



NAGDCA

**NAGDCA President's Award:
Tips from Past Winners and Experts**

Purpose of the Session



Help attendees understand what makes a strong submission



Provide practical guidance based on scoring criteria



Share insights from prior award winners and judges



Highlight common pitfalls to avoid





NAGDCA - ART CAPLE PRESIDENT'S AWARD

The NAGDCA–Art Caple President’s Award was established in 2019 to honor the legacy of former NAGDCA President Art Caple and his commitment to advancing retirement security for public employees.

Presented annually, the award recognizes two public sector retirement plans—one large plan (\$500M+ in assets) and one standard plan (under \$500M in assets)—that exemplify the participant-first approach that defined Mr. Caple’s work and leadership.

Eligibility & Requirements – 2026 Updates

- **Plan Eligibility:** The award is open to all public sector defined contribution plans administered by government entities. The nominee must be a member of NAGDCA. Plans will be categorized as follows:
 - Standard Plan – Plans with total assets under management (AUM) of less than \$500 million
 - Large Plan – Plans with assets of \$500 million or more
- **Dual Submissions:** The same project or initiative may not be submitted for both a NAGDCA Leadership Award and the Art Caple President’s Award in the same year. Each eligible plan may submit only one President’s Award nomination per award year.
- **Project or Program Scope:** Nominees must demonstrate involvement in a completed multi-year strategic project or program aimed at enhancing participant outcomes, such as retirement readiness, financial literacy, or investment education. Governmental staff must have played a role in developing and/or implementing the program.
- **Significant Impact:** Nominees should illustrate the measurable impact of their initiative on participant financial security and well-being.
- **Innovation and Creativity:** Nominated projects should showcase innovative approaches and creative strategies in addressing the evolving needs and challenges of plan participants.
- **Participant-Centric Approach:** Nominees must embody a participant-first mentality, prioritizing the interests and financial goals of plan participants in all aspects of plan administration and service delivery.
- **Documentation and Supporting Materials:** Submissions must be provided as one PDF document no longer than 10 pages.

Award Overview

What Reviewers are Looking For

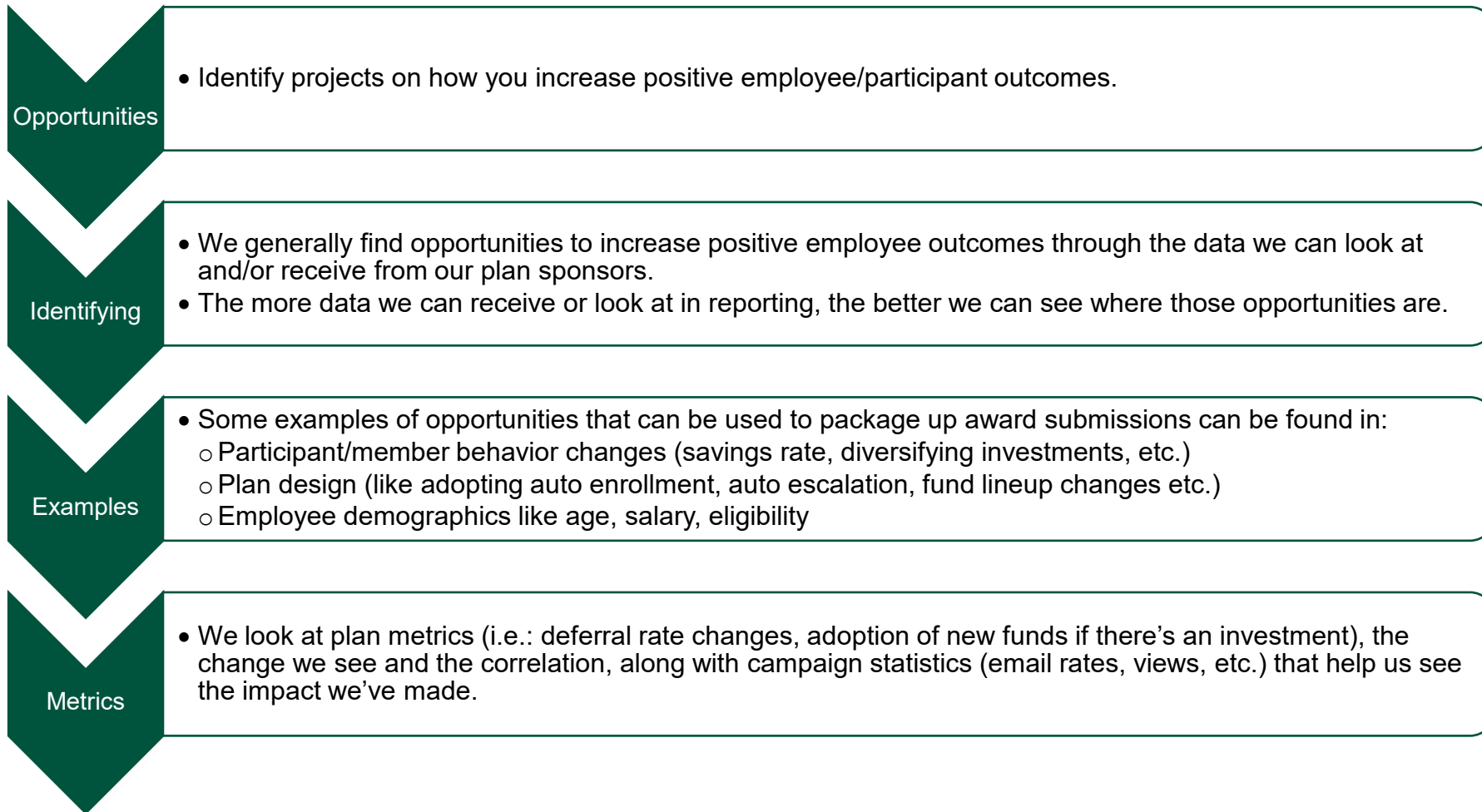
- Clear Problem → Solution → Outcome narrative
- Multi-year, strategic initiative – not legislative
- Innovative plan design with strong participant impact
- Demonstrated measurable results and outcomes
- High participant engagement and behavior change
- Clear, well-structured, and compelling submission
- Well defined goals



