

# What's New for the 2026 NMPA Better Newspaper Contest

The New Mexico Press Association has updated the Better Newspaper Contest rules to better reflect the way today's newspapers and news organizations serve their communities. While the contest maintains its traditional structure, several enhancements have been made for 2026.

**A-Mark Prize for Investigative Reporting** which will award **\$15,000 in prize money** to recognize outstanding investigative journalism. We encourage eligible news organizations to consider submitting their strongest investigative work.

## New Contest Categories

We're excited to introduce four new categories recognizing excellence in digital journalism and audience engagement:

- **Best Use of Social Media**
- **Best Video Journalism**
- **Best Podcast / Audio Journalism**
- **Best Email Newsletter**

These categories recognize the growing role of digital storytelling and provide additional opportunities to showcase your work.

## Expanded Associate Member Eligibility

Associate Members may now enter **all contest categories** for which their work qualifies. This change ensures that all eligible members have the opportunity to compete and be recognized for excellence.

## Freelance Work

Work produced by freelance writers, photographers, videographers, illustrators, and other contributors is eligible when entered by the publication in which it was published.

## Updated Category Names

Several category names have been updated to better reflect current newsroom practices:

- Breaking News – Digital → **Digital Breaking News Coverage**
- Explanation of News Operations or Newspaper → **Transparency & News Literacy**
- Environmental or Agricultural Writing → **Environment & Agriculture Reporting**

- Best Review → **Arts & Entertainment Review**
- Newspaper Subscription Online Promotion → **Digital Subscription Promotion**
- Newspaper Subscription Print Promotion → **Print Subscription Promotion**
- Innovative Online Advertising → **Innovative Digital Advertising**
- Advertising Campaign – Digital → **Digital Advertising Campaign**
- Advertising Campaign – Print → **Print Advertising Campaign**

## Updated Rules

The contest rules have been modernized to include:

- An Artificial Intelligence (AI) policy.
- Updated submission guidelines for digital entries, including websites, video, podcasts, newsletters, and social media.
- Expanded judging criteria for **Best Website**.
- Simplified submission instructions to make the entry process easier to follow.

## Important Dates

**Contest Period:** July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026

**Entry Portal Opens:** July 7, 2026

**Entry Deadline:** August 7, 2026, at 4:59 p.m. Mountain Time

**Awards Celebration:** October 10, 2026

We encourage all eligible publications to review the updated rules and begin preparing entries. We look forward to celebrating another outstanding year of New Mexico journalism!