

**The “Mark of Distinction” Recognition Program
for NSPRA Chapters**

Entry Form

(Please include this information with each individual entry)

Chapter Name: INSPRA

Chapter President: Cathy Kedjidjian

President’s contact information

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Right to Use Materials Statement

On behalf of the Chapter, I agree that NSPRA has the right to use any materials, project/program examples, etc., submitted in this entry in Association print/online publications, on the website, and as “best practice” resources for NSPRA chapters.

Digitally signed by Cathy Kedjidjian
DN: cn=Cathy Kedjidjian, o=DPS109, ou, email=ckedjidjian@dps109.org, c=US

Signature of Chapter President: Date: 2016.05.12 20:28:06 -06'00' _____

Application Process Checklist

- Each entry includes this cover form and the Entry Specifics form.
- A single PDF that includes links to related supplemental materials and examples is attached.** (If entering in more than one category, a single PDF for each category entry is attached or sent individually).
- Chapter president has signed the “right to use materials” statement on the entry form.
- Entry is delivered no later than May 15** and sent to awards@nspra.org, subject line “Mark of Distinction.”

Mark of Distinction Entry Specifics

Chapter: INSPRA

Please complete and include the information below for each individual entry

Section I: Membership Building

- Current number of chapter members _____
 - NSPRA-provided membership baseline number as of June 1 _____
 - Number of chapter members who belong to NSPRA as of April 30 _____
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Section II: Special Focus Areas

Category A – chapter has less than 50% NSPRA membership

Category B – chapter has 50% or more NSPRA membership

1. Professional Development/PR Skill Building

2. Special PR/Communication Program, Project or Campaign

One-time project/program (completed within a single year)

Continuing annual project/program (repeats each year; demonstrate new/improved/revised components)

Multi-year project/program (one-time only with defined start and end dates)

Multi-year phased project/program (components implemented in clearly defined phases each year)

3. Coalition-Building/Collaborative Communication Effort

INSPRA Mark of Distinction Application
Special Focus Area: Professional Development/ PR Skill Building

The Illinois Chapter of the National School Public Relations Association ([INSPRA](#)) supports its members through professional development and PR skill building in a variety of ways. Most notably, INSPRA's *Member Needs Help* initiative has been a cornerstone of the organization for most of its history. Aimed to help professionals in the field receive guidance from peers by soliciting responses to topics or questions, the collaboration and support provided by the service is one of the key factors in membership recruitment and retention throughout the years. The initiative grew from a small circulation of emails into a statewide listserv correspondence more than a decade ago. This service has since evolved from an email listserv to the interactive forum it is today.

To make this initiative more accessible to INSPRA's diverse audience spread throughout the state, INSPRA built *Member Needs Help* into a permanent online presence, housed on the INSPRA website, in late April 2015. The *Member Needs Help* forum is accessed by email log-in, offering itself as an additional professional development tool and membership benefit to all INSPRA members.

Serving as an electronic bulletin board, INSPRA members log into the *Member Needs Help* area of the website to research previously-posted topics, respond to questions or post an item of their own. When a new topic is posted to *Member Needs Help*, the article is also automatically pushed to the entire membership via email.

Member Needs Help serves the entire INSPRA membership, and specifically targets school PR practitioners who need extra resources. INSPRA members who work in one-person PR departments or for a variety of reasons are unable to attend Tips & Tactics, our live professional development series, can use *Member Needs Help* from anywhere at any time and receive help, advice, and information from school PR professionals throughout the state. The program utilizes INSPRA members' wealth of knowledge by allowing those who specialize in various aspects of the industry to respond to questions or topics on which they have experience and/or resources. The scope and breadth of the tool is member-driven.

INSPRA members were told of the pending upgrade to *Member Needs Help* prior to its release, and it was formally launched to INSPRA membership through an email:

4/23/2015 at 7:53 PM

Hello INSPRA members! You're receiving this email because I'm posting in our new Member Needs Help section of the Members Only area of the website. This new and improved feature will allow any member to post a question. When you post (as I'm doing now), an email will go to all members who can log in and respond. We know our members are very generous in sharing their knowledge, resources and talents! The person who posts the question then will receive email notification when someone responds to their request for help. If you would like to post questions anonymously, please email your question to Karen Wells (karen@managementservices.org), who will post your request. Though you won't get notifications when responses come in, you'll be able to log in to Member Needs Help to see responses any time. We hope this becomes a go-to location for information you need when you need it!

Since May 1, 2015, the tool has been successful in achieving its expanded purpose. In the initial year since its web launch, 152 questions have been asked on the forum, with 196 answers provided. The scope of [topics posted in the forum](#) range from creating social media guidelines to vetting vendors to asking for input on community relations strategies. In addition, 66 individuals representing 64 districts engaged in the conversation, either by asking questions or responding or both. This represents a wider reach than the around 50 members who attend INSPRA Tips & Tactics presentations from October through April.

[INSPRA's goals](#) are to be the professional organization that is indispensable to school public relations professionals and other education leaders, and to be the recognized leader and authority on school public relations. *Members Needs Help* assists in accomplishing this goal. INSPRA members view *Member Needs Help* as an essential professional development tool, utilizing its services to seek the expertise of peer school PR professionals throughout the state of Illinois.