



Women *in*
payments

USA 2026

AWARD
CATEGORIES
& CRITERIA

*Kristy Duncan,
Founder & CEO,
Women in Payments*



INNOVATION AWARD

The Women in Payments Award for Innovation will be presented to a woman in the industry who best meets the criteria below. Nominations are encouraged from organizations and roles across the payments and fintech industry, including but not limited to back office, technology, operations, client facing, product, and other roles. Nominees must be employed in the USA.

CRITERION 1: INNOVATION

Has promoted payments innovation through creativity, vision, and perseverance in her organization or the payments industry. Has gone beyond what is expected by their organization and current professional role. Has been instrumental in promoting innovations or creative process re-engineering which are original, have significant impact, can be easily and effectively adopted, have results that are measurable, can be applied elsewhere and support and inspire others in the organization or industry to innovate.

CRITERION 2: PROBLEM-SOLVING

Creative use of new knowledge and/or technology to develop ideas aimed at addressing ongoing challenges, enhancing customer experience, and creating innovative systems, technology, products, programs, and/or policies to solve such challenges.

CRITERION 3: PRODUCTIVITY

Has created a solution that reduces time, resources, risks, and/or costs associated with delivering a service, system, or product. Has successfully implemented the solution, resulting in a positive impact to the product or customer experience beyond the nominee's own team or department.

CRITERION 4: TEAMWORK & COLLABORATION

Is widely recognized for her expertise and actively works to empower others. Leads by example and motivates members of her team, organization, or industry. Has contributed to a positive and supportive learning environment by encouraging diversity of people and opinions.

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CHANGE AGENT

The Women in Payments Change Agent Award will be presented to a woman in the industry who best meets the criteria below. Nominations are encouraged from organizations and roles across the payments and fintech industry, including but not limited to back office, technology, operations, client-facing, product, and other roles. Nominees must be employed in the USA.

CRITERION 1: STRATEGIC AGILITY

Has been an active agent of change, demonstrating leadership, vision, flexibility and perseverance in her organization and/or industry.

Has led initiatives or movements that resulted in meaningful transformation across the payments or fintech industry. Demonstrates agility in navigating change and advancing strategic objectives that benefit the wider ecosystem. Recognized as a driving force behind industry evolution and innovation.

CRITERION 2: LEADERSHIP

Is a visionary leader whose influence extends beyond her own organization. Advocates for progress and collaboration across companies, sectors, or regions. Inspires others through thought leadership, public engagement, or mentorship to drive meaningful industry-wide change.

CRITERION 3: PERSEVERANCE & INTEGRITY

Has shown steadfastness in navigating projects, leading teams and/or accomplishing goals, despite difficulty or roadblocks to achieving success. Has high integrity and sets high professional standards for ethics and quality of work. Has contributed to a positive and supportive learning environment by encouraging diversity of people and opinions.

CRITERION 4: TEAMWORK & COLLABORATION

Is widely recognized for her expertise and skill in leading teams and building consensus. Actively works to empower others and leads by example. Motivates members of her team, organization, or industry. Has contributed to a positive and supportive learning environment by encouraging diversity of people and opinions.

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RISING STAR AWARD

The Women in Payments Rising Star Award will be presented to a woman at or below the age of 35 (as of December 31, 2025), who is currently employed in the USA and who best meets the below criteria. Nominations are encouraged from organizations and roles across the payments and fintech industry, including but not limited to back office, technology, operations, client facing, product, and other roles.

CRITERION 1: DRIVE

Is always willing to go that extra mile to achieve excellence for herself, her organization, and/or the industry. She supports and inspires others through promoting innovation and advancement. She is results-oriented, always seeking innovative ideas with the ability to translate them into action for her organization and customers.

CRITERION 2: PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE

Consistently delivers, collaborates, and leads in a variety of settings and circumstances. Performs with distinction and delivers strong results by building trust and confidence among her colleagues, peers, and/or clients.

CRITERION 3: POTENTIAL

Exhibits behaviors that reflect her organization's culture and values in an exemplary manner. Shows a strong capacity to grow and succeed throughout her career.

CRITERION 4: TEAMWORK & COLLABORATION

Is widely recognized for her expertise and actively works to empower others. Leads by example and motivates members of her team, organization, or industry. Has influenced and encouraged a positive and supportive learning environment with integrity and diversity.

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ADVOCATE FOR DIVERSITY

The Women in Payments Advocate for Diversity Award will be presented to a woman in the industry who best meets the criteria below. Nominations are encouraged from organizations and roles across the payments and fintech industry, including back office, technology, operations, client-facing, product, and other roles. Nominees must be employed in the USA.

CRITERION 1: PROMOTION FOR DIVERSE LEADERSHIP

Actively contributes to the advancement and development of women and other diverse people either inside or outside her own organization and publicly celebrates the work and accomplishments of female and diverse leaders. Leads by example, promoting and broadcasting the need for continuous support and advocacy for female and diverse leadership. Is a strong role model for female and diverse empowerment, encouraging the hiring and promotion of strong talent with diversity in mind.

