

Marks of a Winner:

*What to look for when judging
BIA BC
Best in the West Awards*

SCORING KEY

You are asked to judge each entry using a scale of 0-7. Here's what that means:

- 7: OUTSTANDING:** An extraordinary or insightful approach or result
- 6:** Significantly better than average
- 5:** Better than average
- 4: AVERAGE:** An adequate approach or result; professionally competent but not exceptional
- 3:** Somewhat less than satisfactory
- 2:** A generally inadequate approach or result
- 1: POOR:** Almost totally wrong or inappropriate
- 0:** Not answered or totally inappropriate

TIPS

- Start with a “4” for a competent effort and grade up or down from that standard.
- Just because an answer is competent doesn't mean it deserves a “7” — save the “7”s for truly outstanding work. Equally, don't discount a strategic, insightful problem-solving approach for a tiny technical flaw — you will seldom see perfection in an entry.
- Most of your scores will probably cluster around 3, 4, and 5. If you are scoring too many entries as “1”s or “7”s, you should re-evaluate your judging approach.

The Work Plan

1. How clearly does the plan identify the need or opportunity and its effect on the organization?

A SATISFACTORY entry should:

- Clearly define and show understanding of the problem or opportunity
- Show how the problem or opportunity was identified and why it matters
- Explain how the project addresses the need that was identified
- Provide sufficient context about the organization and its priorities so that you can see how this project could contribute to the broader organization's success

MARK UP for:

- Solid formal or informal research used to identify the opportunity
- Superior explanation of how the research was used to define the opportunity
- Clear explanation of specific changes or challenges that led to the opportunity
- Superior explanation of why it matters for the organization

Mark DOWN if the entry:

- Does not explain how the opportunity was identified
- Fails to demonstrate how the project would help the organization
- "Assumes" the need, or takes it as given

2. How well do the goals and objectives address the stated need? To what extent are the objectives measurable in addressing the stated need?

A SATISFACTORY entry should:

- State an overall "big picture" goal: what were they trying to achieve with this project? There should be only one or two goals; they need not be measurable.
- State specific, results-based objectives which set targets and are measurable or have clear criteria for success

Mark UP for:

- A clearly stated goal, clearly linked to the organization's objectives and the need/opportunity that was identified
- Objectives that are results-based, stated in terms of impact on the target audience
- Objectives that, taken as a whole, appropriately measure success for the project
- Objectives clearly measure significant results in a quantified way or with clear criteria for success
- Identifying appropriate measures for projects where it is difficult to do so

Mark DOWN if the entry:

- Has no objectives
- Has immeasurable objectives
- Has vague objectives with no specific measures, e.g. "to improve morale"
- States objectives based on process not results. "To produce a newsletter on budget" or "to do X by a self-improved deadline" are not objectives – they're the entrant's job
- Has too many objectives (unfocused) or "slam-dunk" objectives that are too "soft" to achieve the goal ("increase attendance by 1%")

2. How clearly does the entrant identify the critical characteristics of the audience?

A SATISFACTORY entry should:

- Describe audience characteristics and needs in sufficient detail so as to show how that understanding led to choices of strategy, tactics, partners, funding, etc.
- There may be secondary audiences, but it should be clear who the primary audience was

Mark UP for:

- Research to determine audience characteristics and/or needs; thorough formal research is best; informal analysis can be credited
- A focused description that demonstrates the thought process linking audience to strategy and tactics
- Addressing a variety of relevant factors, e.g. prior knowledge, education level, geography, psychographics, motivations, opinions, issues, kind of business, relationship to the organization

Mark DOWN if the entry:

- Does not define the audience or claims a “general public or all members” audience without defining the needs or characteristics of that public or its members
- Has a long list of audiences but no descriptions or analysis that would show whether the solution chosen was appropriate
- Makes vague, unsupported assumptions about audience needs
- Has demographic detail on the audience, but it does not seem relevant to choices made in the project.

4. How effective is the overall solution implemented? To what extent does the overall solution demonstrate a strategic or creative approach to the stated need?

A SATISFACTORY entry should:

- Describe the plan the entrant developed and what they did
- Explain the rationale, demonstrating that the plan is an appropriate approach to the need or opportunity

Mark UP for:

- A well-explained rationale clearly linking audience characteristics and objectives to tactics chosen
- A plan that is clearly appropriate for the task at hand
- Sound reasoning supporting choices, possibly including evaluating other options
- Creativity and innovation in devising a solution

Mark DOWN if the entry:

- Does not explain what was done or why
- Offers a plan that does not seem likely to achieve the goal and objectives
- Offers a tired response to a standard communications problem

5. How effectively was the project implemented in terms of budget, time, and other resources?

A SATISFACTORY entry should:

- Describe the resources needed and available (budget, staff/consultants, volunteers, equipment)
- Note challenges encountered in implementation and how they were overcome (reward for smart solutions to challenges, but avoid penalizing if everything went according to plan)
- Explain how entrant sold the plan to partners, his/her board, etc. if required

Mark UP for:

- Good use of budget; reward effective use of constrained budget or appropriate spending if not constrained
- Effective and appropriate use of internal and external resources
- Clever approach to selling the project or engaging partners

Mark DOWN if the entry:

- Does not provide budget information
- Shows wasteful or inappropriate use of budget
- Does not clearly explain how the project was implemented and how various roles and resources were coordinated by the entrant

Note: Budget information is important. Entries should be penalized if sufficient information is not included.

