

2027 DBIA-SW Design-Build Excellence Awards Prospectus + Entry Guide

Entries open Dec. 1, 2026 | Entries and nominations close Jan. 22, 2027, at 5 p.m. CT

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Your Project Deserves the Spotlight

Across Texas, New Mexico, Arkansas, Louisiana and Oklahoma, design-build teams are delivering water systems, runways, roadways and buildings that communities count on. The **2027 DBIA-SW Design-Build Excellence Awards** celebrates the teams and Owners behind that work.

This is the region's first design-build awards program, and it's judged by the people who deliver and buy design-build: a panel of industry professionals and project Owners. Winners are honored on stage at the **2027 DBIA-SW Regional Conference + Golf Tournament**, April 13-14, 2027, at Tapatio Springs Hill Country Resort in Boerne, Texas (near San Antonio).

Submit your project. Bring your Owner. Show the region what Design-Build Done Right® looks like.

Objective

To recognize outstanding design-build projects in the Southwest Region that deliver best value for their Owners, and to showcase the collaboration, problem-solving and results that make design-build the region's delivery method of choice.

What Qualifies as a Design-Build Project

The project must be delivered under a design-build or progressive design-build contract, where a single entity holds responsibility for both design and construction. A DBIA contract document is not required.

The following methods are not eligible unless a single design-build entity held design and construction responsibility:

- Construction-Manager-at-Risk (CMAR)
- CM/GC
- Design-assist
- Integrated Project Delivery (IPD) under a multi-party agreement
- Design/Bid/Build

Eligibility

A project is eligible if:

- **It is located in** Texas, New Mexico, Arkansas, Louisiana or Oklahoma.
- **It reached substantial completion** between Jan. 1, 2022 and Dec. 31, 2026. For a phased project, use the last substantial completion date and list each phase in the entry form.
- **It has no unresolved claims or litigation** between contract parties, excluding lien claims.
- **It has not previously won a DBIA national award.**
- **It includes at least one DBIA-credentialed team member.** Each credentialed member also earns one point in scoring, up to five (see How to Enter).
- **The Owner has signed off.** The entry includes a signed Owner letter confirming the project facts and the Owner's willingness to be recognized. If the Owner can't provide a letter, include an Owner ranking (for example, an evaluation form or satisfaction survey),

an explanation of why a letter isn't obtainable and/or a letter from the Owner's advisor or representative, plus confirmation that the Owner agrees to the entry.
- **One entry per project.** The prime design-builder, the lead designer or the Owner submits it on behalf of the full team.
- DBIA membership is not required to enter. It affects the entry fee only

Award Categories

Projects compete in three sectors, matched to the conference tracks:

Category	Examples
Water/Wastewater	Treatment plants, pump stations, conveyance, storage
Transportation & Aviation	Roadways, bridges, interchanges, airfield and terminal work
General/Vertical/Commercial/Other	Public buildings, education, health care, commercial, industrial, parks and any project outside the first two sectors

Award levels:
- **Winner:** one per sector.
- **Best in Show:** one project chosen from the three sector Winners.

The judges may decline to name a Winner in any category that does not meet the standard. If a category receives fewer than three entries, DBIA-SW may combine it with another category, and affected entrants will be notified.

Owner Leadership Award

This award honors one Owner, from either a public or private Owner organization in the Southwest Region, who has advanced design-build through procurement, policy, program leadership or mentorship.

Nominations:
- **Who can nominate:** anyone, including self-nomination. There is no fee.
- **What to include:** answers to four short prompts (about 400 words total), the nominee's headshot and up to two letters of support. No waiver is required.

Who's eligible: an individual, not an organization, at a public or private Owner organization in Texas, New Mexico, Arkansas, Louisiana or Oklahoma. DBIA membership isn't required for the nominator or the nominee.

How it's reviewed: nominations are reviewed by industry professionals and project Owners.

Honoree recognition: the honoree is recognized on stage at the April 14 luncheon, joins the moderated interview and receives a complimentary conference registration.