Working with your industry partners



How Industry Partners Can Help Identify Submissions



Documentation & Supporting Materials

Nominations must be provided as one PDF document no longer than 10 pages that includes:

- Required as the first page.
- Clearly highlights the initiative's outcomes and measurable results.
- The summary should address: "What did you accomplish?"

Executive Summary



- Outlines the types of plans offered
- Plan asset category (per the \$500M threshold),
- Asset size,
- Number of participants,
- Industry partner(s), etc.

Plan Profile



- Outlines the project's objectives/goals
- Implementation strategies,
- Results achieved.

Comprehensive documentation



- Participant testimonials
- Performance metrics
- Educational resources.

Supporting materials

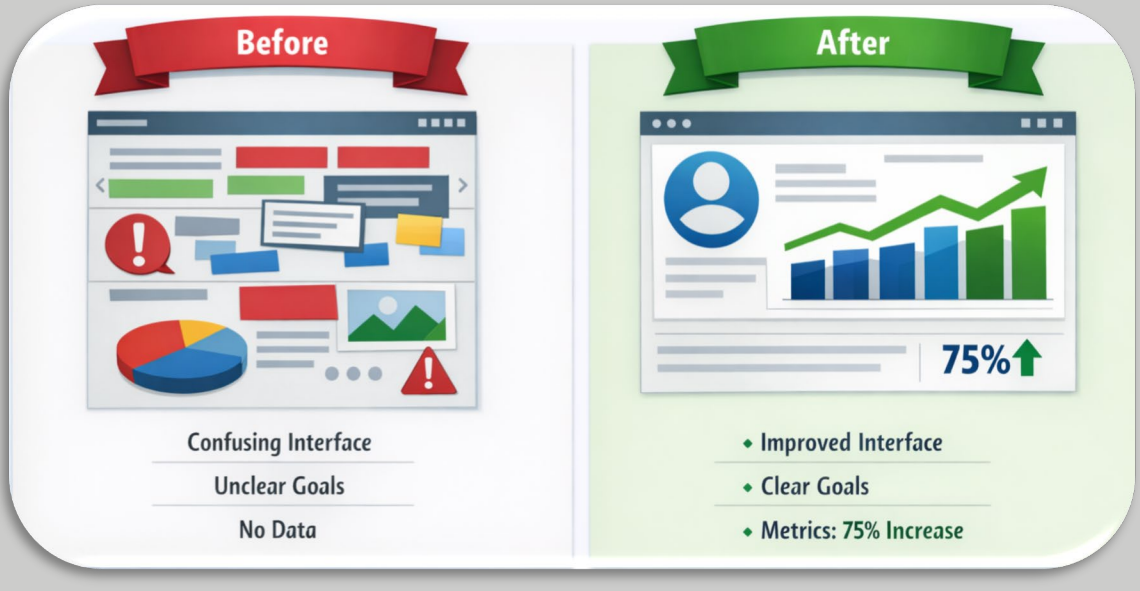


Submissions that do not follow the format and requirements may be returned for revision and could be disqualified from scoring if there is insufficient time to make corrections.

Strong Submissions and Common Pitfalls

Strong Submission

- Start with a clear challenge
- Show intentional decisions over multiple years
- Use data to prove success
- Keep the story simple



Common Pitfalls

- Too much technical detail without context
- Lack of measurable outcomes
- Not providing supporting materials
- Overlooking participant impact
- Overemphasis on aesthetics of submission over content



Case Study: SURS of Illinois

Challenge:

- Legacy plan design forced choice between full annuitization or losing retiree healthcare benefits
- Many participants took lump sums, increasing risk of outliving savings and losing benefits
- Multiple recordkeepers increased complexity




Solution:

- Multi-year plan redesign
- 2020 –
 - Consolidated recordkeeping to improve efficiency and reduce costs
 - Rebrand of 401(a) plan
 - Introduced SURS Lifetime Income Strategy (LIS) as default investment which blends accumulation with optional guaranteed lifetime income
- 2021 – Launched new supplemental 457(b)
- 2023 – Added automatic enrollment at 3% to 457(b)
- 2024 – Added automatic escalation up to 10% to 457(b)
- Delivered robust communication, education, and personalization tools every step of the way

Case Study: SURS of Illinois

Why it Won:

- Innovative plan design focused on retirement income outcomes
- Pioneered a flexible lifetime income default within a public DC plan
- Use of automatic features to drive behavioral change
- Demonstrated measurable improvements in cost, participation, and outcomes
- Holistic approach: plan design, investments, communication, and member experience



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ILLINOIS STATE RETIREMENT SYSTEM
Your Road to a Healthy Retirement

BOOST YOUR FUTURE PURCHASING POWER

Your core SURS retirement plan provides valuable benefits for your future.

However, it will likely take more than one income source to fund your retirement. Especially since you and your SURS employer do not pay into Social Security. With recent inflation increasing costs, what will prices be like by the time you retire?

To help avoid a retirement income shortfall, enroll in the SURS Deferred Compensation Plan (DCP). The supplemental savings you build in the SURS DCP complement your core SURS retirement plan benefits.

You can make before-tax, Roth after-tax contributions or both, giving you flexibility now and when you retire. You can change your contributions any time.


By having an additional income source, you can be better prepared for the future.

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Go to surs.org and click on the Member Website Login button.

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Schedule an appointment with a local representative at sursrsp.timetap.com.

Your Road to a Healthy Retirement

surs.org [800-613-9543, TDD: 800-579-5708](tel:800-613-9543) [Voya Retire mobile app](#)



SURS
ILLINOIS STATE RETIREMENT SYSTEM
Your Road to a Healthy Retirement

TOP 3 REASONS TO START TODAY

There are many good reasons to consider enrolling in the SURS Deferred Compensation Plan (DCP), especially at tax time.

#1. Higher savings.
You choose your contribution rate, and can change it any time. You have the flexibility to put away much more for your future in the SURS DCP, up to the IRS maximum annual limits.

#2. Tax advantages.
You save for retirement on a tax-deferred basis. When your contributions are deducted before taxes from your paycheck, less of your income is taxable, reducing your current tax bill. Your savings and any earnings accumulate in your account without being subject to tax until withdrawn, typically when you retire.

