TiE-DC 2026 Industry Awards

Nomination Guide

Read this page before completing a nomination form.

What is being awarded

TiE-DC presents four awards at the 2026 Awards Gala on Saturday, November 14. Three are open to nomination from anyone in the region. The Lifetime Achievement Award is selected by the TiE-DC board and is not open to nomination.

Visionary Entrepreneur of the Year

Founder led company in DC, Maryland, or Northern Virginia, operating five or more years.

Catalyst Award

An individual or institution responsible for the growth of two or more regional ventures.

Emerging Entrepreneur of the Year

Company under five years old, pre Series B or under $5M revenue, regional headquarters.

What a nomination requires

- A completed form for one category. A nominee may be entered in only one category.
- A nomination statement of up to 500 words.
- Five short answers of up to 100 words each. Each answer maps to one scoring criterion.
- Optional supporting links. No attachments over 10MB.
- Confirmation that the nominee knows they have been nominated and will attend if named a finalist.

How nominations are judged

A jury of five scores every eligible nomination against a published rubric, on five criteria, using a one to five scale. Criteria are weighted differently by category. The three highest scores in each category become finalists. Self nomination is permitted and is not scored differently. Jurors declare conflicts and do not score nominations they are connected to. A sponsor holding a jury seat does not score the category their firm sponsors.

The five criteria are impact and results, innovation and originality, growth and trajectory, contribution to the regional ecosystem, and leadership and integrity. The full rubric is published separately and is available on request.

Dates

Aug 17	Sep 25	Oct 9	Nov 14
Nominations open	Nominations close	Finalists announced	Winners announced

How to submit

Email the completed form to exec@tie-dc.org with the subject line "2026 Award Nomination, [category], [nominee name]." Nominations received after 11:59pm Eastern on September 25, 2026 are not considered. You will receive an acknowledgment within two business days. If you do not, assume the nomination was not received and resend.

Write with specifics. Numbers, dates, and named outcomes score higher than adjectives. A nomination that says "grew rapidly" scores below one that says "grew from 8 to 47 employees between 2024 and 2026."

Visionary Entrepreneur of the Year

For a founder or CEO whose company has achieved meaningful scale and regional significance.

Nominee

Nominee full name

Title

Company

Company headquarters, city and state

Company website and year founded

Nominee email

Nominator

Your name

Your title and organization

Your email

Your phone

Your relationship to the nominee

Is this a self nomination? Yes / No

Eligibility, confirm all that apply

- ☐ The nominee is a founder or CEO of the company named above.
- ☐ The company is headquartered in DC, Maryland, or Northern Virginia.
- ☐ The company has been operating for five or more years.
- ☐ The nominee will attend the gala on November 14 if named a finalist.

Nomination statement, up to 500 words

Attach as a separate page or paste below the form. Tell the jury what this nominee did and why it mattered.

Five short answers, up to 100 words each

1. Impact and results. What has the company achieved? Give figures: revenue, customers, employees, capital raised.

2. Innovation and originality. What is original about the product, model, or approach?

3. Growth and trajectory. What changed over the last 24 months, and what is credibly next for the company?

4. Contribution to the ecosystem. How has the nominee mentored, hired, invested in, or strengthened the regional community?

5. Leadership and integrity. How were these results achieved, and what culture did the nominee build?

Supporting links, up to three (website, press, filings, portfolio)

By submitting, the nominator confirms the information is accurate and the nominee is aware of this nomination.

Visionary Entrepreneur of the Year

Nomination statement and expanded answer space. Submit with page 2.

Nominee full name

Nominator name

Nomination statement, up to 500 words

Type directly in the box below. It scrolls if you write past the space shown.

Five short answers, expanded space

Use these boxes if you need more room than the form page allows. Answer here or there, not both.

1. Impact and results, up to 100 words.
2. Innovation and originality, up to 100 words.
3. Growth and trajectory, up to 100 words.
4. Contribution to the ecosystem, up to 100 words.
5. Leadership and integrity, up to 100 words.

