NORC at the University of Chicago

FACT FORWARD AWARDS 2027

Entry Form Guide

About This Guide

Use this guide to draft your Fact Forward Awards entry before you open the online form. The form doesn't save your progress, so we recommend writing your answers in a document of your own, then pasting them into the form in one sitting.

Most questions are the same for every award, so the guide groups them by topic and flags the few that differ for the Breakthrough and Student Awards. For each question, you'll find its wording as it appears in the form, whether it's required, any length limit, and tips on what the jury needs.

Entries are due **January 22, 2027, at 11:59 p.m. Central time**. Questions? Email FactForwardAwards@norc.org.

Before You Begin

Gather these before you start, so you can finish the form in one sitting:

- **Your award category.** Each piece of work may be entered in one category only.
- **Links to the work,** up to five. For a series, put the most important pieces first.
- **Publication or launch dates.** Work must have been published, presented, or launched in English in 2025 and/or 2026.
- **Details for each person to be honored,** up to five: full name, role, email address, affiliation at the time of the work, and country of residence.
- **Your Make Your Case answers,** drafted to the word limits in this guide.
- **Access for the jury,** if any of the work is behind a paywall or login: PDF copies, access instructions, or a demo account.
- **For the Student Award:** the student's school and status, plus the name, title, department, and school email address of a faculty reference. **A faculty reference is required for every Student Award entry, and we'll contact the references of all finalists.**

About You and Your Entry

These questions are about the person filling out the form, whether or not you're named in the entry.

- **Your full name** (required)
- **Your email address** (required). *We'll use this to contact you about your entry.* Use an address you check often.
- **Your organization or affiliation** (required)
- **Your job title or role** (optional)

Which award are you entering? (required)

Choose one. Each piece of work may be entered in one category only. Organizers may move an entry to a more appropriate category.

- Impact Award: data journalism making a major contribution to society
- Visualization Award: powerful visual representation and interpretation of data
- Breakthrough Award: bold new tools, systems, methods, or processes in data journalism
- Student Award: a college student or recent graduate, with a faculty reference

If your work could fit more than one category, choose the one where your Make Your Case answers will be strongest.

Are you entering your own work or nominating someone else? (required)

- I'm one of the people named in this entry
- I'm nominating someone else

Student Award: You'll answer the faculty reference questions below instead.

Student Award: Faculty Reference

A faculty reference is required for every Student Award entry, and we'll contact the references of all finalists. Ask your reference before you list them, so they expect to hear from us. Faculty members nominating a student can list themselves as the reference.

- **Who is filling out this form?** (required): the student, a faculty member nominating the student, or someone else nominating the student
- **The student's school or university** (required)
- **The student's status** (required): currently enrolled, or graduated in 2025 or 2026
- **Faculty reference's full name** (required)
- **Faculty reference's title and department** (required). *For example, Associate Professor of Journalism.*

- **Faculty reference's email address** (required). *Please use their school email address.*
- **How does the faculty reference know the student's work?** (required): taught the student in a course, advised this work, advises the student's program or a student publication, or other

The Work

Every question in this section is required. Breakthrough Award entries describe a tool, system, method, or process rather than a published story, so the form words these questions differently for them.

Title

- **Impact, Visualization, and Student Awards:** "Title of the work." *For a series, use the series name.*
- **Breakthrough Award:** "Name of your entry." *The name of the tool, system, method, or process. If it doesn't have a formal name, give it a short descriptive title.*

Where It Appeared

- **Impact, Visualization, and Student Awards:** "Where was it published or presented?" *The outlet, publication, program, or channel.*
- **Breakthrough Award:** "How is it made available or distributed for use?" *For example, a public website, open-source code, a newsroom's internal system, or a paid license.*

Date

- **Impact, Visualization, and Student Awards:** "Date or dates of publication." *For example, "March 4, 2026," or "a series from June to August 2025." Work must have been published in 2025 and/or 2026.*
- **Breakthrough Award:** "Launch date." *When it became available beyond beta or limited testing. For example, May 2025. It must have launched in 2025 or 2026.*

Type of Work

- **Impact, Visualization, and Student Awards:** "Format." Options: print, digital news, video, email newsletter, podcast, social media, interactive or app, or other.
- **Breakthrough Award:** "What best describes your entry?" Choose all that apply: tool, system or platform, method, process, product or service, or other.

