



Think Tank Awards Information

Applications for this year's Smart Thinking Awards are now open! Recognising and rewarding excellence and impact in the UK think tank sector, there are a number of categories for think tanks to enter and we encourage all think tanks based or headquartered in the UK to apply.

These awards are open to ALL think tanks that meet the eligibility criteria, not just those listed on Smart Thinking or part of the Smart Thinking membership network. The eligibility criteria can be found [here](#).

It is free to enter and each think tank may enter as many award categories as they would like; however only one entry per think tank, per award category is permitted. For example, Think Tank X may nominate one publication for the Publication of the Year award. The judges are looking at work and impact occurring in the **qualifying period (1st September 2025 - 31st July 2026)**.

The Award Ceremony will take place on the evening of Wednesday 18th November at the British Academy, Carlton Terrace and think tank leaders, nominees, judges, MPs, journalists and other leading policy experts will be invited to the flagship policy event.

Judging panel

We have an incredible panel of judges, chosen for their deep knowledge of policy and how it works in practice, as well as to provide a balanced jury representing politics from across the political spectrum:

- Rt Hon David Gauke (Chair)
- Dame Harriett Baldwin MP
- Harriet Cross MP
- Gordon McKee MP
- Dr Jeevun Sandher MP
- Mark Sweeney
- Rachel Sylvester
- Mayor Claire Ward
- Stian Westlake
- Munira Wilson MP

How to apply

There are 8 award categories to enter and the application form can be found on the Smart Thinking website and [here](#). With help from our steering committee of senior think tankers we have deliberately kept the application process as simple as possible. Each category application typically runs to 1 A4 page. A think tank may apply for every category however the form is set up so that if you do not wish to enter a particular category you can skip to the next one. If you are using google drive your form will automatically save however we recommend looking at the application questions and completing the answers in a separate document and then transferring across to the form. Once a form is submitted it cannot be edited. You will receive a confirmation that your application has been received and a copy of your answers.

All applications must be received by 5pm Friday 31st July 2026. Any applications received after this date will not be considered. All applications are confidential. The information you share will only be read by the judging panel and by Smart Thinking as administrators of the awards. We will not disclose who has applied for each category apart from any shortlisted, commended or winning entries.



Award categories - there are 11 awards up for grabs!

Think Tank of the Year

The highest honour! To be considered for this category a think tank will not just be a great convener or have produced a brilliant publication but will be able to demonstrate impact and excellence across a number of areas. This is the top prize – we are looking for think tanks that have captured the policy zeitgeist this year and really driven impact or change.

One to Watch

For think tanks set up in the past 5 years that are offering a new and exciting voice in the policy sphere. It is not, however, just about excellence but also about their potential to become a driving voice and institution in the future.

Think Tanker of the Year

Each think tank may nominate one member of staff, in any role, who has demonstrated excellence in their job and have also played a vital role in enhancing their think tank's reputation and / or have had an impact on the overall policy debate.

Researcher of the Year

Think tanks may nominate just one person, working in a research capacity, for this award. Entries should demonstrate excellent research skills and the production of rigorous research as well as provide examples of high quality outputs that have had an impact outside of their think tank.

Best Publication

Think tanks may submit one publication (published in the qualifying period - 1st September 2025 - 31st July 2026) that has had impact, demonstrates originality, has persuasively argued for a change or for a new policy focus, and is well-written and engaging.

Best Convener

This award is to recognise think tanks that have used their convening power to have impact and move the dial on a policy issue. Entries could be one big high-profile event, or a series of events coalescing around a key theme or it could be business as usual but with something special about this year.

Best Campaign

Think tanks are increasingly being more proactive in advocating for change to a wider audience. The Best Campaign category is about recognising those campaigns and communications work streams that tell a compelling story, advocate for change and deliver real impact.

The Innovation Award

We are deliberately keeping the qualifying criteria for this broad! Think tanks are encouraged to submit entries that could be anything from an innovation in research, a new policy area, or in communications, operations or fundraising. We are looking to reward those think tanks who have taken risks to try and do something better in the future.

And for a bit of fun we have 3 more lighthearted "Honorary Mentions" that will kick off the awards ceremony:

- **Killer stat of the year**
- **Niche report of the year**
- **Report title of the year**

If you have any questions then please contact Smart Thinking at awards@smarthinking.org.uk.

Good luck!