Key Dates

Date	Milestone
Dec. 1, 2026	Call for entries opens
Jan. 16–22, 2027	Late entry fee applies ($300 member / $450 non-member)
Jan. 22, 2027, 5 p.m. CT	Entries and nominations close
Feb. 1–19, 2027	Judging
Feb. 26, 2027	Finalists notified confidentially
March 3, 2027	Finalists announced publicly
March 26, 2027	Finalist team registration deadline
April 14, 2027	Awards presented at the conference luncheon

Entry Fees

Entry type	Fee
Project entry, lead entrant firm is a DBIA member (through Jan. 15)	**$150**
Project entry, non-member (through Jan. 15)	**$300**
Project entry submitted by the Owner	**No fee**
Owner Leadership Award nomination	**No fee**

- Fees are paid at submission and are non-refundable.
- **Late fee:** entries submitted Jan. 16–22, 2027, are $300 for DBIA members and $450 for non-members. Owner-submitted entries stay free.

Judging

- **Who judges:** a panel of industry professionals and project Owners.
- **How entries are scored:** each entry is scored independently by at least three judges against the published 100-point rubric (see “How Entries Are Scored” on pg. 7).
- **Recusal:** a judge steps aside from any entry that involves their agency, their employer or a firm where they have a financial interest.
- **Final selection:** the judges meet Feb. 24, 2027, to confirm the finalists and Winners. The judges' decisions are final.
- **Confidentiality:** scores and deliberations are confidential. Entrants receive results only.
- **Questions:** during the entry period, staff answer questions about process, eligibility and rules only. Staff do not offer feedback on draft entries.

Recognition

- **Finalists:** announced March 3, 2027, and featured on dbia-sw.org, LinkedIn and in the DBIA-SW newsletter.
- **Winners:** revealed at the April 14 luncheon. Each winning project receives a digital badge, a LinkedIn graphic and a project page on dbia-sw.org.
- **At the luncheon:** The three sector Winners are announced, Best in Show and the Owner Leadership Award are revealed, and a moderator interviews the Best in Show team (Owner and design-build lead) and the Owner Leadership Award recipient. The session is planned for continuing education credit.
- **Interview commitment:** By entering, the project team agrees that, if named Best in Show, its Owner and design-build lead will take part in the interview on April 14. The Best in Show Owner receives a complimentary conference registration, and the design-build lead registers at the $450 speaker rate. Owner Leadership Award nominators agree to help their nominee attend the luncheon, and the honoree receives a complimentary conference registration.
- **Finalist teams:** register by March 26 at the $450 VIP rate and sit at reserved finalist tables at the luncheon. Each finalist receives a digital badge, a LinkedIn graphic and a project page on dbia-sw.org, and the Owner of each finalist project has a reserved $250 Owner's Ticket.

Entry Agreement, Release and Waiver

Each project entry includes the signed Entry Agreement, Release and Waiver, a separate document entrants download from the awards page, sign and upload with the entry. It covers accuracy and eligibility, Owner approval, use of entry text and photos, photo rights, names and event coverage, confidential information, fees, judging, finalist and Best in Show commitments and a release of claims. Owner Leadership Award nominations don't require it.

How to Enter

Your project narrative is the heart of your entry. It's how the judges, a panel of industry professionals and project Owners, will understand what your team built, how you built it together and what it meant for the Owner. This section covers what to gather, how to format the narrative and how each section is scored.

Before You Start

Everything is submitted through the online entry form at dbia-sw.org/awards. Have these ready before you begin:

- **Narrative:** your five-page narrative PDF (see Format at a Glance)
- **Photos:** up to 10 high-resolution .jpg or .png files with captions and photographer credits, plus the file name of one landscape photo to feature on ceremony slides and in announcements
- **Owner letter:** a signed, one-page Owner letter or the alternative documents (see The Owner Letter)
- **Signed waiver:** the Entry Agreement, Release and Waiver, downloaded from dbia-sw.org/awards and signed by an authorized representative
- **Logo:** your firm's high-resolution logo as a .png or .eps file
- **Project facts:** location, sector, project type and size, procurement method, commercial terms, Owner contact, team firms, original and final contract values, and contracted and actual completion dates
- **Safety rates:** the prime design-builder's TRIR, DART rate and EMR for 2023, 2024, 2025 and 2026 year to date
- **DBIA credentials:** the name, firm, project role and credential of each DBIA-credentialed team member (at least one, up to five)
- **Recognition listing:** exactly how the project name, city and state, design-builder, designer and Owner should read if your project is recognized
- **Entry fee:** paid when you submit. Owner-submitted entries are free.

