



How to Write a Winning ATHENA Award or ATHENA Young Professional Award (AYPA) Nomination

This document will help make your nomination as successful as possible. Please take a few minutes to review advice and tips on:

- 1) How to approach the nomination process
- 2) The types of evidence that will be helpful
- 3) How to effectively answer the three key questions in the nomination form

This document will also cover the pitfalls to avoid and will point you to some other resources that you might find helpful!

Approaching the Nomination Process

Once you've decided to nominate someone for an ATHENA Award, think about how you'll approach writing the nomination. It is important to involve the nominee. Additionally, a strong nomination also includes the nominee's network.

- Ask the nominee's permission to nominate her and enlist her help to ensure that her story is being told accurately, effectively, and holistically.
- Reach out to her networks (professional, personal, and community) to obtain content for the nomination including evidence, observations, and even quotes. You may want to form a team of readers and reviewers for the nomination. Before submitting the nomination, give the nominee the opportunity for the final edit.
- Know the due date and allow time for reviews and feedback before you submit the nomination.

Helpful Evidence

What types of evidence might be helpful for a successful nomination? Two types: qualitative support and quantifiable results. These two types of evidence will work together to form a powerful case for your nominee.

- Qualitative support includes things like testimonials, quotes, observations and comments from a variety of sources, including the nominee's professional and personal networks.
- Quantifiable results include facts that support claims, such as metrics that prove deep and/or wide impact.



Writing a Great Nomination: Uniqueness

As you write your nomination, think about how to express the uniqueness of the woman you're nominating.

- What makes her distinct from other women in the community doing similar work?
- How does her work impact others—especially girls and women—in the community?
- How is this part of her DNA?

Some great examples of how past nominations expressed a nominee's uniqueness are included below:

Expressing the Uniqueness of the Nominee

From the nomination for MJ Tocci, 2011 ATHENA Awardee

"According to Trial Run colleague, Warren Radler, women lawyers flock to MJ for advice; she becomes an instant mentor and confidante. Spending countless unreimbursed hours helping women lawyers advance and realize their potential, MJ's vision, courage, and leadership have inspired hundreds, if not thousands of women for nearly thirty years. MJ is a game-changer for elementary, middle, and high school girls, college students and adult women in every stage of their careers. Tackling issues at all levels: one-on-one, in groups and institutionally, her impact is clear and compelling. As the director and cofounder of the Babcock Institute for Negotiations for Women at CMU, MJ's influence will be felt for years to come.

From the nomination for Amiena Mahsoob, 2013 AYP Awardee

"Amiena has also co-founded multiple women's networks - even one abroad! When Amiena was teaching in Japan she and a colleague decided to start an expatriate women's support network. That colleague, Stephanie Alexander shared, 'Because we knew the strength we drew from each other, we decided to start a group of all women that met 2-3 times a month. This group was meant to act as a support network for participants - some of whom had never traveled abroad. With the passing months, each lovely lady brought her own strength to the table in some way. From this group, we were able to develop friendships that will last a lifetime. Amiena was a cornerstone for a number of women in this regard.'"

Three Key Questions

There are three sections that make up the nomination.

- **Section 1:** How does your nominee assist women and/or girls in reaching their full leadership potential?
- **Section 2:** How does your nominee provide valuable service to improve the quality of life for others in the community?
- **Section 3:** How does your nominee demonstrate excellence, creativity and initiative in her business or profession?



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Section 1

The first section of the nomination asks you to provide specific examples of how the nominee assists women and/or girls in reaching their full leadership potential. When gathering evidence for this section, consider evidence of deep, life-long commitment to women. How does the nominee's advocacy and leadership impact other girls and women, including those she mentors or coaches? Gather testimonials from women or girls who look up to your nominee as a role model.

