

Two Award Programs: Powered by Passion. Driven by People.



**2026
GM Awards**
Powered by AHLA

**2027
Stars of the Industry**
Powered by AHLA Foundation



AWARD NOMINATION GUIDE

The hotel industry is powered by exceptional people and leaders who create unforgettable guest experiences, drive operational excellence, and shape the future of hospitality.

The GM Awards, powered by AHLA, and Stars of the Industry Awards, powered by AHLA Foundation, recognize dedicated individuals who go above and beyond to elevate hospitality across the country.

This nomination guide is designed to make the award nomination process as simple and efficient as possible by providing:

- [TIMELINE AND DEADLINES](#)
- [GM AWARDS DESCRIPTION, CATEGORIES, QUESTIONS, AND AHLA AWARD CONTACT](#)
- [STARS OF THE INDUSTRY AWARDS DESCRIPTION, CATEGORIES, QUESTIONS, AND AHLA FOUNDATION AWARD CONTACT](#)

TIMELINE AND DEADLINES

MAY 27 | Nomination portal opens for both the GM Awards and Stars of the Industry Awards; portal instructions will be sent via email from AHLA

JULY 17 | **NOMINATION PORTAL CLOSES** for both the GM Awards and Stars of the Industry Awards

	GM AWARDS	STARS OF THE INDUSTRY AWARDS
Nomination Review & Industry Judging	Mid-July through mid-August	Mid-July through mid-September
Selection Notifications (Sent via email)	Mid-to-late August	Mid-to-late September
Award Ceremony	November 2-4, 2026 The Hospitality Show Miami Beach, FL	January 24, 2027 Night of a Thousand Stars Gala Los Angeles, CA
Questions?	gmawards@ahla.com	Foundation@ahla.com

2026 GM Awards

Powered by **AHLA**



The GM Awards, powered by AHLA, are the industry's most prestigious national awards program exclusively honoring GMs and their properties. Winners will be announced at The Hospitality Show, November 2-4, in Miami Beach, FL.

Each winner will be featured in an exclusive profile video produced by AHLA's videographer and receive complimentary registration to both the GM Summit and The Hospitality Show, a travel stipend, and recognition onstage among their industry peers and throughout The Hospitality Show. Additionally, AHLA will provide dedicated media assets for winners' companies to utilize across their own marketing and communication platforms.

CATEGORIES

GENERAL MANAGERS OF THE YEAR

Recognizes outstanding General Managers across five distinct property categories who demonstrate exceptional leadership, operational excellence, and guest satisfaction while driving strong team culture and property performance.

GENERAL MANAGER OF THE YEAR | INDEPENDENT PROPERTIES

Independently operated properties not affiliated with a chain, including all non-branded hotels and select brands that are membership-based.

GENERAL MANAGER OF THE YEAR | EXTENDED STAY PROPERTIES

Properties offering long-term accommodation for guests, typically quoting weekly rates.

GENERAL MANAGER OF THE YEAR | FULL-SERVICE PROPERTIES (excluding Resort Properties)

Properties providing multiple onsite amenities and services, including full-service restaurants, laundry, security, shuttles, spa, fitness facilities, room service, and concierge.

GENERAL MANAGER OF THE YEAR | SELECT-SERVICE PROPERTIES (not Extended Stay Properties)

Properties with room-only operations (i.e. no food and beverage service) or offering a bedroom for the night, but very few other services and amenities.

GENERAL MANAGER OF THE YEAR | RESORT PROPERTIES

Full-service resort property, often of historical or geographical significance, serving as a destination for leisure and recreation through amenities, such as golf, tennis, skiing, equestrian sports, and water activities, that are primarily owner operated or controlled by the property for their guests.

GENERAL MANAGER RISING STAR AWARD

Recognizes a new General Manager who, within their first 24 months of their first General Manager role, has demonstrated exceptional leadership, growth, and impact through operational excellence, guest satisfaction, and a strong culture of teamwork while showing the confidence, adaptability, and vision to lead successfully in hospitality.

CATEGORIES continued

GENERAL MANAGER COMMUNITY AMBASSADOR AWARD

Recognizes a General Manager who demonstrates exceptional commitment to building strong relationships and integrating their property within the local community through partnerships with civic organizations, nonprofits, and small businesses. Whether through sustainable local sourcing, spearheading charitable fundraisers, or creating employment outreach programs, this GM has redefined what it means to be a 'good neighbor' ensuring that the hotel is not just a place for travelers to stay, but a cornerstone of the community.

GENERAL MANAGER LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Honors a General Manager whose career reflects exceptional leadership, lasting influence, and a lifelong commitment to excellence in hospitality. More than a successful hotel leader, this individual has served as a mentor, role model, and visionary whose impact extends beyond their property into the industry and community. Their legacy is defined by the people they inspired, the standards they elevated, and the enduring difference they made throughout their career. (Note: Requires a letter of recommendation from at least one peer.)

