



ARMD Associate Administrator Awards Fiscal Year 2025

Nomination, Evaluation, and Selection Guidelines

Coordinated by
Aeronautics Research Mission Directorate

National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Washington, DC

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I. PURPOSE

The Associate Administrator (AA) Awards will be presented each year to individuals and groups who contribute to Aeronautics Research Mission Directorate (ARMD) activities and who demonstrate exemplary performance in one of six areas of consideration: Technology and Innovation, Leadership and Management Excellence, Program and Mission Support, High Potentials Award, Strategic Partnerships, and Pushing the Envelope.

The awards are intended to recognize essential contributions of the ARMD team and will be given to civil service employees, government contractors, or students/interns who have shown exemplary performance in one of the award categories, both in approach and results.

II. AWARD CATEGORIES

The AA Awards highlight key areas of focus for ARMD and provide a vehicle to recognize distinguished teams or individuals for their outstanding contributions to the primary goals and objectives of the ARMD mission. The ARMD AA Award categories are:

Technology and Innovation

Exemplary performance by an individual or group that results in significant unique or innovative technical research concepts and technologies that position ARMD, NASA, and the aeronautics community and industry for success in addressing national challenges. This category also would include test and evaluation contributions.

Leadership and Management Excellence

Exemplary performance by an individual in leading and managing people in the formulation and accomplishment of disciplined research in the field of aeronautics, demonstrating leadership qualities that invite collaboration and cultivate dedication to team excellence. Leaders of ARMD-related research activities take action that allows others to foster a sense of pride and accomplishment in achieving the mission of ARMD.

Program and Mission Support

Exemplary performance by an individual or group to provide non-technical mission support to aeronautics research programs, projects, and related activities that significantly improves and streamlines their efficiency and effectiveness of operations. This could be in functions typically associated with the NASA Mission Support Directorate (procurement, HR, policy/evaluation, etc.) or other support activities such as resources management, IT, legal counsel, communications, knowledge management, education, legislative affairs, administrative support, etc. These efforts enable the successful completion and advancement of significant program goals that otherwise may not have been achieved.

High Potentials

Exemplary performance by an individual student, intern, or someone in the first five years of their federal service career that have made significant contributions to the advancement of aeronautics research, and that have clearly demonstrated high potential in their abilities and skills in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and/or math. They have actively and positively contributed to addressing technical challenges, and to the overall mission of NASA.

Strategic Partnerships

Exemplary performance by an individual to establish or strengthen strategic partnerships with non-NASA entities that leverage emerging capabilities in the U.S. and abroad to significantly advance the achievement of aeronautics research and development objectives, generate robust and timely knowledge transfer, and strengthen trust and credibility with U.S. and foreign partners.

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For example, these efforts could result in significantly increased quality of NASA Research Announcements or other collaborative agreements.

Pushing the Envelope

Exemplary performance by an individual or group in taking on an ambitious challenge, and although not meeting the technical objectives, positively applying the learning experience toward advancing the aeronautics community. This category emphasizes the positive impact that can result from broadly disseminating and applying the knowledge gained from a rigorous, objective evaluation.

III. ELIGIBILITY/FREQUENCY

All NASA civil service employees, government contractors, and students/interns engaged with ARMD projects are eligible to be nominated for all but the Smartest “Failure” and High Potentials categories. Pushing the Envelope is limited to NASA civil servants or groups led by NASA civil servants. The High Potentials category is limited to those as defined in the category description above.

Individual nominees will be accepted for all categories. Groups may be nominated for awards in the Technology and Innovation, Program and Mission Support, and Pushing the Envelope categories only.

The AA Awards will be given annually. The number of individual or group awards granted each year will be determined based on the number and strength of the nominations submitted.

IV. NOMINATION PROCESS – SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Any ARMD civil service employee, government contractor, student, or intern may submit a nomination for an individual or group award. Students and interns also may be nominated by an academic mentor or supervisor. Self-nominations are allowed.

Groups can include, for example, members from a specific program or project, a special event team, or committee. Nominators must identify at least one group leader for each group award submission.

Nominations should be for contributions and accomplishments the individual or group made during the fiscal year for which these awards are being presented. Submitting the same nomination for consideration under multiple categories is not allowed.

All nominations must be cleared by the individual or group leader nominee's immediate supervisor, who must sign the nomination form.

To submit a nomination, fill out the form (Attachment A), ensure all signatures are made, and then email a copy of the document in Word or PDF format to hq-armdaaawards@mail.nasa.gov no later than January 30, 2026. Upon receipt, all nominations will be recorded, compiled, and then sent to a panel for review. Award honorees will be announced early in 2026.

The nomination requires a justification narrative that must clearly describe how an outstanding approach and resulting accomplishments during the past fiscal year makes the nominated individual or group deserving of an award in that specific category. Emphasis should be placed on how the actions taken by the individual or group resulted in an outcome that had or will have an impact on ARMD, its partners, and/or stakeholders. For the Pushing the Envelope award, describe the lessons learned from trying to overcome an ambitious challenge and how they were disseminated and/or used by ARMD, its partners, and/or stakeholders.

The narrative is not to exceed 750 words. It may be included by using the space provided on the form, or as a separate page with a 1-inch margin on the top and ½-inch margins on the sides and bottom.

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In all cases, an 11-point, Times New Roman font must be used. Including graphics with the nomination as separate attachments is discouraged unless critical for providing clarity.

Nominations not conforming to these guidelines will not be considered.

Special Instructions for Group Award Nominations

For group awards, in addition to the standard nomination form, please submit via email the group member names using the attached Excel group member template. At the top of the spreadsheet, provide the group name and check the award for which the group is being nominated. The first three rows of the spreadsheet provide examples of how to enter the information.