CRITERION 2: ADVOCATE FOR ALL

Helps support the development of female and diverse talent and encourages all to increase their levels of participation and engagement. Is an advocate for diversity and gender equality, including equal pay and equal opportunities for career growth and provides a positive forum for women and other diverse talent to network and find mentors within the industry.

CRITERION 3: SUPPORTS & EDUCATES

Promotes education, career development, and mentorship opportunities, both formal and informal, for women and other diverse talent in the organization or industry. Leads business resource groups to support the personal and career growth for women and diverse talent in the organization or industry.

CRITERION 4: TEAMWORK & COLLABORATION

Is widely recognized for her expertise and actively works to empower others. Leads by example and motivates members of her team, organization, or industry. Has contributed to a positive and supportive learning environment by encouraging diversity of people and opinions.

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DISTINGUISHED PAYMENTS PROFESSIONAL

The Women in Payments Distinguished Professional Award will be presented to a woman in the industry who best meets the following criteria. Nominations are encouraged from organizations and roles across the payments and fintech industry, including back office, technology, operations, client-facing, product, and other roles. Nominees must be employed in the USA.

CRITERION 1: ACHIEVEMENT

Has influenced industry trends, acts as a role model, and successfully reached and exceeded goals—taking her team, organization, and/or industry to the next level.

CRITERION 2: CONTRIBUTION

Acts as a payments ambassador to promote a positive image of her organization, industry initiative, and the payments industry. Actively contributes to the collective success of the payments industry. Is viewed as a trusted advisor by peers and colleagues and is often a source of industry expertise.

CRITERION 3: LEGACY & INTEGRITY

Is known for her personal and professional authenticity and building her career on a strong set of values. Has built strong and positive relationships with co-workers and industry stakeholders. Has high integrity and sets high professional standards for ethics and quality of work. Is seen as a role model within her organization and throughout the industry.

CRITERION 4: TEAMWORK & COLLABORATION

Is widely recognized for her expertise and actively works to empower others. Leads by example and motivates members of her team, organization, or industry. Acts as a mentor, advisor, and teacher to positively impact members of her organization or the payments industry. Has contributed to a positive and supportive learning environment by encouraging diversity of people and opinions.

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COMMUNITY IMPACT

The Women in Payments Community Impact Award will be presented to a woman in the industry who has made a significant, positive impact within and outside of her own organization, contributing to the broader community.

Nominations are encouraged from all areas of the payments and fintech industry, including but not limited to back office, technology, operations, client-facing, product, and other roles. Nominees must be employed in the USA.

The award will be presented to the nominee who best meets the criteria below.

CRITERION 1: COURAGEOUS LEADERSHIP

Has shown courage in the face of adversity to drive change and support others in her organization, industry, or the community at large. Uses her voice and platform to support equity and inclusion in the community at large. Demonstrates leadership, vision, and resilience to bring about positive change in the community within her organization and/or industry, through education, advocacy, mentorship, or social initiatives.

CRITERION 2: POSITIVE IMPACT

Creates positive and measurable impact on individuals, groups, or communities within and outside her own company. May include community education, financial literacy, volunteering, or industry-wide mentorship. Drives initiatives that promote growth, inclusion, or awareness in the broader ecosystem.

CRITERION 3: RESILIENCE

Demonstrates perseverance in sustaining long-term community or industry initiatives through times of uncertainty or change. Actively works to build resilience of the team, organization, or industry to support each other in times of uncertainty and profound change. Her work uplifts individuals or groups through meaningful, inclusive, and resilient leadership.

CRITERION 4: TEAMWORK & COLLABORATION

Builds partnerships across companies, sectors, or communities to address shared challenges. Collaborates generously and supports others through mentoring, coalition-building, or collective action beyond her own organization. Acts as a mentor, advisor, and teacher to positively impact members of her organization or the payments industry. Has contributed to a positive and supportive learning environment by encouraging diversity of people and opinions to support the greater community.

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INSPIRATION

The Women in Payments Award for Inspiration will be presented to a woman who inspires others in the industry, often through thought leadership or mentorship. Nominations are encouraged from organizations and roles across the payments and fintech industry, including but not limited to back office, technology, operations, client-facing, product, and other roles.

CRITERION 1: DRIVES VISION IN HER ORGANIZATION OR INDUSTRY

Is able to create a strong vision and inspire a team towards achieving a goal, either in her organization or industry. Has demonstrated payments thought leadership by actively contributing to the payments debate.

CRITERION 2: LEADERSHIP

Exudes an ardent desire for growth and has a vision for the future. Actively encourages debate about the evolution of payments to shape a strong payments ecosystem. Inspires others to reach great heights of performance and success and is consistently proactive in seizing opportunities. Creates an environment where everyone feels valued and heard.

CRITERION 3: EXUDES POSITIVITY

Freely shares knowledge and insights of the payments system with colleagues, industry professionals and/or outside the industry. She is a beacon of positivity in the face of challenges and failures and can uplift others through her positive outlook. Inspires others to accomplish goals, despite difficulty or roadblocks to achieving success. Inspires greatness and growth from others.

