The SOPA 2027 Awards

"The Society of Publishers in Asia 2027 Awards for Editorial Excellence"

亞洲出版業協會
「2027 年度卓越新聞獎」

SOPA 2027 AWARDS FAQ

GENERAL ISSUES

Q1 Are online publications eligible to submit their work under all categories?

Yes. Categories are open to both online and print publications.

In-house newsletters, self-publishing platforms, public-relations publications, and other promotional materials are NOT eligible to enter.

Q2 We are a small media outlet and can't afford the entry fees for the SOPA Awards. Is there any financial assistance for us?

Yes. In line with its mission to support editorial excellence, **SOPA** will subsidize certain award entrants. The focus is on **first-time entrants AND small media companies**. If your organization employs 20 full-time staff in total —of which 50% are full-time editorial staff —you can apply for this subsidy **for up to two**

entries only, paying just HK$200 for each. There's a cap on the subsidy, so entrants are encouraged to apply early. Go to www.sopawards.com for all Award entry submission requirements. Once your nomination letters and entries are ready, email us at sopawards@sopasia.com by February 25, 2027 with the Entries' unique reference code and we will be in touch! **Please DO NOT PAY until you hear from us.**

Q3 What advice do you have for entrants?

Be extremely selective. While some awards have gone to entries with multiple articles or photographs, just as many awards have gone to entries with a single article or photograph. Simply submitting the maximum number of articles doesn't necessarily help an entry's chances. It is especially important for entries with multiple articles to show a clear theme of coverage; in fact, the submission of a weak article may pull down the overall score of a multi-article entry.

Write a strong, persuasive description of the circumstances behind the reporting for the entry, the topic's importance, the impact of the article(s), and so on using the online nomination letter. Judges come from all over the world and will be reviewing work done months ago. While they are all senior, seasoned journalists and ex-journalists, they may not be as familiar with the circumstances surrounding the work submitted. If you don't explain clearly why the work matters, what impact it had, or how difficult it was to obtain, they won't be able to get a full sense of the quality of the entry.

Presentation matters. If you are submitting online work, list up to three URLs or, for the Excellence in Photography category, upload a compressed package of up to 5 photographs in the description and supply an ID and password if necessary. If you are submitting print entries, include all the parts of each entry as a single PDF file. Make it easy for judges to evaluate your entry by showing the editorial context or how it appeared when it was published.

Q4 Can non-SOPA members enter the awards?

Yes. The SOPA Awards aim to raise journalistic standards across the Asia-Pacific region. Entries from all publications in the region, be they SOPA members or otherwise, are welcome. Assessment is based on the quality of journalistic work.

Q5 I am a SOPA member entitled to a discount on my submissions. Can I also apply that discount to entries made by sister or affiliated publications?

No. Each SOPA member can use its discount for multiple entries across the various categories. But the discount applies only to the official SOPA membership, not to any other associated publications.

Q6 When will you announce finalists for the awards?

Finalists will be announced in May, and the Awards winners announcement is scheduled for June 2027. Follow our social media channels or join our mailing list at www.sopasia.com for the more updated info. A complete listing of the Award winners will be posted on the SOPA Awards website www.sopawards.com.

THE ENTRY PROCESS

Q1 What are the options for submitting entries?

All submissions must be submitted electronically to https://sopawards.awardsplatform.com. No hard-copy submissions will be accepted. No submissions will be accepted on Google Drive or non-official YouTube channels.

Q2 Can we submit files in any other soft-copy format besides PDF?

Yes. Up to THREE URLs may be submitted.

Exceptions are:
Excellence in Feature Writing, which is limited to ONE article per entry;
Excellence in Video Reporting, which is limited to ONE video per entry;
Excellence in Audio Reporting, which is limited to ONE single episode OR ONE series of up to three episodes (totalling under three hours); and,
Excellence in Magazine Design, which is limited to ONE edition (full issue) in PDF format or URL for digital platform
Excellence in Photography, which allows up to FIVE photographs;
Excellence in Sports Photography, which allows up to FIVE photographs; and
SOPA Award for Public Service Journalism and SOPA Award for Young Journalist, which both allow up to FIVE pieces of work.

Q3 How should the work(s) for each entry be submitted?

Submit only PDF **or** web versions (URLs) for entries. **Do not** submit both PDF and web versions.

For copies of work(s) as a PDF file, submit in the form they were originally published, rather than as text files reprinted from databases. This will allow judges to see the entry as it originally appeared. If the submission is in a photo category, submit photos as they were published. For entries displaying more than the maximum number of photos allowed, indicate which photos should be considered.

