

# JamesBeard

**JAMES BEARD AWARDS AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS**

# Foundation

09.13.2021

# The Need for an Audit

**In August 2020, The James Beard Foundation announced that The Awards Committee and subcommittees, made up of volunteer members from within the broader food, restaurant, and media industries, would work with the Foundation and outside consultants to overhaul the policies and procedures for the Awards.**

The objectives were to remove systemic bias, increase the diversity of the pool of candidates, maintain relevance, and align the Awards more outwardly with the Foundation's values of equity, equality, sustainability, and excellence for the restaurant industry.

An audit was critical in order to identify areas that needed to be addressed and, ultimately, to inform updates and changes to policies and procedures surrounding the Awards. Specific needs were: 1) creating a more transparent Awards process; 2) creating more consistency among the Awards; 3) creating a process to deal with candidates withdrawing their names; 4) creating clearer and more stringent protocols around the final Awards results; 5) fostering a more inclusive process with a focus on diverse representation.

The audit recommendations detailed in this deck addressed each of these needs and have led to the overhaul of Awards policies and procedures that we committed to a year ago. In parallel, the JBF Board conducted its own review to learn from the experience of the 2020 Awards. The Board formed a Special Committee to direct this review with the assistance of external counsel. The insights from the Board's review also informed the recommendations to build a better, stronger Awards program.

The work does not end here—nor does our commitment to champion a more equitable and sustainable Awards program, Foundation and industry.

# Board of Trustees' Parallel Review Findings

The Committee's review found that those involved with the Awards worked with the best of intentions to address extraordinary challenges, but that there were good-faith disagreements on the best ways to address these challenges. A lack of preexisting guardrails in certain key areas magnified these difficulties, including around the confidentiality of voting results, handling of alleged misconduct by nominees, and rules regarding potential revotes. Based on the review, the Committee recommended four areas of focus going forward, centered on guiding future decision-making and promoting confidence in the Awards. These recommendations included:

- + Clarifying the rules around the sharing of information related to voting results
- + Developing guidelines for addressing allegations of misconduct by nominees
- + Clarifying the Award's mission and its role in the evaluation of potential winners
- + Clarifying the respective roles of the Foundation and the Restaurant and Chef Awards Subcommittee

# Awards Audit: The Team and Their Roles



## Awards Working Groups

- + Volunteer cross-subcommittee members representing each Award program led the charge to oversee and execute the audit, resulting in overhauled policies and procedures that are aligned with the Foundation's goals.
- + Supported by the Foundation and with guidance from third-party agencies, working groups helped design and operationalize these changes in the process of the Awards program.

### **Working Groups**

Each covered the following components of the Awards operating procedures:

- + Categories
- + Entry, Eligibility and Criteria
- + Ethics & Vetting
- + Committees, Hierarchy and Procedures
- + Judges & Judging

# James Beard Awards Audit: The Team and Their Roles

Consulting Partner and Subject Matter Experts



**Overall process facilitators, reviewed existing structure and recommended** changes implementation. Worked alongside subject matter experts.

RALLY

**Equity and racial justice subject matter experts.** Facilitated conversations and provided guidance to the working group process to help ensure the final plan reflects the Foundation's priorities around this subject.

POSTELSIA

**Sustainability subject matter experts.** Facilitated conversations and provided guidance around this subject.

Debevoise  
& Plimpton

**Provided legal guidance during the process.**

# Executive Summary of Recommendations

# Awards Audit Recommendations: Summary

## Process & Procedures

- + A new Awards mission in place; core definitions articulated: winner; leader; excellence
- + Remits of all committees documented, membership criteria in place, introduction of shorter term limits (2 x 2 years); diversity goals in place (50% BIPOC by 2023); and new system to build pipeline of potential members
- + Broadening of Restaurant & Chef subcommittee members beyond food journalists to include a wider net of food professional, including former chefs/restaurateurs and consumers
- + Previous winners no longer default to the voting pool. Instead, winner from the last 3 years will be considered as potential judges, requiring the subcommittee to actively vote them on
- + Introduction of 2 new types of judge categories within Restaurant and Chef Awards:
  - Scouts who are responsible for surfacing new restaurants for consideration,
  - and a Tasting panel responsible for tasting all Nominees and voting for winners using standardized voting form
- + All Awards Committee and Subcommittee members will receive an annual honorarium of \$1k; we are finalizing stipends for judges (including scouts and tasting panelists)
- + Judges will be made public after the Awards cycle concludes. Name only, and not for which program they judged
- + Remit of JBF staff codified
  - Administrative support for process and procedures
  - No involvement in vetting or voting

