

The CIPD HR Awards in Ireland 2026



CIPD

Recognising excellence in people development

Are you ready to enter the most prestigious HR awards in Ireland? This is your opportunity to identify and be recognised for your best work and impact.

CIPD, the professional body for the people profession, supports you to champion better work and working lives. In the face of economic uncertainty, the profession has shown great leadership and is shaping the future of work.

Our Awards are designed to recognise the impact of the people profession in addressing the trends in a people-centric way and to showcase this excellent work.

With our robust judging process, the recipients of our awards are noted among their peers as having achieved the top tier of excellence within their field.

Read through this comprehensive document and identify which category best applies to your organisation at this time and see how you can demonstrate the valuable contribution and impact you and your team have made as we work together to champion better work and working lives.

Closing date for receipt of entries is **Wednesday 15 October 2025**.

If you have any queries, please contact the CIPD Ireland Awards team on awards@cipd.ie

Best of luck with your entry!

The CIPD Ireland team

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Rules of entry

All entries must be made via the submit platform (see page 5). Your entry must be finalised. If the entry is not completed correctly, it may be deemed to be an invalid entry. Entries at draft stage and late entries will not be considered valid entries

- CIPD Ireland and the judging panel reserves the right to confirm the accuracy of the information provided. The decision of the judges is final, and no further correspondence will be entered into.
- You may apply for more than one category, **but any entry must not replicate another, and must provide new information specific to that category**, i.e., similar or identical information cannot be used to enter multiple categories. You may not be a finalist in more than three categories, and CIPD Ireland will contact entrants to discuss if appropriate. Previous winners may not present their winning entry as a basis for subsequent award entries.
- Word counts (not including the organisation details) cannot exceed **2,000** words for the team awards and individual awards (Most inspirational and impactful leader and Rising star of the people profession). Each question must be completed online and has an individual wordcount. You will not be able to proceed if you exceed this.
- **Please note:** This word count includes links to additional information on company websites. The information provided via links is not included in the overall wordcount and judges may not view this additional information.
- Consultants and other service providers may jointly enter with client organisations. All entries must be signed off by an appropriate person within the client organisation.
- At the end of the submission process, you will be asked to confirm your entry and permission for CIPD Ireland to use the information and share with the judges. If you do not confirm your entry, it will be deemed 'incomplete' and will not be part of the judging process.
- Entrants agree to co-operate with CIPD Ireland who may wish to publicise entries through the use of social media, case studies, specific media articles and events. Commercial sensitivity will always be respected.
- Where a conflict of interest may arise with suppliers / contractors to CIPD Ireland, such applications will be pre-assessed prior to the judging process.
- At the end of the application process, you will be required to confirm your acceptance of the rules of entry and certify that the information provided on the entry form is true and accurate.
- Winners of the HR Awards 2026 will have the opportunity to be a finalist in the People Management Awards 2026.

Preparing for your entry

As you prepare your entry keep in mind the following guidance, hints and tips. We advise you to read this entire 2026 awards entry information pack before you start your application online.

CIPD professional values and principles

- The [Profession Map](#) sits at the core of our profession and your entry is a way in which you can reinforce our CIPD professional values of being [evidence-based](#) and [outcomes-driven](#).
- We are encouraging applicants to demonstrate how their entry embodies one or more of the [CIPD professional principles](#) that work matters, people matter, and professionalism matters.
- Judges will give credit for solid examples provided.

Clearly describe the business need

- Make sure that you clearly indicate the business transformation or change undertaken, setting out the role of the people team and the business need that was being addressed.
- You should ask yourself these questions:
 - What was the intended outcome and how was HR central to that?
 - What was the specific thinking driving the HR effort?
 - How did that effort lead to a positive outcome?
- Remember, a great HR idea, initiative or project that isn't firmly embedded in the needs of the organisation or brought to life in your entry may not stand out amongst others, no matter how brilliant.

Show evidence of delivery and achievement

- The judging process is designed around being able to clearly identify measurable results and outcomes as a result of the specific actions taken by the people profession and those who collaborated with the activities.
- Entrants are asked to clearly indicate where their journey started and where they got to as a result of taking a decisive and distinctive approach. So, quantify your outcomes, using appropriate metrics relevant to the business when and where possible!

