

BEYOND THE LOOKING GLASS:

CLARITY, CREATIVITY, AND CONNECTION IN A NEW LANDSCAPE

AWARDS DUE

FEBRUARY 5, 2026



smps | Southeastern
Regional Conference

spark
AWARDS

**Celebrating Achievements in
Marketing and Business Development**

2026 SPARK AWARDS

Hilton Norfolk - The Main | Norfolk, VA
March 19, 2026

SMPS SERC announces the inaugural annual SERC Spark Awards, celebrating the achievements of marketing and business development professionals in the AEC industry. These awards honor individuals and firms whose outstanding materials, campaigns, and accomplishments set the benchmark for creativity, innovation, and strategic success. By spotlighting the exceptional work emerging from the Southeast region, the SERC Spark Awards aim to inspire, elevate, and celebrate the transformative power of marketing and business development in the built environment.

Modeled after the National SMPS Marketing Communications Awards, the SERC Spark Awards align with the Society's submittal process, providing a seamless pathway to national recognition. This regional program not only acknowledges the unique challenges and triumphs of firms in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia but also fosters a sense of pride and community in our region. Join us in celebrating the best of the best — where strategy meets creativity and success sparks inspiration.

Why Submit

CELEBRATE EXCELLENCE

Showcase your outstanding marketing, communications, and business development campaigns.

The SERC Spark Awards provide a unique opportunity to showcase the creativity and innovation that set your firm apart. By submitting your work, you can highlight the materials, campaigns, and initiatives that have driven success. This is your chance to celebrate your team's achievements and demonstrate how your marketing and business development efforts exemplify excellence in the AEC industry.

GAIN FEEDBACK

Receive constructive feedback from industry experts to refine and elevate future efforts.

Submitting your work allows you to receive valuable insights and feedback from industry experts. Each entry is reviewed by a panel of seasoned marketing and business development professionals, offering constructive critiques that can help refine your strategies and elevate your future efforts. Gain fresh perspectives and actionable advice to further elevate your firm's marketing initiatives.

EARN RECOGNITION

Increase visibility and enhance your reputation through regional recognition and publicity.

Winning a Spark Award is more than just a trophy — it's a mark of distinction that sets your firm apart in the competitive AEC industry. Recognition at the regional level highlights your team's accomplishments and demonstrates your commitment to advancing the marketing and business development profession. Whether you're showcasing your work to current clients, potential partners, or your internal teams, earning a Spark Award positions your firm as a leader and innovator in the Southeast region.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Eligibility

FIRM AWARDS

- Marketing and business development projects and campaigns completed in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and/or Virginia between January 2024 and December 2025 are eligible for submission.
- Submissions are welcome from AEC companies with offices in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and/or Virginia.
- SMPS member and non-member firms are encouraged to participate.

INDIVIDUAL AWARDS

- Award recipient must be a current SMPS member of Alabama, Atlanta, Charlotte, Central Florida, Nashville, North Florida, Palmetto, Research Triangle, South Florida, Tampa Bay, or Virginia for at least two consecutive years (since Jan. 2024).
- Award recipient must be employed full-time at an AEC firm.
- Can be either self- or third-party nominated.

Categories

- **CORPORATE IDENTITY:** A comprehensive campaign that took place over an extended period (6+ months) to promote your firm's brand awareness. The campaign must include a combination of tactics and media (print, digital, and/or multimedia) and implementation strategies.
- **PROJECT PURSUIT:** An item, or series of items, developed to support a winning project. Materials may be print and/or digital and include qualification packages, proposals, presentations, interview tools, leave-behinds, or other pieces contributing to the total effort.
- **MARKETER OF THE YEAR:** A marketing professional whose exceptional creativity, leadership, and results set them apart from their peers.
- **BUSINESS DEVELOPER OF THE YEAR:** A business development professional whose efforts significantly contributed to their firm's success.
- **RISING STAR:** An AEC professional who has demonstrated leadership and exceptional contributions in the AEC industries.

SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS

Firm Awards

Corporate Identity: A comprehensive campaign that took place over an extended period (6+ months) to promote your firm's brand awareness. The campaign must include a combination of tactics and media (print, digital, and/or multimedia) and implementation strategies.

▪ **Types:**

New brand: creating a brand-new identity.

Brand refresh: modernizing the current brand

Rebrand: overhauling the previous brand.

▪ **Submittal Requirements:**

A pdf of your marketing plan describing campaign focus and objectives.

Submit one copy of any collateral pieces and multimedia aspects of the program.

If media relations were a part of the campaign, please submit a copy of releases/media kits/features developed and a list of results.

Project Pursuit: An item, or series of items, developed to support a winning project. Materials may be print and/or digital and include qualification packages, proposals, presentations, interview tools, leave-behinds, or other pieces contributing to the total effort.