Links

- **Impact, Visualization, and Student Awards:** "Links to the work." *Paste up to five links, one per line. For a series, list the most important pieces first.*
- **Breakthrough Award:** "Links to the work." *Paste up to five links, one per line, such as the tool itself, a demo or documentation, and examples of journalism made with it.*

Before you submit, open each link in a private or incognito browser window to make sure it works for someone who isn't signed in.

Access for the Jury

- **Impact, Visualization, and Student Awards:** "Is any of the work behind a paywall or login?" If you answer Yes, the form asks how the jury can access it. *Share access instructions, or email PDF copies to FactForwardAwards@norc.org with the title of your entry in the subject line. For large files, send a link to a shared copy instead.*
- **Breakthrough Award:** "Does using it require a login, license, or payment?" If you answer Yes, the form asks how the jury can try it. *For example, a demo account, guest access, or a video walkthrough. Please email any login details or files to FactForwardAwards@norc.org with the name of your entry in the subject line.* Keep the access active until winners are announced in late spring 2027.

People to Honor

List the people who should be honored for this work, up to five. Awards go to individuals, not organizations. For the Student Award, list the student first.

For each person, the form asks for:

- **Full name** (required)
- **Role on this work** (required). *For example, reporter, data editor, designer, or developer.*
- **Email address** (required)
- **Affiliation at the time of the work** (required). Use the organization they worked for when the work was made, even if they've moved on since.
- **Country of residence** (required): United States, or other

After each person, the form asks whether you want to add another. Everyone you name should know they're being entered or nominated.

Make Your Case

The jury will rely most on these answers, along with the work itself, to evaluate your entry. Draft them first and give them the most time. Specific outcomes, numbers, and dates make a stronger case than general claims.

Describe the work in one or two sentences. (required)

50 words or fewer (about 300 characters). Say what the work is and what it found or does.

Why does this work deserve the award? (required)

400 words or fewer (about 2,500 characters). Please address the focus of your category:

- *Impact: What difference did the work make? Examples include policy or institutional changes, public response, or follow-up reporting by others.*
- *Visualization: How do the visuals reveal what the data show? What choices made them clear?*
- *Breakthrough: What's new about it, and how does it advance the practice of data journalism or help audiences draw conclusions from data?*
- *Student: How did the student use data and social science methods to inform their community or hold the powerful to account?*

Answer the prompt for your own category only.

Data and methods (required)

250 words or fewer (about 1,500 characters).

- *What data did the work rely on, and how were they gathered, checked, and analyzed?*
- *How did the work help audiences understand the strengths and limits of the data?*

For the Breakthrough Award: What kinds of data does it help journalists report on or with? How does it work, and how does it account for the quality and limits of the data?

Was AI used for any part of this work? (required)

For example, to gather, analyze, or visualize data, write code, or draft text, or as part of a tool you're entering. Using AI doesn't disqualify an entry. We ask so the jury understands how the work was made.

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

How was AI used? (required if you answered Yes)

100 words or fewer (about 600 characters). Name the tasks AI helped with and how people checked its output.

Supporting materials (optional)

Up to three links to materials helpful to the jury, such as a methodology note, a behind-the-scenes post, or evidence of impact.

Final Details

How did you hear about the Fact Forward Awards? (required)

- NORC website
- NORC email

- LinkedIn
- Other social media
- A colleague, professor, or editor
- News coverage
- A journalism organization or email list
- Other (write in)

Would you like occasional email updates from NORC? (optional)

- Yes, sign me up
- No, thanks

Certification (required)

By submitting this entry, I confirm:

- *The work was published, presented, or launched in English in 2025 and/or 2026.*
- *The information in this entry is accurate to the best of my knowledge.*
- *The people named in this entry know they're being entered or nominated.*

Select "I confirm," then submit. On the next page, save or print a PDF of your answers (see After You Submit).

After You Submit

Save a copy of your answers before you leave the thank-you page. After you submit, select the three-dot menu (...) in the top right corner of the thank-you page, then select Print response. To save a PDF instead of printing, choose Save as PDF as the printer. You won't be able to get back to this page later, and it's the only way to keep a full copy of your entry.

We won't email you a copy of your answers, so keep this PDF for your records.

Need to fix something? Email FactForwardAwards@norc.org with the title of your entry. Please don't submit a second entry for the same work.

A jury will review the entries in each category and recommend finalists to NORC leaders, who will select the winners. For the Student Award, we'll contact the faculty references of all finalists. Winners will be announced in late spring 2027.