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NIGERIA

Toolkit for Recognition and Reward Programmes

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Foreword

On behalf of the board, management, and staff of Accountability Lab Nigeria, I am honoured to present this Recognition and Rewards Toolkit, an essential resource aimed at advancing a culture of integrity, accountability, and responsible leadership within Nigeria.

Nigeria's governance landscape is defined by blurred lines between politics and governance, a deep-rooted lack of accountability, inequality, and poor service delivery. Governance often fails to deliver. These realities have caused public trust in government institutions to plummet, making it important to recognize and reward outstanding public servants. At Accountability Lab Nigeria, we believe naming and faming those who consistently show honesty, dedication, and courage is a crucial step to rebuild public confidence and create the foundation for the governance reforms citizens demand.

For the past eight years, supported by the Ford Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and Luminate, the Integrity Icon Nigeria campaign has recognized over 40 public servants who exemplify integrity and resilience. Their stories show that we can make governance work for the people. This programmes has also offered learning and insights into the factors that sustain ethical leadership in fragile contexts.

Building on insights from StepUp Nigeria and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offenses Commission (ICPC) Awards programmes, we developed this toolkit to help government ministries, departments, agencies, and civic actors adapt recognition and reward programs that are transparent, credible, and impactful. Practical and adaptable, it provides a clear framework for recognizing excellence, strengthening accountability, and motivating reformers within and outside government who are dedicated to quality public service delivery.

It is our hope that this resource will contribute significantly to strengthening Nigeria's accountability ecosystem and building strong institutions by providing a replicable, trustworthy approach to honouring those who choose integrity over expediency. Recognizing governance that works not only validates individual efforts but also signals to citizens and institutions alike that ethical leadership is valued and achievable.

We express our sincere appreciation to all partners and stakeholders who have supported this work, most especially Catherine Angai and the team at Griot Studios for developing this toolkit. Together, we remain committed to shifting norms, changing mindsets, and promoting positive behaviours; building a governance system grounded in trust, responsibility, and service to the people.

Odeh Friday,
Country Director,
Accountability Lab Nigeria

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Acknowledgements

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to everyone who played a role in shaping this toolkit.

We are grateful as well to Step Up Nigeria for sharing thoughtful perspectives that strengthened the relevance of the content. We also acknowledge Griot Studios, whose contributions to both the development and the design of the toolkit ensured that it is practical and usable.

We also extend our appreciation to all the previous Integrity Icon Award winners and judges, whose experiences and perspectives helped us better understand the realities, challenges, and opportunities this toolkit aims to address.

Thank you to every contributor, seen and unseen, whose input, time, and willingness to share made this toolkit possible.

1. Introduction

This toolkit supports organisations seeking to design or strengthen recognition and reward programmes that promote civic engagement, accountability, and positive behaviour change. While integrity is a central focus, the guidance applies equally to initiatives that celebrate excellence, dedication to service, moral courage, or contributions to the public good. It is designed for government agencies, civil society organisations, professional bodies, donors, and reform units working to build credible, fair, and context-sensitive recognition systems.

It brings together background knowledge, comparative insights from recognition programmes in different countries, and practice-based lessons drawn from Nigerian award experiences. The learning is based on a mix of sources: interviews, internal reflections, survey and feedback data from established Nigerian integrity award programmes, and desk research on similar initiatives elsewhere. They provide a grounded picture of how recognition and reward programmes actually work in practice, where they succeed, where they struggle, and what principles tend to matter most.

The first part of the toolkit introduces how recognition and reward programmes are conceptualised in different settings and what recognition means within Nigeria's distinctive governance environment. These sections are designed to help readers think about the values, assumptions, and design choices that underlie any reward model.

The step-by-step guidance begins in Section 4 and uses a Learning–Design framework to walk readers through the core components of building or adapting a recognition and rewards programme: clarifying purpose, developing a theory of change, structuring nomination and judging processes, planning communication and storytelling, organising ceremonies, engaging rewardees after recognition, and thinking about monitoring, learning, and sustainability. The aim is to offer a resource that is reflective yet practical, grounded in comparative evidence, informed by practice, and flexible enough to be adapted to different organisational needs and capacities.

2. Understanding Recognition and Reward Programmes

Around the world, recognition and reward programmes take a wide range of forms and are organised by an equally diverse group of actors. Some are led by government agencies working to strengthen professional standards or reinforce public-sector reform. Others emerge from civil-society organisations, media houses, academic institutions or coalitions seeking to spotlight ethical behaviour, defend the public interest, or shift social norms. Professional associations and private citizens also create rewards that celebrate service excellence or everyday ethical practice.

Despite this diversity, these programmes have a shared common purpose: recognising people or organisations that help build public trust. Yet they arise from different traditions and emphasise different kinds of ethical behaviour. Some celebrate public servants; others honour activists, community leaders, private-sector actors or collective initiatives. These differences shape how integrity is conceptualised, who receives recognition, how awards are organised (bottom-up, citizen-driven, or top-down and organiser-led), the forms of reward they use, and the kinds of change they hope to influence.

