

The Global Award for Entrepreneurship Research: Organization, Objectives, and Criteria

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Introduction

In 1996, the Swedish Entrepreneurship Forum (then the Foundation for Small Business Research, FSF) and the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth hosted the International Council for Small Business (ICSB) World Conference in Stockholm. During the planning stage of this conference, a new prize was proposed: an award for outstanding contributions in the field of entrepreneurship and small business research.^{1,2} Given for the first time that same year, the *International Award for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Research* quickly became the foremost global award for research on entrepreneurship. The award aimed to spotlight a vibrant and rapidly expanding research field that brings issues of crucial importance for future prosperity to the fore. At the time, however,

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¹This article builds on Braunerhjelm and Henrekson (2009) and Henrekson and Lundström (2009).

²Anders Lundström FSF proposed to the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth that a prize in this research area should be established. The Agency looked favorably upon the idea and has been the largest sponsor of the Prize up until 2008.

entrepreneurship research was still largely neglected in discussions of economic development and policymaking.³

In 2008, the prize was revamped and renamed the *Global Award for Entrepreneurship Research*, given for the first time in 2009. In addition, a website for the Award was launched (www.e-award.org), which describes the prize, presents all award winners since 1996 and their Prize Lectures, and details other pertinent information about the winners and the field of entrepreneurship.

The Research Institute of Industrial Economics (IFN) joined the Swedish Entrepreneurship Forum and the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth as a new partner in 2008; the three organizations are jointly responsible for the prize. The prize sum now amounts to 100,000 euros – twice the size of the previous award – due to a generous donation from Swedish entrepreneur Rune Andersson and his holding company Mellby Gård AB. The procedure for nominating and evaluating prospective award winners has been reformed as well.

This article gives a brief account of the background of the Award, and describes how a worthy award winner is selected.

Nomination and Selection: The Structure

According to the original statutes, the Award should be given to “a person who has produced scientific work of outstanding quality and importance, thereby giving a significant contribution to theory-building concerning entrepreneurship and small business development, the role and importance of new firm formation and the role of SMEs in economic development”. Hence, outstanding scientific achievement comprises the primary reason for receiving the Award. In addition, the extent to which research has accomplished the following aspects should also be taken into consideration: (1) highlighting the importance of research produced in the areas of entrepreneurship and small business; (2) further stimulating and promoting research within these fields; and (3) diffusing state-of-the-art research among scholars, practitioners, and people involved in small business development.⁴ Thus, several disciplines engaged in research on entrepreneurship and small businesses could be considered for the Award. The statutes also make clear that it is possible to reward research focusing both on the aggregate effect of small firms and entrepreneurial activity and micro-aspects of small businesses and entrepreneurship, in which the individual entrepreneur or firm is the object of study.

³At the beginning of the 1990s, a few studies—together with David Birch’s pioneering work in the late 1970s—emerged that clearly documented the increasing importance of small businesses in most countries (Birch, 1979, 1987; Brown & Medoff, 1989; Sengenberger et al., 1990; Storey, 1994). Yet, in basic micro-economic models of the firm or aggregate (exogenous or endogenous) models of economic growth, no room for entrepreneurs exists (Barreto, 1989; Bianchi & Henrekson, 2005; Braunerhjelm, 2008).

⁴See, Lundström and Halvarsson (2006).

91 The nomination, evaluation, and selection of award winners is delegated to
92 an autonomous Prize Committee, which is elected by the board of the Swedish
93 Entrepreneurship Forum. The Committee consists of six members, in which the
94 chairman holds the decisive vote in case of a split decision. In order to ensure con-
95 tinuity, no more than two members are replaced in a given year. The Committee
96 members are appointed solely based on their scientific credentials and represent dif-
97 ferent disciplines, predominantly economics and business administration. They are
98 leading academics in the field, and have attained the distinction of full professor or
99 equivalent. A chairman cannot be reelected for a consecutive term, but Committee
100 membership can be extended for an additional 3-year-period. The discussions within
101 the Committee are confidential; members are not allowed to report the reasoning
102 behind individual prizes and candidacies.

