



National Band Association

Programs of Excellence Blue Ribbon Award



A National Award Recognizing High Levels of Program Excellence in Bands and Band Music

The National Band Association is dedicated to the attainment of a high level of excellence for bands and band music. The NBA Programs of Excellence Blue Ribbon Award recognizes quality programs of all levels. Band programs and their educators are honored regionally and nationally through this exciting standards-based initiative.

WHO MAY ENTER

All high school, junior high school, and middle school bands and their conductors are eligible for this award, regardless of membership in the NBA. However, all applicants are strongly encouraged to join the National Band Association. Applying band directors need to be in the **head director position** at their school for at least four years at the high school level, or three years at the middle school level.

Schools that have previously received a deferral of any kind must wait two years before re-applying. Schools that have previously received a Division Award only will automatically be considered for the National Award if re-applying within 2-5 years. Schools that choose to re-apply must re-submit all required application materials, updated with recordings and activities that have taken place since the last application.

ENTRY DEADLINE: JULY 15, 2026

APPLICATION SUBMISSION

All application materials should be submitted through Google Drive. Please click [here](#) for submission guidelines. Documents should be submitted as **PDF files ONLY**. Recordings should be submitted as **MP3 files ONLY**.

ENTRY MATERIALS

1. Official Application: Administrator and director signatures are required indicating the submitted recordings have not been edited and are live recordings from a concert or festival. The director must also indicate the number of years as head director at the school.
2. Recording Information: Unedited live recordings from a concert or festival, submitted as MP3 files
 - Submissions should include a total of 35-40 minutes of musical material from at least two different school years. All conductors on submitted recordings must teach at the applying school – no guest conductors permitted.
 - All submitted material must have been recorded within the last **FIVE** years.
 - All audio must be full length performances – no excerpts. Selected movements from a larger work are acceptable as long as they are complete.
 - 25-30 minutes of material should be from the first-tier concert band of the applying school. All recording evaluation in this category (first-tier concert band) will stop at 30 minutes.
 - Concert Band recordings must include at least one traditional military-style march and one original band work. Transcriptions are encouraged, though not required. Please refer to the Midwest Clinic High School Band application on the Midwest Clinic website for a list of [acceptable march composers](#). Submitted repertoire should be clearly identified on the application with information regarding the date and location that the recordings were created.
 - The remaining 10-15 minutes should contain one or more of the following ensembles in the band program: marching band, jazz ensemble, chamber, or percussion groups. It should not, however, include recordings of pep band, Winter Guard, or a lower concert band within the program. This additional ensemble recording is required of both middle school and high school band applications.

3. Provide a list of recent honors and achievements received by the ensemble and director in the last four normal school years, compiled by year starting with the most recent. (2025-26, 2024-25, 2023-24, etc.).
4. Provide five entire concert programs, with at least one program from each of the past three school years, that demonstrate the breadth and depth of your band program. This should include a variety of home concerts as well as regional, and/or national performances. You may wish to include prominent guest conductors, guest soloists, commissioned works, etc. Assessment programs should not be included. Programs can include jazz, chamber, and percussion groups as well, but at least three of the programs should include concert band performances. The date and year of each program must be included.
5. Provide rating forms from concert band festivals, including copies of adjudicator sheets, from each of the last three school years. Make sure the date and year are included on the forms. If no ratings were given at the festival, include all comment sheets. If comments are digital only (no written sheets), then please submit digital files.
6. Provide a comprehensive repertoire list, compiled by year, of all works performed in the school's band program for the previous two school years. This should include all concert, jazz and marching repertoire, listed by ensemble.
7. Provide a report on the number of students accepted by audition into Honor Band/Orchestras on the District/Region and State levels in the past three school years available, compiled by year. Include details of how students are selected for this honor in your Region and/or State, including the number of schools that participate and the required audition material (scales, prepared piece, sight reading, etc.).
8. Provide a report of Solo/Ensemble participants with ratings from each of the past three normal school years, compiled by year. A data chart/spreadsheet with student name, instrument, grade of solo/ensemble piece (if applicable in your state) and rating should be included. If your State/District does not have Solo and Ensemble Festival or does not have a graded list, please note this on the missing items form.
9. Provide reference names and contact information for three ensemble directors, evaluators, or adjudicators who will remember a performance of your band during the last three school years. Please include name, title, address, phone number and email address.
10. **High School:** Provide a brief report of former students who continue to perform after graduation in college ensembles, major in music, and/or perform with community ensembles (bands, orchestras, jazz/dance bands, etc.) for the last four school years. Please compile by year. List student names and their school and/or musical activity.

