RULES AND PROCEDURES

ACADEMY
OF
INTERACTIVE ARTS & SCIENCES

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1 - Introduction

These rules and procedures were developed by the Academy's Board of Directors to ensure a legitimate and accurate voting process. This document should serve as a guide for Peer Leaders, Peer Panelists, AIAS Members and those interested in the D.I.C.E. Awards process. This is an evolving document and will be updated as the Academy's policies change. With that in mind, the Academy welcomes feedback from members and non-members.

2 - Timeline

September 1	Peer Panel leaders and member selection begins
September 1	Initial call for submissions via website and email
December 8	Submissions close
January 6	Peer Panels submit finalists in each genre and craft category
December 30 -January 6	Peer Panels vote to determine finalists for Game of Year
January 8-15	General Academy voting period
February 18, 2027	Winners announced at the 30th Annual D.I.C.E. Awards Ceremony

Dates subject to change

3 - Category Creation/Maintenance

Process

Each year, the Awards Committee reviews member recommendations, analyzes the existing categories and makes recommendations to the Academy's Board of Directors to finalize the categories. Then the Board discusses the recommendations and votes to approve or disapprove the suggested changes. The category descriptions are updated and posted on the Academy website and outlined in the submission packets. To be considered, future category change recommendations must be submitted by June 1, 2027 via email to the Academy.

4 - Submission Procedures

Eligibility

Products eligible for the Annual D.I.C.E. Awards are those that meet all of the following requirements. The title must be:

1. Publicly available in North America between January 1, 2026 and December 31, 2026 unless submitted into Online Game of the Year and Fighting Game of the Year (please see category definition for details).
2. Designed for use on at least one of the following platforms: a videogame console, handheld system, a computer running Windows, a Mac computer, a commercial game network, a wireless cell phone (mobile), a tablet, VR device, an XR HMD, or for use on the Internet through a web browser.
3.

4. Title submissions will only be accepted if:
    a. The publisher of the title is a member in good standing with the Academy at the time of its submission and entered with all materials, as outlined in the Submission section.

    or

    b. A non-AIAS company may submit a title for consideration in craft categories only. These companies will not be eligible to vote or to participate in the peer panel process.
    c.

Titles may only be submitted for consideration one time in their initial release form, unless submitting into Online Game of the Year or Fighting Game of the Year in a subsequent award year.

Remakes

Remakes with demonstrable changes to technical, gameplay, and/or art assets are eligible for submission. However, remasters or ports of existing titles from previous or current generations, with no significant alterations to the core experience, are not eligible for submission. The submitting party must be able to provide documentation supporting the new elements if required by the AIAS.

Submissions

The AIAS encourages submissions from any individual or company providing that submission eligibility requirements are met. The AIAS may, but has no obligation to, disclose the name of or any other information with regards to a submitting party. The AIAS reserves the right to disclose the names of all entries after the submission deadline. After disclosure, any submitting party may withdraw from consideration.

Each application enters the submitted game or title for consideration in AT LEAST ONE (1) Craft category, and ONLY ONE (1) Genre category. A title may be submitted for consideration in any and all of the Craft categories.

In regard to sequels: Genre selections must be consistent with previous entries in a series, unless there is a significant shift in gameplay and/or game design. The AIAS reserves the right to make the final determination on which genre a title may be entered to.

Game of the Year finalists are determined by Peer Panelists in a preliminary vote consisting of all submitted titles. The five (5) titles with the most votes will become the Game of the Year finalists.

Submission Deadline

Deadline: All submissions must be received by the AIAS by 5:00 pm PT on Tuesday, December 8, 2026. The AIAS may, at its sole discretion, reserve the right to extend the deadline and accept or refuse submissions after the deadline.

Submission Materials: Each submission must include the following items:

1. Completed and signed submission form: the entire form must be filled out and contact information completed by submitting party. Please note that the submission forms have changed. Where applicable, key individuals responsible for specific aspects of game development, design or production will be credited. Credits submitted must be complete and accurate in order to ensure the correct information is utilized in all video and printed materials for the D.I.C.E. Awards.