Rewards for Professional Ethics and Public Duty

Many anti-corruption and governance programmes reward professional ethics and administrative responsibility. Examples include the Ghana Integrity Rewards (Ghana Integrity Initiative), the Week of Integrity (originating in the Netherlands and later adapted in Ghana and Kenya), and governance-reform efforts supported by the Volcker Alliance in the United States. Here, awardees are recognized for honesty, impartiality, transparency and consistent adherence to public-service rules.

Recognition in these programmes is largely top-down, with organisers or designated committees selecting honourees. Public visibility, through ceremonies, media features, or official commendations, serves to reinforce institutional norms, encourage sector-wide improvements and strengthen accountability mechanisms. The underlying theory of change emphasises institutional rather than individual change.

Awards for Moral Courage and Defence of the Public Interest

A second group of programmes awards individuals for courageous action in defence of the public interest. In this tradition, recognition is given for acts of resistance: challenging wrongdoing, exposing corruption or defending human rights, sometimes at personal risk. Examples include Nigeria's Gani Fawehinmi Integrity Award and the Allard Prize for International Integrity.

These programmes also rely on organiser-led selection processes, but the emphasis is distinct. Recognition is symbolic and intentionally public-facing, designed to provoke debate, elevate moral exemplars and push for broader reform. Integrity here is defined by principled defiance rather than conformity to established norms.

Awards for Collective Practice and Norm-Building

Some programmes give awards for collective effort, embedded within organisations or networks. The Basel Institute on Governance's Collective Action Awards highlight collaborations aimed at reducing corruption risks across sectors. While less formalised, similar approaches appear in mechanisms such as the ICPC Ethics and Integrity Scorecard in Nigeria, which publicises institutional compliance and performance.

These models emphasize shared organisational practice: cooperation, mutual accountability and system-level improvement.

Awards for Everyday Service and Courage Under Pressure

Integrity Icon, run by Accountability Lab country chapters in Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Mali, Liberia, Uganda, South Africa and Mexico, centres citizens in the recognition process. It combines two strands of recognition: everyday ethical behaviour and courageous choices made under pressure. Public servants are recognised not only for fairness, empathy, and transparent service, but also for moments where they resisted inappropriate demands, refused bribes, or upheld ethical standards despite institutional challenges.

The nomination process is open and citizen-driven; storytelling, films and public campaigns amplify the visibility of honourees. Unlike many programmes, Integrity Icon aims for norm-shift, encouraging peer-level behaviour change and reshaping public perceptions of the civil service.

3. Recognition and Reward Programmes in Nigeria and Implications

The Nigerian context presents a particularly complex environment for recognition and reward programmes. Decades of corruption, weak accountability systems, and service delivery challenges have contributed to what many observers describe as a deep erosion of public trust. Surveys by Afrobarometer and the Africa Polling Institute show consistently low confidence in key institutions—including government ministries, the judiciary, and anti-corruption agencies—with many Nigerians believing that misconduct often goes unpunished. Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index reinforces these concerns, reflecting long-standing doubts about institutional integrity.

In such a climate, public and official processes are frequently met with scepticism, and rewards can easily be dismissed as politicised, transactional, or undeserved—regardless of organisers' intentions. Public debate around national honours, such as the National Merit Award, routinely raises questions about political influence or the perceived undeserving nature of some recipients. Although there is no empirical evidence that awards are "paid for," scepticism persists in media commentary and everyday conversation.

Against this backdrop, the design and delivery of recognition and reward programmes take on heightened importance. Different organisers—government institutions, civil-society organisations, and community groups—face distinct credibility challenges shaped by public perceptions of independence and intent. Community-based groups, for example, often issue awards to political or prominent figures largely on the basis of their positions. While well-meaning, such practices risk weakening the symbolic value of awards and reinforcing the perception that recognition can be given to anyone. Civil-society organisations that recognise public-sector actors must navigate concerns about donor influence, political agendas, or perceptions that their awards are disconnected from everyday governance realities.

Implications for Recognition and Reward Designers in Nigeria

Government-led rewards risk being dismissed as politicised unless merit is made explicit and independence is visibly safeguarded. Even when organisers document their processes, some audiences may still assume manipulation. To counter this, organisers need to do more to demonstrate legitimacy, and this toolkit helps with some of these extra measures that can help strengthen transparency.

Civil-society organisations who rely on donor funding must balance the priorities of donors, the expectations of communities, and the realities of operating in a low-trust environment. Designing recognition and reward programmes therefore requires intentionality from the outset. CSOs need to clearly define what their recognition and reward programmes aim to achieve in the long term, who it is meant to influence, and how the programme will remain credible and sustainable beyond donor funding.

Community groups often enjoy grassroots legitimacy but can inadvertently erode the symbolic value of awards when they "dish out" recognition—especially to political elites or high-profile private-sector figures—without credible criteria. In Nigeria, this widespread practice has contributed to the belief that awards are cheap or transactional.

The implication for designers is clear, without rigorous management of the reward and recognition process, the broader ecosystem of recognition risks losing meaning. This is precisely why this toolkit is designed to support a wide range of practitioners in developing or strengthening their recognition and reward programmes—helping to build credibility, safeguard legitimacy, and foster trust in contexts where these qualities cannot be assumed.

Having outlined the key conceptualisations of recognition and reward programmes, the different models used across contexts, and the particular considerations shaping recognition in Nigeria, the next section turns to the practical task of designing recognition and reward programmes using a step by step guide.