# Awards Audit Recommendations: Summary

## Entries and Vetting

- + All entries to include an Alignment statement to demonstrate commitment to JBF values (factored into evaluation)
  - + All entrants to sign code of ethics (as well as all members of committees and judges)
  - + For Media Awards, reduced entrance fee of \$75, with an option to be waived
  - + All Restaurant and Chef semi-finalists and Media nominees will be vetted by external professional vetter, as in prior years
  - + Establishment of an Ethics Committee to oversee all allegations
- + Ethics Committee:
    - Refine and finalize vetting process, and establish a clear demarcation of what allegations are researched
    - Report to Governance Committee/ Board
    - Function independently from the Awards Committee, Subcommittees and the Foundation's staff
    - If any nominee needs to be removed from the running, the independent accountant will remove that nominee, and the next highest scoring nominee will be inserted as a replacement. No JBF Staff or Awards committee member will participate in this procedure.
  - + Awards to be issued with a 'license' going forward that will stipulate code of conduct. Any breach will result in the recipient not being able to use the JBA association. The Foundation does not intend to rescind awards once issued.



# Awards Audit Recommendations: Summary

## Highlights of Awards Categories

- + Emerging Voice
  - All Media Awards will now have an Emerging Voice category
  - Restaurant & Chef Rising Star Chef Award is now Emerging Chef Award, with no age limit
  - Leadership will continue to present an Emerging Leadership Award
- + Media Awards updated in line with current platforms:
  - TV and Online referred to as "Visual Media"
  - New Categories: Reality or Competition Visual Media; Commercial Sponsored Visual Media; Social Media

# Detailed Recommendations

# Audit Recommendations

## A New Mission & Refreshed Definitions

### The James Beard Awards Mission

- + The James Beard Awards' mission is to recognize exceptional talent and achievement in the culinary arts, hospitality, media, and broader food system; as well as a demonstrated commitment to racial and gender equity, community, sustainability, and a culture where all can thrive.

### What is Excellence and Leadership?

- + **Excellence:** The intersection of exceptional talent and achievement in one's craft and a demonstrated commitment to promoting the Foundation's values of equity, transparency, respect, integrity, community, and passion
- + **Leadership:** Through their work, someone who is paving the way and providing space for others to create a sustainable and equitable independent restaurant industry, while also giving voice to such efforts through writing or other forms of media.

### Who is a James Beard Award Winner?

- + An Award recipient is both innovative and consistent, through storytelling on a plate; in food media; and in the broader food system, making efforts to promote racial and gender equity, sustainability, and a work culture where all can thrive—what we call Good Food for Good™.

# Audit Recommendations

## Policies & Procedures: Committee & Judges



### Oversight & Administration

- + The James Beard Awards are overseen and administered by the Awards subcommittees, together and in consultation with the James Beard Foundation and its representatives (the James Beard Awards Staff), subject to the oversight of the Awards Committee and the Board in their decision-making capacity.
- + Awards subcommittee members, the Awards Committee, the Corporation and the Board of Trustees, are all expected to subscribe to the values and ethics of the James Beard Foundation and its Awards program.

### Committee Terms+ DEI Goals

- + Awards Committee + Subcommittee Terms:
  - Two (2) two-year terms. Staggered roll-offs depending on total empty seats per subcommittee, instead of three (3) three-year terms
  - Use of a standard rubric for all subcommittee and judge composition
- + Diversity Goals for Committee Members and Judges: 45% BIPOC (2022-23), increasing to 50% (2023+)
- + Creation of an Emeritus Committee: Committee members whose terms have ended will be invited to this committee. Role: tapped for advice, historical knowledge and involvement in yearlong awards brand building initiatives.