2. Twenty-Two (22) copies of the title for submission in the applicable Genre category and an additional Twenty-Two (22) copies for evaluation for each additional category in which the title is submitted. In the case of submitting expansion packs, an equal number of the original game title will be required in the event that the original title is needed to play the expansion pack. The Academy will mark all materials before distribution. Materials will not be returned. Materials can be produced/playable media, instruction booklets, and maps. Submissions from pay game networks must arrange free access for the Academy peer panelists participating in the finalist screening process. Online Gameplay submissions require URL addresses, passwords, and navigation paths.

3. Full payment of the submission fees per title for consideration as follows:

    a. One (1) full payment of $1,000 submission fee for the title being entered covering one (1) genre category, game of the year categories and any number of craft categories.

    or

    b. Verified independent publishers/developers may receive a reduced rate of $250 upon AIAS approval if eligible and submitting to the Outstanding Achievement in Independent Game award category. This fee covers entry towards the Outstanding Achievement in Independent Game award, one genre category, and any number of craft categories.

4. Video footage of each submitted game. **This video is for use during the live ceremony and will not be shown to judges**. Footage should be 1080p full HD (Apple ProRes preferred) or higher, and be provided through access to digital file sharing services.. Video footage submitted should include scenes appropriate to each category that the submitted title is entered. This footage should be 2-3 minutes (per category) that best exemplifies the game experiences for the particular categories the game is submitted into. For example, for *Clair Obscur: Expedition 33*, there would have been clips that would be appropriate and best exemplify its place in the Role-Playing Game of the Year category, as well as separate clips for each of the different craft categories it was submitted to. For example, a submission in Outstanding Achievement in Character, the footage should display the gaming experience that best shows off the submitted character's development, performance, and defining attributes. Unique segments of footage should be presented for all craft categories entered.

5. Screenshots: A minimum of six (6) in-game screenshots, at least one box art image, and at least one game title logo image to be available via FTP or other file sharing services. These materials must be of high resolution and may be in JPEG, PNG, BMP, TIFF, EPS or PSD formats.

6. Game description: A text or Word file with a 100-word description of the game.

Note: The AIAS reserves the right to make final determination as to whether submissions meet the eligibility requirements. AIAS reserves the right to refuse submissions in which case a full refund will be granted.

5 - Peer Panels

Introduction
Peer Panels were created to fairly evaluate and establish the number of submissions per category. Over the course of the Academy's history, the number of submissions in each category became overwhelming and it was unreasonable to expect that all Academy members would play the hundreds of games entered each year.

For each genre and craft category there is a Peer Panel, consisting of up to 22 active Creative/Technical Academy members. The Peer Panels are responsible for evaluating the entire list of submissions for a category and narrowing the selection. The Peer Panels are expected to play all submitted games in their categories and through discussions and internal votes, determine the strongest candidates on which the Academy membership will vote to choose the overall winner.

By creating Peer Panels for each category where the panelists are committed to playing all of the submitted games, the Academy can ensure that the membership is presented with a refined list of strong games for the final voting process. Additionally, with an average of five finalists in each category, it's more likely that the general membership will have played all of the games they vote on.

Peer Panel Leaders

Responsibilities
Each Peer Panel has a leader who is responsible for:

- Assembling the panel in a timely fashion
- Communicating write-ins to the Academy
- Ensuring that all panelists have the games they need for evaluation
- Initiating discussions once panelists have finished playing the games
- Managing the voting process to determine finalists in the category
- Submitting finalists to the Academy

Qualifications
Peer Panel leaders are senior professional members of the industry who have experience directly related to the panel they lead. For instance, a Senior Art Director might be expected to lead the Art Direction panel. Peer Panel leaders must be active Creative/Technical members of the Academy.

Approval
Each year the Academy first asks previous year's Peer Panel leaders if they're interested in serving again. Additionally, the Academy will accept requests from members who are interested in being Peer Panel leaders.

Terms
There are no terms for Peer Panel Leaders. However, the AIAS reserves the right to review the performances of Peer Panel leaders and reassign or remove them based on that review.

Peer Panelists

Responsibilities
Each Peer Panelist is responsible for:

- Suggesting write-in submissions
- Playing all submitted games
- Giving evaluations of the games
- Voting to determine finalists
- Participating in a preliminary vote to determine Game of Year finalists

Qualifications
Peer Panelists must be active Creative/Technical members and have expertise in the panel's category. No more than two individuals from the same studio may serve on the same Peer Panel.