#3. Worry less.
Instead of losing sleep over last year's tax bill or inflation or the markets, you can take charge of your financial security by enrolling now. The supplemental savings you build in the SURS DCP may help close the gap between your SURS core retirement plan benefits and your retirement income goal.

The best-in-class investment options and the Roth feature offer more reasons to enroll or learn more today. Log in to the Member Website at surs.org and click on the Enroll in the SURS DCP button. For information, visit surs.org/dcp or call the SURS Defined Contribution Contact Center at 800-613-9543. You can schedule an appointment with a SURS Defined Contribution Account Representative at sursrsp.timetap.com.

surs.org [800-613-9543, TDD: 800-579-5708](tel:800-613-9543) [Voya Retire mobile app](#)

Case Study: City of Seattle

Challenge:

- 1 in 5 residents in Seattle speak a language other than English at home
- Eliminating language barriers and offering important savings information in a customer's preferred language
- Finding and obtaining a vendor who would accommodate the multiple tiers of languages used by Seattle residents.



City of Seattle

Voluntary Deferred Compensation Plan

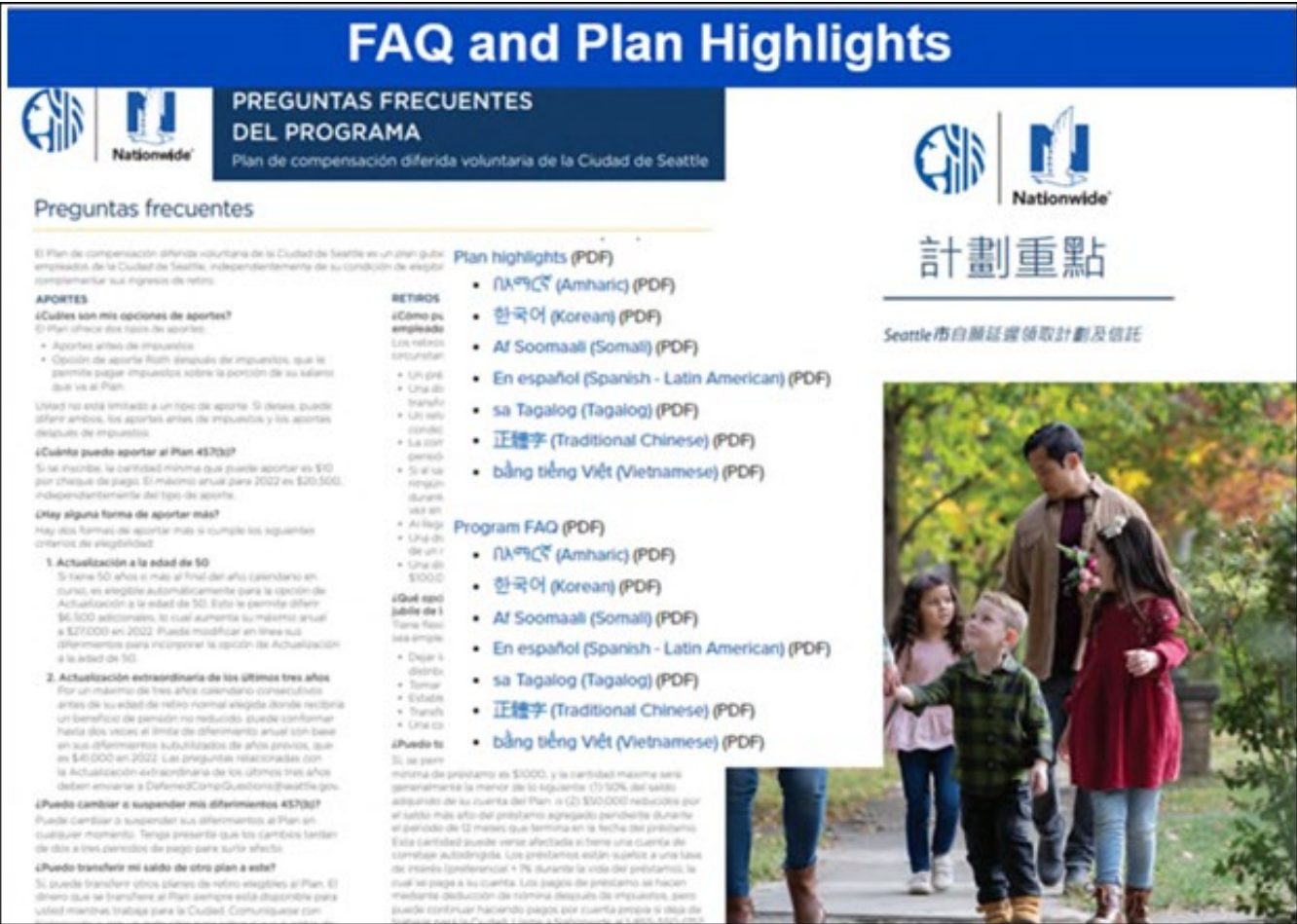
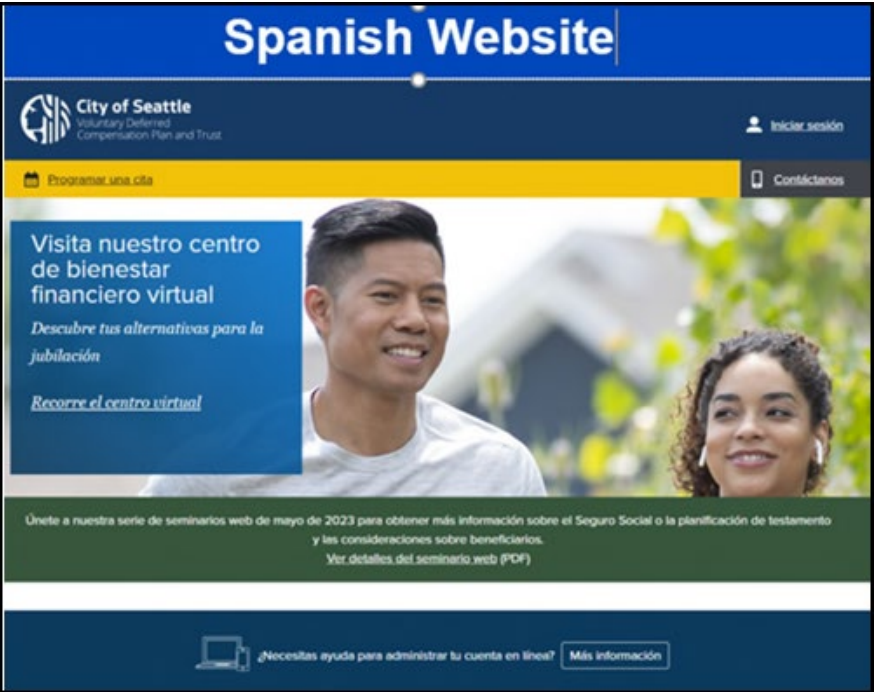
Solution:

- Outline languages needing translation using City of Seattle demographic data
- Tiered Approach:
 - Determine which plan documents to translate – Selected top 3
 - Engage with Language Link and record keeper to perform translation services into seven prioritized languages based off of Seattle demographic data
 - Work with record keeper to create end-to-end Spanish web experience
 - Communications outreach effort by providing virtual open house in Spanish and English

Case Study: City of Seattle

Why it Won:

- Focused on a unique challenge of communicating with disparate communities
- Multi-tiered approach
- Demonstrated measurable improvements



Key Takeaways



Focus on outcomes, not just features



Make it easy for reviewers to follow and evaluate



Highlight measurable impact



Start early to allow time for refinement



Incorporate multiple rounds of review and feedback



Q&A

Nomination Deadline: Friday, June 12

Thank you to the 2026 Awards Committee!

- Chair: Corey Robey, City of Baltimore
- Malia Bonham, WA State Department of Retirement Systems
- Erika Bronikowski, Milwaukee County
- Joe Carter, Mariner Institutional
- Greg Jenkins, Goldman Sachs
- Amber Peters, Nationwide
- Laura Rooney, SMART Plan/Commonwealth of Massachusetts
- Mark Rowe, State Universities Retirement System of Illinois
- Jamie Salafia, Lincoln Financial
- Luella Wampler, Multnomah County - Portland Oregon