sport, arts & culture
Department:
Sport, Arts and Culture
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

THE NATIONAL LITERARY AWARDS

Entry Guidelines

THE NATIONAL LITERARY AWARDS

A Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC) Initiative

Entry Guidelines: 2026/27 Edition

LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR GREATNESS



1. ENTRY GUIDELINES AND ELIGIBILITY

1.1 GENERAL ELIGIBILITY

A. Citizenship & Residency

The National Literary Awards are open to:

- All South African citizens in accordance with the South African Citizenship Act, 1995.
- For the Book Publishing Value Chain Awards (Publishing Houses, Distributors, Booksellers, Organisations), the entity must be registered in South Africa with majority shareholding held by South African citizens.

B. Publication Period

Works submitted for consideration must have been **published for the first time** between:

1 January 2025 and **31 December 2025 (Exceptions are made for some categories)**

C. Publication Format

Eligible works must have been published in one of the following formats with valid ISBN and first published during the eligibility period:

- Physical book
- E-book
- Audiobook

D. Language

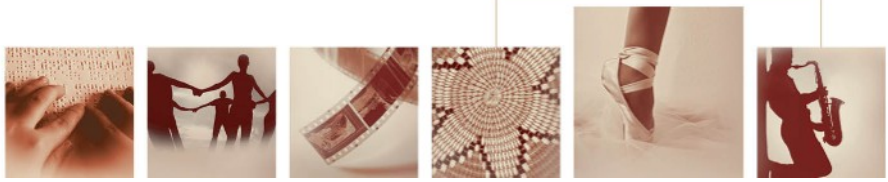
- Works may be submitted in any of South Africa's official languages.
- Language-Specific Awards, the work must be **originally written** in that language. (Translated works are not eligible for this category).

E. ISBN Requirements

All books submitted must have a valid International Standard Book Number (ISBN) assigned by the South African ISBN Agency.

F. Copyright & Ownership

- Submissions can be made by the **copyright holder** (author, publisher, or estate).



- If submitting on behalf of a copyright holder, a letter of authorisation from the owner is required.
- Posthumous submissions: a copy of the death certificate and proof that the submitter is the authorised representative of the estate must accompany the submission.

G. Multiple Submissions

- An author may submit works in multiple cross-cutting categories provided the work meets the eligibility criteria for each.
- A single work may be submitted for only **one** Language-Specific Award (the language in which it was originally written) and may also be submitted for relevant Cross-Cutting Awards.

H. Deceased Authors

Next of kin or authorised estate representatives may submit works on behalf of a deceased author, provided:

- The work was published within the eligibility period.
- The deceased author held copyright at the time of death.
- Proof of authorisation from the relevant authority should accompany the submission.

1.2 GENERAL INELIGIBILITY

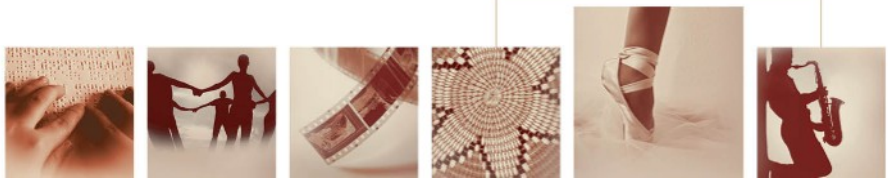
The following are not eligible for the National Literary Awards:

A. Content-Based Exclusions

- Works that constitute hate speech, incite violence, or promote discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, religion, or sexual orientation.
- Works that contain pornographic content as the primary purpose.
- Works that plagiarise or infringe upon the copyright of others.
- Works that were created using AI

B. Author-Based Exclusions

- Individuals who are sitting members of the current judging committee or the NLA planning team.
- Individuals who are currently serving as elected public officials (works written about them are eligible).



- Individuals who have been convicted of a serious crime involving fraud, corruption, or violence against others.
- Individuals who have pending non-compliance matters with DSAC or any government entity.

C. Publication-Based Exclusions

- Works that are primarily academic theses or dissertations that have not been adapted for public literary consumption.
- Works that are primarily technical manuals, textbooks, or instructional.
- Works that are self-published without a valid ISBN and without demonstrable distribution through recognised channels.
- Works that are reprints or new editions of works previously published outside the eligibility period, unless significantly revised.