Approval
The approval process for Peer Panelists is the same as that of the Peer Panel leaders; each year the Academy invites the previous year's Peer Panelists to serve again. Membership Services confirms that Peer Panelists are active Creative/Technical Members in good standing.

Terms
There are no terms for Peer Panelists. However, the AIAS reserves the right to review the performances of Peer Panelists and reassign or remove Peer Panelists based on their participation level.

Peer Panel Procedures

Step 1 – Filling the panel
Timeline: To be initiated on September 1
Peer Panel leaders are contacted by the Academy, asked if they want to serve again, and contact information is confirmed. Panel leaders will work with the Academy to confirm all contact information on current panelists. If there are vacancies, the respective Peer Leaders and the Academy will work together to fill them.

Step 2 – Regular submission period begins
Timeline: September 1
Submissions are officially received by the AIAS and placed in their selected Craft categories and appropriate Genre category.

Step 4 – Getting the games
As soon as titles are submitted, and the Awards Committee has ensured that all games are assigned to the right categories, the AIAS will distribute games to panelists. The Academy gives the panelists a list of final submissions on December 8th.

Step 5 – Determining write-in finalists
Timeline: by December 10
The Peer Panel leader is responsible for submitting a list of official write-in finalists agreed upon by the panel (as determined above) to the Academy.

Explanation of Write-Ins: Write-ins are titles that were not formally submitted by publishers or developers. Panelists must first vote to include a write-in title for panel consideration which requires a 60% vote. Once the title has passed the initial vote, panelists are responsible for procuring copies of the game in question. Afterwards, the title should be considered as part of the entire catalog of formally submitted titles for that panel and voted upon as such.

As with regular submissions, write-in candidates must have been published between January 1, 2026 and December 31, 2026 to be eligible.

Step 6 – Ranking the games
Timeline: January 6
The panel determines the final rankings of the entries and submits its top finalists to the Academy. The maximum number of finalists is never greater than five and the minimum is determined by the following metric:

Minimum Finalists Table
13 or more submissions = 5 finalists
10 - 12 submissions = minimum of 4 finalists
7 - 9 submissions = minimum of 3 finalists
5 - 6 submissions = minimum of 2 finalists
1 - 4 submissions = minimum of 1 finalist

To determine which games become finalists, each panelist sends their respective panel leader a list of nominees he/she believes worthy of advancement to finalist status. Panelists may vote for as many, or as few, nominees as they wish***,*** and each of these nominees receives 1 ***vote***. Panelists also provide a ranked list of up to 5 titles which are their "ideal finalist list"; these titles receive ***points*** based on their ranking (5 points to first-ranked title, 4 points to second-ranked title, etc). If a panelist submits fewer than 5 ranked titles, then only the ranked titles receive points, and no title receives more points than it would have received if a full list of 5 had been submitted.

Step 7 – Preliminary Voting for GotY Finalists
Timeline: December 30 to January 6
The Academy will hold a special preliminary vote open only to Peer Leaders and Peer Panelists to determine five finalists each for the Game of the Year category. All submitted titles are eligible for the preliminary Game of the Year ballot.

Step 8 – General Membership Voting
Timeline: January 8-14
To determine the winners in each category, the Academy will facilitate a general membership vote.

Conflicts of Interest
Since there are often occasions when a Peer Panelist has helped to create a submitted game, to prevent conflicts of interest, it is required that Peer Panelists abstain from ranking any title in which they are credited, during these internal votes. Instead, when that Peer Panelist is ranking the games, that game should receive a ranking equal to the average of everyone else's vote for the game and the rest of that Peer Panelist's rankings should be adjusted.

6 - General Voting Procedures

Introduction
The Academy membership votes in January after the Peer Panels have narrowed down the submitted titles to a maximum of five finalists per category.

See the Peer Panel section above for a detailed description of how finalists are selected.

Who is Qualified to Vote?
Academy active Creative/Technical, Business, and Affiliate members are qualified to vote in all genre categories and in the following categories:

- Game of the Year
- Immersive Game of the Year
- Mobile Game of the Year
- Online Game of the Year
- Outstanding Achievement for an Independent Game

Creative/Technical members of the Academy may also vote on craft categories related to their expertise. The Academy strongly believes that to maintain the credibility of the awards; craft categories should only be voted on by those who take an active, creative role in making games.