4. Framework for Designing Recognition and Reward Programmes

Recognition and Reward programmes are never neutral. They reflect how organisers conceptualise integrity and the values, interests, and goals shaping their design. These choices influence everything—from definitions and eligibility criteria to the form of recognition and the behaviours or outcomes being encouraged.

As explored above, comparative evidence demonstrates that because recognition and reward initiatives emerge from diverse traditions, there is no universal model of what a recognition and rewards programme should be. Nonetheless, a set of foundational considerations appears across contexts. As mentioned above, this toolkit draws primarily on lessons from Nigeria's Integrity Icon programme, supported by broader insights from comparable programmes around the world.

How to Use This Toolkit

This toolkit is designed to be flexible and adaptable. It is organised into two connected layers that work together:

The Learning Layer

This section distils insights from both primary and secondary sources, including interviews, internal reflections, survey responses from Nigerian integrity recognition and reward programmes, and desk research on comparable initiatives globally. These lessons highlight common principles observed across programmes and offer a grounding in how recognition and reward programmes function in practice. The learning layer helps readers understand the core ideas before adapting them to their own contexts.

The Design Layer

This section offers reflective and actionable guidance for organisations building or adapting a recognition and rewards programme. It sets out practical steps, includes questions to support context-specific decision-making, and directs readers to templates and checklists in the Annex that can be used during implementation.

You can read the toolkit from start to finish or jump directly to sections that meet your current needs. The early sections introduce key concepts and lessons from comparative practice, while the Design and Adaptation sections provide hands-on guidance for setting up or strengthening your programme. Use the reflection prompts to think through context-specific choices, and consult the annexed templates and checklists whenever you require practical support. There is also a summarized Principles and Risk Mitigation Table that helps you with a snapshot of possible risks and mitigation strategies for you to consider for your recognition and rewards programme.

Whether you are creating a new award, adapting an existing one, or improving your current processes, the toolkit is designed to guide you through each stage in a way that fits your organisational context and goals.

4.1 Concept and Purpose of a Recognition and Reward Programme

Learning

Designing a recognition and reward programme begins with deliberate choices, both about what the award means for your context and how recognition is expected to influence change. Experience across different programmes shows that clarity on these questions shapes everything that follows and reflects the values on which an award is built.

These decisions often determine who becomes eligible, how nominations are sourced, what verification requires, what judges evaluate, and what forms of impact are realistic. Programmes that have taken time to articulate these foundations at the outset have found it easier to maintain consistency, credibility, and independence throughout implementation.

Whether your programme aims to shift behaviours and social norms, spotlight ethical conduct to strengthen public trust, or recognise integrity across wider groups such as educators, students, community leaders, or other social actors, the logic you establish here will guide every subsequent design choice.

Adaptation and Design

When defining the purpose and concept of your recognition and rewards programme, consider the rationale, values, and assumptions informing your model and the practical choices you will need to make

Begin by identifying the problem your award aims to address

Identify the gap or challenge that makes recognition necessary, such as low public trust, limited visibility of ethical behaviour, or weak incentives for integrity

a. Identify the change you want to influence

Decide whether your programme aims to:

- Shift public perceptions
- Encourage peer-level behaviour change
- Strengthen internal ethical culture
- Support institutional responsiveness
- Build or rebuild trust

b. Define who the programme is for

Specify eligible groups (public servants, teachers, community actors, youth, and private-sector staff).

If recognising public servants, determine which cadres or career stages will be included or excluded.

c. Establish core principles

Set the values that guide the programme: independence, transparency, fairness, inclusion (gender, disability, geographic or sector spread), and clarity of purpose.

d. Decide the form of recognition

Choose whether the award will be:

- Symbolic/public (films, ceremonies, commendation letters)
- Paired with modest rewards (certificates, plaques, mentorship, professional-development opportunities)
- or a hybrid model

e. Context-dependent considerations

Tangible awards may motivate recipients in some contexts but raise concerns in low-trust environments. Consider cultural expectations, availability of resources and sustainability over multiple cycles, and likely reputational risks when awards become competitive and more focused on 'the reward'

Programmes differ on whether certain behaviours such as integrity should be rewarded with tangible awards; reflect on what aligns with your values and long-term sustainability

4.2 Designing a Theory of Change

Learning

Once the concept and purpose of the recognition and reward programme are established, the theory of change explains how recognition is expected to contribute to broader change by mapping the steps through which recognition can influence behaviours, strengthen norms, or support institutional transformation. Experience from recognition and reward initiatives in different countries shows a broadly similar pattern: recognition creates visibility; visibility encourages peers to learn from or mirror ethical behaviour; this strengthens positive norms within offices, agencies, or communities; and, over time, these strengthened norms can support improvements in public trust and institutional responsiveness.

