Innovation & Technology Awards Entry Rules
Submission Year 2025/26

Rules are subject to change at any time during the call for entries. Please refer to the version of the entry rules currently posted on the HPA Awards website, as it supersedes any previous versions.

HOLLYWOOD PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION
135 E. Olive Ave., #509
Burbank, CA 91502
818-273-1508

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ABOUT THE HPA

The Hollywood Professional Association (HPA) is a non-profit member association dedicated to recognizing, educating, and connecting businesses and individuals that provide creative and technical expertise, support, tools and infrastructure for professional content creation, distribution and archive in the media and entertainment industry. Through our three pillars of activities — Community, Knowledge Exchange, and Recognition — the HPA advances the arts, science and business of the media and entertainment industry. Visit https://hpaonline.com/about/who-we-are/ for more details on HPA's overall mission and services.

HPA AWARDS MISSION

To promote creative artistry in the field of post-production, and recognize the achievement of talent, innovation, and engineering excellence in the larger professional media content industry. The first annual HPA Awards were held in November 2006.

HPA AWARDS ENTRY RULES

This document, also referred to as the Awards Entry Rules, describes the timetable under which the awards process will occur, defines each award category and its respective entry requirements, describes those who are eligible to receive an award, describes the specifications for submission material and describes all other rules and procedures.

This document codifies the rules governing the HPA Awards Innovation & Technology including the following guiding principles:
1. Industry Impact First – Awards must celebrate technologies that materially improve the "professional media content industry ecosystem", spanning theatrical, television, streaming, advertising, and branded content for lifestyle and retail experiences.
2. Objectivity & Transparency – All judging criteria are published; scoring follows a single, weighted rubric.
3. Judging Expertise Alignment – Each panel is composed of judges with credible, specialized skillsets that span the technical breadth of the workflow category and ensure impartiality.
4. Continuous Improvement – Post-award retrospectives will feed annual review and improvement cycles.

SCHEDULE

Dates subject to change.

CATEGORIES

The submittable categories in which the HPA may issue an award are:
1. Innovation in Pre-Production
2. Innovation in Production & Capture
3. Innovation in VFX, Virtual Production & Animation
4. Innovation in Post-Production
5. Innovation in Distribution & Audience Experience

Special Awards (non-submittable):
1. HPA Transformative Impact Award
2. HPA Tech Retreat Best in Show

CATEGORY DESCRIPTIONS AND ELIGIBILITY

The HPA Awards Innovation & Technology categories mark an evolution of the prestigious HPA Engineering Excellence Award that better reflects the role disruptive technologies play in today's rapidly evolving media content industry.

Previously presented as a singular award under the HPA Engineering Excellence banner, the HPA Awards Innovation & Technology will now offer recognition in five (5) categories covering the entire production life cycle from pre-production through distribution and audience experience. This expanded category list celebrates technologies that materially improve the professional media and entertainment ecosystem, spanning film, television, streaming, advertising, and branded content for lifestyle and retail experiences.

Innovation Excellence & AI Use. Use of open-source libraries, commercial systems, and AI models is permitted. Entries must evidence a non-trivial, original engineering contribution (e.g., novel model/control method, workflow architecture, evaluation regimen, or interoperability breakthrough) that materially advances professional media outcomes. Prompts or tool configuration alone do not constitute an invention; however, prompt-driven systems with deterministic control, guardrails, and reproducible gains are admissible. Submissions involving AI must include an AI/Systems Disclosure (models, training/adaptation, evaluation, controls/safety, runtime, reproducibility). Judges apply the existing weighted rubric; AI neither helps nor harms eligibility—panels will weigh the degree of human authorship and the entry's material impact on practice.