QUESTIONS (to be completed by nominator via the awards portal)

- 1 LEADERSHIP & IMPACT** | How does this General Manager lead their team and property in a way that goes beyond standard expectations? Include examples of operational excellence, team development, and measurable results.
- 2 COMMUNITY & INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT** | How does this General Manager create a positive impact beyond the hotel? Describe their involvement in community initiatives, partnerships, or broader industry contributions.
- 3 CHARACTER & LEADERSHIP IN ACTION** | Share a specific story or example that best demonstrates this General Manager's leadership style, values, and ability to inspire others.
- 4 DISTINCTION & RECOGNITION** | What distinguishes this individual from their peers? Include any notable achievements, awards, or qualities that make them deserving of recognition.

GM AWARDS CONTACT

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, PLEASE EMAIL GMAWARDS@AHLA.COM

Stars of the Industry 2027

Powered by  **AHLA FOUNDATION**



The Stars of the Industry Awards, powered by AHLA Foundation, are the industry's most prestigious national awards program recognizing exceptional students and hospitality professionals who drive our industry forward. Winners will be announced at the AHLA Foundation's Night of a Thousand Stars Gala in Los Angeles, CA, on January 24, 2027.

Each winner, as well as the top three North Star Award finalists, will be featured in an exclusive profile video produced by AHLA's videographer and receive complimentary registration to the Night of a Thousand Stars Gala, a travel stipend, and recognition onstage among their industry leaders and colleagues. Additionally, the AHLA Foundation will provide dedicated media assets for winners' companies to utilize across their own marketing and communication platforms.

CATEGORIES

NORTH STAR AWARD

Lodging Employee of the Year

Honors an exceptional hotel employee who goes above and beyond their daily duties to deliver outstanding guest experiences, support their team, and positively impact their community.

STEVAN PORTER EMERGING HOSPITALITY LEADER OF THE YEAR

Emerging Leader Under 30

Named in honor of Stevan Porter, former president of the Americas, InterContinental Hotels Group, this award recognizes a rising hospitality professional under 30 who brings fresh ideas, inspires others, and demonstrates strong leadership potential early in their career.

AHLA FOUNDATION SCHOLAR OF THE YEAR AWARD

Recognizing Hospitality Student Achievement

Honors an outstanding hospitality student who excels academically and shows strong promise as a future leader in the hotel industry. Nominees must be enrolled in a two- or four-year hospitality program. The Scholar of the Year Award includes a \$2,500 AHLA Foundation Academic Scholarship.

HOTEL HERO AWARD

Service Above Self in Extraordinary Circumstances

Recognizes a hotel team member who took heroic action and put others first during a difficult situation or unexpected event, creating a positive outcome.

QUESTIONS (to be completed by nominator via the awards portal)

NORTH STAR AWARD

- 1 How did your nominee get their start in the hospitality industry?
- 2 What keeps your nominee dedicated to their role and passionate about the hospitality industry day in and day out?
- 3 Please share an experience or story that exemplifies the characteristics of your nominee.
- 4 What makes your nominee stand out amongst their peers and excel in their position?
- 5 Please provide examples of times your nominee has gone above and beyond their daily duties.
- 6 Has your nominee won any additional awards on the property, corporate, or state level?
If so, please share which awards.

STEVAN PORTER EMERGING HOSPITALITY LEADER OF THE YEAR

- 1 How did your nominee get their start in the hospitality industry?
- 2 What sets this individual apart from other young professionals?
- 3 How does your nominee strive for career advancement or continuing education?
- 4 How does this up-and-coming individual represent the best values of the hospitality industry?
Please share an experience or story that exemplifies the characteristics of your nominee.
- 5 Has your nominee won any additional awards on the property, corporate, or state level?
If so, please share which awards.

AHLA FOUNDATION SCHOLAR OF THE YEAR AWARD

- 1 What college or university is the student currently attending? (must be a 2-4 year college or university)
- 2 What degree is the student currently pursuing?
- 3 What makes this student exceptional and unique?
- 4 What specific contribution to the hotel industry does the student plan to make?
- 5 Describe the student's extracurricular campus activities that contribute to their future hospitality career and personal and professional development?

HOTEL HERO AWARD

- 1 How did your nominee get their start in the hospitality industry?
- 2 What keeps your nominee dedicated to their role?
- 3 Please provide an act of service example.
- 4 Has this employee won any additional awards for their act of heroism?

STARS OF THE INDUSTRY AWARDS CONTACT

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, PLEASE EMAIL FOUNDATION@AHLA.COM