A useful theory of change must also fit the institutional culture and accountability realities of the environment in which the programme will operate. Comparative experience shows that programmes are more effective when their definition of integrity, their expectations about behaviour change, and their pathways of influence match what is feasible in their particular context—whether the goal is shifting everyday practices, reinforcing professional standards, or encouraging more systemic reforms

Adaptation and Design

When developing the theory of change for your recognition and reward programme, focus on both the underlying logic of your model and the concrete choices that explain how recognition is expected to contribute to change.

a. Clarify what recognition is meant to change
What shifts are you expecting recognition to support—behavioural change, stronger institutional culture, shifts in public perception, or a mix of these?

b. Identify the key inputs your programme will rely on
What time, resources, partnerships, and expertise are required for nominations, verification, judging, storytelling, and post-award engagement?

c. Map the core activities that make your programme work
Set out the main processes—nomination, verification checks, judging, public storytelling, and the recognition and reward ceremony—and think carefully about how each one contributes to the wider purpose.

d. Specify the outputs your activities will produce
These may include a shortlist of nominees, verified story profiles, documentary films, public events, media features, or reports.

e. Define the outcomes you hope the programme will influence
For example: peer-level behaviour change, stronger institutional culture, increased public visibility for acts of integrity, moral courage, honesty or improved trust in ethical public service.

f. Make your underlying assumptions explicit

Note the conditions that must hold for your model to work (for example: people trust the process; institutions are willing to participate; audiences respond to stories; recognition will motivate ethical behaviour). Reflect on the assumptions you are making about public trust, institutional responsiveness, or peer influence

Does the change we expect align with our resources, relationships, and credibility?

4.3 Partnerships and Collaboration

Learning

Across recognition and reward programmes, partnerships are central to both legitimacy and sustainability. Different partnership models tend to align with different understandings of integrity. Programmes that emphasise professional ethics often work closely with government departments or public-sector bodies, drawing on their mandate and reach.

Those that centre on moral courage or public-interest defence are more likely to rely on independent foundations, civil-society organisations, legal advocates or public-interest networks to safeguard independence. Citizen-driven models depend heavily on community groups, media partners and civic networks to mobilise nominations, share stories and build trust.

These relationships often require time and sensitivity to institutional procedures, but where they work well, they broaden acceptance of the programme and signal that the behaviour is recognised from within the system, not only from outside it.

Adaptation and Design

When identifying partners, consider how different actors can strengthen your recognition and rewards programme through credibility, visibility, technical support, or reach — while also ensuring that partnerships do not compromise independence or shape outcomes in unintended ways.

a. Match partnership choices to your reward philosophy

- Professional-ethics models may benefit from collaboration with civil-service commissions, public-sector training institutes, or reform-oriented agencies, which can extend institutional legitimacy and help embed integrity norms more formally
- Citizen-driven models may align more naturally with civil-society organisations, media partners, community groups, youth networks, or grassroots associations that can broaden nominations, deepen engagement, and strengthen public trust
- Moral-courage models may be better supported by independent foundations, advocacy organisations, or human-rights groups that can amplify visibility while maintaining distance from political or institutional influence

b. Assess the role of sponsorship and resource partners

- Partnerships, including private-sector sponsorship, can enhance sustainability, visibility, and outreach. At the same time, consider how branding expectations, public perceptions, and potential influence over programme direction may affect credibility
- If you decide to pursue sponsorship, clarify expectations and safeguard the independence of the award process
- Develop a simple partnership agreement outlining roles, boundaries, data-sharing rules, and principles of independence.
- If sponsorship is included, add a safeguard note to your programme materials (e.g., “Sponsorship does not influence nomination or selection”).

Reflections

- What partners might help you promote the values your recognition and rewards programme stands for?
- How will you protect independence if partners have strong visibility or branding interests?
- Are there groups whose involvement might strengthen public trust or raise questions about motive?

4.4 Call for Nominations

Learning

Experience shows that nomination systems vary widely depending on programme goals, institutional arrangements, and target groups. Some models issue public calls for nominations using online forms, social media announcements, community networks, or hybrid digital–in-person outreach to widen participation. Others use internal nomination systems, where supervisors, professional bodies, oversight units, or designated committees put nominees forward based on predefined criteria.

Regardless of the model, effectiveness depends on clear communication, transparent eligibility rules, and trust-building measures that help people understand the process (for instance, clarifying that nominations are not votes if this is not the case for your recognition and rewards programme). Inclusive programmes also recognise that certain groups—such as women, persons with disabilities, or people in rural or lower-visibility roles—may be overlooked unless deliberate strategies ensure they are reached and represented.

Comparative experiences likewise show that trusted intermediaries (such as volunteers, institutional focal points, or community partners) often determine whether individuals feel confident enough to nominate or accept nomination, especially in contexts where visibility carries risks.

Adaptation and Design

When planning your nomination or selection approach, consider the model that best aligns with your programme's purpose, context, and target audience:

a. Decide what nomination model fits your programme

- Open public calls may be suitable for citizen-driven, public service or community-rooted recognition and rewards
- Internal or institutional nominations may fit professional-ethics programmes where supervisors or oversight bodies play a role
- Closed selection or committee-driven identification may be appropriate for awards recognising moral courage, whistleblowing, or sensitive forms of integrity

b. Design for clarity, fairness, and inclusion

- Provide clear guidance on eligibility, what integrity looks like in your context, and how nominees are assessed
- Communicate explicitly if nominations are not votes or popularity contests
- Decide whether self-nominations are allowed and communicate this clearly
- Consider mechanisms that ensure inclusion—e.g., prompts for gender balance, disability inclusion, sector and geographic diversity

c. Choose nomination channels that match your context

- Online forms, institutional focal points, nomination desks, hotlines, or hybrid outreach models.
- In low-trust or low-digital-access environments, face-to-face explanations or trusted intermediaries may be particularly important—but consider sustainability, especially where volunteer stipends or travel costs are involved
- When working inside institutions, identify appropriate internal communication channels (intranets, circulars, HR units, integrity desks)