Submittable Category Description

Category	Technology Groups / Processes
1. Innovation in Pre-Production	Scheduling & Budgeting; Scriptwriting & Continuity; Generative Script / Shot-List AI; Virtual Scouting & Location Capture; Previsualization / Techvis; Rights & Clearance
2. Innovation in Production & Capture	Cameras & Imaging Sensors; LED Volumes & XR Stages; Time-Sync & Genlock; On-set Networking & Streaming; Metadata & Camera Reports; DIT & Video Village; In-Camera FX; Motion Capture
3. Innovation in VFX, Virtual Production & Animation	Shot & Asset Tracking; Core DCC & Pipeline; Cloud / Distributed Rendering; Asset Interchange & Re-use; Simulation & Procedural FX; ML / AI Enhancements; Real-Time Engines; Animation Authoring; Storyboarding
4. Innovation in Post-Production	Editorial & Collaboration; Color Grading; Audio Post; Conform & Online; QC & Automated Validation; On-Set & Cloud Dailies; Remote Review; File Transfer & Storage; Asset Management; AI-Driven Assist
5. Innovation in Distribution & Audience Experience	Mastering & Packaging; Localization & Dubbing; Adaptive Streaming & Encoding; Analytics & QoE; Accessibility & Alternate Experiences; Immersive Formats; Restoration; Archive Mining

For assistance in determining what category your technology belongs in, see **Appendix A on page 12** for detailed illustrative products and companies guide.

Submission Eligibility & Submission Requirements

1. The HPA Innovation & Technology Awards are open to any individual, group of individuals or entity offering a submitted entry to the production, post-production, distribution, and/or archiving industry at large.

2. Any technology, product, hardware, service, workflow, or demonstrable solution that: (1) is commercially available to paying customers (GA) at least 60 days before the submission deadline; (2) has verifiable application to professional media & entertainment workflows (pre-prod → distribution); and (3) can be demonstrated publicly (video, hosted demo, or live URL).
3. Category Placement & Appeals – The Awards Committee may elect to move submissions from one category to another based on applicability and number of submissions in a category (e.g., re-balance where appropriate).
4. HPA Awards reserves the right to disqualify, at any stage of the competition, entries found to be ineligible.
5. In the event that the eligibility of an Entrant is questionable, HPA may request additional information from the submitter. Additional administrative fees may apply if the HPA Awards Committee must request additional information or submitter requests changes to an Awards Submission after the entry deadline date.
6. By submitting an entry, Submitters confirm that all entry information is complete, true, and correct. The HPA has no liability for, or obligation to, correct any incorrect information such as missing information, misspelled names, ballot listings or subsequent incorrect publicity that are the result of incorrect information submitted on the entries.

Submission Materials

1. A complete entry must be accompanied by the following:
   a. An completed entry form, submitted at https://hpaonline.com/form/hpa-awards-innovation-technology-submission/
   b. Video presentation uploaded to HPA's upload portal https://hpaonline.com/hpa-awards-uploads/
      i. Presentations may be a maximum of 10 minutes; any over-length will be automatically trimmed to exactly 10 minutes
      ii. When preparing your HPA Awards submission, please produce a concise, evidence-led package that directly maps to the judging criteria: briefly describe the problem and your innovative solution, include measurable outcomes (before/after metrics, customer or pilot data), and explain technical architecture, integrations and scalability. Keep language concrete (numbers, test methodology, GA/pilot dates), anonymize sensitive data or include judge-only appendices for NDAed figures, and finish with a single contact for follow-up so judges can quickly validate your claims.
   c. Video teaser: Up to 60 seconds introducing main innovation. You may pull 60 seconds from your 10-minute video presentation to fulfill this requirement.
      i. Usage: the intent of the Teaser Package is to support community voting but also generating awareness for the submissions. HPA marketing will publish the Teaser Package by category (e.g., a series of announcements) in the weeks between submission close and final voting completion.
   d. Video Specs - https://vimeo.com/help/compression

     i.   Video should be headed with a color bar test image, downloadable by clicking here. (when playing back your finished clip on your playback device, check that you see all 13 bars equally spaced and take care that the black patch is not lifted)

     ii.   Video should be slated with submission number, company, and technology name.

e.   Written brief: 1,000–2,500 words (unlimited additional supporting documentation).

f.   Demonstration URL: If a live or hosted demo is available, a URL may be provided for contextual reference.

g.   Entry Fee: USD $500 per submission for HPA corporate members, $750 for non-members.

