FAQs for IABC Award Evaluators

Q – How do I score entries that don't include a budget?

A – Some form of budget is a required element for any submission. If it's missing all together, mark down from 4. Resources for a project could be expressed as a whole number ($5,000/project) or a percentage of a departmental budget (4% of $25K/annual) and/or include an allocation of human resource costs (.5 full-time equivalent x 6 months).

Q – How do I evaluate entries where the objectives and measurement don't match and/or either some objectives are not measured, or new measurement is introduced at the end?

A – The Goals & Objectives and Measurement & Evaluation sections of the work plan should mirror and book-end each other. A target listed as an objective should be measured against that target. And, each objective should be tied directly to a listed primary audience. Starting with the objectives: if any or all aren't written in a measurable format (for example, 'Increase readership by X% over 2019 readership of X by March 2020'), mark this section down from a 4. A mark of 3 will suffice. Include robust and actionable comments in the Comments section stating why you marked it down and how the objectives could be re-written.

Moving to the Measurement section: assuming the non-measurable objectives are not measured, mirror your Objectives score in the Measurement section. So, a mark of '3' in Objectives equals a '3' in Measurement.

If new measurements are included in the Measurement section that weren't referenced in Objectives, still mark this section down to mirror the lower score in the Objectives section. Why? Because these 2 sections need to match. And, the evaluator shouldn't have to bounce back and forth to compare or validate the content of the two sections. Again, tell the entrant in the Comments section why/how to include these measurements first as targets, then as measured outcomes.

Q – Some work samples are really long; how much time should I spend on them?

A – A reminder that work samples (in Divisions 1, 2 & 3 in particular) are evidence or proof of the work noted in the work plan. So, read and evaluate the work plan first; spend the most time on it. Ideally, the work samples are well labelled, so evaluate sections that are referenced specifically in the work plan.

For example, if easy navigation of a new website was a key objective, review that part of the website first or only. If an employee survey was a key component of a project, look at the survey and results specifically. Each entry should take about 60 minutes (give or take) to evaluate individually. As a guide, spend 40 minutes on the work plan; 20 minutes on the sample.

Some entrants use the Work Sample section as a bit of a dumping ground for PowerPoints of the work plan, every media clipping or email trails of tactical work. Don't feel obligated to review these if they don't demonstrate effort noted in the work plan.

Q – How do I evaluate entries that include work samples that are not in English or French?

A – Contact your Coordinator first and/or IABC headquarters to source a local solution or have the entry reassigned to an evaluator who speaks the language.

Q – What do I do when information is included in the work plan, but it's in the incorrect section.

A – First, make sure to read the whole work plan to get a full understanding of the entry. Second, use the Call for Entries and the evaluation rubrics to understand what information should be included in each section specifically. If it's one infraction, for example, the budget is included, but in a different section and this doesn't make a material difference, especially if it's a winning entry, make a comment in the Comments section, but don't mark it down.

If, however, the whole work plan doesn't follow the entry template correctly, know this is likely a first-time entrant, a rushed last-minute entry or a non-IABC entrant. Mark each impacted section down appropriately (a 3 will suffice). You can make an overarching comment at the end of the evaluation such as the entrant reviewing the call for entries and/or award-winning work plans to better understand the content required for each section.

Q – Is it ok to leave a reconciled score just below the winning threshold?

A – Technically, yes. However, it's frustrating for an entrant to receive such a mark. If it's a winner, make it one by adjusting your scores accordingly. If the work plan doesn't hold up against the Gold Quill standard, adjust your scores down a bit more in a few sections to clearly indicate it is not a winner. Don't forget to include encouraging suggestions in the Comments sections like 're-work the sections noted above and re-enter next year' or 'you've included some solid elements of this project; strengthen X section and try again.'

Q – I never know what to include in the Comments section; what is helpful?

A – Know that evaluators' comments are the most important aspect of the evaluation for entrants. Spend more time on these than the scores. Don't simply state the obvious like 'your objectives aren't measurable.' Not helpful. Consider: 'Objectives need to be stated in the SMART format. For example, your objective #1 could be re-written as 'Increase from X to X the number of attendees that understood the new vision by X date.' Make the comments actionable, fair, kind and helpful. We want non-winning entrants to enter again.