

2026 MSSWR Community Builder Awards Awards Criteria & Guidance for Nominators

Purpose

The MSSWR Community Builder Awards recognize individuals, organizations, and businesses who strengthen mental health, belonging, justice, and community wellbeing in Waterloo Region.

These awards are guided by MSSWR values and are not based on popularity, prestige, or visibility. Impact may take many forms.

Award Categories & Criteria

Community Allyship Award

Who this award is for:

- Non-Muslim-led individuals, organizations, institutions, or businesses demonstrating sustained and meaningful allyship with Muslim communities.

What we are looking for:

- Action beyond symbolic inclusion
- Culturally responsive design and practice
- Genuine partnership with Muslim leaders and communities
- Tangible contributions to safety, dignity, and belonging

Inspiring Women's Award

Who this award is for:

- A Muslim woman whose leadership, advocacy, or community care work has created meaningful impact in Waterloo Region.

What we are looking for:

- Leadership in formal or informal spaces
- Empowerment of others
- Alignment with justice, compassion, and wellbeing
- Often unseen or under-recognized contributions

Spirit of MSS Award

Who this award is for:

- An MSSWR volunteer or Board member demonstrating exceptional dedication to the organization.

What we are looking for:

- Sustained engagement and commitment
- Meaningful contributions to programs or governance
- Leadership grounded in care, integrity, and service

Emerging Leader Award (25 & Under)

Who this award is for:

- A Muslim and/or racialized youth or young adult demonstrating leadership and community impact.

What we are looking for:

- Initiative in school, advocacy, creative, or peer spaces
- Commitment to equity, mental health, or social justice
- Potential for continued growth and impact
- Nominees do not need formal titles or recognition

Beacon of Strength Award

Who this award is for:

- A Muslim and/or racialized individual who demonstrates courage, self-awareness, and leadership through prioritizing mental health and wellbeing.

What we are looking for:

- Commitment to mental health, healing, or personal growth
- Openness that helps reduce stigma
- Modeling boundaries, care, or growth
- Leadership rooted in agency and integrity

Nominees are not required to disclose personal adversity. This award honors leadership in wellbeing, not the severity of hardship.

Founder's Social Justice Award

Who this award is for:

- An individual (Muslim or non-Muslim) with a long-standing record of advancing justice and belonging for Muslim communities.

What we are looking for:

- Sustained commitment over multiple years
- Tangible contributions to community infrastructure
- Principled leadership rooted in compassion and equity

Community First Business Award (New for 2026)

Who this award is for:

- A small business or entrepreneur centering social impact and community wellbeing.

What we are looking for:

- Ethical, values-driven business practices
- Reinvestment in community
- Support for equity-deserving communities
- Alignment of financial sustainability and social good

How the Awards Committee Uses This Criteria

- Criteria guides discussion; it is not a numerical scoring rubric
- Context and access to resources are considered
- Prestige or visibility are not weighted over impact and values alignment