



***gia* 2025-2026 – Sponsor Guidelines**
April, 2025

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What is *gia*?

The IHA's ***gia*** Awards is a national and global awards program whose objective is to honor innovative business practices and excellence in home and housewares retailing and visual merchandising around the globe. Established in 2000, the global program is sponsored by the International Housewares Association (IHA) and The Inspired Home Show. Leading housewares publications from around the world are national ***gia*** awards co-sponsors.

Eligible retailers and *gia* awards categories

Different types of retailers **selling home and housewares** may participate in the IHA's ***gia*** Awards competition:

- Independent Specialty Homegoods Retailers
- Department Stores/Specialty Chain Stores/Mass Market Stores
- Internet/Online Retailers (without a physical storefront; a prior authorization by IHA required)

There are no separate categories for different types of retailers, but all participating companies compete for the same ***gia*** Global Honoree awards. One winner per trade publication sponsor unless the publication is authorized by the IHA to select more than one winner.

In addition to the general ***gia*** awards, the national ***gia*** winners have a chance to compete for the Martin M. Pegler Award for Excellence in Visual Merchandising and for the ***gia*** Digital Commerce Award for Excellence in Online Retailing (the online award depending on the total number of eligible applicants).

Judging

- IHA provides Evaluation Forms for candidates and shares best practices of successful selection processes used by other national sponsors. Each publication independently chooses its national winner.
- IHA appoints the Global Jury for selecting the Global Honorees. The Global Jury consists of global retail/merchandising experts and a rotating number of co-sponsoring publications.

Base Criteria – *gia* Awards

- Overall mission statement, vision and strategy
- Store design and layout
- Visual merchandising, displays and window displays
- Marketing, advertising and promotions
- Customer service and staff training
- Innovation

National Winner Benefits

- Recognition as a retail leader among peers in home country
- High visibility at The Inspired Home Show (Chicago)
 - A special **gia** winners' display in a main Show area
 - A presentation at the **gia** dinner
 - Store introduction on IHA's website
- Access **gia** expert jurors' know-how (Chicago)
- Networking with other **gia** winners – chance to find new business partners, get new ideas, benchmark performance, etc.
- Extensive publicity in home country – depending on winners' pro-active promotions
- Opportunity to conduct customer/press events
- Boost employee morale and productivity
- Enlarged customer base (depending on winners' promotions) and potential sales increases
 - Right to use the **gia** logo, photos and information in marketing and in-store promotions, etc.
 - Access to other **gia**-related materials (poster, etc.) that can be used for promotional purposes
- Leverage reputation with banks and other institutions

National Sponsor Benefits*

- Extensive Recognition at The Inspired Home Show
- Elevation of publication's image with retailers and suppliers at the national and global levels
- Recognition as one of the top housewares trade publications around the globe
- Image-enhancing recognition in home country as sponsor of a large global award program
- Access to editorials with special interest to specialty retailers (visual merchandising, top-retailer feature stories, etc.)
- Access to professional photography from **gia** winners around the world (first class visual merchandising)
- Networking with other **gia** sponsors and **gia** winners

* Note: There is no sponsorship fee for being a National Sponsor



National Publication-Sponsor Responsibilities

- Place annual **gia** program announcement ad (or an official announcement about the new **gia** year in some other form, an email campaign, etc.) free-of-charge at least once between March-August
- Actively publicize the program to your readers in print and on-line
- Help your national winner(s) with the **gia** portfolio; share with the winner your experiences from previous years, help them understand and meet the graphical requirements. **Please encourage your winner to participate in the **gia** Digital Commerce Award judging as well (by completing the separate **gia** Digital Commerce Award evaluation form).**
 - **Make sure that the graphical requirements are met and that the Evaluation Forms, store logo and photos, as listed in the portfolio requirements, are made available to the IHA by November 15, 2025.**
- Confirm your winner's participation in the **gia** program at The Inspired Home Show
- Be available, if appointed, for the Global Jury evaluation process
- Accompany your winner to The Inspired Home Show and the **gia** Awards dinner

IMPORTANT: *When evaluating your candidates, please make sure to take the product categories of The Inspired Home Show into account - cook & bakeware, tabletop & kitchen accessories, gourmet foods & products, giftware/decorative accessories, household & kitchen electrics, home & personal healthcare, floor & carpet care, cleaning & hardware, space organizers & clothing care. Please note that if your winner is a lifestyle store, their focus should be on housewares products.*

There have been several previous national winners who have improved their business practices/visual merchandising as a result of winning the **gia**. To provide these retailers with another chance to win the Global Honoree award or to win a second National Award, **the National Sponsor can present the national award for a second time as long as three years have passed since the store's first winning.**