If your programme uses formal nomination forms, create a clear and accessible template See Annex 1: Nomination Form Template

4.5 Selecting Nominees

Learning

Selecting nominees typically begins with careful preparation of the nomination pool —whether nominations come from the public, from within institutions, or through professional bodies. Many programmes use multi-stage review processes, first cleaning or consolidating entries (for example, removing duplicates or incomplete submissions), then conducting verification checks through phone calls, reference checks, or workplace visits to confirm the nominee's behaviour and reputation.

Selection often narrows a large initial pool into progressively smaller shortlists, with decisions based on the strength of the nominees story, the clarity and reliability of evidence, and indications of consistent ethical conduct, particularly under pressure.

Comparative examples highlight that credibility is strengthened when reviews include independent perspectives—such as peer reviewers, cross-institutional teams, or external assessors—to minimise bias. While criteria might differ across contexts, programmes consistently prioritise demonstrated ethical behaviour, verifiable evidence, and behaviours that reflect integrity norms valued in that specific environment, adjusting weighting to reflect institutional goals and expectations.

Adaptation and Design

When selecting from the pool of initial nominees, think about how to balance fairness, evidence, and inclusion, and identify the practical steps needed to keep the process credible, structured and manageable:

a. Clarify your shortlisting approach
Decide whether selection will move through multiple filtering stages (e.g., longlist → midlist → final shortlist). A tiered system helps manage high nomination volumes and allows time for deeper checks where needed

b. Establish clear and usable criteria
Define what counts as a strong nomination—demonstrated integrity, evidence of ethical behaviour under pressure, consistency over time, contribution to the public interest, or sector-specific expectations. Ensure criteria are easy for reviewers to interpret and apply

c. Plan your verification process
Determine how information will be validated (e.g., phone calls, reference checks, in-person visits, cross-checks with supervisors or community members). Verification should prioritise the quality of evidence and the strength and clarity of the nominees story—not popularity or the number of nominations received, especially where nominations are not intended to function as votes

d. Build in credibility safeguards
To reduce bias, consider peer-review mechanisms such as cross-team or cross-regional assessment. Independent reviewers from outside the original nominating group will help reinforce fairness and strengthen trust in the process

e. Review inclusion and representation

Assess gender balance, disability inclusion, sector spread, and geographic distribution - if these are a criteria for your context. Inclusion is not a separate step but should be treated is an ongoing check across the entire shortlisting process

f. Keep records for transparency

Maintain simple documentation of how decisions were reached (scoring notes, verification summaries, decision logs). Clear records are especially important in low-trust environments where fairness may be questioned

Apply the Verification Checklist (Annex 2) to guide follow up phone calls, document checks, and office visits

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Use the Consent Form (Annex 4) to ensure nominees understand how their information will be used

4.6 Appointment of Judges and the Judging Process

Learning

Judging is one of the most consequential stages for credibility of recognition and reward Programmes. Programmes commonly use independent panels made up of respected professionals, civic actors, or subject experts who apply clear criteria and structured scoring tools to assess sustained ethical behaviour rather than isolated events.

Comparative initiatives use different judging structures—a dedicated expert panel, institutional review committees, hybrid internal–external oversight, or rotating multi-stakeholder panels—but all emphasise independence, conflict-of-interest safeguards, and transparent documentation.

A small number of programmes invite public input (such as feedback or additional evidence) while keeping final decisions with expert judges to avoid credibility risks associated with open voting. Across contexts, organising an orientation for judges, sharing standards, and setting clear records strengthen both fairness and public trust.

Adaptation and Design

When developing your judging system, consider both who should make decisions and how those decisions will be reached. Credibility in recognition and rewards often rests on independence, evidence-based assessment, and clear documentation, regardless of whether judging is internal, external, multi-stage, or expert-driven.

What you must establish upfront

a. Define how judges will be appointed

Specify who is eligible to serve—individuals known for integrity, neutrality, and relevant expertise. Programmes often draw judges from civil society, academia, the public sector, community leadership, or past awardees. Balance representation across gender, disability, profession, and region. Include explicit conflict-of-interest safeguards from the outset

b. Set judging structures that fit your model

Across programmes, judging takes different forms:

- Multi-panel expert judging (common in professional-ethics programmes)
    - Independent civil society or media-led panels (typical for community-based and citizen-driven recognition)
- Mixed technical panels + external reviewers (seen in collective-integrity)

Choose the structure that best protects independence and aligns with your programme's type of integrity

c. Provide a structured judge pack that includes:

- Clear criteria and definitions
- Confidentiality guidelines
- Guidance on narrative and evidence assessment
- A conflict-of-interest declaration
- Instructions for how scores will be moderated