Watch for:

- Apologies or regrets for too low budget (many BIAs produce exceptional materials on a shoe-string budget), slow progress, inappropriate choice of media, etc.
- Excuses based on limited resources ("If we had more staff, we could have. . .").
- Media/medium that don't suit the audience
- Excessive use of resources without proper justification.

6. How thoroughly were the results measured against the objectives? (Score 0 if not measured)

A SATISFACTORY entry should:

- Prove that the objectives were met through formal evaluation
- Have evaluation measures directly related to the objectives that were set
- Have methods of measurement appropriate to the project

Mark UP for:

- Thorough documentation of measures
- Appropriateness of measures in relation to objectives
- Effective measurement of things that are difficult to measure
- Thoroughness of evaluation

Mark DOWN if the entry:

- Measures *outputs* rather than *outcomes* (brochure was distributed vs. brochure increased audience acceptance of the organization's plans)
- Does not have a measure to match each objective
- Has only anecdotal evaluation ("We heard that people were happy")
- Does not relate evaluation to audience or objectives ("My manager liked it")
- Uses data or measures inappropriately (i.e. does not support conclusions)

Watch for:

- Objectives that are never mentioned but noted in the results section.
- Results that were obtained through unknown or questionable means
- Quantitative results that are statistically invalid (e.g., sample size too small).
- Illogical pairing of objectives and qualitative/quantitative results.

7. How well were the project's/program's goals and objectives met?

A SATISFACTORY entry should:

Demonstrate that it has met its goal and objectives

Mark UP:

- If you are easily convinced that the objectives were met and the project was a success
- If it seems to you a sound blueprint for a project of this type

Mark DOWN if the entry:

- Had weak or unclear objectives: if it's not clear what the objectives were, you can't judge how successful it was
- Claims success, but on grounds that are not related to the objectives or impact on the target audience
- Uses data inappropriately to claim success, or data does not support conclusions
- "Cherry-picks" data to prove success, but ignores other evidence that would lead to a less positive evaluation

Watch for:

- Results that are positive but weren't specifically set out in the objectives ("Management really liked the magazine design..."). Don't necessarily penalize for this because some results are unexpected or unplanned (i.e. notes of congratulations from the audience) but ensure that back-up is included.
- Overly positive results that don't seem possible given the project description.
- Results that are too narrow or skimpy.
- "Highlights" of results that don't seem to paint the entire picture.
- Generalizations or vague results ("Members seemed to really like the article").

Supplemental Materials/The Work Sample

1. How well do the elements of the project reflect an understanding of the needs and characteristics of the target audience?

A SATISFACTORY entry should:

Embody choices appropriate to the audiences

MARK UP for:

- Particularly good choices matching audience characteristics
- Packaging of messages or program elements that would clearly impact the specific audience

MARK DOWN for:

- Level of language, graphics or design that is too complex or too patronizing for the defined audience
- Program elements aimed at audiences not described

2. How well does the work sample reflect the objectives in the work plan?

A SATISFACTORY entry should:

Reflect the objectives set out in the work plan

MARK UP if the entry:

- Is clearly implemented in such a way as to be likely to achieve the objectives that were defined
- Reflects choices of design, staging, hosting, etc. that are clearly appropriate given the objectives
- Has clear, consistent messages, reflecting the objectives
- Is impactful in communicating the organization's messages

MARK DOWN if:

- Some objectives are not addressed in the work sample
- Messaging is not consistent
- Excess elements in the sample distract from the objectives
- The sample offered does not show you what was done: incomplete, confusing or poorly presented/explained

3. How clearly does the work sample meet or exceed the accepted technical and professional standards for the medium/media selected?

A **SATISFACTORY** entry will have good production values appropriate to the media/medium selected and the available budget, while reflecting professional standards of ethics, good taste, etc.

MARK UP for:

- Effective use of limited budget
- Efficient use of budget to create the most effective project/program possible
- Quality of writing, messaging, staging, hosting etc.

MARK DOWN for:

- Amateurish work
- Out-of-date approaches
- Poor technical production
- Apparent excess spending not likely to achieve results
- Evident disrespect for the audience (e.g. poor taste)

4. To what extent does the work sample show imagination, innovation, uniqueness and/or creativity?

A **SATISFACTORY** entry will take a fairly standard approach to the solution, but will do it competently.

MARK UP if the entry:

- Stands out from the others
- Shows a clearly original or creative approach
- Leaves a lasting impression
- Makes you wish you'd thought of it

MARK DOWN for:

- A cliché approach
- A product likely to bore the audience or be buried by the competition
- A creative approach that clearly would not work

5. To what extent does the work sample live up to the description and expectations described in the work plan?

A **SATISFACTORY** entry should reflect the plan.

MARK UP if the entry:

- Seems to embody most or all of the considerations explained in the plan
- Is clearly a good overall product, suited to the objectives

MARK DOWN for:

- A sample that does not match the plan - was the plan written later, for the awards competition?
- A weak sample that does not address the considerations outlined in the plan
- A poor piece of work