- Entrants at the early stage of an intervention may not be successful if they struggle to demonstrate impact. More time may be necessary to build up your evidence before entering the Awards.

Explain the people aspects of the project or initiative

- Set out the specific human resource and people management actions that were taken throughout the change or transformation delivered.
- Outline how you achieved support for the project / initiative amongst employees and senior managers.
- Tell us about any cross functional collaboration that was required within the organisation.
- Good entries often have interesting / innovative communication strategies that clearly get the message across to all stakeholders. Which communications methods worked best for your organisation?
- Explain how you intend to build on these efforts in the future

Show the distinctiveness of your approach

- Explain what is unique or innovative about your entry.
- What was the scale and complexity of the challenge(s) that had to be overcome?
- Make sure to tell us how the sustainable approach taken will support the organisation in the future.
- Identify how the approach evolved the culture of the organisation to ensure sustainable competitive advantage, engagement and people development.

The application process

Submitting your entry online

- Entries must be completed using our online application platform Submit: <https://cipd.submit.com/>
- While Submit is supported by other browsers, Chrome is the recommended browser for the best user experience.

- You will be asked to register and create your unique login on [Submit](#) before you begin to enter a category.
- You can start your application, save and return to complete at a later stage. You will be able to download and print your application as you go and will receive a copy with the email confirming your completed submission.
- The name of the entering organisation will always be used as the name referred to in all announcements and marketing communications, unless instructed otherwise.
- Watch out for the word count, each individual question has a word limit. Submit will not let you exceed the word count per question.
- There is a different entry form for the nominations of the Rising star of the people profession and Most inspirational and impactful leader categories.
- Attachments should be used to provide information such as a table or graphic to support your application, but these will not be scored.
- At the end of the submission process, you will be asked to confirm your entry and permission for CIPD Ireland to use the information. If you do not confirm your entry, it will be deemed 'incomplete' and cannot be accessed by the judges.

Entry timelines

- All entries must be completed and fully submitted by **23:59, Wednesday 15 October 2025**.
- Finalists in each category will be announced online and communicated on **Tuesday, 25 November 2025**. An online briefing for finalists will take place on **Thursday 27 November 2025**.
- Finalists are required to make a short presentation to the judging panel on either **14 or 15 January 2026** in a virtual judging process. Each finalist will be required to use their own computer to present to the virtual judging panel. Any presentation or video will be required to be sent to CIPD Ireland in advance of the judging day.
- Winners will be announced at the exciting afternoon awards ceremony on **13 February 2026** in the Round Room of the Mansion House.

Communication and marketing

- The organisation / individual nominated name provided will always be the name used in all announcements, CIPD websites and marketing communications, unless instructed otherwise.
- Entrants agree to co-operate with CIPD Ireland who may wish to publicise entries through the use of social media, case studies, specific media articles and events. Commercial sensitivity will always be respected.
- CIPD Ireland and sponsoring organisations may use photographs / video of the awards ceremony and winners as appropriate. Delegates attending the ceremony may contact us in advance to let us know where such permission is not granted.
- You can review previous [winning entries](#). Please note, while these videos do not provide the full picture of the impact of each intervention, they may inspire you as you prepare your entry.

Judging Process

We operate a robust multi-tiered judging process that sets the annual CIPD HR Awards apart. The recipients of our awards are noted among their peers as having achieved the top tier of excellence within their category field.

The marking and judging process has been carefully designed to ensure that outcomes are fair, transparent and credible, and winners have reached a high standard.

The process is as follows:

1. Initial submissions are judged by a panel of experts who assess the quality of the information provided against the category descriptors and the questions asked.
2. The shortlisted entries are announced as finalists. A category may be divided in two, when both the volume and standard of entries are high.
3. Finalists are invited to attend an online briefing session. Guidance on planning and preparing to meet the judges is also provided.
4. The second stage of the judging puts the finalists through a rigorous judging process where they meet a panel of expert judges for a virtual interview. Judges want to hear the story and impact of the initiative, presentations and videos are optional but recommended.
5. The finalist interviews will take place online on **14 and 15 January 2026**.