JUDGING AND NOMINATIONS

Preliminary Judging Phase

1. Vetting Procedure: All complete entries will be reviewed by a vetting committee to ensure correct category placement; only qualified submissions proceed to judging.
2. Preliminary Judging by Community Vote: If a category receives more than 10 qualified submissions, a community vote is activated to narrow to Top 10; otherwise, judges review all qualified entries directly.
3. Voting Mechanics:
    a. Each HPA corporate member designates one qualified technical representative to vote.
    b. The voter will be supplied with the company/technology name, the 60 second video teaser and a brief description of the technology for assessment purposes.
    c. Each voter ranks up to 5 candidates; submissions with the highest aggregate ranks advance (e.g., 1st place gets 5 points, 2nd place 4 points, etc.).
4. The top 10 entries in each category by aggregate vote move on to final judging

Final Judging Phase

1. Voting Mechanics:
    a. Judging panels with a minimum of seven (7) judges per panel and a maximum of ten (10) judges (including 3 alternates) to maintain quorum, will select the nominees in each category.
    b. Expertise mix: A broad industry mix including engineering specialists, production technologists, vendor R&D leads, and relevant academics.
    c. Alternate judges will rotate in if a conflict of interest arises or if a primary judge is unavailable.
2. Judging Criteria:
    a. Entries will be judged on a 100-point judging rubric comprised of four parts:

    i. Innovation — 25 pts
     Novelty and leap vs. state of the art.
    ii. Industry Impact — 25 pts
     Adoption velocity, breadth of effect, ROI/efficiency potential.
    iii. Technical Merit — 25 pts
     Architecture, performance at scale, reliability, standards correctness.
    iv. Adoption Readiness— 25 pts
     Interoperability & openness, security & trust, workflow fit & UX, supportability & scale

  b. Conflict of Interest Policy: Judges must not have any conflict of interest with the entries they are assigned to evaluate. A conflict of interest includes:
    i. Direct or advisory involvement in the development of the product
    ii. A personal relationship with anyone who was/is involved in the development of the product
    iii. A professional or personal bias that could prevent the judge from fairly evaluating a specific category or entry
    iv. Affiliation with a company or group that owns the submitted material does not automatically constitute a conflict unless the judge has a direct connection to the entry or production.
    v. If a possible conflict of interest exists, the HPA Awards chairs will make the final determination on whether a judge must be recused.

Nominations and Winners

1. Where possible and appropriate, the HPA Awards Committee will strive to nominate up to five (5) entries per category. There may be fewer than five (5) nominations or none at all if deemed appropriate. A category may have more than five (5) nominations only if there is a tie for one (1) of the nominations.
2. All nominees will receive a nominee certificate.
3. There will be one winner per category. One (1) HPA Award trophy will be issued to each winner.
  a. One (1) Honorable Mention per category may be given for an entry that scores in close proximity to the winner and is deemed worthy of recognition. An honorable mention is given at the discretion of the judging panel and may not be given every year.
4. All winner information, including spelling of the winners' names, is the responsibility of the Submitter and will be taken directly off the submission.
5. The HPA owns and reserves all rights to each physical HPA Award (including the intellectual property rights, design and any trademarks or patents thereon).
6. The HPA grants each recipient of a physical HPA Award and his/her heirs a limited license to possess and display the physical HPA Award for personal use only. Any other use is not permitted without the prior written consent of the HPA.
7. Additional awards can be purchased by the submitter of a winning entry. Further information is available by contacting awards@HPAonline.com.

ENTRY PREPARATION WALKTHROUGH

By submitting the entry form an Entrant(s) or Submitter states that they have read the HPA Awards Entry Rules and have submitted an entry in accordance with all stated policies.

1. Choose Your Category
   Select one of the five submittable categories:
   - Innovation in Pre-Production
   - Innovation in Production & Capture
   - Innovation in VFX, Virtual Production & Animation
   - Innovation in Post-Production
   - Innovation in Distribution & Audience Experience

Potential submissions that do not conform to one or more HPA Awards requirements may petition the HPA Award Committee as an exception to the entry rules. Requests must be made via e-mail to awards@HPAonline.com, Attn: HPA Awards Committee, and provide a reason for the request and when possible, documentation proving the need for the request. Petitions and their accompanying submission forms MUST be received no later than entry deadline day indicated in the Schedule.

2. Confirm Eligibility
   Ensure your technology:
   a. Is commercially available to paying customers ≥ 60 days before the submission deadline.
   b. Is a single tool or process that improves the professional media content ecosystem.

