

## AIPM Revolution

# AI Project of the Year Award

## Concept Note Draft

For feedback from Ricardo Viana Vargas, Antonio Nieto, and the AIPM Revolution Ambassadors

*Draft status: for discussion, refinement, and ratification. No decision is assumed.*

<b>Prepared for</b>	Ricardo Viana Vargas, Antonio Nieto, and AIPM Revolution Ambassadors
<b>Purpose</b>	Present a concise concept for feedback before detailed operating design and launch planning
<b>Proposed first edition</b>	Free, online, global award recognizing responsible AI in delivered project work
<b>Draft date</b>	9 July 2026

### Working premise

AIPM has an opportunity to own a currently unclaimed space: responsible AI applied inside real project delivery, judged with project-management rigor, and converted into community learning through feedback and case studies.

# 1. Purpose of this concept note

This concept note translates the AIPM award benchmark, concept proposal, business proposal, South African supplement, and founder-facing deck into a concise draft for leadership and ambassador feedback. It is intended to align the group on the proposed award's purpose, scope, credibility safeguards, operating model, and the decisions that still require ratification.

## Feedback requested

Please review whether the concept is strategically sound, sufficiently differentiated, operationally realistic for a first edition, and aligned with AIPM's community-first purpose.

# 2. Strategic opportunity

The benchmark work points to a clear gap in the current awards landscape. Project-management awards judge delivery rigor, outcomes, and PM practice, but generally do not recognize the responsible use of AI inside delivered project work. AI and innovation awards recognize AI products, platforms, or business innovation, but usually judge them through generic business-excellence language. Hackathons reward greenfield builds under time pressure, which is a different archetype from operationalized project delivery.

The proposed AIPM award occupies the intersection that none of those models fully owns: responsible AI in delivered projects, assessed with project-management rigor, delivered free and online, and converted into capability-building feedback and publishable community case studies.

## Why now

- Responsible AI and Agentic AI are already recognizable award category framings in the wider AI market. The gap is that they are not yet deeply combined with project-delivery rigor and a practitioner feedback loop.
- AIPM can claim this category early, before a PM body adds AI language to an existing project award or an AI award adds a delivery rubric.
- A 2026 launch creates a first-mover narrative while the category is still open.

# 3. Proposed positioning

## Positioning statement

The AIPM AI Project of the Year Award recognizes AI-enabled projects that demonstrate responsible innovation, strong project delivery, measurable value, human-centered adoption, and positive organizational, community, or societal impact.

The award should be positioned as a thought-leadership and capability-building initiative, not as a vendor showcase and not as a credential to be purchased. The prize is recognition, learning, and visibility: a badge, certificate, case-study publication, online ceremony, and criteria-anchored feedback.

## 4. Design principles

Principle	Meaning for the award
<b>Original</b>	Borrow proven mechanics from benchmarked awards, such as open nomination, video evidence, published rubrics, and multi-stage judging, but avoid copying PMI branding, naming, or visual identity.
<b>Non-commercial</b>	Free end-to-end: no entry fee, no judging fee, no charge for the badge, certificate, logo use, or proof of winning. This directly avoids the pay-for-proof credential-mill risk.
<b>Practice-grounded</b>	Recognize AI applied inside real, delivered, or operationalized project work. Do not reward ideas, models, tools, demos, or hackathon prototypes alone.
<b>Community-first</b>	Make finalist feedback, case-study publication, and community learning central to the award's value proposition.

## 5. Proposed first-edition award structure

The recommended first edition is deliberately focused: one overall award plus two special recognitions. The special recognitions are not separate application tracks. They are designated by the jury from the finalist pool using the same submission and the same rubric.

Recognition	Purpose	First-edition design choice
<b>AI Project of the Year</b>	Overall winner	One winner, selected from the global finalist pool.
<b>Excellence in Responsible AI</b>	Special recognition	Awarded to the finalist that best demonstrates responsible AI governance, human accountability, and trustworthiness.
<b>Excellence in Agentic AI</b>	Special recognition	Awarded only where a finalist uses agentic or autonomous AI responsibly. If no entry qualifies, it is not awarded in 1st Edition.

### Scope guardrail

Do not introduce a full multi-category architecture in year one. A five-category split, sector tracks, size tracks, or a separate person-level award can be considered for 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition after the operating model is proven.

## 6. Eligibility and nomination model

### Recommended eligibility

- AI must be a meaningful component of the project, not a decorative add-on.
- The work must be beyond proof of concept: completed, delivered, piloted in a real setting, or operationalized with evidence.
- The award should be global from the first edition.
- The project should have been completed or operationalized within the approved eligibility window. The recommended window is 18 months, with 24 months as an option if leaders want to widen the first field.
- Entries must include responsible-AI evidence, such as governance, risk, ethics, transparency, privacy, bias mitigation, and human oversight where applicable.
- Entries must include adoption evidence, not only deployment evidence.
- Publishable case-study consent should be required, with confidentiality safeguards.
- Joint vendor plus practitioner entries may be allowed, but the spotlight should remain on the practitioner or delivery team leading adoption.