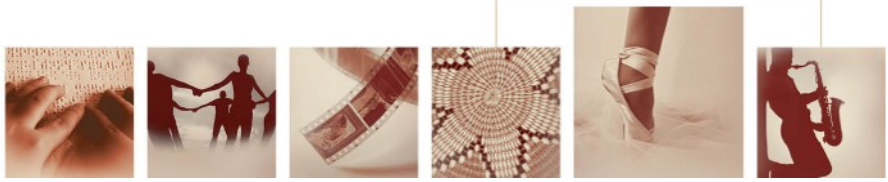
D. Timing-Based Exclusions

- Works published before the eligibility period.
- Works published after the eligibility period.
- Works that have not been publicly available for sale or distribution during the eligibility period.

1.3 ELIGIBILITY BY CATEGORY

1.3.1 Pillar A: Official Language Specific Awards (The Core Official South African Languages)

Requirement	Detail
Language	Work must be originally written in the specific official language of the award.
Genre	Fiction (novels, short stories, poetry), non-fiction.
Length	Full-length published works by a single author. Minimum 48 pages for prose; minimum 24 pages for poetry.

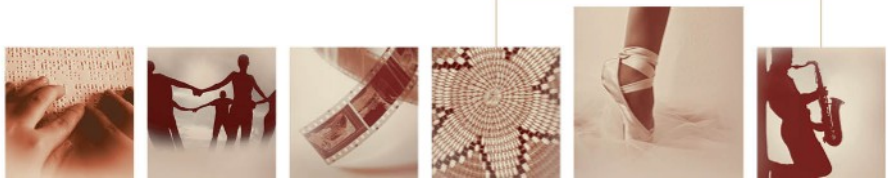


Requirement	Detail
Authorship	Contributions (co-authored) into a body of works are eligible.
Qualifying attributes	Nominees must, through their work, demonstrate contribution to at least one of: Education & Training; Archiving & Preserving; Cultural and Creative Industries Sectors, broader contribution into national socio-economic development (interpreted as contribution to literary infrastructure).

3.3.2 Pillar B: Cross-Cutting Awards

A. Lifetime Achievement Award

Requirement	Detail
Eligibility	Presented to an individual who has made a monumental and sustained contribution to South African literature over the course of their career. This award may also be conferred posthumously to honour the enduring legacy of a deceased literary giant.
Nomination	Nominations are accepted from publishers, literary organisations, and members of the public. Self-nominations are not accepted.
Criteria	Demonstrated sustained excellence over a career of at least 25 years in South African literature.
Age	No minimum age requirement, but the award recognises a body of work, not a single publication.

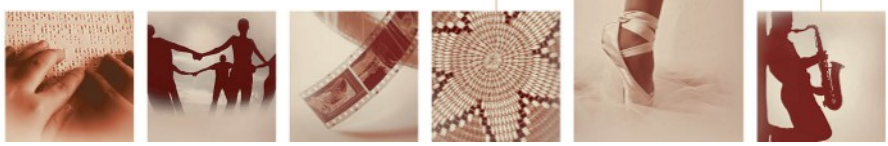


B. Children's Book Award

Requirement	Detail
Age Categories	Picture Books (0-8 years); Intermediate Readers (9-12 years
Language	Open to works in any South African official language.
Format	Picture books, chapter books, novels, graphic novels, and illustrated non-fiction.
Illustration	Works may be judged on text alone or text with illustration. Illustrated works must credit the illustrator.

C. South African International Author Award

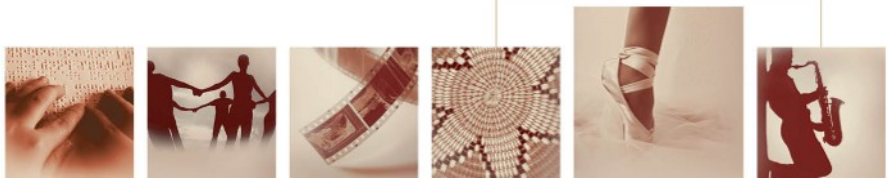
Requirement	Detail
Publication Time	First published between [1 January 2023] and [31 December 2025].
Publication Location	**No restriction**—may be published by an international publisher or a South African publisher.
Original Language	Must be **originally written** by the author; translations are not accepted (unless the author themselves is the translator, and the original work is by the author themselves).
Language	No restriction on language; may be written in any South African official



Requirement	Detail
	language, or any other Internationally recognised language. However, **if written in a language other than the official South African languages**, the author must provide not more than 600-word English or official South African language summary.
Genre	Fiction, non-fiction, poetry, children's book or young adult book are all eligible.
ISBN	Must have a valid ISBN.
Previously Awarded Works	Works that have won other international literary awards may still be submitted; however, the author must declare the award details in the nomination form.
Unpublished Manuscripts	Not accepted.

