



AIPM AI PROJECT OF THE YEAR AWARD

Call for Judges and Selection Criteria

Edition 1 (2026)

Edition 1 (2026). The published call for judges for edition 1.

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The AIPM AI Project of the Year Award is judged by a volunteer panel of practitioners and experts. This page explains what the award looks for in a judge, who can serve, the selection criteria at each tier, the integrity commitments every judge accepts, and how to express interest.

1. What the award looks for in a judge

The award recognizes AI-enabled projects that demonstrate responsible innovation, strong project delivery, measurable value, human-centered adoption, and positive organizational, community, or societal impact. Judging is scored against a single published rubric of six weighted criteria, weighted 25, 20, 15, 15, 15, and 10 percent, with outcomes and responsible-AI governance carrying the most weight and the first three criteria carrying 60 percent combined (the full rubric is in the operating rules). Every score is anchored to what the evidence shows rather than what an entry asserts.

A good judge for this award, therefore:

- Reads for evidence, not for confident narrative, and can tell a supported claim from an unsupported one.
- Brings depth in at least one of the rubric's competency domains: project management and delivery, responsible AI governance, ethics and risk, business value, or sector context.
- Applies a common scoring scale consistently, so that a high score means the same thing across every region and in the global round.
- Judges independently and holds entries and deliberations in confidence.

Judging is a volunteer role. It is unpaid and carries no fee in either direction. The award is free end to end, for entrants and for judges alike.

2. Who can judge

The panel is a mixed group of AIPM ambassadors and external experts. It is deliberately not an all-academic panel: it is drawn from people who have delivered and governed real project work alongside those who study it. A panel is about seven jurors and is never seated below five, so the five competency domains above are shared across the panel and no single judge needs all five.

The award publishes the names of its judges and its conflict-of-interest policy. It does not run an anonymous jury.

Judging runs in two tiers:

- **Tier 1, the regional round.** Regional panels screen entries for eligibility and score the eligible entries against the rubric. Edition 1 runs three macro-regions: Americas, EMEA (Europe, the Middle East, and Africa), and Asia-Pacific.
 - **Tier 2, the global round.** The entries promoted from the regions are re-scored from the start by the global jury, which then designates the overall winner and the special recognitions.
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3. Selection criteria by tier

Candidates are qualified against the tier for which they are being considered. The criteria are stated at the principle level; where a threshold is qualitative, it is assessed by the organizers and no numeric bar is invented.

3.1 Tier 1: regional panel juror

A Tier-1 juror meets all of the following.

- **Regional link.** The juror is an AIPM ambassador of that region, or is linked to that region by affinity rather than by residence alone, or is a qualified external expert serving that region.
- **Competency.** The juror has demonstrable expertise in at least one of the five rubric competency domains, chosen so that the assembled panel covers all five.
- **Integrity.** The juror passes conflict-of-interest screening, gives a confidentiality undertaking, and accepts the no-contact rule (Section 4).
- **Consistency.** The juror aligns on the shared scoring scale before any real scoring begins, so that scores read the same way across panels.
- **Availability.** The juror commits to the Tier-1 judging window in October 2026.

3.2 Tier 2: global juror

The global jury is made up of the ex officio members and the ambassadors who pass the global criterion.

- **Ex officio.** The founders Ricardo Vargas and Antonio Nieto-Rodriguez serve as the ex officio global jurors.
- **Ambassadors who pass the global criterion.** An ambassador qualifies for the global jury by meeting the Tier-1 competency, integrity, and consistency bars, plus a higher bar: demonstrated cross-domain judgment, meaning the ability to weigh outcomes, responsible-AI governance, adoption, solution fit, delivery rigor, and community contribution against one another, together with a strong calibration outcome (close alignment with the shared reference scoring). This higher bar is qualitative and is assessed by the organizers.
- **Availability.** A global juror commits to the Tier-2 judging window in November to December 2026, including attending the live finalist pitch.
- **Conflict of interest.** No global juror judges a materially connected global finalist; a juror with any such connection recuses from the affected finalist.

Edition 1 is owner-funded with no sponsor, so there is no sponsor juror. The global jury is the ex officio members plus the ambassadors who pass the global criterion, and nothing else.

4. Integrity commitments every judge accepts

All integrity rules are published, and all are free of cost to everyone involved.

- **Conflict of interest (auto-decline plus disclose-and-recuse).** No judge scores their own entry, employer, client, or any materially connected project. A project is materially connected where, within the 24 months before judging, the judge was an owner, employee, contractor, client, direct competitor, or paid adviser of the entrant organization or of the delivered project, or has a close personal relationship with the Lead Nominator. A judge with any such connection declines the assignment automatically; any lesser or uncertain connection is disclosed, and the judge recuses from the affected entry.

- **No contact with entrants during judging.** From the publication of the named panels to the results reveal, there is to be no contact between judges and nominees about any entry. Any award-related question goes through the organizers, not a judge. A judge who is contacted about an entry reports it rather than engaging.
 - **Confidentiality.** Every judge gives a confidentiality undertaking covering the entries and deliberations they see. Entries and evidence packs are not shared or discussed outside the panel.
 - **Evidence over claims.** Judges distinguish claims from evidence and do not credit unsupported assertions.
 - **Score integrity.** Once scoring opens, submitted scores are not altered quietly; any correction is requested through the organizers and recorded. After judging opens, the rubric, weights, and eligibility do not change for entries already in progress.
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5. How to express interest

If you would like to serve as a judge, use the judge option on the award interest list. You will be asked for a short competency-and-affiliation note: the rubric domains you can cover, your regional link, and the affiliations relevant to conflict screening.

The call for judges opens in July 2026. Jury formation and calibration run from July to September, so panels are seated and aligned before Tier-1 judging opens in October; Tier-2 judging follows in November to December.

Expressing interest is not a promise of a seat. Candidates are qualified against the criteria in Section 3, and panels are assembled to cover the full competency mix and to keep every panel free of connected entries. The organizers confirm each seat.

For the full rules of the award, see the operating rules. For what an entry contains and how it is judged, see the nomination form and the evidence-pack guide.