3. Submit Your Entry Form
   a. Complete HPA Awards Innovation & Technology Entry Form https://hpaonline.com/form/hpa-awards-innovation-technology-submission/
   b. Include date the technology was first commercially available, brief description of technology, and demonstration URL if a live or hosted demonstration is available.
   c. Confirm participation in the Live Q&A session with judges (optional but encouraged).
   d. Upload all materials to the designated HPA upload portal https://hpaonline.com/hpa-awards-uploads/.
   e. Email any additional documentation to awards@hpaonline.com.
   f. Finalize and pay: $500 (HPA corporate members), $750 (non-members)

4. Prepare Submission Materials
   You'll need to submit to HPA upload portal https://hpaonline.com/hpa-awards-uploads/:
   a. Video Presentation (maximum 10 minutes)
   b. Video Teaser (≤ 60 seconds, can be excerpted from the 10-minute video)
   c. Written Brief (1,000–2,500 words, plus optional supporting docs)

Best Practices for a Strong Submission

1. Focus on the Judging Rubric (100 pts total) when preparing your presentation materials.
   a. Innovation (25 pts) – Highlight novelty and leap vs. current state of the art.
   b. Industry Impact (25 pts) – Show adoption, ROI, and ecosystem relevance.
   c. Technical Merit (25 pts) – Detail architecture, scalability, and standards compliance.
   d. Adoption Readiness (25 pts) – Address interoperability, security, UX, and support.
2. Make Your Video Count
   a. Keep it clear, concise, and engaging
   b. Use visuals to demonstrate real-world application
   c. Ensure the teaser is compelling—it drives community voting
3. Write a Strong Brief
   a. Tell a story: What problem does your tech solve?
   b. Use metrics and case studies to show impact
   c. Include user testimonials or industry endorsements if available

SPECIAL AWARDS

The HPA will also present two special awards—Transformative Potential Impact and Best in Show—that recognize entries going beyond category-level excellence: the Transformative Potential Impact Award honors a technology or workflow that has the potential to deliver a transformative positive impact on the TV and Film industry (clear, measurable outcomes, broad adoption or adoption potential, and a compelling roadmap), while Best in Show recognizes the single submission that most powerfully combines technical merit, real-world results, and standout presentation across all categories.

1. HPA Transformative Potential Impact Award
   a. Purpose: Recognizes the single idea in any given year with the most potential to transform the professional media content industry ecosystem.
   b. Eligibility: Any entry submitted in one of the five main Innovation & Technology categories (Pre-production; Production & Capture; VFX, Virtual Production & Animation; Post-production; Distribution & Audience Experience), is automatically eligible for award consideration.
   c. Award Process: Technologies will be assessed by a jury of M&A advisors, serial entrepreneurs, VC/PE investors)
2. HPA Tech Retreat Best in Show
   a. Purpose: Allow HPA Tech Retreat attendees to vote for most innovative technology exhibited in the Innovation Zone at the annual HPA Tech Retreat.
   b. Eligibility: All Innovation Zone exhibitors at the HPA Tech Retreat are automatically eligible for award consideration.
   c. Award Process: Tech Retreat attendees cast ranked votes while the Innovation Zone is open. After closing, the entry with the most votes wins.

CONTACT INFORMATION
HOLLYWOOD PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION
135 E. Olive Ave., #509
Burbank, CA 91502

Phone: 818-273-1508

QUESTIONS? awards@HPAonline.com
HPA AWARDS WEBSITE www.HPAawards.net

APPENDIX A — ILLUSTRATIVE PRODUCTS & COMPANIES BY CATEGORY

1. Pre-Production & Planning
- **Scheduling & Budgeting:** Movie Magic Scheduling & Budgeting; StudioBinder; Greenlight Finance; Wrapbook; Cast & Crew ProductionHub
- **Scriptwriting & Continuity:** Final Draft 13; Scripto; Sceneorize; Celtx; Scrite
- **Generative Script / Shot-List AI:** ScriptBook Predictive Greenlight; Largo.ai; ChatGPT Shot-List Assistant; Solveig Automated Breakdown
- **Virtual Scouting & Location Capture:** Unreal Engine Virtual Scout; NVIDIA Omniverse Create; Luma AI; Polycam LiDAR; 360VR Scout
- **Previsualization / Techvis:** ShotPro; Previs Pro; Cine Tracer; Blender Grease Pencil Previs; Framestore Techvis; The Third Floor
- **Rights, Clearance & Collaboration:** Rightsline; MediaPulse; ClearView Rights; GrayMeta Curio; Cinelytic Rights Analyzer