Middle School/Junior High School: Provide a brief report on program retention from MS/JHS Band into high school band over the last four years, which states the number of students who continue to the high school program. Please compile by school year.

11. Provide a professional, high-resolution, formal staged photo of the top concert band in their concert attire.
12. Provide the name and address of the following school administrators: superintendent, principal, and district music or fine arts supervisor (if not applicable, please list appropriate supervisor).
13. **MISSING ITEMS FORM FOR ANY REQUIRED ITEMS MISSING FROM THE APPLICATION.**
 - Missing items will strongly impact the viability of the application.
 - Missing items not explained in the application will disqualify the entire application from consideration.

Submit an application fee of \$100 by July 15. Payment can be made by credit card via this [link](#) or submitted by check made payable to "National Band Association" to the following address:

National Band Association
 364 Patteson Drive #271
 Morgantown, WV 26505.

The application fee must be received within one week of the application deadline, July 15, 2026.

PROCEDURE AND TIMELINE

The NBA President shall designate a person to administer and chair the Programs of Excellence Blue Ribbon Award committee each year. This person oversees the collection of all application materials and distribution of said materials to the appropriate NBA Division Chairs and National Evaluation Committee members, also appointed by the NBA President. Division level committees are chaired by NBA Division Chairs, with NBA State Chairs serving as committee members. Division Chairs may appoint additional NBA members to their committees as needed.

(1) End of August: Application materials are reviewed for completion, organized and sent to Division Chairs for evaluation.

(2) September: NBA Division Chairs and their committees review and process the first round of applications. Division Chairs and their committee members select Division winners (National finalists), which are then approved by the NBA Executive Committee. Division committees are not obligated to select National finalists at the Division level if application materials do not warrant such recognition. Feedback could be provided upon request to those programs who are deferred. Deferred applicants must wait a minimum of two years before re-applying for the award.

(3) Early October: Division winners (National finalists) are announced and forwarded to the national level for consideration.

(4) October-November: National Evaluation Committee will review National Finalists (Division winners). A recommendation from the National Evaluation Committee will be forwarded to the NBA Executive Committee for review and approval.

(5) December: National finalists are reviewed by the NBA Executive Committee prior to the Midwest Clinic. The NBA is not obligated to select a winner at the National level if application materials do not qualify for national recognition. National level evaluation comments will not be forwarded to directors; however, in the event of a deferral, feedback could be provided upon request to those programs who are deferred.

National winners are announced at the NBA General Membership Meeting at the Midwest Clinic in December. National finalist winning directors may be added to future National Evaluation Committees pending their availability to attend the meetings at the Midwest Clinic.

PROGRAMS OF EXCELLENCE RESULTS

Results of Division winners (National finalist schools and conductors) will be publicized by the end of November on the NBA website and Facebook page. The National winners of the Programs of Excellence Blue Ribbon Award will be announced at the NBA General Membership Meeting at the Midwest Clinic in December. Results are then posted again on the NBA website and Facebook page by mid-January, plus included in the winter edition of the *NBA Journal*.

AWARD MATERIALS

Division Blue Ribbon Award winners receive a framed certificate and recognition at the NBA General Membership meeting held at the Midwest Clinic in December. National Blue Ribbon Award winners are recognized at the same General Membership Meeting, plus these schools and their director(s) receive a commemorative plaque, which is presented at their school in the spring of the following year.

Every attempt will be made to have an NBA officer or Board member present the National Blue-Ribbon award to the band and its conductor(s) at an event of importance (e.g. public concert, school assembly, etc.) in the spring. In the event an officer or Board member cannot present the award in person, the school's principal or music supervisor should present the award at a public event.