### Expansion of Committee & Judge Criteria for Restaurant & Chef Awards

- + In addition to the traditional food media background of members of this subcommittee, others who qualify to join include: book authors; chef-instructors; former chefs/restaurateurs; food studies scholars; and diners from unrelated professions who have vast knowledge of the restaurant scene in a particular region.
- + Previous winners no longer default to the voting pool. Instead, winners from the last 3 years will be considered as potential judges, requiring the subcommittee to actively vote them on.

# Audit Recommendations

## Policies & Procedures: Committee & Judges



### Criteria for Membership:

#### Conflict of Interest

- + Awards committee members may not apply, enter, or have an entry submitted on behalf of them for any Awards program.
- + Subcommittee members may not serve on the subcommittee in any Awards year for which they are submitting or are having submitted on their behalf, an entry that the subcommittee member has participated in, contributed to, or edited.
  - Should member wish to apply, they must recuse themselves completely from the committee during that year.
- + Subcommittee members must indicate any potential conflicts of interest.

### Updated Duties of Subcommittee Officers:

#### Vice Chair & Secretary

- + **Vice Chair's role:** More clearly defined
  - Help onboard committee members and judges with aid and support from JBF staff
  - Review and provide feedback on all official Awards documents and consult with Chair on deciding upon new Subcommittee members
  - Train to potentially serve as Chair during the year which Chair will roll off
- + **Secretary's role:** Additional responsibilities
  - Additional responsibility for secretary: Committee liaison who is tasked with keeping other committees up to date and bringing any questions to other committees (e.g., a cross-collaborative award)

# Audit Recommendations

## Entry, Eligibility & Criteria



### Entry and Eligibility

#### Alignment Statement for Entrants

- + Entrants for the Media Awards (Book, Broadcast Media and Journalism) and Restaurant & Chef Awards, will be required to provide a brief statement of alignment with one or more of the James Beard Foundation's Awards mission and values from candidates.
- + Statement can be submitted as a write-up or video/audio clip. Candidates are encouraged to write or speak in their own authentic words.
- + Statements will be taken into consideration when the voting body reviews entries.
- + Entrants will be required to review and check box indicating that they've reviewed the Code of Ethics.

#### Entry Fees

- + \$75, with an option to be waived with entrant's explanation of circumstances.

### Lifetime Achievement & Humanitarian Awards

- + Awards Committee + Subcommittee members, as well as Judges will now have the opportunity to submit potential recipients.
- + All Subcommittee members will now vote for recipients via a ballot.

# Audit Recommendations

## Entry, Eligibility & Criteria



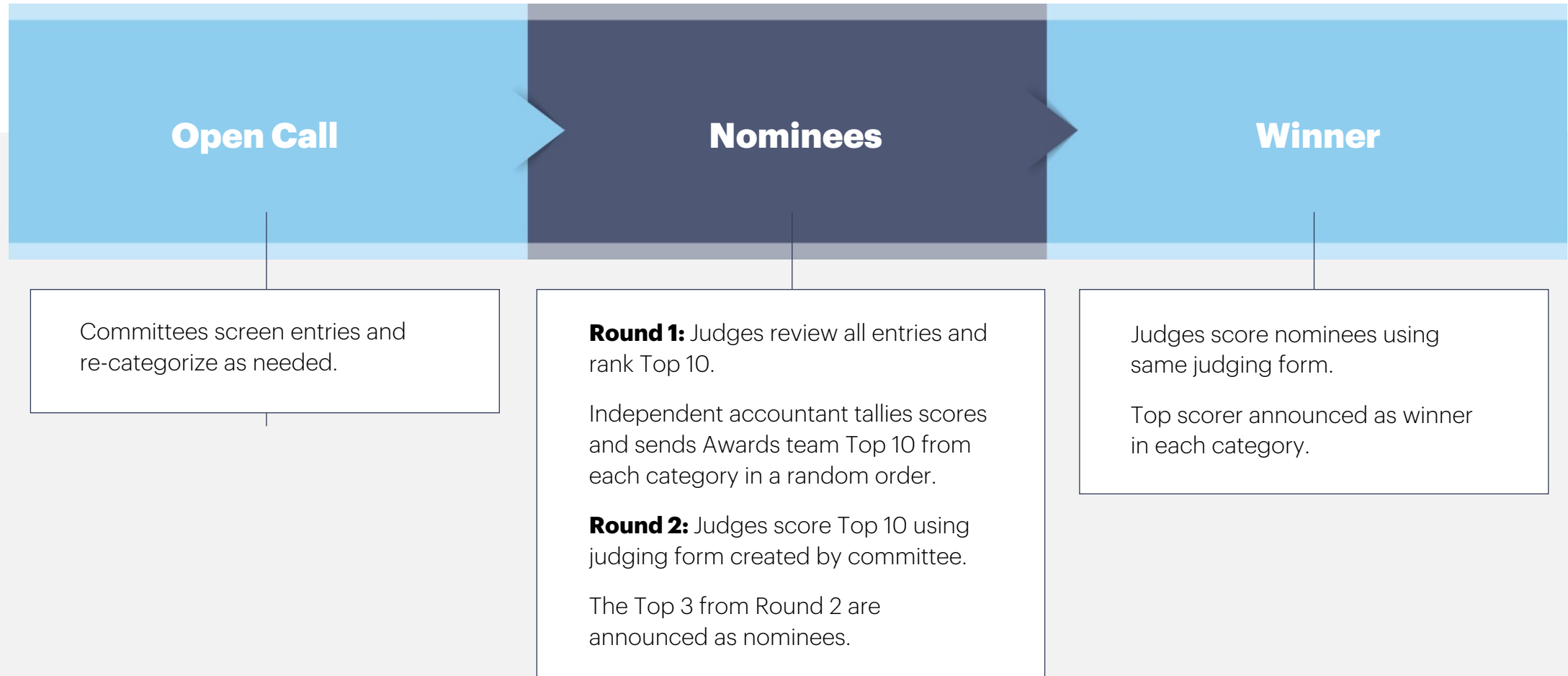
### New Awards Categories (highlights)

