

Award of Excellence Submission: What Project to Showcase?

Jennifer Davis, Blue Grass Farms of Indiana

Have you ever thought of entering a project into the INLA Awards of Excellence? Reading through the application and trying to pick the perfect project can be overwhelming. There is a process to creating an award winning entry. The rewards when you are finished are an award-winning project or projects and a fantastic marketing piece for your company's résumé.



Step #1: Select a Winning Entry

1. List all your projects that meet the criteria. Narrow it down to projects that are at least a year or more old if possible. This allows for maximum impact when viewing before, during, and after photos.
2. Evaluate your projects based on complexity, uniqueness, interesting features. Pick the one that highlights most of these.
3. Do you have good before, during, and right after installation images? This is a necessary piece to have for the selected project.
4. Has it been maintained well (hopefully by you!!)?
5. Ask permission from project owner.

Step #2: Gather Information

1. Go through all before and after shots to find pictures that show the impact of your work. Review the pictures during the build process as well for similar shots to show the progression of the project.
2. Go to jobsite on some beautiful weather days to capture the pictures one year later in the same positions as you have for the before and during shots. Also, move around the site and capture the best views trying to maximize the features of the project.
3. Interview the crew! The people that sold the project and/or installed the project love to talk about how it came together. Talk about the process, challenges they faced, and how they problem-solved to overcome those. What parts of the project went smoothly? How long did it take? Etc.

Step #3: Pulling It All Together

This is the fun part, although it can be intimidating to get started. Always keep in mind this is your story about the project — how it was built, the fantastic parts, and the difficult parts. Start off with selecting the iconic picture that encapsulates what your project is about. Title the project with name and location. On this page give a brief introduction to what the project consisted of, the location, and any other pertinent information to set the stage.

Next, find that perfect “before” picture to showcase either the lack of anything there or to show what had to be removed. Begin talking about



the client, the expectations, budgets, and project requirements. Talk about the timelines for the project. Sometimes what makes a project interesting is the amazing feat of how fast it all comes together. This info begins the story of the project.

Add in pictures for the beginning of the build process. Describe the processes that are part of this time in the project and highlight areas of interest,

difficult or challenging aspects for the project. If you have a particularly detailed part of the install, highlight that here with some in-progress shots showing how this part was put together. Such as in a residential paver install showing the layers of prep work before pavers are laid.

Wrap up the story of your project with some great side-by-side shots. Nothing speaks volumes of a masterpiece better than showing the boring before picture right next to the after picture. Even better — have a before, right after install, and a year later shot to show how the project is maturing. This is also a good time to talk about how the project is doing a year after install — what has worked fantastically, challenges, how it has impacted the people who benefit from it.



In progress shots detailing the progress of the project.



An example of side-by-side photos that show the before and after shots from the same perspective.

These awards are a chance to highlight all the fantastic work you are doing in Indiana. They are also a great way to showcase your crew, talent, hard work, and creativity. Having your project win is a great accolade to show off. But the opportunity to focus on a handful of projects each year begins to create the résumé for your company. After they have been written these awards can be used as part of your marketing to let people know the kind of work you and your crew are capable of. They will have so much more impact than just a series of photos. Good luck! We cannot wait to see all your fantastic project entries!

About the Author

Jennifer L. Davis is the Sales and Information Manager at Blue Grass Farms. She earned a BS in Landscape Architecture from Purdue University in 1993. While employed at Becker Landscape, she worked with sales and install teams to put together INLA Awards entries from 2009 to 2013 — winning for 13 different projects!



www.inla1.org

Submissions to the INLA Awards of Excellence competition are due December 1, 2017.

Award submission forms and complete information on the next four page or online at www.inla1.org.

Questions? Feel free to contact INLA at 800-443-7336 or 317-889-2382.