



2024 CATEGORIES

10 Nomination Categories (13 awards) Available to STS Members & Non-Members

- 1) **ESCAPE TO THE SOUTHEAST TRAVEL ATTRACTION OF THE YEAR** – Awarded to an attraction whose work has resulted in a year of notable accomplishment (i.e., development of new business markets, substantial growth in revenue or attendance, special outreach). Nominations should show concrete results; explanations can include descriptions of advertising/promotional campaigns, special celebrations, or commemorations.
- 2) **TOURISM OFFICE OF THE YEAR (Two Awards)**
Category 1 Budget < \$1 Million
Category 2 Budget > \$1 Million
Evaluated on the overall performance of the organization and should show demonstrable accomplishments through effective tourism marketing (advertising, promotions, public relations, etc.). Nominations should show creativity in design, development and implementation of any projects cited. Nominations must provide documentation for the DMO revenue category in which they are entered. While nominations can include the history and growth of an organization, the emphasis must be on projects or programs developed and implemented from November 1, 2022, through December 31, 2023.
- 3) **GOVERNMENTAL TOURISM LEADERSHIP AWARD** – Honors an elected official (city, county, state or federal) whose support or influence greatly enhanced the tourism industry. The nominations may include achievements or contributions over the nominee’s entire career or a single accomplishment in the recent past.
- 4) **2024 EVENT OR FESTIVAL OF THE YEAR**
Nominees in this category will be selected from the winners of the “2024 Signature Events of the Southeast” Award program **ONLY**. To submit your event or festival, please click [here](#).
- 5) **BEACON AWARD** – Recognizes an individual who best exemplifies outstanding leadership in the pursuit of excellence and who has advanced the tourism industry. The winning nominee will have dedicated many years to tourism and nominations may include contributions over an entire career or for a recent, notable single accomplishment. Judging will consider accomplishments, innovation, performance, empowerment of others, integrity, and respect. Self-nominations are acceptable.

6) RISING STAR AWARD – Recognizes extraordinary on-the-job performance by a person new to the travel and tourism industry. Nominee’s initial employment in the industry must have come between January 1, 2021, and May 13, 2023. Nominations will be evaluated on leadership, enthusiasm for the industry, innovation, successful programs or events, and other performance-related accomplishments. Extra consideration goes to nominees who are involved in the industry outside of their normal employment. The nominee should be an effective advocate to the public, their government, and their tourism peers, in relation to the travel and tourism industry. They should be recognized as building value for the among consumers and companies in the industry, show success in solving problems central to the practice or well-being of the industry, and show a reputation of leadership amongst industry peers while challenging the industry to greater achievement. Employers, supervisors, or colleagues may nominate individuals.

7) BEST MARKETING AWARD – (Three Awards)

Category 1 Annual advertising/marketing budget under \$100,000

Category 2 Annual advertising/marketing budget of \$100,000 - \$499,999

Category 3 Annual advertising/marketing budget of \$500,000 or more

Judged on research, creativity, demographic targets and strategy, nominations should have an explanation of how the program was implemented and its level of success. What impact did it have on the market? (Nominations must include qualitative and quantitative data to support claims of success.) Did it achieve its objectives and goals? What impact did it have on future marketing? How did consumers receive it? Note: information entered here will be kept confidential to STS staff and judges and will not be shared publicly unless express consent is given. *If a category has less than three nominees within it, that category will fold into the next category above or below it. ***State Tourism Offices are not eligible for this award.**

8) BEST NICHE MARKETING AWARD – Judged on niche market viability and a distinct quality of unique, original, and creative thought. Focus on selection of the winner will be based on strategy: Submissions should reference research, creativity, demographic targets, strategy, and execution: Explanation of how it was implemented and its level of success. What impact did it have on the market? The successfully nominated niche marketing plan will demonstrate excellence, both in design and form.

9) PARTNERSHIP AWARD – Recognizing effective partnerships within the tourism industry. Examples would include partnerships successfully impacting any of the following: Marketing, Advocacy, Education and Development. What impact did the partnership have on the market or event? (Nominations must include qualitative and quantitative data to support claims of success.) Did the partnership achieve its objectives and goals? How was this partnership formulated? Where did the idea originate? Successful nominations would have a note from both/all partners noting how the partnership impacted their business and/or goals as well as any plans for future collaborations.

10) BEST DIGITAL MARKETING AWARD – Awarded to any organization using digital media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, website, digital advertising campaign, podcast, etc.) to promote a destination, attraction, property, event, or campaign. Applicant should include documentation showing reach, growth, and results during the award period. The judges will be looking for clear objectives, creative and effective implementation, and tangible and demonstrable results in the campaign award categories. They will also consider the structure, presentation, and clarity of each entry. Provide a detailed explanation of your implementation of the campaign. Include screenshots to help visualize campaigns. Provide information on the creativity of the campaign. Relate your results to the objectives and targets. Provide actual numbers rather than percentages wherever possible and show tangible results.

Awards Listed Below Are Not Open for Nomination

CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD AWARD – Selected solely by the Chairman of the STS Board of Directors.

DOROTHY HARDMAN SPIRIT OF STS - A special recognition to an individual who best expresses the genuine love and devotion Dorothy had for STS. The selection process is by a small, anonymous committee.