Orientation sessions—used in several programmes—ensure all judges interpret the criteria consistently

d. Use scoring sheets that blend structure and judgement

Combine numeric scales with short narrative prompts to encourage assessment based on evidence, consistency, and demonstrated behaviour under pressure—not reputation, public popularity, or single heroic events.

e. Establish a moderation and documentation process

Create a simple process for:

- Comparing scores across judges
- Documenting deliberation notes
- Recording final decisions and rationales

Programmes with strong credibility often keep clear records of each stage of decision-making, enabling transparency if questions arise

f. Keep documentation accessible and transparent

Maintain summaries of decisions, scoring patterns, and timelines. This strengthens defensibility and supports public confidence

Adapt the Scoring Sheet Template (Annex 3) to guide consistent scoring for judges

4.7 Recognition and Reward Ceremony

Learning

If you decide to include a public recognition and reward ceremony as part of your programme, experience across different initiatives shows that the ceremony often becomes the moment when the stories of awardees gain their widest visibility. Programmes treat this event as the narrative peak—where shortlisted individuals are celebrated publicly, and where their stories are shared in ways that resonate with audiences.

Emotional or visual storytelling (for example, short films or narrative profiles) tends to form the core of these events because it helps humanise the values and behaviour the recognition and reward programmes recognise and allows colleagues, families, and communities to see ethical behaviour celebrated in ways that are rarely experienced in everyday institutional life. In some contexts, public recognition alone is seen as sufficient and symbolically powerful, reinforcing the idea that the behaviours recognised should not require material reward. In others, organisers incorporate tangible elements such as professional-development opportunities, mentorship, training, or modest financial or material support to reinforce motivation or help sustain the rewardee's career trajectory.

Comparative examples highlight that the format of ceremonies varies by context. Some programmes opt for high-visibility public events, including livestreaming or wide media coverage, while others take a smaller, more controlled approach where visibility carries risk or political sensitivities are high. Audience composition also differs—some ceremonies feature community participation, others include institutional leadership to signal official support.

Adaptation and Design

When planning the recognition and reward ceremony, think carefully about the purpose of the event, the message it should communicate, and the experience you want awardees and stakeholders to have. Your choices should reflect your programme's values, available resources, and the level of visibility that is appropriate in your context.

a. Decide the type of event you want to host

Choose a format that aligns with your objectives and the environment you work in:

- A formal/thematic event, with panels, keynote remarks or conversations on integrity
- A celebratory ceremony, focused mainly on the awardees and the films, with minimal speeches
- A hybrid model that combines short reflections with a strong celebratory emphasis

b. Determine what form the reward will take

Be clear about the type of recognition you intend to provide:

- Symbolic/public recognition (films, ceremony, commendation letters, digital storytelling)
- Tangible elements (certificates, plaques, small financial or material support, mentorship, training opportunities)
- A hybrid approach, pairing symbolic recognition with modest career or skill-building opportunities

Consider what level of material or symbolic recognition fits your values, your resources, and stakeholder expectations. The goal is to choose a format that is meaningful and feasible, and in line with your programme values

4.8 Post-recogniton and reward Ceremony Engagement

Learning

Experience across different recognition and reward programmes shows that what happens after the award is just as important as the nomination, verification, or ceremony stages. Programmes that maintain some form of post-award engagement tend to strengthen the visibility, confidence, and influence of awardees. This can take the form of periodic check-ins, opportunities for awardees to share updates, participate in reflective convenings or learning spaces, or be featured in public communication efforts of programme organisers.

This is important because some awardees often describe mixed post-award experiences: some gain recognition or support within their workplaces or communities, while others encounter subtle resistance or discomfort from colleagues, supervisors, or political actors. Continued engagement—whether light-touch or structured—can help awardees navigate increased visibility, manage risks, and stay connected to a community that affirms integrity in challenging environments.

Comparative programmes also show that alumni networks, fellowships, or communities of practice provide safe spaces for reflection, peer learning, and mutual support for awardees. These networks vary widely in formality, but they share the aim of ensuring that recognition leads to sustained encouragement rather than a one-time moment.

Adaptation and Design

When planning how your programme will support awardees after recognition, consider both how to maintain meaningful engagement and how to safeguard individuals in contexts where visibility may create new pressures:

a. Decide the kind of post-award community you want to build

- Will you maintain light-touch contact, establish an alumni network, or link rewardees into broader institutional or civic initiatives?
- Choose an approach that is realistic and sustainable for your organisation

b. Plan for ongoing communication and follow-up

Develop a simple contact plan to check in periodically with awardees, track their experiences, and note emerging challenges or opportunities for contribution

c. Identify voluntary opportunities for continued involvement

Awardees may choose to participate in outreach, mentorship, storytelling, community engagement, or institutional reform efforts. Participation should be optional and respectful of their time and professional roles

d. Create a safe and confidential support pathway

Increased visibility can lead to workplace tension, misinterpretation, or scrutiny. Establish a private and trusted channel through which rewardees can raise concerns or request guidance

For any follow-up communication that involves collecting information, consider adapting the Feedback Form in Annex 6.