For the Excellence in Magazine Design entries, the whole magazine should be submitted as a PDF, or URL link of digital platform, and is limited to ONE edition of that magazine.

For the Audio Reporting category, entries can consist of one single episode OR a series of up to three episodes totalling under three hours. The submission must include active URLs, a brief description of content, and a list of timestamps outlining key points.

For other categories where audio work can be submitted, the audio piece cannot exceed 35 minutes.

For the Video Reporting category, and other categories where a video work can be submitted, the video cannot exceed 20 minutes in duration.

PDFs should be configured to output for the web to reduce file size.
Advertising should be omitted.

If the entry is behind a paywall, the entrant should provide a clear login ID and password for the judges. The URL should remain active during the judging period, from February to the end of June. **Additionally, entrants that make it to the Finalists' List should make their URLs accessible to the public free of charge until the end of June.**

All submitted URLs should be hosted on the website (including the publication's official social-media platform) where the work was initially published.

In addition, you MUST include any challenge to the fairness or accuracy of an entry as well as the publication's response to the challenge, including published corrections and clarifications.

Q4 What should the nomination letter include?

You should explain why the entry deserves consideration, the publication's editorial objectives and how the entry helped fulfill those objectives. You may also provide additional information about the entry to assist the judges to contextualize the article.

In the case of entries with multiple articles or photographs, you must explain the unifying theme of coverage they collectively address. Entries will be judged by how well they fulfill the objectives described in the nomination letter.

If artificial intelligence (AI) tools played a major role in researching, reporting or writing, the nomination letter should explain how they contributed to the strength of the coverage.

For the Scoop Award, the nomination letter must specifically explain why the story is a scoop or exclusive to the publication.

The nomination letter for all entries must be within 600 words/Chinese characters.

Q5 How do we submit all the documents required for the Young Journalist Award?

The entrants must **ONLY upload a zip file** which includes the nomination letter, the journalist's personal statement (under 800 words/Chinese characters) and the nominated articles (up to 5). Please put all the articles in one single PDF with clear labels (Article 1-5) and remove any ads that scanned copies may contain.

Q6 What are the criteria for submissions in the various groups?

Awards are divided into three groups – Global (English language), Regional/ Local (English language) and Chinese language – and a standalone Bahasa Indonesia language award.

Global (English language): Publications with original news coverage of an international nature and marketed to a worldwide audience. Some examples include: *The New York Times*, *CNN International*, *The Guardian*, *Financial Times*, *Bloomberg.*

Regional/Local (English language): Regional or local media publications that are published in English. These include major English-language media outlets in each country or territory, as well as smaller, regional or specialist publications.

Chinese language: Publications in Chinese that are local, regional or global in focus.

Bahasa Indonesia: Publications in Bahasa Indonesia that are local, regional or global in focus.

Note: online publications that are affiliated with, or part of, a print publication should enter in the same group as their affiliated print publication.

Q7 Can the entry forms and nomination letters be filled out in Chinese or Bahasa Indonesia?

Entry forms for the Chinese-language Group must be in **both** English and Chinese, with the headlines and names of submissions translated into **English**. Due to the limitation of space, short, simple, clear translated headlines are preferred. Only the **Nomination Letter** part for entries in this group must be completed in **Chinese**.

Entry forms for the Bahasa Indonesia News Reporting category must be **both** in Bahasa and in English, with the headlines and names of submissions translated into English. Only the **Nomination Letter** part for entries in this category must be completed in **Bahasa**.

The English information provided in the other parts of the entry form will be used for the presentation during the Awards ceremony.

Q8 How many entries can we submit?

Each publication may submit a maximum of **TWO** entries **per category except** in the following categories: **SOPA Award for Public Service Journalism**, **SOPA Award for Young Journalist** and **Excellence in Magazine Design**. In those categories, each publication may submit **only ONE entry**.

For example, a publication can submit two entries in the Excellence in Reporting Breaking News category, two entries in Excellence in Feature Writing, two entries in Excellence in Technology Reporting, two entries in Excellence in Video Reporting and so forth.

Q9 How many articles or photos can be submitted as part of each entry?

It depends on the category.