Explanation of Ranked Voting
The ranked voting system ensures the winning game has broad support among members. In each awards category, game developers rank up to three of their favorite nominated games in order of preference.

Votes are first counted using only each ballot's **first-choice selection**. If a game receives more than 50% of the first-choice votes, it wins the category. If no game reaches a majority, the game with the fewest first-choice votes is eliminated. Ballots that selected the eliminated game are then reassigned to the next-ranked game on those ballots.

This process continues—eliminating the lowest-ranked game and redistributing those ballots—until one game achieves a majority. This method, known as **Instant-runoff voting**, helps ensure the winner reflects the strongest overall consensus among the voting developers.

Procedure for Creative/Technical Members
Before the elections, the Academy sends each active Creative/Technical member a password and link to the voting website. When logging on to the website, these members will be asked to pick a field which best describes their expertise. Their choice will determine the categories in which they will be allowed to vote:

Game Designers Producers, & Writers can vote in:
- Outstanding Achievement in Story
- Outstanding Achievement in Character
- Outstanding Achievement in Audio Design
- Outstanding Achievement in Game Direction
- Outstanding Achievement in Game Design

Artists, Animators & Programmers can vote in:
- Outstanding Achievement in Art Direction
- Outstanding Achievement in Animation
- Outstanding Achievement in Character
- Outstanding Technical Achievement
- Immersive Technical Achievement

Audio Designers & Musicians can vote in:
- Outstanding Achievement in Audio Design
- Outstanding Achievement in Original Musical Composition
- Outstanding Achievement in Character

During voting in the craft categories, these members will be presented with up to five finalists in each category. Members will be asked to rank the selections in order. Once finished voting in the craft categories, these members can vote in all genre categories.

In each genre, they will be presented with up to five finalist choices. Members will be asked to rank the selections in order.

Finally, active Creative/Technical members will be presented with five finalists in the following categories:

- Game of the Year
- Immersive Game of the Year
- Mobile Game of the Year
- Online Game of the Year
- Immersive Reality Game of the Year
- Outstanding Achievement for an Independent Game

Members will be asked to rank the selections in order.

Procedure for Business and Affiliate members
Before the elections, the Academy sends each active Business and Affiliate member a password and link to the voting website.

When these members log on, they will be presented with up to five finalist choices in each genre category. Members will be asked to rank the selections in order.

Once finished voting in the genre categories, they will be allowed to vote in each of the following categories:

- Game of the Year
- Immersive Game of the Year
- Mobile Game of the Year
- Online Game of the Year
- Immersive Reality Game of the Year
- Outstanding Achievement for an Independent Game

Members will be asked to rank the selections in order.

Compilation of Votes Procedure
The Academy of Interactive Arts & Sciences tabulates the votes in every category and the winners are announced at the D.I.C.E. Awards ceremony.

7 - Award Category Definitions

Special Awards

AIAS Hall of Fame
The Hall of Fame award is reserved for individuals who have been instrumental in the development of highly influential games. These individuals are usually associated with having moved a particular genre forward. Candidates are typically designers or creative directors, but can also be technologists, producers, or production executives. These individuals demonstrate the highest level of creativity and innovation, which results in significant product influence on a scale that expands the scope of the industry. Previous recipients include Shigeru Miyamoto, Mark Cerny, Tim Sweeney, Hideo Kojima, Todd Howard, Bonnie Ross, Connie Booth, Koji Kondo, and Ted Price.

AIAS Lifetime Achievement Award
The Lifetime Achievement Award is reserved for individuals whose accomplishments span a broad range of disciplines over a lengthy career in the industry. Recipients are typically individuals distinguished for their business leadership and are not necessarily involved in development or the creative process. Through their leadership and ideology, these individuals have driven significant and positive change across the industry. Previous recipients include Don James, Phil Spencer, Doug Lowenstein, Satoru Iwata, and Genyo Takeda.

AIAS Pioneer Award
The Pioneer Award is reserved for individuals whose career spanning work has helped shape and define the interactive entertainment industry. These individuals are often associated with the creation of a technological approach or the birth of a new genre. The accomplishments of the Pioneer Award recipient are generally focused in a particular discipline or a few particular areas directly related to development of games. Previous recipients include Eugene Jarvis, Ralph H. Baer, and Al Acorn.