Format at a Glance

- **File:** one PDF, uploaded through the online entry form
- **File name:** ProjectName_Narrative_2027DBIASW.pdf (for example, CedarCreekWTP_Narrative_2027DBIASW.pdf)
- **Page setup:** 8.5 x 11, portrait, single-spaced, page numbers in the lower right
- **Font:** Arial, 10-point or larger
- **Length:** five pages maximum. Pages beyond five are not read.
- **Images:** no photos, charts or graphics in the narrative. Simple text tables (for example, budget and schedule figures) are fine.
- **Not counted toward the five pages:** the signed Owner letter (one page) and the signed Entry Agreement, Release and Waiver, both uploaded separately
- **Photos:** up to 10 high-resolution .jpg or .png files, uploaded separately, with in-progress and completed shots, captions and photographer credits. Photos are required but not scored.

Tip: Project facts (location, sector, contract type, Owner, team firms, contract values, completion

dates and safety rates) go into the online entry form once. Don't spend narrative space repeating them. Use the narrative to explain the story behind the numbers.

How Entries Are Scored

Use the section numbers and titles below as headings, in this order, so judges can find each answer quickly.

Section	Points	Suggested length
1. Project Overview	Pass/fail	250 words maximum
2. The Design-Build Approach	30	About 1.5 pages
3. Results for the Owner	30	About 1.5 pages
4. The Owner's Perspective	15	One line pointing to the Owner letter
5. Problem-Solving and Impact	10	About 0.75 page
6. Safety	10	About 0.5 page
7. DBIA Credentials	Up to 5	A short list
Signed Entry Agreement, Release and Waiver	Pass/fail	Uploaded separately
Total	**100**	**Five pages**

Suggested lengths are a guide, not a rule; only the 250-word Project Overview limit is firm. The Design-Build Approach and Results for the Owner carry 60 of the 100 points, so give them most of your space.

Section by Section

Section 1: Project Overview (pass/fail, 250 words maximum)

Tell the judges what the project is, who it serves and why it mattered to the Owner. This section isn't scored, but it frames everything that follows, and an entry without it is incomplete.

- **Lead with the need.** What problem did the Owner have to solve?
- **Describe the project in plain language.** Write for an Owner from a different sector.
- **Close with the payoff.** What's different for the community or the Owner now that it's built?

Example opening: "When a growing suburb outpaced its only water plant, the city needed 10

million more gallons a day before summer peak demand returned. Our team delivered a new treatment train in 22 months while the existing plant stayed online."

Section 2: The Design-Build Approach (30 points)

Show how your team worked as one. Judges want to see design-build working the way it's meant to, not a design/bid/build project with a different contract.

- How the contracts were structured among the Owner, the design-builder, designers and specialty firms
- How the design-builder was engaged (for example, from project inception or in response to Owner-issued design criteria or a conceptual design) and how the team was selected
- How the team worked together through design and construction: co-location, shared decision-making and how the Owner took part
- The Owner's goals for scope, quality, cost and schedule, and how the team organized to meet them
- How you put Design-Build Done Right® best practices to work
- For progressive design-build: how the phases, the price development and the off-ramps were managed

Instead of: "The team utilized a highly collaborative process." **Try:** "The Owner's engineer, our designer and our superintendent met weekly in a shared site office. Design questions that once took 10 days to answer were settled in two."

Section 3: Results for the Owner (30 points)

Prove the project delivered. Numbers persuade Owners, so use them, and explain any differences between contracted and final figures.

- **Budget and schedule:** how the project performed against the Owner's budget and schedule. Owner-directed scope changes and unforeseen conditions are not counted as overruns, so explain them.
- **Quality:** how quality expectations were set and met, and what the Owner has seen since turnover
- **Best value:** decisions the team brought to the Owner that saved money or time, or added capability

Example: Cost was $42.0 million at contract and $43.1 million final; the Owner added a second clarifier ($1.4 million), and team savings totaled $0.3 million. Substantial completion was contracted for June 30, 2025, and reached May 15, 2025, thanks to early equipment procurement. (Figures are illustrative only.)

Section 4: The Owner's Perspective (15 points)

Judges score this section from your signed Owner letter, uploaded separately. In the narrative, include the heading and one line: "See the attached letter from [Owner name and title]." See The Owner Letter below for what to include.

