

BREAKTHROUGH AWARDS

2026 Hospital Planning Guide

Recognizing & Celebrating Exceptional Contributions to World Class Healthcare Customer Satisfaction

HCSEC HealthCare Service Excellence Conference

Custom Learning Systems



Table of Contents

What Are the Breakthrough Awards 2

Award Categories 2

Rules and Regulations 3

Important Dates 3

Required Reports 4

How to Submit 4

Questions 4

What Are the Breakthrough Awards

The Breakthrough Awards recognize hospitals and healthcare organizations that have demonstrated exceptional performance in patient experience through measurable improvement and sustained excellence.

Organizations participating in the Service Excellence Initiative™ are eligible to submit their patient experience results for consideration.

Awards recognize organizations that:

- Improve their patient experience scores year over year.
- Perform above national benchmarks.
- Sustain exceptional performance over time.

All qualified organizations are recognized during the HealthCare Service Excellence Conference.

Award Categories

The Breakthrough Awards are open to all Service Excellence Initiative™ participants and alumni. The awards serve to draw attention to and reward excellence in Patient Experience. The deadline for submissions is **Friday, October 9, 2026.**

Here is a summary of all the awards available:

1. **Patient Experience** [HCAHPS]

   Improvement

   Bronze: At least 5 percentage points based on Top Box Score
   Silver: At least 10 percentage points based on Top Box Score
   Gold: At least 15 percentage points based on Top Box Score

   Achievement

   Emerald: At least 5 percentage points higher than the comparative Top Box Score
   Ruby: At least 10 percentage points higher than the comparative Top Box Score
   Diamond: At least 15 percentage points higher than the comparative Top Box Score

2. **Patient Experience** [ED CAHPS, CG-CAHPS, OAS CAHPS, HH CAHPS]

   Improvement

   Bronze: At least 5 percentage points based on Top Box Score
   Silver: At least 10 percentage points based on Top Box Score
   Gold: At least 15 percentage points based on Top Box Score

   Achievement

   Emerald: At least 5 percentage points higher than the comparative Top Box Score
   Ruby: At least 10 percentage points higher than the comparative Top Box Score
   Diamond: At least 15 percentage points higher than the comparative Top Box Score

3. **Platinum Honors** [All Categories]

   Sustained Excellence

   Awarded to organizations maintaining **95% or greater Top Box performance** within an eligible domain throughout the reporting year.

Copyrighted Material, Custom Learning Systems Group Ltd. All rights reserved. 2026

Rules and Regulations

1. The HCSEC Breakthrough Awards are available only to organizations participating in the Service Excellence Initiative™.
2. Only surveys with at least **8 responses** will be accepted to ensure a reasonable assessment.
3. Survey vendor reports must accompany each submission.
4. All comparative scores **must be from your survey vendor database**.
5. Survey vendor reports and all supporting documentation are to be submitted online at www.customlearning.com/awards-breakthrough/.
6. All eligible submissions will be acknowledged during the HealthCare Service Excellence Conference in Reno, NV, November 9-11, 2026.
7. The deadline for nominations to be received by the judges is **Friday, October 9, 2026.**
8. You will receive a summary of the awards you have qualified for prior to the Conference. This will give you a chance to review and correct any discrepancies.

These awards are administered by the HealthCare Service Excellence Conference and all qualified submissions will be recognized and receive a certificate of achievement presented at the 26th Annual HealthCare Service Excellence Conference at the Breakthrough Awards Luncheon, in Reno, NV on Tuesday, November 10, 2026. Please join us there.

Your participation is invited. Your organization's recognition awaits your submissions.

Important Dates

Submission Deadline
Friday, October 9, 2026

HealthCare Service Excellence Conference – Reno, NV
Breakthrough Awards Luncheon
Tuesday, November 10, 2026

Copyrighted Material, Custom Learning Systems Group Ltd. All rights reserved. 2026

Required Reports

To be considered for the Breakthrough Awards, please submit **two survey vendor reports** for each survey type you wish to enter.

Reporting Period 1
July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025

Reporting Period 2
July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026

Reports should be submitted exactly as they are generated by your survey vendor.

Your reports should include:

- ✓ Top Box scores for each applicable domain
- ✓ The reporting period dates displayed on the report
- ✓ The current National Average or benchmark comparison (typically included on survey vendor reports)
- ✓ Overall domain results (rather than individual question-level reports)

Accepted Survey Types

Submit reports for any of the following survey types:

- HCAHPS
- ED CAHPS
- CG-CAHPS
- OAS CAHPS
- HH CAHPS

Before You Submit

Please verify that:

- ✓ Both reporting periods are included
- ✓ Reports display Top Box scores
- ✓ Reports include the current National Average or benchmark comparison
- ✓ Reports are exported directly from your survey vendor
- ✓ Reports have not been modified or edited

If You're Unable to Locate the Correct Report

If your survey vendor offers multiple report formats, select the report that displays:

- Top Box scores
- Overall domain results
- The appropriate reporting period
- National benchmark or average, when available

If you're unsure which report to run, we're happy to help before you submit.

How to Submit

Survey vendor reports and all supporting documentation are submitted online at www.customlearning.com/awards-breakthrough



Questions

Chelan MacMillan
HCSEC Awards Chair
info@hcsecawards.com
Phone: 1-800-667-7325 ext. 5230

Mandy Robidoux
HCSEC Awards Vice-Chair
info@hcsecawards.com
Phone: 1-800-667-7325 ext. 5212

Copyrighted Material, Custom Learning Systems Group Ltd. All rights reserved. 2026