Some great examples of how this was done well in past nominations are included below:

How Your Nominee Assists Women and/or Girls in Reaching their Full Leadership Potential

From the nomination of Lynn Banaszak, 2015 ATHENA Awardee

"Lynn stays engaged in the lives of young women that she has worked with helping them as they continue through their lives and careers. 'Being a part of Lynn's life has had such a huge impact on mine. Lynn is the most brilliant, generous, loving strong woman I've ever known. I worked for Lynn for a short time where I got to witness how outstandingly creative and talented she is. Spending the short time I did under her supervision was more educational than any college could have given me. Lynn was always very patient and eager to teach. Never making anyone around her feel less than her. I know that her tutelage helped me in advancing my own career. I haven't worked with Lynn in over 10 years however I can pick up the phone at any time and Lynn is available and willing to listen, connect me to others and give advice! Hands down Lynn deserves this award. Her strength and wisdom is unmatched,' Jennifer Miller, Business consultant, Verizon communications.

'Lynn Banaszak Brusco has truly made an impression since my first year as her 10th grade Marketing student at Parkway West (1996.) I always admired her confidence and professionalism, and I strive, even today, to become a successful female leader with her magnetism. What a blessing my life has been with her influence,' Lisa Nicholson, IFS Records Specialist, Express Jet Airlines."

From the nomination of Josie Badger, 2015 AYP Awardee

"While most women need to learn to navigate both internal and external barriers to success, these issues are compounded for women with disabilities who encounter daily stigma and discrimination. Sarah Heinzl, one of Josie's many mentees, described it like this, 'I acquired my disability at age 13. I jumped immediately into adaptive sports and ended up playing with boys on boys' teams. My goal was to fit in and be perceived as ordinary. You lose a lot of things when you have a disability. I lost the experience of being a girl.' Sarah's friends dragged her to a Youth Leadership Conference, and it was there that she met Josie. 'Josie had this amazing presence. She was a strong and confident woman. At that time in my life I had the strong part down, but I had lost the part about being a woman. When you are in a wheelchair, nobody perceives you as attractive or sexual.' Sarah credits Josie with helping her to find her own voice and feeling confident in asking for things that she wanted and needed. Josie helped me to realize that being ordinary isn't really what I wanted. Walking or not walking, I wanted to be extraordinary.' This was a turning point for Sarah, who joined Josie in establishing the Children's Hospital Advisory Network for Guidance and Empowerment (CHANGE). Sarah continued learning from Josie and went on to open doors for other young women with disabilities. When Josie left CHANGE to pursue the #WantoWork campaign opportunity, Sarah stepped into a leadership position, having been well prepared by Josie to do so."



Section 2

The second section asks you to provide specific examples of how the nominee provides valuable service to improve the quality of life for others in the community. Include her relevant history of volunteer and community involvement, but don't write a laundry list. Think about the most important pieces that specifically focus on service to others. Detail her role for each community activity, highlighting her leadership positions and the impact she's had. Note relevant awards your nominee has won as well as their significance. It's helpful to have quotes or observations from individuals representing the organization(s) with which she is involved.

Some great examples of how this was done well in past nominations are included below:

How Your Nominee Provides Valuable Service to Improve the Quality of Life for Others in the Community

From the nomination of Laura Ellsworth, 2013 ATHENA Awardee

"Laura is also very active in civic and community affairs. She serves as Vice-Chair of the Allegheny Conference on Community Development where she has demonstrated a commitment to the region, and in particular to workforce development and regional economic prosperity. She is Chair of the Pennsylvania Economy League of Greater Pittsburgh; Chair of the Youth Policy Council of the Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board; and Chair of the United Way Women's Leadership Council[...]

As a testament to her dedication, John Surma, CEO of the US Steel Corporation provided the following, 'When I became Chairman of the Allegheny Conference on Community Development in 2009, it was clear to me that I would need lots of help. I decided to invite to several leadership positions the smartest, most dynamic and hardest working people I knew. My first call was to Laura, and the rest is history. In the role she filled initially as chair of the PA Economy League and in successive roles since, Laura has left an unmistakable imprint on our region and everyone with whom she works [...]"