### Recommended nomination flow

- Self-nomination and open peer nomination allowed.
- A single named Lead Nominator owns the entry and is the point of contact.

- A lightweight initial gate, for example a very short summary, helps triage before a full evidence pack is assembled.
- A structured questionnaire, evidence pack, and short video are submitted for judging.
- Finalists deliver a 10 to 15 minute live online presentation plus Q&A.

## 7. Assessment model

The recommended assessment model uses six weighted criteria, each scored from 1 to 10. The weights should be published before nominations open. This is one of the award's strongest credibility signals and an immediate way to be more transparent than many benchmarked awards.

Criterion	Weight	What judges assess	Typical evidence
<b>Outcomes, benefits, and impact</b>	25%	Measurable value, before/after evidence, benefits realized, organizational or societal impact.	Baseline and actual metrics, benefits report, ROI, public value, operational improvements.
<b>Responsible AI governance and Human-in-Command</b>	20%	Ethics, risk controls, accountability, transparency, privacy, security, bias controls, and human oversight.	AI governance artifacts, risk or ethics review, privacy review, audit trail, human-approval model.
<b>Adoption and change management</b>	15%	Real operational embedding, user uptake, stakeholder trust, training, and sustained use beyond launch.	Adoption metrics, training materials, change plan, stakeholder feedback, usage data.
<b>AI solution fit and innovation</b>	15%	Appropriate and effective use of AI for the problem, originality where relevant, and fit-for-purpose design.	Architecture summary, model or tool rationale, performance evidence, solution demo.
<b>Project management and delivery rigor</b>	15%	Problem definition, governance, planning, delivery discipline, risk and issue management, and lessons learned.	Charter, plan, schedule, risk log, governance cadence, delivery artifacts.
<b>Learning and contribution to the community</b>	10%	Transferable lessons and the quality of the story the case can contribute to AIPM knowledge sharing.	Lessons learned, case-study draft, reusable practices, reflection on what others can adopt.

### Scoring philosophy

Reward durable change and real adoption over model novelty. Criteria 1, 2, and 3 carry 60% of the score, so technical novelty alone cannot win without evidenced outcomes, responsible governance, and adoption.

## 8. Judging structure and governance

The proposed first-edition judging model is regional-to-global. This uses the ambassador network as a judging engine while keeping panels staffable in year one.

Stage	Recommended approach	Output
<b>Tier 1: regional judging</b>	Three macro-regions in 1 <sup>st</sup> edition: Americas, EMEA, and Asia-Pacific. Panels combine ambassadors and external jurors where needed.	Each region advances 2 or 3 entries only above a published cutoff.
<b>Tier 2: global judging</b>	Regional winners pitch live online to the global jury.	Overall winner plus the two special recognitions.
<b>Feedback and learning</b>	Jury comments are consolidated against the published rubric.	Every finalist receives a short feedback report with strengths and improvement areas.

### Jury profile

- Panel size around seven, within the preferred 5 to 10 range.
- Mixed composition, not all-academic: project management, AI governance, ethics and risk, business value, and relevant sector experience.
- Ambassadors form the core, with external criterion-eligible jurors added to strengthen thin benches or add expertise.
- Panels calibrate before scoring so a 9 out of 10 means the same thing across regions.

### Integrity safeguards

- Conflict-of-interest auto-decline plus disclose-and-recuse.
- No juror judges their own entry, employer, client, or materially connected project.
- No contact with judges during the judging period.
- Human-authored submission requirement, with responsible use of AI tools disclosed if permitted by the final rules.
- Sponsor firewall if sponsorship is accepted, with no sponsor influence over eligibility, scoring, or winners.
- Judges distinguish claims from evidence, with low scores for unsupported assertions.

## 9. Recognition, feedback, and community value

The award's differentiator is not only who wins. It is what every finalist learns and what the AIPM community gains from the process.

Element	Recommended design
<b>Free end-to-end</b>	Entry, judging, certificate, badge, logo use, and proof of winning remain free.
<b>Credly-style badge and certificate</b>	Use existing badge assets where possible, adapting them for the award and publishing earning criteria.
<b>Online ceremony</b>	Make the ceremony the community moment, not a press-release afterthought.
<b>Story of Success publication</b>	Each finalist case becomes a publishable community-learning asset, subject to consent and confidentiality.
<b>Finalist feedback report</b>	Every finalist receives criteria-anchored feedback on strengths and improvement areas.
<b>No cash prize</b>	Recognition and career capital are preferred over cash. If a tangible prize is desired, use a non-cash, in-kind model.