2. Production & Capture
- **Cameras & Imaging Sensors:** ARRI Alexa 35; RED V-Raptor XL; RED Komodo X; Sony Venice 2 Rialto; Blackmagic URSA 12K; Panavision Primo Artiste Lenses
- **LED Volumes & XR Stages:** ILM StageCraft; Disguise vx / RenderStream; Lux Machina VP Stage
- **Time-Sync & Genlock:** Tentacle Sync Track E; Ambient Lockit ACN; Teradek CTRL.3; Lens-mapping
- **On-set Networking & Streaming:** Sohonet ClearView Pivot On-Set; Teradek Bolt 6; Haivision SRT Gateway; Private 5G NPN kits
- **Metadata & Camera Reports:** Setellite; Pomfort ShotHub; ARRI Camera Companion
- **DIT, Video Village & Live Color:** Pomfort LiveGrade Studio; Colorfront On-Set Dailies 2025; QTAKE Cloud; Frame.io C2C; Codex Recorders
- **In-Camera FX / XR Overlays:** GhostFrame; Unreal Engine 5 ICVFX; Brompton Tessera G1
- **Motion / Performance Capture:** Vicon Shōgun 2.0; OptiTrack Insight; Xsens MVN Link; Faceware Studio Live

3. VFX · Virtual Production · Animation
- **Shot & Asset Tracking:** Autodesk ShotGrid; ftrack Studio; SyncSketch; Bind Studio
- **Core DCC & Pipeline:** Autodesk Maya 2025; SideFX Houdini 20; Foundry Nuke 15; Maxon Cinema 4D 2025; Blender 4.1
- **Cloud / Distributed Rendering:** AWS Deadline Spot; Conductor Cloud; Google Zync; GridMarkets
- **Asset Interchange & Re-use:** Pixar OpenUSD 24; Autodesk Flow; Perforce Helix Core; OpenPBR
- **Simulation & Procedural FX:** Houdini Solaris/Karma XPU; EmberGen; NVIDIA Flex
- **ML / AI Enhancements:** Stability.AI Stable Video; Runway Gen-3 Alpha; Google Veo; OpenAI Sora; Topaz Video AI 5; Wonder Dynamics
- **Real-Time Engines for VP:** Unreal Engine 5.4 (Nanite/Lumen); Unity Wētā Tools; Aximmetry DE; Disguise RenderStream
- **Animation Authoring & Rigging:** Toon Boom Harmony Premium; OpenToonz; Moho Pro 14; Autodesk MotionBuilder; Ziva Dynamics Face Trainer

- **2D / Storyboarding & Layout:** Storyboard Pro; TVPaint Animation; Adobe Animate 2025; Cartoon Animator 5; RoughAnimator

4. Post-Production & Finishing
- **Editorial & Collaboration:** EditHero; Avid Media Composer Enterprise 2025; Adobe Premiere Pro 26; DaVinci Resolve Studio 19; ShotHero; Vibe Editorial Tools
- **Color Grading:** Filmlight Baselight 6; Resolve Advanced Panel HDR; Assimilate Scratch 10
- **Audio Post:** Avid Pro Tools Ultimate 2025; Dolby Atmos Renderer 5; iZotope RX11; Adobe Enhance Speech
- **Conform & Online:** Autodesk Flame 2025; Mistika Boutique; Resolve Fusion
- **QC & Automated Validation:** Telestream Vidchecker Cloud; Interra Baton AI; Cinnafilm PixelStrings QC
- **On-Set & Cloud Dailies:** Pix System; Autodesk Moxion; Sohonet ClearView Rush; PrimeFocus Clear; EditShare MediaSilo; Amazon MCS
- **Remote Review & Sync:** CineSync; Frame.io Live Review; Sohonet ClearView Flex; Sohonet ClearView Pivot; Colorfront Streaming Server; Evercast
- **File Transfer & Remote Storage:** Signiant Media Shuttle; IBM Aspera FASP; Resilio Connect; LucidLink Filespaces; Studio Suite Cloud; Hammerspace Global Data Environment; Wasabi Hot Cloud Storage; Sohonet FileRunner; PixitMedia Ngenea
- **Asset & Version Management:** Frame.io Enterprise; iconik; Sohonet Core/Storylink; Codemill Cantemo; BlueLucy; Dalet Flex; Ateliere Connect
- **AI-Driven Review & Assist:** Adobe Sensei Text-to-Edit; Blackmagic Neural Engine Magic Mask; Axle AI Auto-tag