Section 5: Problem-Solving and Impact (10 points)

- The toughest challenge the team faced, how you solved it together and what design-build made possible that another delivery method wouldn't have

- Community, sustainability or resiliency outcomes

Pick one challenge and tell it well rather than listing five. Describe the problem, the options the team weighed, the decision and the result.

Section 6: Safety (10 points)

Describe the project-specific safety approach and how design-build supported it. For example, did design decisions remove hazards before crews reached the site? Did the Owner, designer and builder plan high-risk work together? The prime design-builder's company safety rates are entered as numbers in the online form, not in the narrative:

- **TRIR** (total recordable incident rate) for 2023, 2024, 2025 and 2026 year to date
- **DART rate** (days away, restricted or transferred) for the same years
- **EMR** (experience modification rate) for the same years

Most firms pull TRIR and DART from their OSHA Form 300A annual summary and EMR from their workers' compensation carrier. Lower is better on all three, and an EMR of 1.0 is the industry average. If a rate rose in a given year, you can use the narrative to explain what changed and what the firm did about it.

Section 7: DBIA Credentials (up to 5 points)

Every entry must include at least one DBIA-credentialed team member. List each DBIA-credentialed team member's name, firm, role on this project and credential. Each credentialed team member earns one point, up to five points.

Example: Jordan Lee, DBIA, ABC Builders, design-build project manager

The Owner Letter

A strong Owner letter is one page, on the Owner's letterhead and signed. It covers:

- Why the Owner chose design-build for this project and how the team was selected
- What worked, in the Owner's own words, with specific results
- Whether the Owner would use design-build again
- Confirmation of the project facts and the Owner's willingness to be recognized

If the Owner can't provide a letter, upload an Owner ranking (such as an evaluation form or satisfaction survey), a short explanation of why a letter isn't available and/or a letter from the Owner's advisor or representative, plus confirmation that the Owner agrees to the entry.

Tip: Ask for the letter early. Many public Owners need time for internal review before they sign anything.

Writing Tips From the Judges' Chair

- **Write for an Owner.** Your readers include public and private Owners. Skip internal shorthand, and define any acronym the first time you use it.
- **Show, don't claim.** "Collaborative" and "innovative" earn nothing on their own. The decision, the number and the result earn points.
- **Credit the whole team.** Name the Owner, the designers and the specialty firms where they made a difference.

- **Keep it consistent.** Use the same project name, firm names and figures in your entry form, narrative and Owner letter.
- **Leave out sensitive details.** Don't include confidential pricing, proprietary methods or security-sensitive information about critical infrastructure. Entry materials may be published.
- **Have someone outside the project read it.** If they can't explain why the project mattered after one read, tighten it.

Before You Submit

- ☐ Narrative is one PDF, five pages or fewer, Arial 10-point or larger, single-spaced, with page numbers in the lower right
- ☐ File is named ProjectName_Narrative_2027DBIASW.pdf
- ☐ Sections 1 through 7 appear in order with their headings
- ☐ Project Overview is 250 words or fewer
- ☐ No photos or graphics are embedded in the narrative
- ☐ At least one DBIA-credentialed team member is listed
- ☐ Signed Owner letter (or the alternative documents) is ready to upload
- ☐ Safety rates for 2023, 2024, 2025 and 2026 year to date are ready to enter
- ☐ Up to 10 photos, with captions and photographer credits, are ready to upload
- ☐ The Entry Agreement, Release and Waiver is signed by an authorized representative
- ☐ Figures and names match across the narrative, entry form and Owner letter

Owner Leadership Award Nominations

Nominations go through the separate online nomination form at dbia-sw.org/awards. There is no fee, and no waiver is required. Have these ready:

- **Nomination statement:** answers to four prompts, about 400 words total: how the Owner has advanced design-build in the region (150 words maximum), one example of their leadership in procurement, policy or program management (100 words maximum), how they have built collaboration with industry or mentored others (75 words maximum) and the results you can point to (75 words maximum)
- **Nominee details:** name, title, Owner organization, contact information and whether the nominee knows about the nomination
- **Headshot:** a high-resolution .jpg or .png of the nominee
- **Letters of support:** up to two, one page each (optional)

Specific examples carry the most weight. The honoree is recognized on stage April 14, 2027, joins the moderated interview and receives a complimentary conference registration.

Questions

Contact **info@dbia-sw.org**. Program details are at dbia-sw.org/awards.