

GUIDANCE FOR SUBMITTING APPLICATIONS TO THE MSC SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD AWARDS CANADA & US



This guidance document contains suggestions to support successful applications and nominations by all stakeholders for the MSC Sustainable Seafood Awards Canada & US 2027.

Please note that judges will base their decisions **only** on documentation submitted in the award application process. They will not factor in any outside knowledge of the company, fishery, brand, or individual named in the application.

Judges have signed NDAs to ensure any information you provide remains confidential.

PREPARING YOUR ENTRY

To assist in the planning process, develop a checklist of materials and data required for the submission so that you and your team can internally pull this together as a work in progress.

Review the criteria for your award selection on the last page.

Requirements for each award category vary slightly, but in general your application will require:

- **Basic contact info** for the applicant and nominee
- **Application package** (no specific format provided, up to the applicant to develop)
 - **Opening narrative:** an executive summary about the nominee's commitment to incentivizing sustainable fishing and seafood that succinctly communicates all the work/key takeaways and activities in a snapshot.
 - **Business case for why your nominee qualifies** for the award category you've selected: A narrative on the claims and data that substantiates your submission will help judges accurately score against the criteria.
 - **Supporting documents**, where relevant, to highlight the nominee's commitment to MSC and success in meeting the award criteria. See the list below for possible supporting documents.
- **A few final questions** to help your application stand out.

Supporting materials can include but are not limited to:

- Graphs and data visualizations
- Sustainability reports or presentations
- Success stories
- Third party quotes from influential stakeholders
- Quotes from internal leadership
- Promotional campaigns
- Catalogues
- Brochures
- Media articles
- Radio sound bites

You will be able to save your application as you work on it, so you can review the question and come back any time.

FINAL CHECKS BEFORE SUBMISSION:

- Get someone who was not involved in the submission to proofread it.
- Ensure file size meets size limits – if your file is too large consider using Dropbox or WeTransfer.
- Remember that a panel of judges will be reviewing all materials you submit, so please ensure your supporting materials are accurately named and easy to interpret.

If you experience any problems submitting your application, please contact CanadaUSawards@msc.org



1. MSC SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD RETAILER OF THE YEAR

This award goes to a Retailer with the most significant commitment to MSC certified sustainable seafood, based on the following areas:

1. SOURCING POLICY AND COMMITMENTS

Has an up-to-date, robust, and ambitious seafood sourcing policy that prioritizes MSC certified and labeled seafood and includes categories beyond seafood that include marine ingredients. Key criteria include:

- Strength of sustainable sourcing policy and commitments
- Diversity in coverage across the store (private label, national brands, different categories, etc)
- Commitment or achievement of Chain of Custody at the store level
- Willingness and initiative to be a driver of change for the industry
- Strength of progress reporting against commitments
- Inclusion of the MSC Improvement Program fisheries in sourcing policy

2. GROWTH IN MSC LABELED PORTFOLIO

Offers a diverse, growing range of MSC labeled products including private label and proprietary brands. Key considerations include:

- Amount of MSC labeled items offered (volume, # SKUs, # of species, # store categories)
- Percent growth over the last year
- Expansion into new categories e.g., pet food, health supplements, sushi

3. COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT

Is celebratory, informative, and visible about their MSC certified seafood range, commitment, and program. Key considerations include:

- MSC education on owned and external channels
- Participation in MSC-led campaigns e.g., World Ocean Day, Earth Month, National Seafood Month.
- Employee engagement efforts
- Participation in speaking engagements demonstrating commitment and pride in your MSC partnership.
- Demonstrated examples of spokespeople and organization ambassadors talking with pride and knowledge about the retailer's MSC partnership.

2. NEW MSC CERTIFIED PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

This award recognizes an MSC certified consumer-facing product launched in the last 2 years. Key criteria include:

1. PRODUCT ATTRIBUTES

The product has sustainability and the MSC label as one of its core attributes. It also demonstrates uniqueness through innovation, selling points, flavors, or otherwise that sets it apart in its category.