From the nomination of Jennifer Cairns, 2011 AYP Awardee

"Perhaps the most profound account of her compassion occurred when Jen befriended a homeless man, suffering health issues related to addiction. Cut off from family, Mike Branchen was nearing the end of his life when Jen saw him at a lunchtime church service. She bought him a coat, shoes, lunch, and worked to find him a job. Mike wanted to reach his family, but didn't know how. Jen was that connection. 'All the things she did for my son,' said tearful JoAnn Branchen. 'Others wouldn't give him the time of day, but Jen? Her caring and generosity gave my son a lifeline when he needed it most. I'll always be grateful. I couldn't be more proud of her if she were my own daughter.' This was also a life-changing experience for Jen: her courage and desire to make a difference is real."



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Section 3

The third section asks you to provide specific examples of how the nominee demonstrates excellence, creativity and initiative in her business or profession. When completing this section, include the nominee's most pertinent work history. Consider facts and figures that support the idea of excellence and consider how your nominee might be exceptional. How has she done things differently? How has she contributed above and beyond her job description to demonstrate creativity and initiative? Explain or note achievements in the nominee's company or industry and consider quotations from former and current managers and mentees.

Some great examples of how this was done well in past nominations are included below:

How Your Nominee Demonstrates Excellence, Creativity, and Initiative in her Business or Profession

From the nomination of Kim Berkeley Clark, 2012 ATHENA Awardee

"[...]Kim is a judge in the Court of Common Pleas in Allegheny County, Family Division, mainly hearing juvenile court cases. Though this brilliant jurist could practice any kind of law, Kim has chosen for 14 years to focus on the best interests of children in a court known for its long hours and wrenching cases. Kim is a problem-solver, whose credo is that nothing is too hard. One of her gifts is that she inspires others to feel and act the same way, removing roadblocks and driving innovative solutions such as the creation of the first written time-of-arrest protocols for when parents are arrested; the first charter school in the area for juvenile offenders; and this April, a new semi-independent-living program for girls."

From the nomination of Christy Uffelman, 2012 AYP Awardee

"As the first female member of Mascaro Construction's executive team, Christy manages the HR and OD departments at Mascaro, and is the go-to person for conflict resolution, talent management, coaching and team building. Co-chair of the Master Builders Association HR Forum and regular speaker for the Associated General Contractors of America and the National Association of Women in Construction, she is breaking ground in the traditionally male-dominated construction field by coaching executives and high-potentials in Emotional Intelligence to increase their self-awareness and align their actions to deliver desired results.

'Christy's role opened a new realm in our industry that needs to be embraced. She leads our internal efforts to grow our people from within,' says Michael Mascaro, Mascaro COO. 'Her diversity initiatives make her a pioneer. Christy is an innovator in her approaches to organizational development, both in our industry and out,' says Mascaro CEO, John Mascaro, Jr. Adds Josh Pisarcik, Mascaro emerging leader participant, 'Christy is an excellent motivator and a valuable resource. Her program was a game-changer for my career.' Christy pioneered award-winning mentoring and coaching programs, such as Mascaro's Feedback for Performance program, which won the Associated General Contractors of America 'Education of Excellence' award and the Pittsburgh Human Resources Association's 2011 People Do Matter Award."



What to Avoid

Let's talk about some things to avoid in your nomination:

- Don't make any unsubstantiated or overreaching claims.
- Don't include any hyperlinks.
- Don't use vague language and superlatives.

Remember: The selection committee can only consider the information included in the nomination.

Editing and Revisions

After you've written the nomination, what do you do? Before you submit it, have several people review—especially the nominee.

Ask for feedback on content as well as any edits for grammar, spelling, etc. The length of the nomination isn't necessarily a determining factor for selection. Remove redundancies and irrelevant information.

Remember: It's likely that the selection committee will be reading more than thirty nominations. Writing this nomination is a process, so be sure to allow time for additions and revisions!