Our judges

Our thanks to Professor Bill Roche, Full Professor of Industrial Relations and Human Resources at UCD Smurfit Graduate Business School who oversees the judging process and has done so for several years. This ensures all judges are provided with clear criteria and guidelines as well as stringent mechanisms to assess and score the entries. There is also a panel of head judges who oversee the final decisions. The judges' decisions are final.

Our impressive diverse judges are HR leaders, experts and former winners coming from a variety of roles, sectors and organisations. Judges commit to confidentiality and avoidance of conflicts of interest.

Feedback from judges in previous years

- Keep the responses straightforward and jargon light. Use as few internal acronyms as possible!
- Strong entries have a clear format and structure to their answers.
- The judges will be looking for evidence of the outcomes achieved.
- Sounds obvious, but make sure to answer the question that's asked and not the one that you wish had been asked.
- Make sure you are entering the right category for your initiative/project.
- Successful entries reflect the criteria of the award category. We encourage entrants to fully understand the award criteria for the category that they are entering and make sure that this criterion comes across in the entry and presentations.
- Avoid focusing solely on metrics that are not directly linked to the business.
- The judges were impressed with entries that clearly indicated where their journey started and where they got to as a result of taking a decisive and distinctive approach. For some entries it was too soon in the journey for any insights to be available. So, ensure you can show the impact in your organisation.
- Successful entries demonstrated how the sustainable approach taken would support the organisation in the future and how the approach evolved the culture of the organisation to ensure performance, engagement and people development.

2026 HR Award categories

Each year the categories of the CIPD Ireland HR Awards are designed to reflect the areas core to the work of the people profession, as well as current trends affecting what we do.

For 2026 we are introducing four new categories – recognising both emerging priorities and long-standing areas of impact that are now firmly in the spotlight:

- Reward and recognition strategy
- Global people strategy
- Future workforce strategy
- Most inspirational and impactful leader

Please read all category definitions carefully and select the category that best reflects your work and where you can provide appropriate evidence. Study the Rules alongside these guidelines carefully to understand all our requirements.

We strongly encourage entries to reflect the CIPD [principles](#) by demonstrating that work matters, people matter and professionalism matters.

Don't forget that the [Profession Map](#) sits at the core of our profession and our Awards are a way in which you can reinforce our professional values of being [evidence-based](#) and [outcomes-driven](#).

Categories

- **AI, technology and workforce transformation**

This category recognises initiatives where People strategy drives the adoption of AI, automation, HR technology, or data analytics to transform how work is done and how people are supported. It highlights HR's role in leading ethical, inclusive, psychologically safe, and sustainable digital change. Judges will look for clear strategy, use of tools such as HRIS or AI-driven platforms, and measurable impact on people, culture, and business performance. Entries should show how workforce readiness is supported through education, future-fit skills, and trust-building, with responsible AI use embedded via safety rails and integration into policies, procedures, and ways of working.

- **Consultancy or strategic partnership**

For consultants, suppliers, or partnerships that have delivered strategic HR or L&D outcomes for a client organisation. Judges will seek evidence of partnership alignment, co-created solutions, and quantifiable outcomes that addressed specific business challenges.

- **Equality, diversity and inclusion initiative**

Honours individuals, teams, or strategic programmes that have advanced equality, diversity and inclusion in meaningful, sustainable ways. Entries should include clear goals, robust action plans, evidence of structural change, and metrics demonstrating progress in representation, engagement, or behavioural change.

- **Future workforce strategy (New)**

For strategies that plan a future-fit workforce by redesigning work, jobs, workforce structures and ways of working to meet evolving business needs. Entries should demonstrate proactive skills development, workforce agility, and innovative resourcing models. Evidenced by strategic planning, cross-functional collaboration, and measurable readiness to tackle emerging challenges and opportunities.

