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NextGen Under 30 Oklahoma Announces the 2026 Oklahoma Statewide Search for Young Adult Oklahomans

NextGen Under 30 Oklahoma is proud to announce the official call for nominations for the 2026 NextGen Under 30 Awards, a premier recognition program honoring the most impactful young professionals aged 30 and younger. Unlike traditional awards that focus solely on technology or finance, this program highlights excellence across 21 distinct career categories, ranging from Healthcare, Education, and Agriculture to Manufacturing, Law, Marketing, Public Service, and the Arts—reflecting the full spectrum of Oklahoma's workforce.

During the past fourteen years, more than 4,900 young Oklahomans have been honored. Now entering Class #15, the program continues to serve as a critical initiative to identify and retain the talent that will lead Oklahoma's economy for the next three decades.

By recognizing achievers in less “visible” industries alongside high-growth, high-profile sectors, the program affirms that all professions are vital to the strength and future of Oklahoma. This award recognition effort provides a comprehensive snapshot of the state's next generation of leaders.

“Leadership isn't confined to a corner office; it's found on the factory floor, in the classroom, and in the research lab,” said Donald B. Swift, Founder of the NextGen Under 30 Foundation. “Through our career categories we are sending a clear message: no matter your trade or craft—if you are striving for excellence in your community, we will see you.”

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The 21 Career Categories for 2026 Include

Essential Services: Healthcare, Education, Public Service, Law, Community Service

Innovation & Industry: Technology, Manufacturing, Energy, Science/STEM, Aviation

Commerce & Lifestyle: Finance, Real Estate, Retail, Hospitality, Agriculture

Creative & Strategy: The Arts, Media & Marketing, Staffing/Human Resources, Sports & Fitness, Animal Care, Construction

Nomination & Selection Process

Nominations open January 20, 2026 at www.nextgenunder30.com. Peers, mentors, employers, and community leaders are encouraged to nominate individuals who have demonstrated exceptional professional achievement, community involvement, and innovative thinking.

Nomination Deadline: June 20, 2026

Application Deadline: June 27, 2026

Following the nomination period, a panel of respected community leaders will vet all candidates to select the final NextGen Under 30 Oklahoma Class of 2026, which will be published online on July 20, 2026.

Honoree Events & Recognition

All honorees will receive a “Mark Your Calendar” notice featuring two signature events.

Day at the Capitol

August 24, 2026 | 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Oklahoma State Capitol – Oklahoma City

A memorable day featuring a group photo on the Capitol steps, complimentary luncheon, and messages from Oklahoma state leaders.

NextGen Under 30 Awards Gala

November 6, 2026

Embassy Suites Hotel – Norman, Oklahoma

The 2026 honorees and their guests—including family members, friends, and coworkers—will be celebrated at a high-production awards gala at no charge to honorees.

Guests may purchase ceremony tickets online, and organizations may reserve table sponsorships (seating for 10 guests), which include recognition in the official awards program listing all honorees by career category.

During the ceremony, each winner will receive a cut-glass engraved desktop award.

Alumni Engagement

All NextGen Under 30 alumni will have access to exclusive networking events, mentorship programs, and annual one-day leadership conferences hosted across Oklahoma. These initiatives are designed to keep elite young talent building their careers and dreams within the State of Oklahoma.

Both NextGen Under 30 Oklahoma and the NextGen Under 30 Foundation (501c3) are registered with the Oklahoma Secretary of State.

Mission Statement

To locate, identify, and honor innovative, creative, and inspiring young adult Oklahomans through recognition, education, and networking, while building vibrant and connected professional communities of future leaders.

Recognition = Retention

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