Catalyst Award

For the investor, mentor, or ecosystem builder who accelerated other people's companies.

Nominee

Nominee full name

Title

Firm or organization

Firm headquarters, city and state

Website and role type

Nominee email

Nominator

Your name

Your title and organization

Your email

Your phone

Your relationship to the nominee

Is this a self nomination? Yes / No

Eligibility, confirm all that apply

- ☐ The nominee has materially advanced two or more ventures based in the region.
- ☐ The nominee is active in the DC, Maryland, or Northern Virginia market.
- ☐ The nomination names the specific ventures advanced.
- ☐ The nominee will attend the gala on November 14 if named a finalist.

Nomination statement, up to 500 words

Attach as a separate page or paste below the form. Tell the jury what this nominee did and why it mattered.

Five short answers, up to 100 words each

1. Impact and results. Name at least two regional ventures advanced, and what measurably changed for each.

2. Innovation and originality. What is distinctive about how the nominee helps founders?

3. Growth and trajectory. What have those ventures achieved in the last 24 months through the nominee?

4. Contribution to the ecosystem. Beyond individual companies, what has the nominee built, funded, or taught?

5. Leadership and integrity. How does the nominee behave when a venture struggles or a deal goes against them?

Supporting links, up to three (website, press, filings, portfolio)

By submitting, the nominator confirms the information is accurate and the nominee is aware of this nomination.

Catalyst Award

Nomination statement and expanded answer space. Submit with page 4.

Nominee full name

Nominator name

Nomination statement, up to 500 words

Type directly in the box below. It scrolls if you write past the space shown.

Five short answers, expanded space

Use these boxes if you need more room than the form page allows. Answer here or there, not both.

1. Impact and results, up to 100 words.
2. Innovation and originality, up to 100 words.
3. Growth and trajectory, up to 100 words.
4. Contribution to the ecosystem, up to 100 words.
5. Leadership and integrity, up to 100 words.

Emerging Entrepreneur of the Year

For the early stage founder on a clear upward trajectory.

Nominee

Nominee full name

Title

Company

Company headquarters, city and state

Company website and year founded

Nominee email and funding stage

Nominator

Your name

Your title and organization

Your email

Your phone

Your relationship to the nominee

Is this a self nomination? Yes / No

Eligibility, confirm all that apply

- ☐ The company was founded less than five years ago.
- ☐ The company is pre Series B, or under $5M in annual revenue.
- ☐ The company is headquartered in DC, Maryland, or Northern Virginia.
- ☐ The nominee will attend the gala on November 14 if named a finalist.

Nomination statement, up to 500 words

Attach as a separate page or paste below the form. Tell the jury what this nominee did and why it mattered.

Five short answers, up to 100 words each

1. Impact and results. What has the company achieved so far? Users, pilots, contracts, or revenue.

2. Innovation and originality. What is the founding insight, and why had others not acted on it?

3. Growth and trajectory. What changed in the last 12 to 24 months, and what comes next?

4. Contribution to the ecosystem. How does the nominee engage with and give back to the founder community?

5. Leadership and integrity. How is the nominee building the team and setting standards for growth?

Supporting links, up to three (website, press, filings, portfolio)

By submitting, the nominator confirms the information is accurate and the nominee is aware of this nomination.

Emerging Entrepreneur of the Year

Nomination statement and expanded answer space. Submit with page 6.

Nominee full name

Nominator name

Nomination statement, up to 500 words

Type directly in the box below. It scrolls if you write past the space shown.

Five short answers, expanded space

Use these boxes if you need more room than the form page allows. Answer here or there, not both.

1. Impact and results, up to 100 words.
2. Innovation and originality, up to 100 words.
3. Growth and trajectory, up to 100 words.
4. Contribution to the ecosystem, up to 100 words.
5. Leadership and integrity, up to 100 words.