CALL FOR JUDGES

https://dsacevents.dsac.gov.za/mbf/#p-awards

NATIONAL LITERARY AWARDS

Call for Judges

Issued by: The Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC)

1. Invitation to Serve

The National Literary Awards (NLA) seeks distinguished individuals to serve as **judges** for its inaugural awards cycle. This is a unique opportunity to shape the future of South African literature, uphold the highest standards of literary criticism, and champion linguistic diversity across all official languages.

We are seeking experts who are not only accomplished in their fields but also deeply committed to the celebration and preservation of South Africa's literary heritage, particularly in our previously disadvantaged languages.

2. About the Awards

The NLA is South Africa's premier literary awards programme, honouring excellence in all official languages. Administered independently on behalf of DSAC, the awards celebrate:

- Literary excellence in every language.
- The elevation of previously marginalised languages.
- The power of stories to unite and transform.

3. Roles Available

Each panel will consist of 3–5 members with specific genre expertise.

A. The Core Language Awards

- Reading and assessing all eligible submissions in the specified language.
- Participating in panel deliberations (virtual and/or in-person).
- Selecting a longlist, shortlist, and final winner for each language award.
- Providing written motivation for the final selection.



Languages:
isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sesotho, Sepedi, Setswana, Siswati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English.

B. Cross-Cutting Awards

Specialised panels for:

- Lifetime Achievement Award
- Children's Literature Award
- South African International Author Award

C. Special Recognition Committees

- Liberation Struggle Literary Award

D. Special Recognition: Book Publishing Value Chain

- Publishing House of the Year
- Outstanding Literary Organisation of the Year

4. Eligibility Criteria for Judges

1. **Expertise:** Demonstrated expertise in literature, literary criticism, publishing, translation, or a relevant field. This may include:
    - Published authors, poets, or playwrights.
    - Academics in literature, linguistics, or African languages.
    - Literary critics, editors, or journalists.
    - Publishers or literary agents.
2. **Language Proficiency:** For language panel judges, **native fluency** in the relevant language is essential, including strong reading and writing skills.
3. **South African Connection:** Preference will be given to South African citizens or permanent residents. A limited number of international experts may be considered for specialist panels.
4. **Integrity:** No conflicts of interest. Judges may not:
    - Have a work submitted in the current cycle.
    - Be employed by a publishing house with submissions.



- Have a close personal or professional relationship with a nominee.

5. **Commitment:** Ability to commit to the full judging period, including:
    - Mandatory orientation session.
    - Reading period (approx. 6–8 weeks).
    - Deliberation meetings (virtual and/or in-person).
    - Awards ceremony attendance (where possible).
6. **Diversity:** The NLA is committed to diversity in its panels. We encourage applications from women, youth, persons with disabilities, and individuals from rural or previously disadvantaged backgrounds.

5. Responsibilities of Judges

- Read all assigned submissions thoroughly and promptly.
- Complete individual scoring and written assessments.
- Participate actively and respectfully in panel deliberations.
- Maintain strict confidentiality about all submissions, discussions, and decisions.
- Adhere to the NLA Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest policy.
- Meet all set deadlines.
- Represent the NLA with professionalism and integrity.

6. Time Commitment

Activity	**Estimated Time**
Orientation & Training	1 day
Reading Period	6–8 weeks
Panel Deliberations	Up to 3 sessions
Final Selection Meeting	1 day



Activity	Estimated Time
Awards Ceremony	1 evening

7. How to Apply

Step 1: Prepare Your Application Pack

- Completed online application form.
- Curriculum Vitae (CV) – max 4 pages.
- A motivation letter (max 500 words) stating:
    - Which panel(s) you are applying for.
    - Your relevant expertise and experience.
    - Your commitment to promoting linguistic diversity.
- Two (2) professional references.
- A brief sample (Max 5 pages) of your writing, criticism, or published work.

Step 2: Deadline

Applications close on **12 December 2026**

Step 3: Selection Process

- Applications will be reviewed by the Core Panel.
- Shortlisted candidates may be invited to a brief virtual interview.
- All judges must sign a **Code of Conduct** and **Conflict of Interest Declaration** before commencing service.

8. Key Dates for Judges

Milestone	Date
Applications Open	16 November 2026
Applications Close	12 December 2026



Milestone	Date
Awards Ceremony	27 February 2027

9. Why Serve as a Judge?

- **Shape the Future:** Play a fundamental role in defining literary excellence in South Africa.
- **Champion Diversity:** Help elevate previously marginalised languages to national prominence.
- **Network:** Connect with leading literary figures, publishers, and cultural leaders.
- **Professional Development:** Maximise experience in high-level literary adjudication.
- **Recognition:** Be publicly acknowledged as a guardian of South African literature.

The National Literary Awards is committed to transparency, fairness, and the highest standards of literary adjudication. We look forward to receiving your application.