The information provided in the First/Middle/Last name columns is what will appear on each group member's certificate. If the group member has a doctorate, please put "Dr." in the "Prefix" column. If the group member is a contractor, please note that in the last column under "Contractor."

V. EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCESSES

Evaluation Factors

Throughout the nomination and selection processes, two factors, Impact and Responsiveness, will be used to evaluate potential award candidates relative to achievements toward ARMD program goals and objectives:

- **Impact** considers the relevance of the work – Did it address an issue of importance to ARMD? – as well as the benefit that accrued to NASA and its stakeholders in other government agencies and the aeronautics industry.
- **Innovation** considers the degree to which the contribution was innovative, creative, and inclusive of new perspectives and skill sets.

Scoring Guidelines

Using a competitive scale review process, the AA Award panel members will review and develop a numerical ranking for each nomination using personal expertise and judgment and based on the evaluation factors and guidelines outlined above. Each submission and factor will be assessed using a competitive scale, from non-competitive to highly competitive, with each factor receiving a score from zero (0) to ten (10), with ten being the highest.

Non-Competitive=0, Less Competitive=1-3, Competitive=4-7, Highly Competitive=8-10

These scoring guidelines are provided for reference and assistance in assessment and relative ranking of the nominees. ARMD recognizes that all employee efforts are valuable contributions to the mission of the agency. These guidelines are simply an objective way for raters to score submissions in a consistent manner.

Adjective Description	Performance
Highly Competitive	Exceptional, world-class work or performance
Competitive	Excellent, major advancements; excellent performance
Less Competitive	Very good, important advancements; above average performance
Non-Competitive	Good/Fair, average advancements; expected performance

This document and competitive ranking scale will be the primary reference for evaluating award nominations. As part of the official panel review process, panel members may independently solicit information or feedback on a candidate's performance from the appropriate NASA officials, including, though not limited to:

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- NASA Headquarters, Center Contracting Officers, and Contracting Officers' Technical Representatives.
- NASA Headquarters and Center program or project personnel with knowledge of the nominee's performance.
- Other government agencies, offices, or partners with knowledge of the nominee's performance.

Although outside advice may be sought and obtained, AA Award-competitive information will not be revealed outside the NASA teams and panelists evaluating the nominations.

Award Panel Review

The panel review members will consist of ARMD, Center, other NASA representatives, and/or other relevant government agency representatives. Each panelist will review and screen nominations against the evaluation factors. The panel chair will convene meetings to review and discuss all nominations. Based on the deliberations, the AA Awards coordinator will compile the results and notes, submit by award category and submission type (individual or group), and rank ordered recommendations to the Associate Administrator. Panels also may recommend "Honorable Mention" recognition to highly competitive nominations, at their discretion. The Associate Administrator will then make final selections. The number of awards granted will vary based on the number and strength of nominations.

Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure

Names of nominees, nomination reports, commentary, and scoring and ranking information will be kept confidential, and such information will be available only to those NASA employees and panelists directly involved in the assessment and evaluation process. All panel member deliberations, papers, findings, and recommendations will be treated in this confidential manner. Further, all contractor-related information and material will be handled as proprietary to protect contractor interests.

Notification of Award

Upon final selection, the AA Award winners and their supervisors, will be notified by the ARMD Associate Administrator.

VI. PROCESS PARTICIPANTS

ARMD AA Award Panelists

The ARMD Deputy Associate Administrator will establish the review panels, consisting of senior-level, technically qualified representatives from ARMD Headquarters and NASA Centers, and may include other government agency representatives. The AA Awards coordinator will manage the awards process, document the panel deliberations, and provide a final report with results and recommendations to the Associate Administrator. The ARMD Associate Administrator will be the selecting official and will make the final award decisions based on the results and recommendations of the panel review and submission rankings. Alternate members or designees may also be selected and included.

Consultants

Although they are not members of the AA Awards panel or the review and evaluation process, other NASA offices or employees involved in ARMD programs may be consulted throughout the evaluation process for relevant input. These NASA offices may include, but are not necessarily limited to, the General Counsel, the Office of the Inspector General, the Office of Procurement, the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs, and the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization.

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VII. SCHEDULE

December 2025

- A call memo from the ARMD Associate Administrator to the NASA Centers' directors and program directors opens the award cycle.
- Panelists are identified and approved by ARMD Associate Administrator.

December 2025-January 2026

- Adhering to submission guidelines, nominators prepare nomination documents for submission.

January 2026

- The AA Awards coordinator sends award submission packages to panelists for review and rating.
- Panelists are provided guidance to evaluate the awards.

February 2026

- The review panel meets to deliberate submissions and to provide rank ordered recommendations to the Associate Administrator.

March-April 2026

- The Associate Administrator makes the final selection of award winners.
- Award winners are notified.
- Award trophies and certificates are ordered.

July 2025

- Viewing of the ARMD AA Awards video

VIII. AWARDS

All ARMD FTE's, contractors, and students and interns are eligible to apply or be nominated. Students and interns or someone in the first 5 years of federal service are eligible to apply or be nominated for the ARMD High Potentials Award.

All eligible award recipients, including individual members of groups, will receive a certificate signed by the Associate Administrator. Individual and group leader honorees also will receive a moderately sized etched item of recognition.

DEADLINE: Nominations for FY25 should be submitted electronically by **January 30, 2026** to: hq-armdaaawards@mail.nasa.gov. Natasha McNeill is the point of contact for the ARMD AA Awards and can be reached at Natasha.McNeill-1@nasa.gov or 202-358-2638.