- In **Excellence in Investigative Reporting, Reporting Breaking News, Business Reporting, Technology Reporting, Human Rights Reporting, Reporting on Women's Issues, Reporting on the Environment, Opinion Writing, Arts and Culture Reporting, Explanatory Reporting, Sports Journalism and The Scoop Award** each entry may include a maximum of **THREE** pieces of work, of which at least **one** must be a **written** article. That means, for example, an entry that has three pieces of work can comprise at least one written article and some other non-written article element, such as a photo, video or graphic (a video piece must be **under 20 minutes**; an **audio** piece must be **under 35 minutes**). Entries in these categories that comprise a **single piece** of work must be a **written** article; if they have two pieces of work, at least one must be a written article. This is in recognition of the increasingly multimedia nature of journalism, while preserving an emphasis on written work.
- In the **Excellence in Photography** and **Excellence in Sports Photography** categories, each entry may include a maximum of **FIVE** pieces of work.
- Multimedia entries that incorporate interactive graphics should be submitted in the Excellence in Journalistic Innovation category.
- In the **Excellence in Magazine Design** category, entries are limited to **ONE** complete issue per entry.
- In the **Excellence in Feature Writing** category, entries are limited to **ONE** article per entry.
- In the **Excellence in Video Reporting**, entries are limited to **ONE** video per entry (maximum 20 minutes in duration).
- In the **Excellence in Audio Reporting**, entries are limited to **ONE** single episode **OR a series of up to THREE EPISODES totalling under three hours**.
- In the **SOPA Award for Public Service Journalism** as well as the **Award for Young Journalist**, entries can consist of a single piece or up to a maximum of **FIVE** works of journalism. Examples can comprise a single piece of written work or a series of written and multimedia works.
- In the **Excellence in Bahasa Indonesia News Reporting**, each entry may include a maximum of **THREE** pieces of work, of which at least one must

be a written article. That means, for example, an entry that has three pieces of work can comprise at least one written article and some other non-written article element, such as a photo, video or graphic. Entries in the category that comprise a single piece of work must be a written article; if they have two pieces of work, at least one must be a written article.

Q10 Do sidebars count against the three-article limit in entries?

Yes, sidebars do count. Videos embedded in an article do not count as a separate submission.

Q11 We're very busy. Can we get an extension on the entry deadline?

No. This is a strict deadline.

Q12 Are there any special rules governing the submission of entries from online publications or independent online media?

An online publication may be an independent website or part of a print or broadcast organization.

Official URLs and web versions are acceptable for all categories except Excellence in Magazine Design. The work(s) should have been first published in calendar year 2026. Entries may be a single item or a continuing project.

Websites requiring passwords **must provide a single username and password to be used by the judges**. It is up to the entrant to ensure that judges are able to access URLs during the judging period (February to June).

Q13 We're a newly launched magazine with fewer than four published issues. Can we enter the awards?

The clause in the rules "Magazines must be issued at least four times a year" refers to the frequency of publication. Only entries that have been published or distributed at least four times in the calendar year 2026 are accepted.

Q14 Can we submit photographs produced by other publications?

No. Entries must have been taken by, or exclusively for, the entering publication.

Q15 For Excellence in Photography or Excellence in Sports Photography, if I am submitting five photos from a series of 10, how should I submit it?

If you are submitting the photos as a packet, upload the photos as a compressed zip file.

For PDFs depicting photographs that are part of an article, clearly indicate which five photos you are submitting. In the past, entrants have drawn a red highlight or red rectangle around the images for consideration for the award.

Q16 What is the difference between The Scoop Award and Excellence in Reporting Breaking News?

The Scoop Award honors journalists who break an important story before their competitors. This does not have to be the result of deep investigative reporting, indeed it usually isn't. It is for exclusive stories that your peers then widely follow. The Excellence in Reporting Breaking News is for stories that are covered under deadline pressure. These might include, for example, reporting on natural disasters or the fall of a regime. These may not be scoops, but your organization will probably be among the first on the scene.

Q17 Can the same work be entered into more than one category?

Yes. The **same work or entry** may be submitted in a **maximum of TWO categories**, provided it satisfies the criteria for both. The nomination letter should be tailored to explain why the work meets the objectives of each category.

Q18 Must multiple works in one entry have the same theme?

Yes, except for Public Service Journalism and Young Journalist. Multiple works submitted together should not simply be unrelated examples of good journalism. They should collectively demonstrate one clear editorial theme or body of coverage, explained in the nomination letter.

Q19 What counts as a written article?

A written article means a published text-based journalistic article. Videos, podcasts, graphics and photographs do not count as written articles.

Q20 Can multimedia work be included in reporting categories?

Yes. For most reporting categories, an entry may combine a written article with supporting multimedia work, provided the pieces concern the same topic/ theme. For example, one written article + one video + one graphic is acceptable.

A **single work** in most reporting categories **must be a written article**.

A standalone video is eligible only in categories that specifically permit standalone video, such as Excellence in Video Reporting, or in Public Service Journalism.

