



2025-2026

Awards

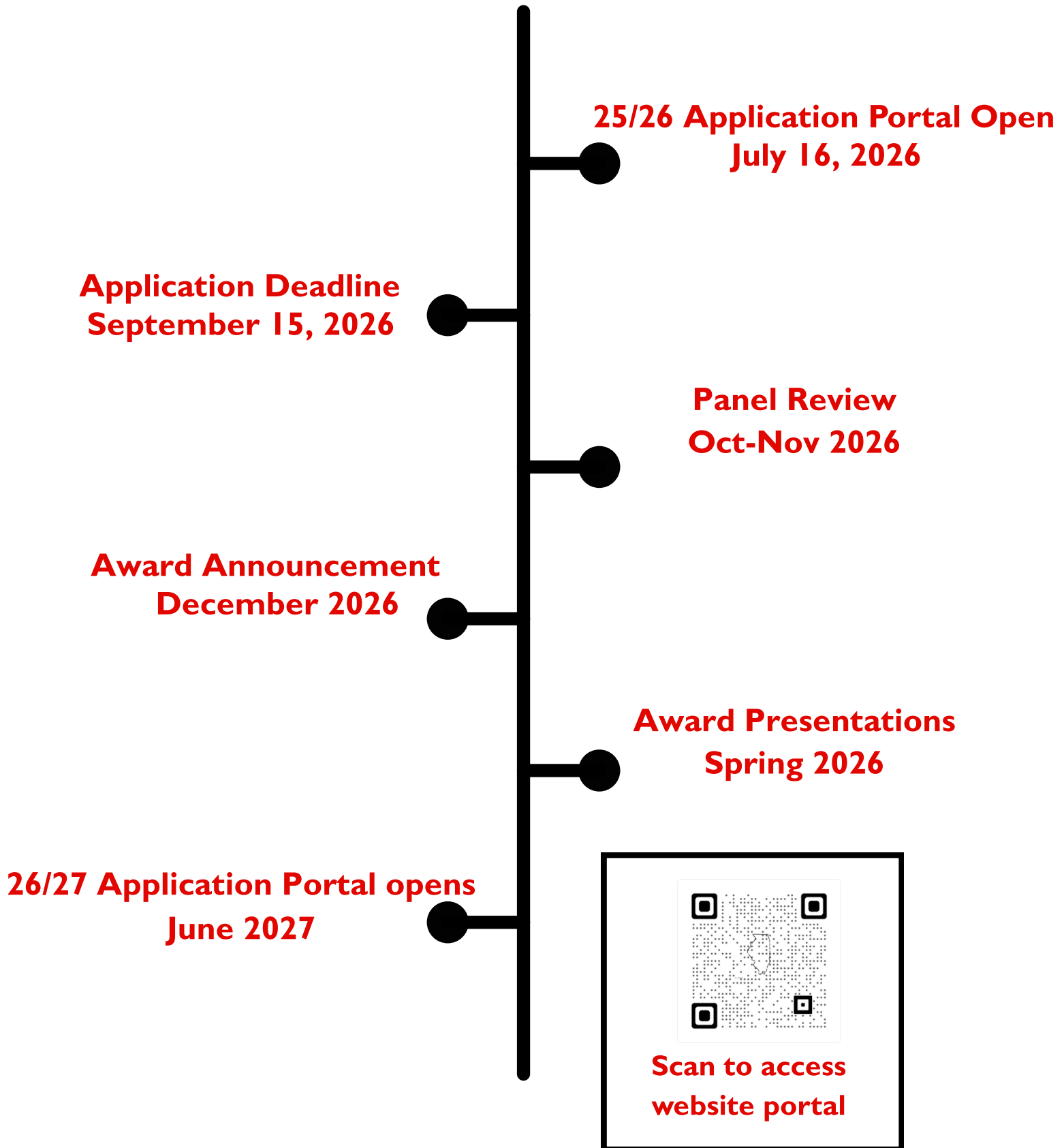
Application

Packet

Table Of Contents

Timeline.....	3
Awards Categories.....	4
Overview of Awards Criteria.....	5
General Information.....	8
Accessing the Application.....	10

New Awards Timeline



2025-2026 Awards Categories

Orchestra of the Year, professional orchestra

Orchestra of the Year, community orchestra

Orchestra of the Year, youth orchestra

Orchestra of the Year, chamber ensemble

Conductor of the Year, professional orchestra

Conductor of the Year, community/small orchestra

Conductor of the Year, college/university orchestra

Musician of the Year

Board President of the Year

Executive/General Manager of the Year

Volunteer of the Year

Volunteer Group of the Year

Programming of the Year

Community Engagement Program of the Year

Category Criteria

Specific criteria considered for each award category are listed below. These are guidelines – not requirements – and are offered to make the application process clearer.