4.9 Communication, Public Engagement and Storytelling

Learning

Across recognition and reward programmes, storytelling plays a central role in shaping public perception, strengthening credibility, and helping audiences connect emotionally with examples of ethical behaviour. Experience shows that documentary-style storytelling, written features, or visual profiles help make the value recognised visible in relatable and human terms. Communication teams often distinguish between storytelling and monitoring: while M&E tracks what happened, storytelling explains why it matters and helps audiences see and feel the significance of integrity in practice.

Where programmes have used short films or written profiles, awardees frequently describe these narratives as meaningful because they highlight work that is rarely recognised in their institutions or communities. For some, public visibility affirms their values; for others, it may feel sensitive or even risky, underscoring the need for careful consent processes and audience awareness. Media partnerships and journalist fellowships used in some programmes help broaden reach, strengthen reporting quality, and support ethical storytelling practices that protect the dignity of those featured.

Adaptation and Design

When planning how your programme will communicate its message and share stories, think about how storytelling will support credibility, visibility, and norm-shifting—and what safeguards are needed to protect those featured.

a. Design your communication approach around purpose

Decide what communication is meant to achieve:

- Raise visibility
- Inspire behaviour change
- Strengthen public trust or
- Support institutional advocacy.

Each requires a different mix of platforms, tone, and audience engagement.

b. Develop an ethical storytelling process

- Establish guidelines for consent, dignity, and accuracy.
- Ensure individuals understand how their stories will be used and where they will appear.

c. Choose formats that best fit your audiences

- Decide whether stories will be shared through short films, written profiles, radio features, social media, or community screenings.
- Consider accessibility—captioning, translation, or alternative formats—especially where digital reach varies.

d. Plan your communication channels with intentionality

- Map where your target audiences are (e.g., national TV, local radio, online platforms, community gatherings).
- Balance high-reach channels with trusted intermediaries in contexts where scepticism toward public messaging is strong.

e. Prepare a clear visual and messaging identity

- Develop consistent messaging that reinforces programme values and explains the purpose of recognition.
- Create simple visual assets (logos, templates, social cards) that can be reused throughout each cycle.

f. Build a risk-aware visibility plan

- Consider whether public exposure may pose risks to awardees, especially in sensitive institutions or contexts with workplace tensions.
- Adjust visibility levels accordingly: anonymised profiles, staged disclosure, or smaller audience events where needed.

g. Develop a storytelling workflow

Outline steps from initial interviews to final media products:

- Story-gathering
- Fact-checking
- Consent confirmation
- Script or profile development
- Review with awardees
- Publishing and dissemination.

Adapt the Consent Form (Annex 4) to support informed storytelling and media use.

If storytelling outputs involve feedback loops (e.g., screenings, community reactions), adapt Annex 6: Feedback Form for communication evaluation

4.10 Monitoring and Learning

Across recognition and reward programmes, effective monitoring combines simple quantitative indicators with deeper qualitative insight. Common metrics include nomination numbers received, tracking the levels of public engagement across social media and other platforms, demographic data such as representation across gender and sector. These figures are strengthened by lived-experience data—feedback from volunteers, nominees, judges, and awardees—which helps explain how the process works in practice and where improvements are needed.

Monitoring and evaluation has also been found to function as a learning system—one that signals what is working, what needs adjustment, and how each cycle can be redesigned to strengthen credibility, inclusion, and impact: such as helping programmes design clearer nomination forms where forms have been found to be complex, refining verification processes, designing better communication plans and strategies with partners and institutions, removal of elements that might undermine credibility and rethinking inclusion strategies.

Adaptation and Design

When planning your Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) approach, focus on how you will track programme reach, document meaningful change, and use learning to continually strengthen your model. A balanced system should capture both quantitative metrics and qualitative insights, and clearly inform redesign in future cycles.

a. Decide what you need to measure

Identify the key indicators that reflect your programme's goals—for example: nomination numbers, diversity spread (gender, disability, geography, sector), audience engagement, verification throughput, or story reach. Pair these with qualitative signals that show how integrity behaviours or norms may be shifting among peers, institutions, or communities.

b. Develop tools that support consistent data collection

Create or adapt simple tools for tracking (e.g., indicator tables, engagement logs, or volunteer feedback forms). Ensure the data you collect aligns with what you want to understand—not everything needs to be measured.

c. Include mechanisms to learn and adjust

Plan for periodic reviews—after-action reflections, team debriefs, or structured check-ins—with volunteers, nominees, judges, and partners. Use these insights to refine processes such as nomination forms, verification steps, outreach strategies, or partnership approaches. Make learning a deliberate and documented part of each programme cycle

d. Document insights for future cycles

Keep short, structured summaries of what was learned each year. These become the foundation for improving criteria, tools, messaging, verification processes, or ceremony design over time, ensuring the programme strengthens with each iteration.

See Annex 5: Monitoring & Evaluation Template

4.11 Sustainability

Learning

Across recognition and reward programmes, long-term sustainability depends on a mix of stable resources, institutional anchoring, and the ability to adapt over time. Experience shows that recurring costs—such as verification, documentation, outreach, and events—can strain programmes unless they are embedded in existing structures or supported through diversified partnerships.

Some initiatives sustain themselves by integrating recognition and reward into ongoing institutional or community programmes (e.g., within schools, civic platforms, professional associations, or reform initiatives), allowing the recognised behaviour to become part of routine practice rather than a one-off event. Others maintain momentum through volunteer networks, alumni engagement, and storytelling that keeps visibility alive between funding cycles.