**Full list of categories will be available in October, in time for Call for Entries.**

- + New categories reflect current movement in the media and culinary industries, with an eye toward a more equitable future.
- + **Emerging Voice**
  - All Media Awards will now have an Emerging Voice category
  - Restaurant & Chef Rising Star Chef Award is now Emerging Chef Award, with no age limit
  - Leadership will now have an Emerging Leadership Award

- + **Book Awards**
  - US Foodways instead of American
  - Visuals instead of Photography
- + **Broadcast Media Awards**
  - All categories have been updated to reflect current platforms:
    - TV and Online referred to as "Visual Media"
    - New Categories: Reality or Competition Visual Media; Commercial Sponsored Visual Media; Social Media

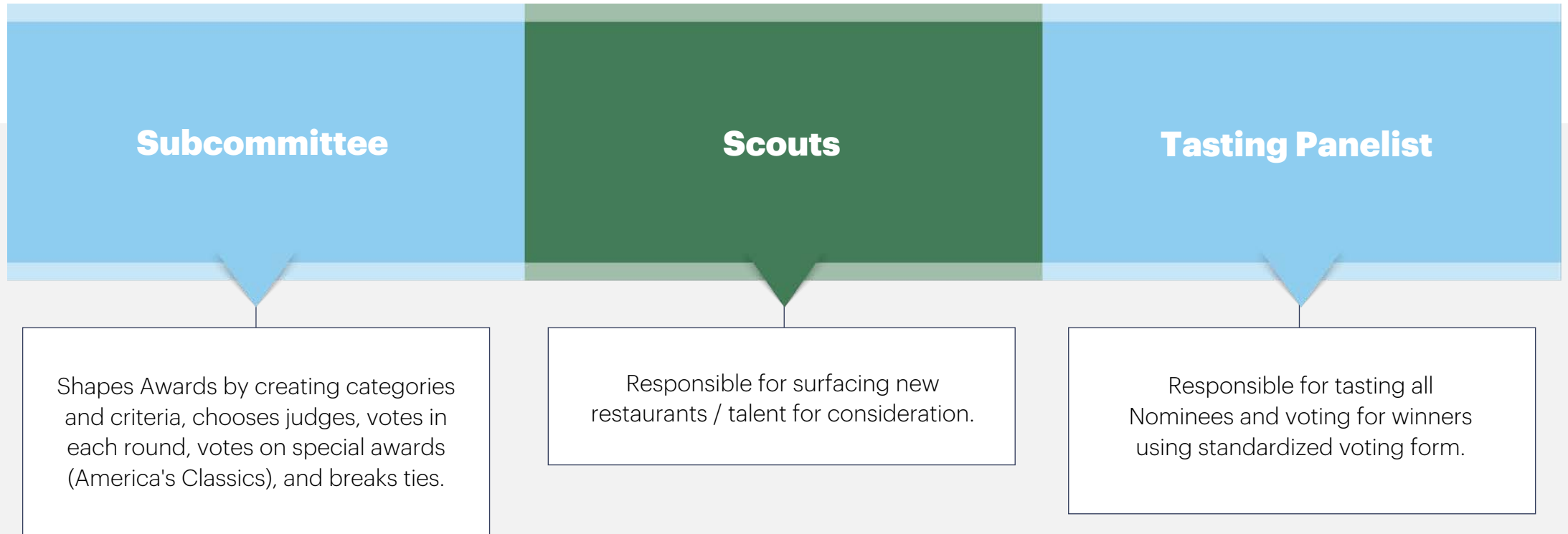
# Media Awards Voting Process





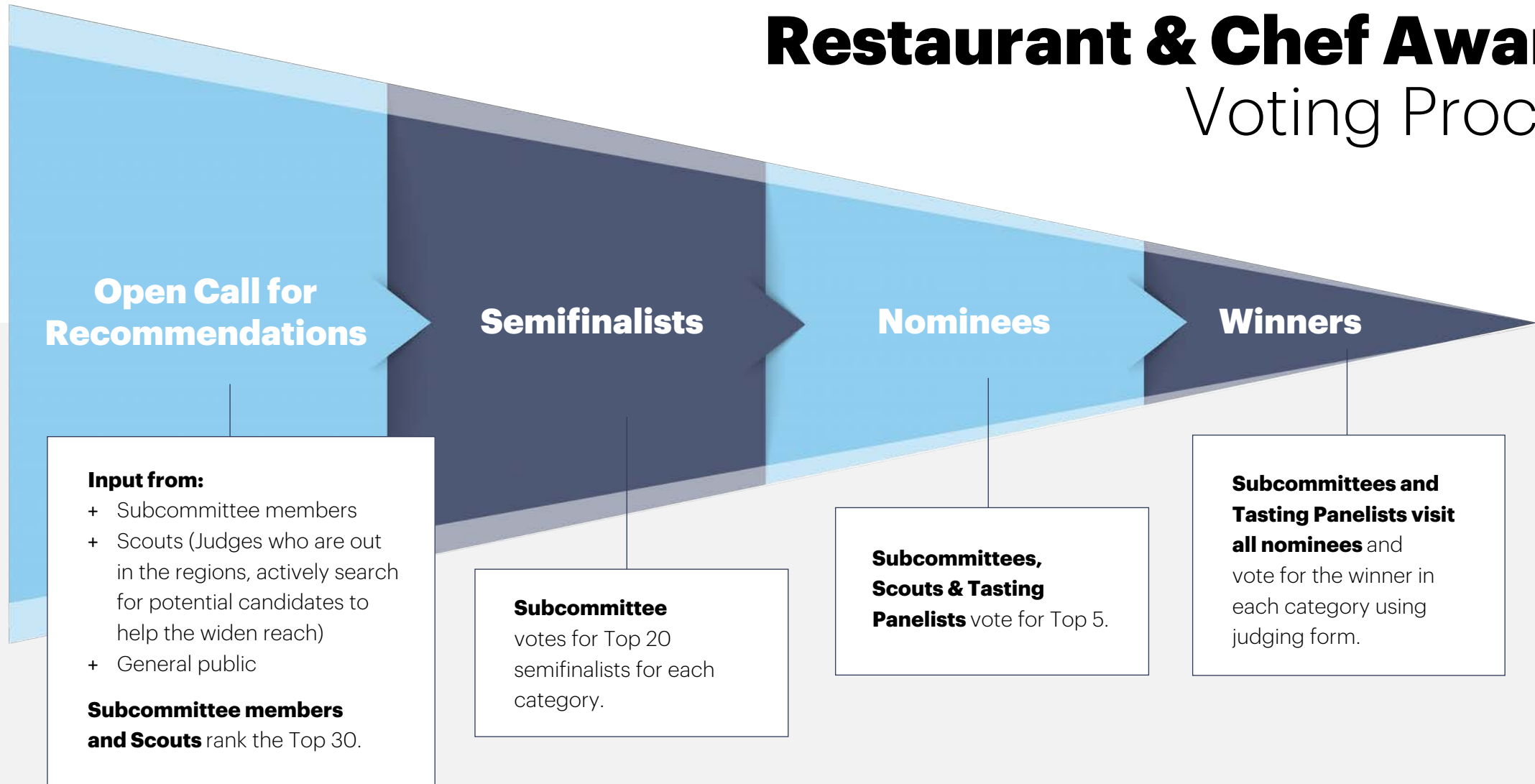
# Restaurant & Chef Awards

## Voting Body Structure Updated

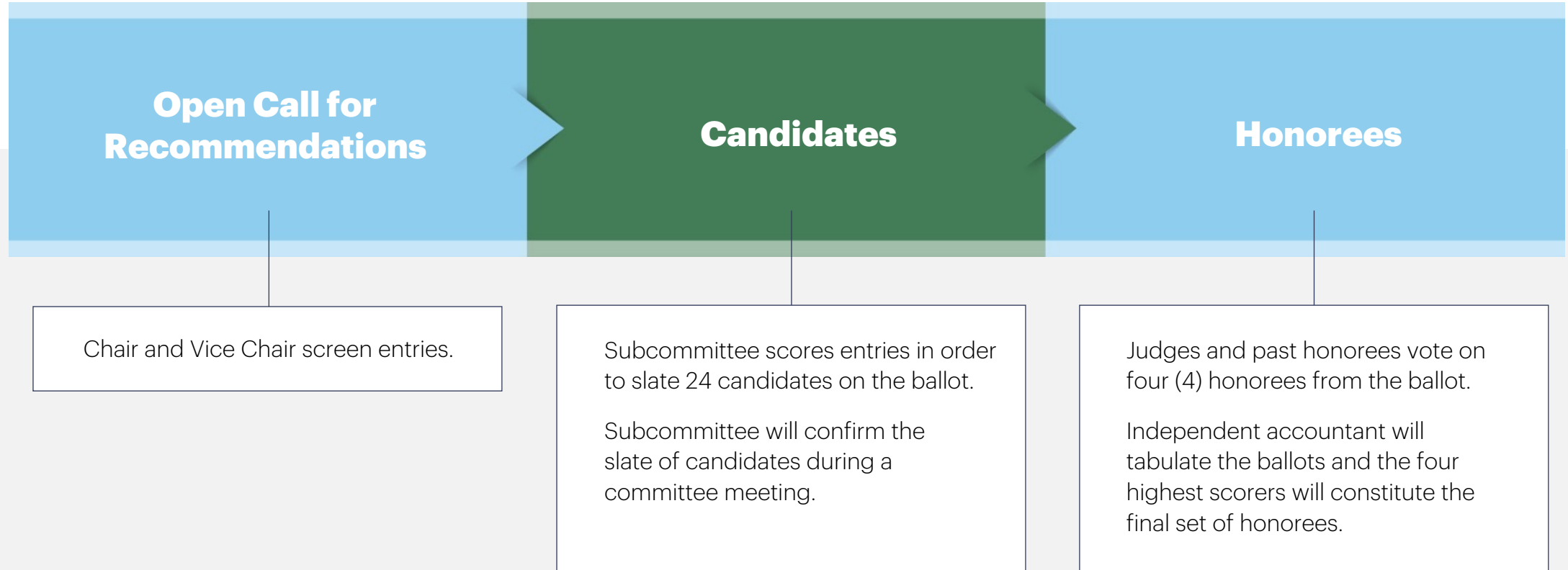


# Restaurant & Chef Awards

## Voting Process

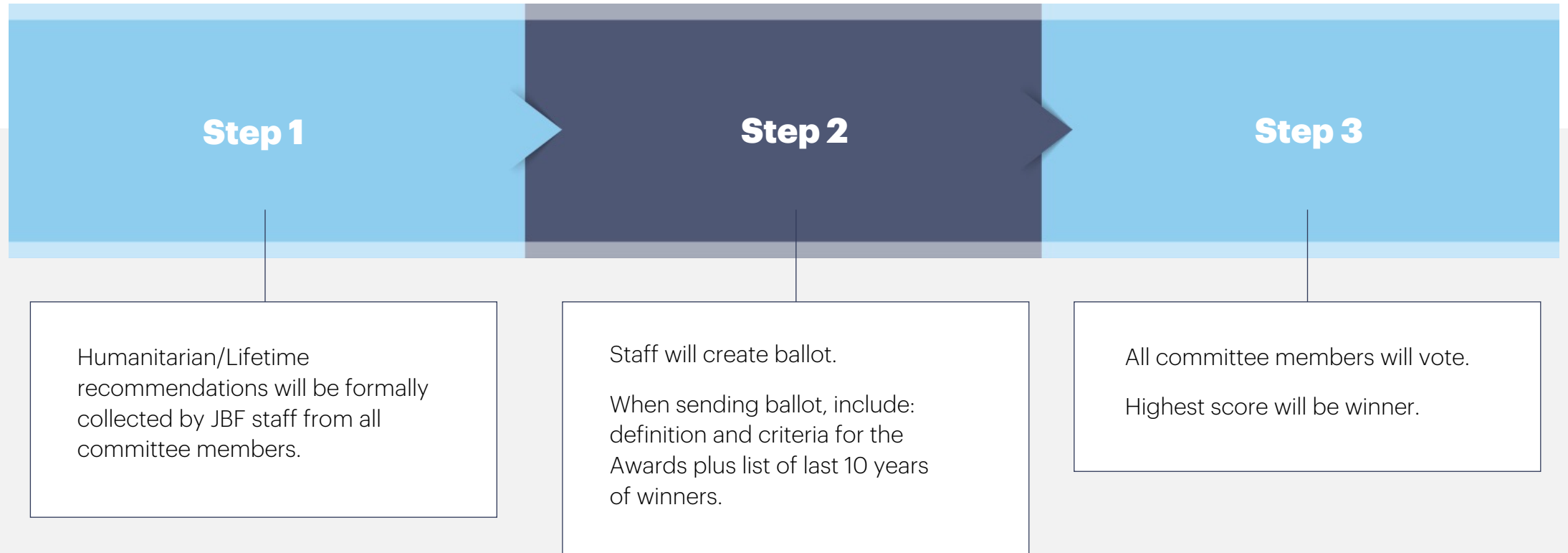


# Leadership Awards Voting Process



# Lifetime Achievement & Humanitarian

## Voting Process



# Vetting Process



- + **All Restaurant and Chef semifinalists**, Media nominees and special award and Leadership honorees will be screened and vetted.
- + **The Foundation** will have in place: the renewed mission statement; Foundation's values; Code of Ethics, which entrants must sign off on before submitting their entry; and a required entrant's alignment statement as part of their application.