5. Distribution & Audience Experience
- **Mastering & Packaging:** Rohde & Schwarz Clipster NG; Colorfront Transkoder 2025; Dolby Vision/Atmos Toolset; Opaque UI IMFtool; SDVI Rally; GrayMeta Iris AI; Ateliere Connect
- **Localization, Subtitling & Dubbing:** Deluxe One; Iyuno-SDI Nebula; ZOO Digital ZOOstudio; SubtitleNEXT AI; CaptionHub; 3Play Media; ElevenLabs Voice AI; Flawless TrueSync
- **Adaptive Streaming & Encoding:** Bitmovin Encoder/Player; AWS Elemental MediaConvert/Package; Harmonic VOS360; Unified Streaming Origin
- **Analytics & QoE:** Conviva Sensor; Nielsen Gracenote Metrics; Mux Data; Touchstream DVE
- **Accessibility & Alternate Experiences:** Dolby Dialogue Enhancement; AudioEye; Immersion SDK haptics; HDR10+ Adaptive
- **Immersive / Next-Gen Formats:** Apple Vision Pro Spatial Video; MPEG-I; VR180 Pipeline
- **Restoration & Dust-Busting:** MTI Film DRS Nova; Pixel Farm PFClean; HS-ART Diamant; Digital Vision Phoenix; Colorfront DVO Restore
- **Archive Tech & Content Mining:** Spectra Logic BlackPearl; Oracle DIVA Archive; GrayMeta Curio AI; Veritone aiWARE; AWS Rekognition MediaSearch; Cinegy Archive; 12 Labs Video Intelligence API

APPENDIX B — INNOVATION EXCELLENCE & AI USE

Purpose

Clarify what qualifies as an innovative engineering achievement versus routine configuration or prompting; govern the use of third-party systems (open source and commercial); and specify AI disclosures and evidence to keep judging objective and consistent with the existing rubric.

1) What "Innovation Excellence" Means (at HPA)

An entry demonstrates Innovation Excellence when the entrant's original contribution—rather than the vendor platform or pretrained model—delivers material, repeatable advances to professional media workflows.

Peer-organization alignment (summarized):
- Television Academy (Engineering/Science & Technology): honors developments that are so innovative or extensive an improvement that they materially affect television production, recording, transmission, or reception.
- NATAS (Tech & Engineering): recognizes innovations and standardizations that materially affect television.
- AMPAS (Sci-Tech Awards): recognizes devices, methods, or inventions of special and outstanding value to motion picture arts and sciences.
- AMPAS (current Oscars rules): generative AI and digital tools are neutral to eligibility; branches weigh the degree to which a human is at the heart of authorship.
- Advanced Imaging Society (Lumiere): embraces advanced technologies, including AI, while honoring the humanly authored achievement.

2) Keep the Core Rubric (No Changes to Weights)

Use the existing HPA scoring rubric as-is (Innovation/Uniqueness; Impact/Adoption; Technical Merit; Efficiency/Creativity gains; Roadmap; Sustainability/Accessibility). AI criteria below serve as gatekeeping and documentation requirements that feed those categories.

3) Using Other Systems (Open Source & Commercial)

Allowed: open-source libraries, commercial SDKs/APIs, cloud services, and pretrained AI models.

Not sufficient on its own: thin glue code, routine orchestration, or UI skinning without a non-trivial, documented contribution.

Qualifying original contributions include (one or more):
- Algorithmic/Model Work: new model, fine-tuning regimen, controller, or post-processing that advances quality, latency, cost, color fidelity, sync, or safety.
- System Architecture: novel pipelines (e.g., low-latency HDR review at scale), deterministic state machines, QoS/error budgeting, session sync, or interoperability breakthroughs.

- Data & Evaluation: curated datasets with lawful provenance; ablation studies; benchmarks that advance state of practice.
- Workflow Design: methods that unlock new creative or operational capabilities proven across productions, not just demos.