▪ **Submittal Requirements:**

A pdf of your marketing plan describing campaign focus and objectives.

Submit one copy of any collateral pieces and multimedia aspects of the program.

If media relations were a part of the campaign, please submit a copy of releases/media kits/features developed and a list of results.

SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS

Firm Awards

Award recipients must be a current Alabama, Atlanta, Charlotte, Central Florida, Nashville, North Florida, Palmetto, Research Triangle, South Florida, Tampa Bay, and Virginia SMPS chapter member since January 2024. Non-members may nominate a current Alabama, Atlanta, Charlotte, Central Florida, Nashville, North Florida, Palmetto, Research Triangle, South Florida, Tampa Bay, or Virginia SMPS chapter member.

MARKETER OF THE YEAR

A marketing professional whose exceptional creativity, leadership, and results set them apart from their peers.

Eligibility:

- Marketing professional with 5+ years of AEC experience.
- Demonstrates innovative and creative marketing strategies throughout 2024-2025 with measurable contributions to firm success.
- Active SMPS member in a regional chapter.

Submittal Requirements:

- Two letters of recommendation demonstrating their accomplishments outside their normal scope of work that's worthy of distinction.
- One letter must be from a supervisor and the other from an Alabama, Atlanta, Charlotte, Central Florida, Nashville, North Florida, Palmetto, Research Triangle, South Florida, Tampa Bay, or Virginia SMPS chapter member.



BUSINESS DEVELOPER OF THE YEAR

A business development professional whose efforts significantly contributed to their firm's success.

Eligibility:

- Business development professional with 5+ years of AEC experience.
- Demonstrates innovative and creative BD strategies throughout 2024-2025 with measurable contributions to firm success.
- Active SMPS member in a regional chapter.

Submittal Requirements:

- Two letters of recommendation demonstrating their accomplishments outside their normal scope of work that's worthy of distinction.
- One letter must be from a supervisor and the other from an Alabama, Atlanta, Charlotte, Central Florida, Nashville, North Florida, Palmetto, Research Triangle, South Florida, Tampa Bay, or Virginia SMPS chapter member.

RISING STAR

An AEC professional who has demonstrated leadership and exceptional contributions in the AEC industries.

Eligibility:

- Professional with a minimum of two and a maximum of five years of AEC experience.
- Active SMPS member in an Alabama, Atlanta, Charlotte, Central Florida, Nashville, North Florida, Palmetto, Research Triangle, South Florida, Tampa Bay, or Virginia SMPS chapter.

Submittal Requirements:

- Two letters of recommendation demonstrating their accomplishments outside their normal scope of work that's worthy of distinction.
- One letter must be from a supervisor and the other from an Alabama, Atlanta, Charlotte, Central Florida, Nashville, North Florida, Palmetto, Research Triangle, South Florida, Tampa Bay, or Virginia SMPS chapter member.



TIMELINE

Timeline

Don't miss the chance to showcase your marketing and business development achievements! Prepare your submissions and join us in celebrating the best of the best in AEC marketing.

CALL FOR ENTRIES

January 1, 2026

DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS

February 5, 2026

FINALISTS ANNOUNCED

FEBRUARY 26, 2026

AWARD CEREMONY

MARCH 19, 2026

CRITERIA & FEES

Judging Criteria

FIRM ENTRIES

Firm entries will be evaluated using a point system, with a maximum of 100.

Marketing Objectives:	20
Target Audience and Research/Planning:	10
Content Messaging:	15
Content Deliverable(s):	20
Results:	20
Creative Brief:	15

INDIVIDUAL ENTRIES

Individual entries will be evaluated using a point system, with a maximum of 50.

Firm Impact:	25
Statement:	25

Fees

Firms will be invoiced upon receipt of award application.

ENTRY FEES

	MEMBER	NON-MEMBER
Regular	\$150	\$225

AWARD

APPLICATION

CONTACT INFORMATION

FULL NAME

JOB TITLE

EMAIL ADDRESS

COMPANY NAME

STREET ADDRESS

ADDRESS LINE 2

CITY STATE ZIP

PHONE NUMBER

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

(Please list additional names of people or firms that assisted you with creating this entry. This information will not be published. Only the firm name will be listed.)

SMPS MEMBER

Yes No

Are you or a colleague at your firm a current member of SMPS? (Must be a current member of SMPS; does not have to work in same office, if member is located in different office location.)

SMPS CHAPTER

Alabama	Atlanta	Charlotte	Central Florida
Nashville	North Florida	Palmetto	Research Triangle
South Florida	Tampa Bay	Virginia	





ENTRY TITLE

COMPLETION DATE

All entry projects must be completed between Jan. 2024 and Dec. 2025.