- **Global people strategy (New)**

For organisations operating both in Ireland and internationally that have implemented an integrated people strategy across jurisdictions. Entries should show how global frameworks are adapted to local context, and provide evidence of consistency, scalability, and results across diverse locations.

- **HR Excellence in a small business (SME)**

For organisations with fewer than 150 employees that demonstrate strategic, agile, and high-impact people practices. Entries should show how they have utilised resources effectively to deliver measurable business or people outcomes and showcase the vital role of HR in enabling success in a smaller business environment.

- **Learning and development initiative**

For initiatives that strategically align education, learning and development with business goals to close critical skills gaps and build future capability. Entries should demonstrate how L&D has been positioned as a key enabler of organisational success, with evidence of business impact, learner engagement, and measurable outcomes for people and performance.

- **Most inspirational and impactful leader (New)**

For an individual who has championed the people profession and acted as a visible, values-driven role model. Recognises those who influence culture, mentor or sponsor others, and demonstrate measurable leadership impact within and beyond their organisation and across the profession.

- **Organisational change and transformation initiative**

For people-led change or transformation strategies that have restructured teams, redefined ways of working, or reshaped culture. Entries should demonstrate how change was aligned to organisational goals, supported by strong planning, stakeholder engagement, and clear metrics showing business performance improvement and positive workforce outcomes.

- **People team of the year**

Celebrating HR/L&D/OD teams that deliver excellence across the people function—demonstrating alignment to organisational strategy, cross-functional collaboration, and consistent impact. Judges will look for clear team objectives, shared values, and performance outcomes achieved through innovation, resilience, and measurable delivery.

- **People and culture initiative**

For People strategies that strengthen culture, drive engagement, support wellbeing, or embed ESG values—clearly linked to business priorities. This category seeks holistic initiatives with visible senior leadership support and quantifiable impact on employee engagement, productivity, retention, or organisational performance.

- **Reward and recognition strategy (New)**

Recognises the strategic design and implementation of fair, inclusive, transparent and motivating reward and recognition frameworks. Entries should demonstrate how the approach aligns with business goals, reinforces desired behaviours, and delivers measurable sustainable improvements in engagement, performance, or retention.

- **Rising star of the people profession**

For a high-performing early-career professional (within first five years in HR, L&D, Recruitment or OD) who demonstrates strategic thinking, innovation, and clear contribution to business outcomes. Judges will consider impact, personal development, and leadership potential.

- **Talent management strategy**

For strategies that strengthen organisational capability through effective attraction, development, engagement, and retention of talent. Judges will expect strong workforce planning, clear business alignment, and evidence of impact on pipelines, performance, representation and critical skills.

Entry questions:

- **Entry title** – the title that you have given your entry
- **Organisation name** – this will be used as provided in all aspects of the competition
- **Contact details** - Name of main point of contact within the organisation, including position/role, email, phone number

Each of the entry questions has a maximum number of words (as outlined below). You are required to keep to within these limits.

1. **Overview of organisation and initiative (200 words)**

Briefly describe your organisation (size, sector, people function). Provide a concise summary of the initiative, including when it was implemented and its intended purpose. Keep this section factual and short — like an executive summary.

2. **Why was this initiative necessary? (400 words)**

Explain the problem, challenge or opportunity you were responding to. Describe the context (internal and/or external) that created the need for action.

Could include:

- What data or insight led to the initiative?
- Why was this the right time for the intervention?
- What were the risks of not acting?

3. **How did you deliver the initiative? (600 words)**

Describe the design and delivery process in detail.

Could include:

- What were your objectives and timeframes?
- How was the initiative resourced and governed?
- Who was involved (teams, stakeholders, partners)?
- What actions were taken and how were they prioritised?
- What methods, platforms, or tools (e.g., HRIS, AI, frameworks) were used?
- How did you ensure alignment with business or people strategy?
- Highlight what was new or innovative in your approach.

If relevant, explain how you ensured equity, inclusion, psychological safety, or sustainability in your delivery.

4. **What was the impact and how did you measure success? (600 words)**

Provide clear and measurable evidence of success.