4) AI Participation — Four Tiers
- Tier 0 – No-AI: Traditional methods (proceed under normal rules).
- Tier 1 – Assistive Prompting (Tool Use): Off-the-shelf prompting for ideation, summaries, or basic transforms. Not an invention by itself; must be coupled with engineering that yields reliable, professional outcomes.
- Tier 2 – Integrated AI (System-Level): Original integration methods (retrieval, guardrails, control grammars, evaluation gates, fallbacks, latency control, audit) achieving studio-grade outcomes.
- Tier 3 – Novel AI Method: New model, training/fine-tuning process, inference-time controller, dataset, loss/metric, watermarking, or provenance tech that advances the art for professional media.

5) Mandatory AI & Third-Party Disclosure (for any Tier ≥ 1)
Submissions must include a one-page AI/Systems Disclosure covering:
1. Model(s) & Version(s): vendor or open source; base model family; fine-tunes.
2. Training/Adaptation: data sources; consent/licensing posture; synthetic data use.
3. Evaluation: metrics, baselines, ablations; effects on fidelity, sync, color, sound.
4. Controls & Safety: failure modes; human-in-the-loop checkpoints; provenance/watermarking; privacy and rights protections.
5. Runtime Characteristics: latency, throughput, costs, and carbon/energy notes.
6. Reproducibility: configs, seeds, and versions; what is required to repeat outcomes.

6) What Is vs. Isn't an Invention — Examples

A. Qualifies (Innovation present)
- Systemized LLM shot-breakdown: controlled grammar + retrieval over continuity/schedule data + validation harness delivering >20% fewer continuity errors and <150 ms response across multiple shows.
- AI color-aware streaming: temporal upscaler plus a novel tone-mapping controller preserving skin tones and HDR intent at low bitrates with ablations vs. baselines.
- Ethical dubbing pipeline: verified consent; voice-match with intent guardrails; per-locale QC metrics; auto-conform back into IMF with audit trails.
  B. Likely not enough (no invention)
- Clever prompts or UI macros that call a vendor model to summarize dailies without control logic, metrics, or reliability guarantees.
- Wiring a known open-source library to a cloud API with standard defaults and no measurable gains over common practice.
  C. Gray but admissible when engineered
- Prompt-chaining + tools that achieve frame-accurate EDLs with a deterministic state machine, test suite, and error bounds.

7) Updated Submission Packet (Add Two Items)

- E1. AI/Systems Disclosure (Section 5).
- E2. Evidence Appendix (max 10 pages): benchmarks, ablations, references; at least one before/after or vs. baseline chart tied to real productions; relevant rights/consent attestations.

These dovetail with existing Commercial Availability and Conflict-of-Interest requirements.

8) How Judges Apply the Existing Weights

- Innovation/Uniqueness (25%): Is there an inventive step (Tier 2/3) beyond off-the-shelf tools?
- Industry Impact & Adoption (25%): Evidence of use beyond a lab demo; scale, interoperability, and influence on practice.
- Technical Merit & Design Quality (20%): Sound architecture, deterministic behavior, reproducibility, QoS; appropriate metrics.
- Demonstrated Efficiency / Creativity Gains (15%): Time saved, error reduction, creative possibilities unlocked (with data).
- Path to Future Progress (10%): Roadmap, standardization potential, openness.
- Sustainability & Accessibility (5%): Cost/energy awareness; inclusive design.

9) Author Credit & Human Authorship

- Awards are conferred to humans and/or organizations responsible for the achievement— not to models or vendor platforms.
- When AI is involved, judges consider the degree to which a human was at the heart of authorship.

Quick FAQ for Entrants

Q: Can we use open-source code or vendor APIs?
A: Yes. Eligibility hinges on your original engineering contribution that materially advances professional outcomes (see Tiers 2–3).

Q: Is "prompt engineering" an innovation?
A: Prompts alone: No. Prompt-driven systems with control grammars, guardrails, deterministic behavior, and measurable gains: Yes (that's a method).

Q: Do we need to disclose model names/versions and training data?
A: Yes (one-page disclosure). Judges need enough to evaluate reproducibility, rights posture, and safety.

Q: Who gets credited?
A: People and/or organizations who materially authored the method or system; not the tool or model vendor.