It is in each national sponsor's interest to aggressively publicize its **gia** program. The following steps are recommended to create greater in-country awareness of **gia**, to generate a sufficient number of candidates between April and September, and to bring the national winner selection to a successful conclusion by the end of September. Candidate recruitment – *the recruitment options might include:*

- Publish annual **gia** program announcement ad (provided by IHA)
- Promote the **gia** contest on magazine's website
- Promote the **gia** contest in social media
- Emailing to retailers and suppliers in the industry, inviting applications/recommendations
- Mailing to a targeted group of retailer readership
- Contacting appropriate in-country home and housewares retailer trade associations
- Editor's / publisher's personal contacts in the industry
- Hand-outs at trade shows and other events attended by housewares retailers
- During candidate selection: continue raising the awareness of **gia** with editorial **gia** updates, including reporting on the "best" **gia** candidates

NATIONAL SPONSOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Uniform *gia* branding – print and online

gia has developed into its own brand under which umbrella every sponsor can offer value-added services to its readers, be it *gia*-branded editorial or *gia*-branded education – in print, on-line, and in educational settings.

To make all this work, *gia* needs to be branded and positioned uniformly. The most basic steps that are required include:

Your magazine:

1) We highly recommend that you include the *gia* logo where you list your magazine's logo, address and staff listings – or on the Table of Contents page:



Please note the current *gia* logo (available in color, in grey and in black & white).

2) When publishing *gia* stories, please be sure to prominently use the *gia* logo in conjunction with the editorial and consistently use the following closing sentence:

“...(your magazine name)... is the exclusive *gia* sponsor in (...your country...). The IHA Global Innovation Awards program honors home and housewares retail excellence in over 30 countries around the world. The global sponsor is The Inspired Home Show, which honors this year's *gia* winners in March in Chicago.”

3) To be sure your readers can find more information about *gia*, please list in every *gia* article:

- * Winners' websites on whom you're reporting
- * The IHA website where readers can learn about the worldwide program (TheInspiredHomeShow.com/Awards/gia-Retailing)

4) The *gia* logos (in .jpg format, please let us know if you'd like to receive the same in print quality), *gia* award images, *gia* awards dinner photos and national winner store photos are available for download at <http://housewares.smugmug.com/gia>

Your website:

Your website is a great tool for your readers to access *gia* information throughout the year. Please be sure to utilize your website as a *gia* branding tool by:

- Strategically using the *gia* logo throughout
- Including the link TheInspiredHomeShow.com/Awards/gia-Retailing for complete information about the *gia* program
- Acknowledging The Inspired Home Show as the global sponsor with a direct link to the Show (TheInspiredHomeShow.com)
- Utilizing the current Inspired Home Show logo where appropriate and listing the Show dates prominently

NATIONAL SPONSOR RESPONSIBILITIES

***gia* Events Organized by National Sponsors**

The *gia* logo as well as the name and tagline "***gia*** – Global Innovation Awards – home + housewares retail excellence" have been legally protected by the IHA/The Inspired Home Show.

Therefore, other shows/events outside of the U.S. that serve as venues to promote a national ***gia*** program or honor a national ***gia*** winner cannot use their logo(s) or other types of identification that could mislead audiences into thinking that they are organizing or sponsoring the global ***gia*** program.

The Inspired Home Show in Chicago should always be identified as the global *gia* sponsor.

National ***gia*** sponsors should consult the IHA if any questions arise as to the appropriateness of events/venues that will feature a ***gia*** activity.

NATIONAL SPONSOR 2025-2026 TIMETABLE



March-September

- National sponsors start publicizing 2025-2026 **gia** program to their readers
- Candidate recruitment is in progress

September 30

- **DEADLINE:** National winners are chosen and winner information is sent to the IHA
- National sponsors start working with the winners on the Evaluation Forms, store logo and photos (see **gia Portfolio Requirements**)

November 15

- Deadlines: Evaluation Forms and winner logo/photo materials. **National sponsors are to make sure that the requirements are met and all information/materials are made available to the IHA by this date. Please encourage your winner to participate in the gia Digital Commerce Award judging as well (by completing the separate gia Digital Commerce Award evaluation form).**
- National sponsors send their magazine and possible corporate sponsor logos (as Illustrator .eps vector files) to Jessie DesRochers at the IHA: jdesrochers@housewares.org
- **Also by November 15: All national gia sponsors are asked to provide a brief commentary (can be bullet points) on their winner: what makes this store special, how are they innovative – what made you choose them as your winner.**

September–March

- National sponsors stay in contact with their winners
 - **Confirm attendance at the Show and at the various gia events during the Show**
 - Honor the winner in the home country
 - Introduce/write about the winner in the magazine
 - **Make sure that the Evaluation Forms and winner logo/photos meet the requirements and are made available to the IHA by the November 15 deadline**



home + housewares
retail excellence

To make sure that the winners all fully understand the *gia* criteria and portfolio requirements and that the portfolios sent to IHA are complete, each national sponsor is responsible for working together with the winner to present a complete portfolio. Especially please make sure that your winner understands the photo and logo requirements.