Could include:

- What business, workforce or people outcomes were achieved?
- Include data and metrics such as engagement scores, retention, productivity, cost savings, time to hire, skills growth, etc.
- Show how the outcomes align with business priorities or KPIs.
- What changed as a result – and how do you know?
- How will the learning inform future work or wider people strategy?

5. **What were the key challenges and learnings (200 words)**

Could include:

- What challenges or barriers arose?
- How did you respond or adapt?
- What lessons have you taken forward to future HR or organisational activity?

6. **Optional: Final reflections or comments (200 words - not scored)**

Use this section for anything not already covered that the judges should consider – e.g., testimonials, feedback, awards, senior endorsements.

7. **CIPD membership (not scored)**

Are you or your team a member of CIPD Ireland? If yes, please provide your membership number(s)

8. **Supporting evidence (not scored)**

You may attach up to 2 supporting documents (PDF, table, chart, or image) to visually reinforce your entry.

At the end of the application process, you will be required to confirm your acceptance of the rules of entry and certify that the information provided on the entry form is true and accurate.

Don't forget to demonstrate how the entry embodies the CIPD professional principles that work matters, people matter, and professionalism matters!

Most inspirational and impactful leader and Rising star entry questions

- **Entry title** – The title that you have given your entry
- **Name of individual being nominated** – This will be used as provided in all aspects of the competition
- **Organisation overview** – Business aims and context, main products / services, sector and number of employees
- **Nominator details** - including position / role, pronouns, email, phone number

Each of the entry questions has a maximum number of words (as outlined below). You are required to keep to within these limits.

1. Overview of nomination and context (200 words)

What is the nominee's current role and professional background?

Answers should include:

- Current position, level of responsibility, and scope of influence
- Organisation size, sector, and reach
- Years of experience in the people profession
- Areas of specialism or focus
- Professional memberships, accreditations, or recognition (CIPD membership is essential for this category)

2. Championing the profession and role modelling values. (400 words)

Answers might include:

- Values and behaviours they consistently demonstrate
- How they've advocated for or raised the profile of the profession
- Influence in shaping or promoting progressive, evidence-based, people-centred practices leading to positive outcomes
- Visibility and credibility as a profession-led leader within or beyond their organisation

3. Influencing culture and inspiring others. (600 words)

How has the nominee influenced culture, inspired others, and shaped how work gets done?

Answers might include:

- Empowering and developing others through mentoring, sponsorship, talent
- Development, and career progression support
- Enabling people teams and individuals to grow and succeed in their careers
- Demonstrating inclusive, ethical, or courageous leadership
- Leading transformation in people practices or organisational culture
- Championing change that has lasting, positive impact across teams, organisations, or the wider profession

4. Measurable leadership impact. (600 words)

What is the measurable impact of the nominee's leadership within and beyond their organisation?

Answers might include:

- outcomes such as improved engagement, retention, wellbeing, or performance
- impact on business or people strategy
- feedback, testimonials, or endorsements from colleagues, mentees, and stakeholders that highlight their role in growing talent and leadership capability
- formal recognition or awards
- evidence of broader influence at organisational, sector, or professional level

5. Reflections and legacy. (200 words)

What challenges has the nominee overcome, and what is their lasting impact or legacy?

Answers might include:

- key challenges or barriers they have faced and how they responded
- the longer-term impact of their leadership on culture, policy, or practice
- their contribution to advancing the people profession
- how they intend to continue influencing or shaping the future of the profession, especially through developing future leaders

6. Optional: Final reflections or comments (200 words - not scored)

Use this section for anything not already covered that the judges should consider – e.g., testimonials, feedback, awards, senior endorsements.

7. CIPD membership (not scored)

Are you or your team a member of CIPD Ireland? If yes, please provide your membership number(s)

8. Supporting evidence (not scored)

You may attach up to 2 supporting documents (PDF, table, chart, or image) to visually reinforce your entry.

At the end of the application process, you will be required to confirm your acceptance of the rules of entry and certify that the information provided on this entry form is true and accurate.

Don't forget to demonstrate how the entry embodies the [CIPD professional principles](#) that work matters, people matter, and professionalism matters!

The very best of luck!