Technical Impact Award
This special award celebrates unique innovations that contribute to the ongoing progress of interactive media. Honorees may come from various facets of the industry, which include but are not limited to software, hardware, and community. Previous recipients include the Apple App Store and Visual Basic.

Game of the Year Awards

Game of the Year
The single game, without regard to system or delivery mechanism, voted by the membership of the Academy of Interactive Arts and Sciences that best utilizes the chosen medium to entertain users.

Mobile Game of the Year
The Mobile Game of the Year shall be the game developed for a mobile device platform such as a mobile phone or tablet. These games demonstrate a skilled usage of the devices software and hardware features to offer a unique and addictive play experience. All game genres are eligible. Mobile platforms include but are not limited to iOS or Android. Titles submitted in this category are not limited to release within the calendar year but must be supported by significant new content. Examples include: Persona5: The Phantom X, *Wuthering Waves, Call of Duty: Mobile, and MARVEL SNAP.*

Online Game of the Year
Online Game of the Year celebrates titles of any genre with a significant portion of the gameplay experience transpiring online -- collaboratively or competitively. These titles frequently offer excellent matchmaking systems, innovative gameplay options, persistent content releases that further evolve gameplay, user customization and fluidity of gameplay. Titles submitted in this category are not limited to release within the calendar year but must be supported by significant new content. Examples include: *Arc Raiders*, *Apex Legends*, *Marvel Rivals*, *and Diablo IV: Vessel of Hatred.*

Outstanding Achievement for an Independent Game
Awarded to a game that embodies the independent spirit of game creation, representing a higher degree of risk tolerance and advances our media with innovative gameplay and experiences. Examples include: *Blue Prince, Animal Well*, *Untitled Goose Game, and Dispatch*.

Immersive Reality Game of the Year
This award celebrates a single game released on an immersive reality platform that best utilizes the attributes of the platform to entertain users and results in the most consistently engaging player experience. Elements of design, direction and narrative are factored into the title selection. Titles of all genres are eligible if commercially available on a publicly released platform. Examples include: *Ghost Topwn, Batman: Arkham Shadow, Beat Saber*, and *Half-Life: Alyx.*

Genre Awards

Action Game of the Year
Action games feature characters frequently engaged in real-time combat against opponents either player controlled or non-player-controlled while moving through a linear or open environment. These titles often emphasize challenging players' reaction time and hand-eye coordination in order to advance through the game. Examples include: *Hades 2, Helldivers 2, Marvel's Spider-Man 2*, *Returnal*, and *Vampire Survivors.*

Adventure Game of the Year
Adventure games are titles that primarily emphasize platforming, puzzle-solving, resource management, exploration, and narrative experiences and feature little to no combat

gameplay. Past examples include: *Blue Prince, 1000xResist, Dispatch, and Donkey Kong Bananza.*

Family Game of the Year
Family games are those titles that are designed to appeal to novice or experienced players through both individual or shared gaming experiences. These experiences may include puzzle gameplay, mini-games, rhythm mechanics and touch or motion mechanics. Examples include: *Lego Party*, *Astro Bot*, *Super Mario Bros. Wonder*, and *Animal Crossing: New* Horizons.

Fighting Game of the Year
Fighting games are those titles that offer the user the virtual experience of controlling a character engaging in individual combat with another character usually from a fixed camera perspective. The opponent can either be controlled by another player or by the game. Titles submitted in this category are not limited to release within the calendar year but must be supported by significant new content. Past examples include: *Mortal Kombat: Legacy Kollection*, *Tekken 8, GUILTY GEAR -STRIVE-*, *Super Smash Bros. Ultimate,* and *Street Fighter 6.*

Role Playing Game of the Year
This award honors a title, single-player or multi-player, where an individual assumes the role of one or more characters and makes decisions that develop those characters in terms of abilities and/or traits; and help shape the story as the game progresses. Through the player's actions, the virtual characters' statistics or traits demonstrably evolve throughout the game and have a direct effect on the player experience and success in combat and/or narrative experience, which can be turn-based or real-time. Gameplay emphasizes exploration, narrative, decision making, acquiring resources, solving puzzles, quests, and interacting with player or non-player characters in a persistent world. Past examples include: *Clair Obscur: Expedition 33*, *Baldur's Gate 3*, *Metaphor: ReFantazio, Elden Ring,* and *FINAL FANTASY VII REBIRTH.*