D. Liberation Struggle Literature Award

Requirement	Detail
Publication Time	No Limitations
Content	Recognises a work that documents, chronicles, or reflects upon the South African anti-apartheid struggle, liberation movements, or the fight against racial oppression. This award honours the role of literature in bearing witness to history and preserving the memory of the struggle for future generations.
Genre	Any genre: memoir, history, biography, fiction, poetry, or oral history.
Language	Open to works in any South African official language or Khoi and San



Requirement	Detail
	languages.
Historical Accuracy	Works of fiction must be historically grounded. Non-fiction works must demonstrate rigorous research.

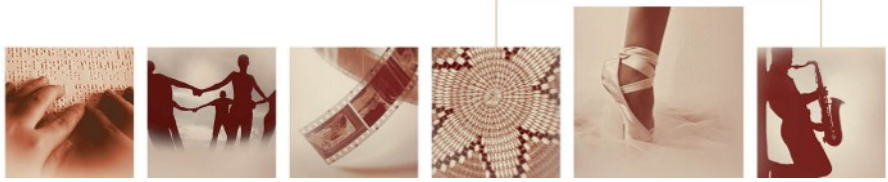
3.3.4 Special Recognition Awards: Book Publishing Value Chain

A. Publishing House of the Year

Requirement	Detail
Eligibility	The entity must be registered in South Africa with majority shareholding held by South African citizens.
Activity	Must have published a minimum of 5 new titles during the eligibility period.
Multi-Language Publishing	Preference given to publishers active in multiple South African official languages.
Nomination	Open to self-nomination and third-party nomination.

B. Outstanding Literary Organisation of the Year

Requirement	Detail
Eligibility	Non-profit organisations, trusts, foundations, or community-based organisations working in the South African literary sector.



Requirement	Detail
Activity	Must have demonstrated sustained commitment to literary promotion, reading campaigns, or sector development.
Nomination	Open to self-nomination and third-party nomination.

3.4 SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS BY CATEGORY

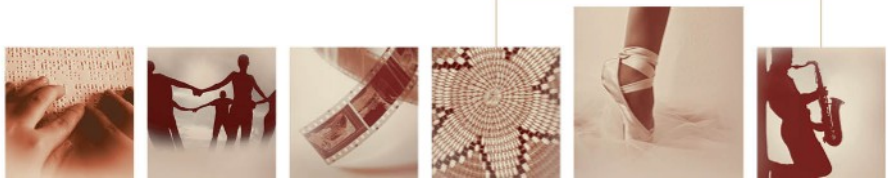
Category	Required Materials
All Book Awards	Completed nomination form; 6 physical copies of the book; or digital copies (PDF/ePub) uploaded via the portal; ISBN verification; proof of publication date (copyright page).
Value Chain Awards	Completed nomination form; supporting documentation (e.g., sales figures, event programmes, organisational reports) as evidence of achievement.
Lifetime Achievement Award	Completed nomination form; CV of nominee; letters of support (up to 3); bibliography of works.

3.5 SUBMISSION PLATFORM AND DEADLINES

A. Submission Platform

All entries must be submitted via the official National Literary Awards online portal:

B. Submission Deadlines



Milestone	Date
Entries Open	16 November 2026
Entries Close	12 December 2026
Physical Copy Receipt Deadline	18 December 2026
Late Submissions	No late submissions will be accepted.

C. Confirmation of Receipt

Submitters will receive an automated email confirmation upon successful submission. If no confirmation is received within 48 hours, it is the submitter's responsibility to contact the NLA Secretariat.

3.6 DISCLAIMERS

- DSAC accepts no responsibility for entrants missing deadlines.
- Final decisions regarding eligibility of content submitted are made by DSAC.
- DSAC is not liable for errors in listings that are the result of incorrect information being submitted.
- DSAC cannot be held responsible for content being submitted to incorrect categories.
- Any category that receives lower than expected entries shall be at the judges' discretion as to whether to proceed to the judging phase. Such categories may not result in an award in that year. Entries may be re-directed at the judges' discretion to the closest appropriate category. If no suitable alternative category exists, the entry will not be eligible for judging.