ENTRY CATEGORY

FIRM AWARDS

Corporate Identity
Project Pursuit

INDIVIDUAL AWARDS

Marketer of the Year
Business Developer of the Year
Rising Star

ENTRY IMAGES

Specifications: File size must be under 5 MB. 300dpi, 3000 pixels for either width or height measurement.
Email images with completed form.

Entry image #1 will be the image showcased if it is selected as a finalist. All images uploaded will be used for judging purposes. Make sure to upload a clean, clear image that best represents your entry. A minimum of three different images is required for all entries.

IMAGE 1 NAME

IMAGE 2 NAME

IMAGE 3 NAME

CREATIVE BRIEF

Please give a **250-word or less** creative brief on your entry to convey to their jurors why your entry should win.

**TARGET
AUDIENCE**

150 WORDS OR LESS

Define the audience for this piece or program. Answer the following questions:

- Who was your target audience?
- How many pieces were sent via mail, e-mail, or social media? If a website or video, what were your analytical goals?
- Characterize the composition, size, and location of your target audience (example: 250 CEOs and senior managers of the top 500 leaders of the California high-tech industry).

**RESEARCH
AND PLANNING**

150 WORDS OR LESS

Describe the market research conducted prior to planning your piece or program. Summarize your marketing plan efforts. Explain the production and delivery method.

MESSAGING

75 WORDS OR LESS

Describe the intended message or call to action of this entry? What are you trying to convey or communicate to the audience through this marketing piece?

**RESULTS
& IMPACT**

150 WORDS OR LESS

Describe the intended message or call to action of this entry? What are you trying to convey or communicate to the audience through this marketing piece?

STATEMENT

500 WORDS OR LESS

Provide a brief statement on what receiving award would mean to the candidate, and why they are passionate about the AEC industry.

Marketer of the
Year

Business Developer
of the Year

Rising Star

IMPACT

500 WORDS OR LESS

Summarize and provide examples of the candidate's significant contributions that can be demonstrated by measurable results and have brought value to their firm.

Examples

Using measurable results, demonstrate activities that provide value for your firm, such as:

- Leadership: marketing, business development, finance, peer association, and/or client organization.
- Improvements: developed new or improved strategies, processes, approaches, and/or tactics.
- Contributions: campaign development, successful project (pursuit or initiative), collaborations with partners (internal or external), and/or writing or speaking opportunities.



FIRM/INDIVIDUAL
NAME AND FIRM

Please complete the following information to be used if your entry is a finalist in this year's competition. It is important that you list your Firm's name exactly as you would like it to display on your award.

DISCLAIMER: If you are selected as a finalist, the images of your entry will be featured in various Spark Awards communications. It will also be featured during the awards ceremony on March 19. All entry information and images become the property of SMPS and may be utilized in future Spark Award promotions or displayed during SMPS and industry educational events as examples of best practices in marketing communications.

This is how your firm's name will appear on your award if your firm is selected as a finalist. If you are a consultant entering on behalf of a client please confirm and receive permission regarding this information before submitting.

FIRM NAME **PR**

This is how your firm's name will appear in the press releases, articles, and promotional pieces regarding the awards program results. If you are a consultant entering on behalf of a client please confirm and receive permission regarding this information before submitting.

FIRM **CITY, STATE, ZIP**

This will be listed with your firm name on press releases, articles and promotional pieces regarding the award program. Please abbreviate state.

PERMISSION

By entering the SMPS SERC Spark Awards, you agree to allow SERC to use your company and entry information and photo for promotional and educational purposes.

Yes No

COMPANY
INFORMATION

100 WORDS OR LESS

This brief company description will be featured if your entry is selected as a Finalist.

ENTRY **PHOTO**

Email image with completed form.

Please include a photo that best represents your entry for display in awards multimedia presentation, Awards Gallery, Marketer publication, and press releases. Specifications: Minimum 300 dpi; Dimensions: Minimum 3000 pixels in width OR height.

SELF OR TEAM **PHOTO**

Email image with completed form.

Please include a photo of you or your team to be used for promotional purposes. Specifications: Minimum 300 dpi; Dimensions: Minimum 3000 pixels in width OR height.

COMPANY **LOGO**

Email files with completed form.

SCREEN RESOLUTION

Please include a jpg or png file of your firm logo for use on the awards website and ceremony presentation. 72 dpi, 600 pixels width or height.

PRINT RESOLUTION

Please include an eps or ai file of your firm logo to be used in Marketer publication and other publications if your entry is a winner. Must be vector, eps file. Specifications: Minimum 300 dpi; Dimensions: Minimum 3000 pixels in width OR height.

SUBMIT **APPLICATION**

Please **email** this completed form, photos, logos, and other attachments to: crobertson@gfnet.com.

QUESTIONS

Please **contact** Cricket Robertson, FSMPS, CPSM:
crobertson@gfnet.com.