## 10. Operating model and indicative timeline

The first edition can run with near-zero cash cost: a structured form, video links, a shared scoring sheet, existing online meeting infrastructure, volunteer jurors, and adapted badge/certificate assets. A dedicated awards platform can be deferred until the award scales.

Timing	Activity
<b>July 2026</b>	Confirm concept, finalize rules and rubric, recruit jurors, and pre-announce the award to open an interest list.
<b>Mid-August 2026</b>	Launch nominations with published rules, rubric, eligibility, timeline, and FAQ.
<b>End of September 2026</b>	Close nominations after an approximately six-week window.
<b>October 2026</b>	Eligibility screening and regional judging.
<b>November to December 2026</b>	Global finalist pitch, final judging, and online ceremony.
<b>December 2026 to January 2027</b>	Issue feedback reports and publish Story of Success case studies.

## 11. Decisions and feedback requested

The concept is ready for leadership and ambassador feedback, but four decisions should be surfaced explicitly before launch planning proceeds.

Decision	Recommended position	Alternative	Feedback requested
<b>Sponsorship posture</b>	Owner-funded, no sponsor for 1 <sup>st</sup> edition.	Sponsor-to-charity model if a sponsor appears.	Which posture best protects credibility?
<b>Community Choice vote</b>	Jury-only main award; optional secondary Community Choice on finalist shortlist.	Defer all public voting to 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition.	Do leaders want community-vote energy in year one?
<b>Eligibility window</b>	18 months at nomination deadline.	24 months to widen the first field.	Which window balances quality and nomination volume?
<b>Person-level award</b>	Keep 1 <sup>st</sup> edition project-only.	Add or prepare AI Project Manager of the Year.	Confirm whether this should be deferred to 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition.

### Additional feedback questions

- Is the positioning distinctive enough for AIPM to own?
- Are the eligibility requirements practical for a global first edition?
- Is the rubric balanced correctly between outcomes, responsible AI, adoption, innovation, delivery rigor, and community learning?
- Are the regional-to-global judging model and three macro-regions appropriate for year one?
- What should be simplified before launch, if anything?

## 12. Key risks and mitigations

Risk	Mitigation
<b>Thin first field</b>	Use founder and ambassador reach, global eligibility, a pre-announcement, and a cutoff so weak entries do not advance.
<b>Scope creep</b>	One overall award plus two special recognitions only. Defer five-category split and person-level award to 2nd Edition.
<b>Perception of pay-to-win</b>	Free end-to-end, no cash prize, and sponsor firewall or sponsor-to-charity only if sponsors are accepted.
<b>Jury conflict of interest</b>	Publish COI rules, require disclosure, and recuse jurors from connected entries.
<b>Looks like a PMI copy</b>	Borrow mechanics only. Use AIPM's own naming, identity, rubric, and community-learning posture.
<b>AI-generated submissions undermine credibility</b>	Require human-authored submissions and evidence-backed claims.

## 13. Proposed next steps

- Circulate this concept note to Ricardo Viana Vargas, Antonio Nieto, and the AIPM Revolution Ambassadors.
- Collect feedback on the four decisions and the five additional feedback questions.
- Confirm the final first-edition scope, rubric, eligibility window, and sponsorship posture.
- Translate the approved concept into an operating pack: rules, nomination form, evidence pack guide, judge guide, scoring sheet, finalist feedback template, communications kit, and ceremony outline.
- Prepare the July pre-announcement and ambassador amplification kit.

**Leadership ask:** endorse the concept direction, flag material objections, and advise on the four open decisions.

## Appendix A. Draft scoring anchors

The same 1-to-10 anchor scale should be applied to every criterion. The final judge guide should include criterion-specific examples, but the common anchor keeps scoring consistent and easy to calibrate.

Score band	Meaning	Interpretation
1 to 2	Minimal or unsupported	Mostly assertion. Little or no evidence. Major gaps against the criterion.
3 to 4	Notable gaps	Some relevant content, but evidence is weak, incomplete, or not yet operationalized.
5 to 6	Adequate	Meets a reasonable baseline. Evidence exists, but impact or maturity is limited.
7 to 8	Strong	Well-evidenced and credible. Shows strong practice and transferable lessons.
9 to 10	Exceptional	Outstanding evidence, durable value, responsible practice, and high learning value for the community.

## Appendix B. Source foundation used for this draft

This draft synthesizes the following source materials in the AIPM award source pack. It is intentionally written as a leader-ready concept note rather than a source-heavy benchmark report.

- AIPM AI Project of the Year, founder-facing proposal deck.
- Award Benchmark: Operationalizing the AI Project of the Year Award.
- AIPM AI Project of the Year Award, South African Benchmark Supplement.
- AIPM AI Project of the Year Award: Concept Proposal.
- AIPM AI Project of the Year Award: Business Plan and Proposal for the Founders' Forum.

*End of draft.*