Q21 Does the 20-minute video limit apply only to Excellence in Video Reporting?

No. Any video submitted as part of an entry in another category must also not exceed 20 minutes.

Q22 What mixed-media combinations are acceptable?

Acceptable examples include: written article + video; written article + graphic; written article + photo essay; and written article + social-media video.

Not acceptable: three unrelated stories; one standalone video in Technology Reporting; or a video over 20 minutes.

Q23 Can I submit a live blog as part of my entry?

Yes. Live blog entries should represent a continuous span of coverage, selected by the submitting organization from anywhere within the blog's run. Entrants should identify the start and end timestamps of the selected span.

Entries will be assessed on original reporting, accuracy and transparency about sourcing and corrections, speed and clarity in establishing what is known, usefulness to a reader joining at any point, and consistency of quality throughout the span.

Q24 Can self-publishing platforms enter?

No. In-house newsletters, self-publishing platforms, public-relations publications, and other promotional materials are NOT eligible to enter the SOPA Awards.

Q25 Can an individual journalist enter?

Staff journalists must submit through their publication. Freelancers may submit on their own behalf only with explicit approval from their supervising editor at the relevant publication. Independent journalists may enter only where an eligible publication authorizes the submission.

NEW SPORTS CATEGORIES (Excellence in Sports Journalism and Excellence in Sports Photography)

Q1 What qualifies as Excellence in Sports Journalism?

Reporting that explains, investigates or illuminates important sports themes and subjects in the Asia-Pacific region. Eligible entries may highlight organized sport at any level, provided that the work reflects substantial reporting effort conducted in the Asia-Pacific region, or features competitors from the region.

Q2 Can match reports or game summaries be submitted?

No. Routine match reports, box-score summaries or purely descriptive game coverage are not eligible to enter.

Q3 Can multimedia work be submitted in Excellence in Sports Journalism?

Yes. Video, audio, data visualizations and interactive graphics may be included. However, at least one written article is required in each entry, and any submitted video must not exceed 20 minutes.

Q4 What qualifies for Excellence in Sports Photography?

Powerful and defining images and photo essays that show outstanding timing, composition and visual storytelling in covering Asia-Pacific athletes or sporting events. Eligible entries may highlight organized sport at any level, provided that the work reflects coverage of events in the Asia-Pacific region, or features competitors from the region. The nomination letter should explain the context of the images, the significance of the moment(s) captured, and editorial intent. (Note: entries must have been taken by or exclusively for the publication concerned).

Q5 Are photo illustrations or heavily edited images allowed?

No. Photographic entries must not have been manipulated or altered, apart from standard cropping and editing. AI-generated images and digitally manipulated photographs are not allowed.

Q6 Can unpublished photographs or stories be submitted?

No. All entries must have been published during calendar year 2026 by the entering publication.

Q7 Do international sporting events qualify if held outside Asia-Pacific?

Yes, where the work has clear Asia-Pacific relevance and meets the regional eligibility requirements. Asia-Pacific athletes, teams, journalists or perspectives are central to the coverage.

Q8 Can freelance journalists submit sports entries?

Yes, provided the work was published by an eligible media organization and the submitting publication has the authority to enter it. Freelancers submitting on their own behalf must obtain the required approval from the supervising editor.

THE JUDGING PROCESS

Q1 How does the judging process work?

SOPA judges are experienced journalists, former journalists and academics from around the world. Because of the large number of entries, the SOPA judging process has two stages. The SOPA Administration Panel will conduct an initial vetting procedure to ensure that entries adhere to the competition rules and regulations, primarily using Award Force's filtering features. During the vetting process, entrants will be automatically alerted whenever there are changes to be made to their entries, and they have 48 hours to make the requested changes. For the Bahasa Indonesia category, experienced journalists and scholars in Indonesia will carry out the initial vetting round.

In the second, final round, specialist panels of three or more judges will determine a shortlist of three entries in each category, including a winner and a runner-up. In the case of a deadlock among judges, the Head of Judges will be responsible for breaking ties and resolving any disputes.

The Head of Judges is a journalist or a former journalist with minimal ties to award entrants and potential entrants. Judges are chosen so as to ensure there are no conflicts of interest or potential conflicts of interest with the publications entering the category they are judging.

Q2 Will awards be given in all categories?

If there are insufficient entries in a given category, no award will be given. We may also merge the English-language regional/local group and global group submissions in any given category if there are insufficient entries. Also, if in the opinion of the judging panel, the quality of entries does not merit an award, no award will be given.