CRITERION 4: RELATIONSHIPS AND MENTORSHIP

Is widely recognized for her ability to build strong relationships and mentor others. Actively works to empower others to be positive team players and further change agents. Leads by example and motivates members of her team, organization, or industry. Acts as a mentor, advisor, and teacher, making a positive impact on members of her organization or the payments industry.

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MALE ALLYSHIP AWARD

The Women in Payments Award for Male Allyship will be awarded to a man in the payments & fintech industry who best meets the criteria below. Nominations are encouraged from across the payments industry, including but not limited to back office, tech, operations, client facing, and more.

CRITERION 1: PROMOTION FOR FEMALE LEADERSHIP

Actively contributes to the advancement and professional development of women either inside or outside his own organization and publicly celebrates the work and accomplishments of women. Leads by example—promoting and broadcasting the need for continuous support and advocacy for female talent and leadership. Is a strong role model for female empowerment, encouraging the hiring and promotion of strong female talent to build diverse and balanced teams.

CRITERION 2: ADVOCATE FOR ALL WOMEN

Helps support the development of women and encourages women to increase their levels of participation and engagement. Is an advocate for gender equality, including equal pay and equal opportunities for career growth. Provides a positive forum for women to network and find mentors within the industry.

CRITERION 3: SUPPORTS & EDUCATES

Promotes education, career development, and mentorship opportunities, both formal and informal, for women in his organization. Actively advocates for, sponsors, and supports the advancement of women in the organization and across the industry.

CRITERION 4: MENTORSHIP

Is widely recognized for his expertise and actively works to empower others. Leads by example and motivates members of his team, organization, or industry. Acts as a mentor, advisor, and teacher, to make a positive impact on members of the organization or the payments industry.

CRITERION 5: INTEGRITY & DIVERSITY

Has high integrity and sets high professional standards for ethics and quality of work. Has contributed to a positive and supportive learning environment by encouraging diversity of people and opinions.

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WOMEN IN PAYMENTS USA 2026

AWARDS PROGRAM CATEGORIES & CRITERIA

NOMINATION REQUIREMENTS

- Self-nominations are not allowed.
- Each nominee submitted must reside in the USA.
- Each nominee can only be nominated for one award category; duplicate nominations will not be accepted.
- A maximum of one nominee per category per organization.

Please have the following prepared in advance of submitting the application online:

Nominator

- Name
- Organization
- Email
- Phone

Nominee

- Name and Job title
- Organization
- Biography
- Email
- Phone
- LinkedIn Profile (URL)
- Address

Award

- Category
- Describe how the nominee meets the criteria for this award. (min 500 – 1000 max characters)
- Outline of the nominee's experience and most significant achievement(s) in the organization or within the payments industry in the areas of leadership, mentorship, integrity, and diversity. Provide concise examples of initiatives, efforts, programs, or policies that have contributed to success. (min 500 – 1000 max characters)
- Profile picture of the nominee (max 1000 x 1000 pixels). The picture must be labeled with full name and organization

References

- Minimum of one (1) mandatory reference letter from colleagues and peers who can support the nomination. However, we encourage you to provide two additional (2) supplementary references for a strong nomination. *This is optional.*
- Name, Organization, Email, Phone
- Capacity in which they know the nominee (min 100 – 300 max characters)

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- Reasons why they support the nomination (min 100 – 300 max characters)

INNOVATION AWARD

Nomination #:				
Nominee:				
Title:				
Organization:				
Innovation	Problem Solving	Productivity	Teamwork & Collaboration	Total Score
/10	/10	/10	/10	/40

CHANGE AGENT AWARD

Nomination #:				
Nominee:				
Title:				
Organization:				
Strategic Agility	Leadership	Perseverance & Integrity	Teamwork & Collaboration	Total Score
/10	/10	/10	/10	/40

RISING STAR AWARD

Nomination #:				
Nominee:				
Title:				
Organization:				
Drive	Professional Excellence	Potential	Teamwork & Collaboration	Total Score

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/10	/10	/10	/10	/40
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ADVOCATE FOR DIVERSITY AWARD

Nomination #: Nominee: Title: Organization:				
Promotion for Diverse Leadership	Advocate for All	Supports & Educates	Teamwork & Collaboration	Total Score
/10	/10	/10	/10	/40

DISTINGUISHED PAYMENTS PROFESSIONAL

Nomination #: Nominee: Title: Organization:				
Achievement	Contribution	Legacy & Integrity	Teamwork & Collaboration	Total Score
/10	/10	/10	/10	/40

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COMMUNITY IMPACT

Nomination #: Nominee: Title: Organization:				
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Courageous Leadership	Positive Impact	Resilience	Teamwork & Collaboration	Total Score
/10	/10	/10	/10	/40

INSPIRATION

Nomination #: Nominee: Title: Organization:				
Drives Vision in her Organization or Industry	Leadership	Exudes Positivity	Relationships & Mentorship	Total Score
/10	/10	/10	/10	/40

MALE ALLYSHIP

Nomination #: Nominee: Title: Organization:				
Drives Vision in her Organization or Industry	Leadership	Exudes Positivity	Relationships & Mentorship	Total Score
/10	/10	/10	/10	/40

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