2. CONSUMER EDUCATION & PROMOTION

The product and its sustainability features are being actively promoted or have secured plans to be. Key considerations include:

- Promotion and education on owned channels
- Communicates the story of their new product's sustainability to consumers
- High impact / high reach outputs included in new product promotions, e.g., outdoor advertising, TV/streaming, PR/Media, etc.
- Participation in MSC-led campaigns e.g., World Ocean Day, Earth Month, National Seafood Month
- Collaborations with spokespeople, ambassadors, and collaborators e.g. influencer and content creator partners

3. MSC SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

This award recognizes a supply chain business that's committed to providing MSC certified sustainable seafood to their customers.

1. SOURCING POLICY, COMMITMENTS, AND ENGAGEMENT WITH MSC

Has an up-to-date, robust, and ambitious seafood sourcing policy that prioritizes MSC certified and labeled seafood and other marine ingredients or products.

- MSC certification status and length of tenure
- Strength of sustainable sourcing policy and commitments
- Willingness and initiative to be a driver of change for the industry
- Strength of progress reporting against commitments
- Inclusion of the MSC Improvement Program fisheries in sourcing policy
- Actively promoting MSC partnership and MSC certified products to their customers and/or suppliers
- Active engagement with the MSC beyond certification

2. COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

Is celebratory, informative, and visible about their MSC certified seafood range, commitment, and program. Key criteria include:

- Communicates and promotion on owned channels e.g. website, social media, customer emails
- Participation in MSC-led campaigns e.g., World Ocean Day, Earth Month, National Seafood Month, and others
- Activities supporting education and awareness of MSC certified fisheries or species
- Employee engagement efforts

4. MSC FISHERY IMPROVEMENT OF THE YEAR

This award recognizes an MSC-certified or MSC Improvement Program fishery that achieved or implemented a significant sustainability improvement in 2026. The work may be part of a longer-term project, provided that significant progress, implementation or measurable results occurred during the year.

1. SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPACT OF THE IMPROVEMENT

The significance of the improvement relative to the fishery's previous performance and sustainability challenges, including evidence of implementation, measurable results and lasting impact.

Improvements may relate to stock health, bycatch, habitat impacts, fishing practices, monitoring, data collection, management or governance.

2. INVESTMENT AND COMMITMENT

The fishery's investment of time, funding, equipment, research or expertise, including collaboration with harvesters, Indigenous communities, scientists, managers or other stakeholders.

3. INNOVATION AND LEADERSHIP

The development or adoption of an innovative approach to a sustainability challenge, including its potential to provide learning or benefits for other fisheries.

5. MSC CHANGEMAKER OF THE YEAR

This award goes to an individual in the fishing community who catalyzed meaningful change by enabling, advancing or supporting a fishery (fisheries) through the MSC Certification or Improvement Program process in the 2026 calendar year. The award may not be presented every year if no nominee sufficiently meets the criteria, listed below.

IMPACT

The award honors an individual who, through demonstrated leadership, courage, commitment, advocacy, or innovation, has enabled, led or significantly supported initiatives or projects that drove progress in the sustainable management of a fishery (fisheries) in the MSC Certification or Improvement Programs.

Examples can include overcoming significant barriers, challenging the status quo, or bringing together diverse stakeholders to achieve the successful completion of a fishery certification or recertification, Fishery Improvement Program milestones, strengthened stakeholder collaboration, adoption of sustainable fishing practices, improved data collection or monitoring, habitat or bycatch mitigation measures, or other measurable outcomes.

Nominees may come from any sector, including fishing, seafood businesses, science, Indigenous leadership, fisheries management, policy, conservation, academia, or community leadership.

This could include, though is not limited to, events, festivals, education seafood expos, outreach, local media, competitions, or campaigns.

6. MSC LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

This award recognizes an individual for a lifetime commitment to the sustainable wild-caught fishing and seafood movement. Nominees may come from any sector, including fishing, seafood businesses, science, Indigenous leadership, fisheries management, policy, conservation, academia, or community leadership. The award may not be presented every year if no nominee sufficiently meets the criteria.

Key considerations include:

LEGACY

This award honors an individual whose career has significantly advanced sustainable wild-caught seafood sector and exemplified the values championed by the Marine Stewardship Council. Their leadership, integrity, and commitment have created lasting improvements that will continue to benefit fisheries, oceans, coastal communities, and future generations.