ENTRY CRITERIA

Q1 Can work done principally from outside the Asia-Pacific region be entered? What about joint-venture articles in which one reporter is in the Asia-Pacific region and one reporter is outside the region?

Entries must show a substantial emphasis on the Asia-Pacific region, and substantial journalistic work must have been done in the Asia-Pacific region. So work done principally from outside the Asia-Pacific region, even if it has a substantial emphasis on the region, is ineligible. However, articles that are reported partly in the region and partly outside the region are eligible if substantial journalistic work was done in Asia-Pacific.

Q2 Can translated articles be entered in the awards?

No. Articles must be entered in the language in which they were originally published.

Q3 Is promotional or advertorial or other paid content eligible to enter?

No. The awards are not open to paid-content materials. In-house newsletters are also ineligible.

Q4 Is work from Afghanistan/Iraq eligible for entry?

For the purposes of the awards, the Asia-Pacific region is defined to include the region of Afghanistan and the Central Asia republics, in addition to the Indian subcontinent, North and East Asia, Southeast Asia, Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Islands.

Iraq, Iran and the Middle East are **not** included in this definition and hence work from those places is **not eligible for entry**.

Q5 Must entries in the Excellence in Opinion Writing category be written by the publication's staff, or can they be from outside contributors?

They should be from regular contributors, although the authors need not be on staff.

Q6 Can opinion pieces be submitted in categories other than for Excellence in Opinion Writing?

Articles that have appeared on op-ed pages rather than on news pages cannot be submitted in reporting categories.

Q7 Can entries comprise both online and print articles and photographs?

Entries can contain a mix of online and print articles and photographs. For Excellence in Journalistic Innovation, Excellence in Video Reporting and Excellence in Audio Reporting, only online entries are accepted, whereas for Excellence in Magazine Design, PDF format or URL are accepted. Please do not exceed the limit on the number of articles, photographs and audio episodes per entry as this could lead to disqualification. Entries comprising more than a single article or photograph, or an audio series must demonstrate a clear theme of coverage articulated in the nomination letter.

Q8 Why do freelancers need to obtain approval of their supervising editor when submitting an entry on their own?

The rules for the Awards stipulate that entries must be made on behalf of a publication, not an individual journalist. As publications are limited in the number of entries they may submit in each category, unauthorized entries could lead to a publication inadvertently exceeding the allowed number of

entries in a particular category. All entries must include the supervising editor's name, email address and/or telephone number, acknowledging that the editor is aware of the submission.

An article of a freelancer may be published in more than one publication. He or she must declare in their submission there is no objection from the publication that first published the article if it is submitted under another publication.

Q9 What kind of stories are suitable for the SOPA Award for Public Service Journalism?

Any journalistic work that has a significant impact on public affairs in the Asia-Pacific region. Some examples of past SOPA Award entrants that would be suitable for submission in this category are:

- *The New York Times, China's Malaise and Its People's Endurance (2026 Award for Excellence)*
- *The Wall Street Journal, A Vicious New Scam Industry Metastasizes (2025 Award for Excellence)*
- *Bloomberg News, Bad Medicine (2024 Award for Excellence)*
- *ProPublica, The Night Raids (2023 Award for Excellence)*
- *The Wall Street Journal, Of Unknown Origin (2022 Award for Excellence)*
- *VICE Indonesia, Jakarta Post, Tirto, BBC Indonesia, #NamaBaikKampus (2020 Award for Excellence)*
- *天下雜誌 | CommonWealth Magazine, 揭開廢棄物黑幕 Tracking Down Taiwan's Industrial Polluters (2021 Finalist)*

Q10 What kind of media outlets are qualified for small media companies subsidy?

Any media outlet with a maximum of 20 full-time staff in total, of which at least 50% are full-time editorial staff, can apply for this subsidy. SOPA reserves the right to reject applicants not deemed to be small media companies.

Q11 Can I get a refund?

No refunds will be made.

Q12 Are there any cash prizes given out as awards?

No. The awards confer international prestige on the journalists, editors and publications involved. But there are no cash prizes in any category.

Q13 Where can I see the Winners lists and articles from past years?

https://2026.sopawards.com/the-sopa-awards/awards-finalists/
https://2025.sopawards.com/the-sopa-awards/awards-finalists/
https://2024.sopawards.com/the-sopa-awards/awards-finalists/
https://2023.sopawards.com/the-sopa-awards/awards-finalists/
https://2022.sopawards.com/the-sopa-awards/awards-finalists/
https://2021.sopawards.com/the-sopa-awards/awards-finalists/

In the case of discrepancies between the English, Chinese and Bahasa versions of the FAQ, the English version will prevail.