Writing Winning Award Nominations

General Tips

• Identify the person you want to nominate and **start the process months ahead of time**.
• Talk with your nominee and those who work with the individual (i.e. colleagues, staff, faculty, etc.) to identify specifics about their leadership.
• Address all parts of each question completely to assure the review committee has all the information it needs to know about your nominee.
• Cite specific examples—use descriptive language and then give a situation or example that shows the attribute.
• Remember, your audience does not know anything about the nominee; thorough explanations are key.
• Avoid the use of too many pronouns and run-on sentences. The narrative should be clear and easy to read.
• Don't just talk about what the person is/has done. **Share what stands out**. What makes this person outstanding? How have these accomplishments had an impact - on people, the community, and the profession? Create a unique picture of your applicant. What makes him/her stand out from all the rest? Remember, longevity is often not part of the criteria. Consider how your nominee has taken the position and made an impact, for the organization, the volunteers, and/or the community.

A Suggested Outline for a Nomination Letter

• **The salutation or greeting**: This is an important aspect of the letter. A successful letter will include a personal greeting to the person you are writing to. If you are unsure of the person’s name, ask the person you are recommending or call the office that the letter is being sent to, also making sure of the spelling of the person’s name.
• **Paragraph 1**: Explain your connection to the person you are recommending, including how you know them and why you are qualified to write a recommendation letter. It is also a good idea to clearly state that you are nominating or recommending that person.
• **Paragraph 2**: Provide information regarding why the person you are writing about is special, including a detailed description of why they are qualified. Choose a few points, giving specific examples reinforcing these points and then return to those throughout the letter.
• **Paragraph 3**: Address the specific skills this person possesses relating directly to the award criteria or job position. When writing a letter of nomination for an award, the information included will again be concise and include an example that is relatable to the criteria required for the award. Along those same lines, when writing a letter referring a candidate for a particular job opening, the recommendation letter will include information on how the person's skills match the skills required of the position they are applying.
• **Paragraph 4:** This section of the recommendation letter should contain a brief summary again of why you are recommending the person. It is important to stick to the points that you brought up in the previous paragraph and not to introduce any new information that you will not be able to explain in the remainder of the letter. The person reading the letter should have no doubt in their mind as to what the nominee or candidate’s qualifications are. It is also a great idea to once again state that you "highly recommend" the person or you "recommend them without reservation".

• **Conclusion:** The conclusion of your letter should contain a statement declaring your faith in the candidate, your hopes for the letter and an offer to provide more information about the candidate. You may include contact information, phone number and e-mail address, in this paragraph but it is absolutely essential to include that information once again in your signature at the bottom of the page.

**Examples of Nomination Letters**

• **Too general:**

I am the lobbyist for the _________ Association and was hired when [nominee] was the _____-elect in 1994. _______ didn’t stop working hard when she stepped down from being the ______. She continues to be one of the most effective members at the grassroots level.

• **More specific:**

I have been very impressed by ______’s work in the political arena. As ______-Elect, she worked tirelessly to identify state issues of importance to [the organization], then took action to deal with those issues. She spent hours at legislative meetings, both to get to know legislators better and to keep on top of the issues. She participated in party fund-raising events to elevate the visibility of the Association and got other members involved. She also helped develop the role of the lobbyist hired by the Association.

**Sources:**

Student Activities at Minnesota State University, Mankato.
http://www.mnsu.edu/activities/toolbox.html
The Awards and Professional Development Committee
http://nasapeople.nasa.gov/awards/winning_nominations.htm
http://fwa.byu.edu/nomination_letters.doc
http://www.docstoc.com/docs/22235977/How-to-write-an-award-nomination