- + **Any allegations** received will be reviewed and assessed by the independent Ethics committee, which will determine next steps.
- + **No James Beard Foundation staff** including its Awards team, any member of a committee or subcommittee, or anyone involved in administering the program will be involved in this process.

# Ethics Committee



## Establish an Independent Ethics Committee

### + **Committee members to:**

- Review and vet all allegations
  - Uphold the Awards Code of Ethics
  - Refine and finalize process, establishing a clear demarcation of what allegations are researched
  - Help create operational procedure for Ethics Committee
- + Report to Governance Committee/ Board
  - + Will function independently from the Awards Committee, Subcommittees and the Foundation's staff.
  - + Total number of members: 5–6

### + **Potential Committee composition:**

- An ethics professor
- A retired lawyer – someone who has had experience as a trial lawyer or as a judge
- Professional who is knowledgeable about ethics in journalism/writing
- Professional who is knowledgeable about the food and beverage space, but not a chef or restaurateur
- Additionally, some members could be 'ordinary citizens'—they may include civic leaders (not politicians/activists). They often bring common sense in evaluating facts without agenda or prejudices.

For questions regarding the 2020-2021 Awards audit,  
please contact our team at **awards@jamesbeard.org**

For any press inquiries, please  
contact **pati@navaltamedia.com**