The most enduring initiatives also treat knowledge as an asset: they document lessons, train successors, and share open-source tools so different actors both within and outside these organizations can replicate or adapt the model

Adaptation and Design

When planning for long-term sustainability, consider both the footprint you want your programme to have and the level of continuity you intend—whether it will be a one-off recognition initiative or a recurring cycle:

a. Identify potential anchors that fit your model

- For programmes focused on public service ethics, this may include partnerships with government agencies, training institutes, or reform platforms
- For community-centred or citizen-driven models, schools, civic organisations, youth networks, or professional associations may provide better alignment
- For awards centred on moral courage or public-interest advocacy, independent foundations or civil society organisations may offer safer and more credible anchoring

Your host institution should match your values, degree of independence, and intended visibility

b. Develop a flexible resource plan

- Combine grants, organisational support, partnerships, volunteer networks, or in-kind contributions
- Plan for recurring costs proportionate to your programme model—some models require documentation and formal ceremonies, others rely on smaller, targeted recognition events
- Diversifying resources reduces vulnerability to funding gaps and helps maintain continuity across cycles.

c. Build a knowledge and continuity system

- Maintain templates, process notes, decision logs, and guidance materials so future teams—within your organisation or partner institutions—can replicate or adapt the programme
- Keep both quantitative data (reach, participation, diversity) and qualitative insights (stories, reflections, feedback) to preserve institutional memory
- Use monitoring findings to update design choices each cycle, improving credibility and effectiveness over time

d. Consider the role of alumni and broader networks

- If your programme runs more than once, invite past awardees to contribute as mentors, storytellers, or ambassadors—but only where voluntary and appropriate to your model
- For one-off awards, consider lighter-touch follow-up, such as sharing the awardees' stories through partner networks or documenting lessons for others to build on

5.0 Resources and Tools

Annex 1 – Nomination
Nomination Form Template

Annex 2 – Verification
Nominee Verification Checklist

Annex 3 – Scoring
Scoring Sheet Template

Annex 4 – Consent
Consent Form Template

Annex 5 – Monitoring and Evaluation
Monitoring and Evaluation Template

Annex 6 – Feedback
Feedback Form Template

Annex 7 - Credibility and Risk Principles
Credibility and Risk Principles

Reflective Questions

1. What values or behaviours do you believe should guide recognition and reward programmes, everyday practices such as honesty, dedication to work or must it be something considered significant?
2. Do you think recognition should remain purely symbolic, or can modest material support be appropriate in certain contexts, and what values or assumptions do you think might shape the choice for tangible awards?
3. How might introducing financial or tangible rewards influence motivation, perceptions of fairness, or the public meaning of values such as integrity?
4. Who should be allowed to put names forward—should people be able to nominate themselves, or does that change how the award is viewed?
5. Do you believe organisers should also serve as judges, or is an independent panel essential for credibility?
6. Do you think the principles put forward in this toolkit to protect fairness and credibility are sufficient? What other principles could apply?
7. How might different forms of visibility (public ceremony and media coverage) affect awardees, especially in environments where attention can create personal or professional risks?
8. Do you think recognition can meaningfully shift behaviour or norms in your context, or does it need to be paired with additional institutional reforms or incentives?
9. How should programmes balance wide participation with the need for credible evidence—should trust be placed in community nominations, official records, or a mix of both?
10. What would long-term success look like for recognition and reward programmes? Should they be a continuous occurrence or one-time events?

Resources & Further Reading

- Allard Prize for International Integrity – Profiles of finalists, nomination processes, and storytelling formats https://www.allardprize.org
- Basel Institute on Governance – Anti-Corruption Collective Action Rewards – Collective integrity initiatives, selection criteria, and verification approaches https://baselgovernance.org/collective-action
- Gani Fawehinmi Impact & Integrity Rewards (GFIIA) – Moral courage and public-interest leadership recognition https://gfa.hedang.org
- Ghana Integrity Rewards (GIA) – Professional ethics and public-sector standards https://ghanasintegrityrewards.org
- Week of Integrity & Integrity Reward (Ghana/Kenya/Netherlands) – Multi-stakeholder integrity norms and recognition events https://weekofintegrity.al
- Paul A. Volcker Public Integrity Rewards (USA) – Excellence in government, ethical public administration https://www.volckeralliance.org
- Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) – Ethics & Integrity Scorecard – Collective performance metrics for public institutions https://icpc.gov.ng
- Public Service Rules & FCSSIP25 (Federal Civil Service Strategy & Implementation Plan) – National framework for civil-service recognition, rewards, and accountability (Referenced via FCSC/Nigeria Head of Service publications)
- Nigeria Social Cohesion Survey – Africa Polling Institute (API) – Public trust data relevant for reward design in low-trust environments https://africapollinginstitute.org
- Transparency International – Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) https://transparency.org/cpi
- Afrobarometer – Public Trust & Governance Surveys https://afrobarometer.org
- Chatham House – Social Norms and Accountable Governance (SNAG) Project – Insights on norm change, role models, and behavioural influences https://www.chathamhouse.org
- Basel Institute – Behavioural Approaches to Anti-Corruption https://baselgovernance.org

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