Sports Game of the Year
Sports games offer the user the opportunity to reproduce a sporting experience: either a realistic simulation of a traditional sport or virtually reproduce a sporting experience outside the realm of traditional sports. Titles can include portrayals of individual sports, team sports, and motorsport. Past examples include: *Rematch*, *MLB® The Show™ 25*, *Rocket League,* F1 25, and Wreckfest*.*

Strategy/Simulation Game of the Year
Strategy games are defined to be those titles in which the user directs or manipulates resources to create a set of conditions that result in success as determined within the confines of the game. These games can offer the user the chance to simulate or to virtually reproduce an experience, real or imaginary, which would require some form of equipment. Strategy games emphasize the planning of tactics rather than the execution. Past examples include: *The Alters*, *Balatro*, *Microsoft Flight* Simulator, *Dune: Spice Wars , League of Legends, Satisfactory,* and *Caves of Qud.*

Craft Awards

Outstanding Achievement in Animation
This award will be presented to the individual or team whose work represents the highest level of achievement in bringing a character or characters to life in an interactive title. This award will consider the fluidity of movement, and interaction with the environment in addition to contextual realism (look and feel).

Outstanding Achievement in Art Direction
Presented to the individual or team whose work represents the highest level of achievement in designing a unified graphic look for an interactive title.

Outstanding Achievement in Character
Presented to the individual or team whose work has furthered the interactive experience through the creation of a memorable character within an interactive title. Outstanding character takes into consideration the marriage of voice acting and performance (motion capture work), character design and execution, and writing.

Outstanding Achievement in Game Direction
The individual or small group of individuals who are responsible for directing and driving an interactive game and its team through a combination of skills that include vision, management execution, aesthetics, and game design to create a cohesive experience. This award recognizes the role of the Creative Director and Game Director - in guiding all elements of a title and shaping the final outcome of a game.

Outstanding Achievement in Game Design
This award will be presented to the title that most effectively combines interactive and non-interactive elements to create a cohesive gameplay experience. Outstanding design is exemplified by balanced system design, cohesive mechanics that relate to overall aesthetic direction, level layout, challenge flow, progression elements, interface design, and social game mechanics. This award recognizes the Lead Designer or Design Director in architecting all elements into a unified design.

Outstanding Achievement in Original Music Composition
Presented to the individual or team whose work represents the highest level of achievement in original music composition for an interactive title. The quality of the composition, production and integration of the music into the title will all be contributing factors when determining the recipient of this award.

Outstanding Achievement in Audio Design
Presented to the individual or team whose work represents the highest level of achievement in creating a unified audio experience. The quality of the individual sound effects, voice over, music, technology, and other audio elements will be considered in addition to the overall

audio mix of the title.

Outstanding Achievement in Story
Presented to the individual or team whose work has furthered the interactive experience through the creation of a game world -- whether an original creation, one adapted from previously existing material or an extension of an existing property, which best exemplifies the coalescence of setting, characters and plot.

Outstanding Technical Achievement
This award celebrates the highest level of technical achievement through the combined attention to gameplay engineering and visual engineering. Elements honored include but are not limited to artificial intelligence, physics, engine mechanics, and visual rendering.

8 - Awards Ceremony

Awards Protocol
When finalists and winners are announced during the Awards, the Academy will mention the developer, the publisher, and if applicable, individual game makers, when announcing the games.

When winners are announced in any category, the following criteria should be used to determine who actually accepts the award:

- The credited individuals or up to five members of the development team that created the game.
- If the developers aren't available, the next choice is a representative from the publisher. This representative should be someone who was directly involved with publishing the winning title.
- If no representative is available, the Academy will accept the reward on behalf of the developer and publisher.

Winners are encouraged to keep their acceptance speeches concise (maximum one minute).

9 - Awards Committee

The Awards Committee consists of members of the Board of Directors and is responsible for suggesting policies and overseeing all functions related to the D.I.C.E. Awards and voting procedures. Its responsibilities include:

- Maintaining and updating the awards categories
- Setting rules and procedures for submission and voting
- Suggesting candidates for the Hall of Fame, Lifetime Achievement, Pioneer Award, and Technical Impact inductees