Portfolio Requirements

The national *gia* materials as listed below need to be made available to the IHA by **November 15**:

- 1) National sponsor's logo, comments on the winner
- 2) Evaluation Form(s), emailed in Word format
- 3) Photography
- 4) Winning company's logo
- 5) Photos or scans of the winner's promotional pieces/press clips

PLEASE NOTE: No PowerPoint presentations or other special portfolio presentation formats – the materials should be sent to the IHA as described in the portfolio requirements.

IHA will email each sponsor/winner personally with detailed instructions and password for using Hightail (photos).

1) National sponsor's logo AND COMMENTS ON THE WINNER

- Magazine and possible corporate sponsor logos (as Illustrator .eps **vector** files) are to be emailed to Jessie DesRochers at the IHA: jdesrochers@housewares.org
- A brief commentary on your winner (bullet points are ok): what makes this store special, how are they innovative – what made you choose them as your winner. *These commentaries will help the global gia judging process and might also be used in the gia promotional and display materials as well as in the gia editorial prepared.*

2) Evaluation Forms and Summary of Innovative Highlights

Evaluation Forms should be submitted **in English** (If the answers are not in English, the sponsoring magazine should translate the text – using Google translate is OK).

- Specific answers, presented in max. 10 bullet points (or 50-200 words, as instructed for each question).
- The *gia* judging is based on what is and has been done. Thus, future plans should not be discussed in too much length and detail.
- If available, a store floor plan should be included.
- Included in the Evaluation Form, a quick bulleted summary, to be used for the *gia* display and other *gia* communications (discussing the innovativeness and unique features/practices of the winner).

Please note: This description may be slightly changed to ensure consistency of writing style and grammar.

3) Professional photography – **it's recommended to include a short video**

All visuals must be professional high resolution images (300 dpi .tiffs or .jpgs).

Photography subject requirements

- Between 15-20 photographs of the store and best visual merchandising displays:
 - a) 7-10 Store overview photos (the different areas of the store from some distance)
 - b) Display setting photos (that show the whole display, not just single products)
 - c) **A first impression photo: the view from the doorstep as you enter the store**
- Between 3-5 photographs of the winner's best window displays (past and present). Please note that these photos serve as one part of the evaluation for the Martin M. Pegler Award for Excellence in Visual Merchandising.
- 1 or 2 photographs of the exterior of the store
- **Photos from in-store events or other "action points" in-store**
- **PLEASE NOTE: No product photos that don't also show a display or visual merchandising technique! Also, there should be NO photos with Christmas decoration unless it's a special Christmas display that's included as an example.**

Photography size requirements

- All photographs need to be digital images, high resolution **300 dpi TIFFs or JPGs**
- Dimensions for visual merchandising, window display and store exterior photos: **approximately 21 cm x 26 cm**
- **PLEASE NOTE: photography pre-selection is required.**
- In addition to photos, it's **recommended to include a short video (MP4):**
a quick overview of the store, what you'd like to present/highlight in 30 seconds.

4) Winning company's logo

The logo is needed as an Illustrator .eps (**vector**) file.

All the photos and logos can be submitted to the IHA by using Hightail through the link <https://spaces.hightail.com/uplink/housewares>.

5) Photos or scans of the winner's promotional pieces/press clips

We encourage all candidates/national winners to include **photos or scans** introducing their promotional pieces (i.e. email newsletters, direct mail pieces, PR articles, examples of customer service statements, advertisements, shopping bags, wrapping paper & ribbons, company letterhead & cards, etc.) or any other materials that demonstrate their stores' excellence. This may include areas other than merchandising excellence, for example: mobile apps, superior customer service procedures, etc.

Note: Winners' photos, information and testimonials may be used for PR purposes and future gia promotions, as well as in a gia PowerPoint presentation developed by the gia Expert Jurors to be used as a gia promotional/educational tool in various countries.



Promotional and informational *gia* materials available to sponsors include:

- Program announcement advertisement
 - ***gia*** logos
 - ***gia*** award photos
 - ***gia*** videos
 - ***gia*** fact sheet and announcement flier
 - ***gia*** Best Practices PowerPoint
 - ***gia*** Q+A article educating magazine readers on the background and benefits of *gia*
 - ***gia*** Success stories, feature articles on Global Honorees
 - Photos from the ***gia*** Awards Dinner
 - ***gia*** winner store photos
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- ***In addition, the *gia* Expert interviews and columns published in the INSPIRED. magazine of the IHA are available for the *gia* sponsors to use.***