ORCHESTRA OF THE YEAR, ALL CATEGORIES

- Programming
- Community involvement/outreach
- Opportunities for youth
- Growth of audience
- Fiscal responsibility
- Community Support

CONDUCTOR OF THE YEAR, PROFESSIONAL ORCHESTRA

- Innovation in programming and soloist selection
- Personal involvement in community
- Relationship with musicians and board
- Quality of performances

CONDUCTOR OF THE YEAR, COMMUNITY/SMALL ORCHESTRA

- Open to conductors of community and youth orchestras and of chamber ensembles
- Innovation in programming and soloist selection
- Personal involvement in community
- Relationship with musicians and board
- Quality of performances

CONDUCTOR OF THE YEAR, COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY ORCHESTRA

- Open to conductors of college or university-sponsored orchestras
- Exposure to a broad range of orchestral repertoire

- Success in the education and training of orchestra musicians
- Leadership in ensemble program growth
- Quality of performances
- Support of college/university community and/or the general public

MUSICIAN OF THE YEAR

- Demonstrates leadership abilities
- Support of community, organization, board, or staff
- Unique contributions that go above and beyond performance abilities to help the organization at large.

BOARD PRESIDENT OF THE YEAR

- Demonstrates leadership abilities
- Support of board, staff and orchestra
- Tangible results (increased audience, new facilities, endowment fund)

EXECUTIVE/GENERAL MANAGER OF THE YEAR

- Demonstrates organizational abilities
- Support of board, staff and orchestra

VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

- Number of hours, years of service
- Impact of contribution on organization

PROGRAMMING OF THE YEAR

- Bold programming that differs from previous years
- Innovative musical choices – new music and old
- Interesting soloists
- Interesting themes

COMMUNITY RELATIONS OF THE YEAR

- Projects undertaken to benefit the community as a whole
- Projects involving other organizations in the community (including schools, universities, or other non-profits)

GUILD (or VOLUNTEER ENTITY) OF THE YEAR

- Numbers involved relative to size of organization
- Special projects contributing to organization

RECOMMENDATIONS

- For orchestras or individuals who have won in the past, explain how your current application, work, and achievements expand on your previous award. What is new about your work?

General Information

Application deadline: September 15, 2026

All applicants must be members of the Illinois Council of Orchestras in good standing.

Awards will be based on achievements of the past season, 2025-2026.

An organization may apply for awards in more than one category in the same year. If applying for an award in more than one category, please submit a separate application for each award category.

After having received an award, an organization will not be considered for an award in the same category for a period of five years. The organization may apply in other categories.

A community orchestra is one in which at least 60% of the musicians are either volunteers or are paid less than union scale.

A college/university orchestra is one in which at least 75% of the musicians are registered students.

If requested, one on-site presentation will be made at a performance by winning orchestras during the upcoming season by an ICO Board member.

The Illinois Council of Orchestras reserves the right not to name a winner in every category.

No applications or additional materials will be accepted after September 15, 2026.

An awards panel made up of judges drawn from the Orchestra industry and independent professional musicians review nominations representing orchestras, youth orchestras, and chamber ensembles. The ICO Awards Committee members are kept anonymous.

- Please follow instructions on the online application form at www.ilcouncilorchestras.org

Accessing the Application

The awards application is now fully housed on the ICO website and linked to user accounts. Here are some tips if you are having trouble accessing the application.

1. Ensure your organization's membership is up-to-date. If it has lapsed the application is not available.

2. Make sure your email address is tied to the organizations account.

Whoever manages the organization's listing and renewal, is able to add organizational contacts to the account.

3. Creating an email on the ICO website does not automatically link you to the organization's account. If you encounter issues with creating an email and still not having access to the application, email info@ilcouncilorchestras.org to get added to your organization.

Questions?

Email info@ilcouncilorchestras.org
or call at 847-508-9848