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Recognizing the Eminently Specifiable in a Fast-Moving Market

As you read this *Posting*, the 2015 [Next Generation Luminaires™ \(NGL\) Design Competition](#) is nearing its conclusion. Earlier this month, the entries were put through their paces—indoor products at Intelligent Lighting Creations (ILC) in Arlington Heights, IL, and outdoor products at Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI) in Blacksburg, VA—and the winners in both categories will be announced in New York at LIGHTFAIR® International in early May.



NGL was launched in 2008 by DOE, the Illuminating Engineering Society, and the International Association of Lighting Designers to encourage technical innovation and recognize and promote excellence in the design of energy-efficient LED luminaires for commercial, industrial, and institutional applications. Since then, the SSL market has undergone drastic changes, to which NGL has adapted as it evolves to keep pace with the technology. Among the major changes for 2015: the number of categories has been reduced and a more in-depth approach has been taken, in order to maximize NGL's value to specifiers and manufacturers. The indoor competition is focusing on dimming performance, serviceability, and color-tuning, and the outdoor competition on controls and serviceability. Both competitions have adopted significantly more stringent efficacy requirements and have made use of more authentic installations during the judging process.

For example, the VTTI Smart Road was equipped with “pedestrians” crossing the road at various points, a car driving under the test luminaires, and a special car placed in the appropriate position to assess the degree of glare motorists would experience. At ILC, all the luminaires were digitally controlled from a single console to consistently evaluate dimming performance—integrated digital controls being a new requirement for all indoor entries.

But as always, a product's overall specifiability remains central to its recognition by the judges, with the bar set high on a wide range of performance parameters—color, illuminance, glare control, light distribution, value, appearance. The judges are drawn from the architectural lighting community and are a tough bunch to impress, so recognition from them is not lightly given (pun intended).



However, to enable them to fine-tune their focus and make the competition even more beneficial to the industry, NGL's Best in Class category has been replaced by the designation Outstanding, which will apply to performance parameters rather than entire applications. Winners will still earn the designation Recognized, which will indicate that the judges considered those products to be specifiable. But instead of having a Best in Class winner in the downlights category, for example, there might be a product that's judged Outstanding for dimming—or for serviceability or efficacy. And an entry can even be judged Outstanding on multiple parameters, much like baseball's Triple Crown winner (forgive me—spring is in the air...). In fact, based on what we've seen so far, it looks like there will indeed be multiple-parameter winners this year.

But the real winners of each NGL competition are the lighting designers and specifiers, because they're more easily able to identify state-of-the-art LED lighting products worthy of their consideration—and, of course, their clients, who consequently are more likely to end up with the cutting-edge designs, features, and functionalities that are encouraged by NGL.

Stay tuned for the announcement of the 2015 winners, which will be posted at www.nglcdc.org.

As always, if you have questions or comments, you can reach us at postings@akoyaonline.com.