103 A number of distinguished entrepreneurship scholars are invited to nomi-
104 nate candidates. This invitation, extended every year since 1995, is accorded
105 in February/March to scholars who belong to the following four categories: (i)
106 previous award winners; (ii) editors and editorial board members of the jour-
107 nals of entrepreneurship and small business research included in the Social
108 Sciences Citation Index (currently *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *Journal*
109 *of Business Venturing*, *Small Business Economics*, *Entrepreneurship and Regional*
110 *Development*, *Journal of Small Business Management*, and *International Small*
111 *Business Journal*); and (iii) present and past members of the Scientific Forum of
112 the Swedish Entrepreneurship Forum, who also hold or have held positions as full
113 professors. In addition, members of the Prize Committee have the right to nominate
114 candidates, although self-nominations are not allowed.⁵

115 These nominations provide a list of potential candidates to be considered by the
116 Committee; the Committee then decides which candidates should be targeted for a
117 more thorough evaluation. A candidate can be on the list for several years and be
118 regarded as a potential candidate for the Award during that time. The eventual selec-
119 tion of the winner is based on thorough evaluations and comparisons of a number of
120 worthy candidates; the pool of candidates from which the winner is selected must be
121 reasonably stable, reflecting the long-term efforts of the Prize Committee. The Prize
122 Committee “inherits” therefore a limited number of short-listed candidates from the
123 previous year, and except in rare cases the winner is selected from this pool of short-
124 listed candidates. However, the Committee is also commissioned to add one or two
125 new candidates to this pool based on nominations and discussions in that year (and
126 in previous years).

127 All short-listed candidates are thoroughly evaluated by a specialist in the candi-
128 date’s field. These outside evaluations are strictly confidential, although they later
129 form the basis for a published presentation of the winner co-authored by the mem-
130 ber of the Prize Committee who is most familiar with the winner’s work. In some
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132 ⁵Editorial review boards are not included; eligibility requires membership in the more restricted
133 editorial board. Moreover, the Prize Committee may take a decision to include additional high-
134 quality entrepreneurship journals if these are deemed likely to be included in the SSCI in the
135 foreseeable future.

136 cases, the commissioned expert may be a member of the Prize Committee, but this
137 is likely to be an exception rather than a rule.

138 The name of the award winner is announced at Swedish Entrepreneurship
139 Forum's annual conference *Small Business Days* in late January. After the
140 announcement, the award winner will be requested to prepare a publishable Prize
141 Lecture that can be delivered at the official Award Ceremony in Stockholm in May.
142 The Award is normally given by the Minister of Industry; the winner is then expected
143 to tour Sweden during *Entrepreneurship Week*, an annual seminar tour of Swedish
144 university cities taking place during the week when the Award is conferred. Both
145 the essay presenting the contribution of the winner and his or her Prize Lecture are
146 published in *Small Business Economics* as soon as possible after the Award is given.

151 Selection of Award Winners: The Criteria

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153 So, what is a worthy contribution? This key question lacks a precise answer, but it
154 must, nevertheless, be elaborated upon. Naturally, there have been lengthy discus-
155 sions of this issue in the Prize Committee over the years, and the following is greatly
156 inspired by those discussions and by input from current and previous Committee
157 members on an earlier version of this text. Assar Lindbeck's (1985, 2007) insight-
158 ful exploration of the criteria used to select the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic
159 Sciences has also been an important source of inspiration.

160 First and foremost, a prize worthy contribution needs to be *original* and *influen-*
161 *tial*. A contribution can be influential in many fashions, with impact on subsequent
162 scientific work the most notable consideration; this impact can be achieved by virtue
163 of the scientific work per se but sometimes through the organization of large research
164 programs as well. Influence may also be obtained by furthering entrepreneurship as
165 a field (by creating important data bases, starting influential journals, supporting
166 scientific communities, and so forth), by furthering entrepreneurship education and
167 training at the academic level, and by influencing policy making and society more
168 broadly. However, it takes time before one can be reasonably sure that a contribu-
169 tion is both original and influential, rather than a fad that will taper off with little
170 long-running effects. One needs to allow the requisite time for potential criticism
171 and scrutiny by other scholars before one can be confident that the contribution is as
172 solid as it first appeared to be. Therefore, a certain caution and "conservatism" can
173 be expected to continue in the future.

174 One of the Prize Committee's prime ambitions is that the award-winning con-
175 tributions will reflect the extraordinary width of entrepreneurship as a social
176 science field, spanning the entire spectrum from anthropology to theoretical micro-
177 economics, and award methodological diversity ranging from hermeneutics to
178 formalized deductivism via traditional hypothesis testing by means of state-of-the-
179 art statistical methods. Therefore, the Committee does not limit itself to a certain
180 type of work, such as designating that only articles in peer-reviewed journals should

181 count. Rather, the Committee is governed by the originality and uniqueness of the
182 research's insights.

183 Another concern involves which aspects of entrepreneurship research can be
184 rewarded. At least three important considerations arise: (i) the environment and
185 the organizations in which entrepreneurship is conducted; (ii) the character of the
186 entrepreneur (personality, cognitive, and affective aspects); and (iii) the role of
187 the entrepreneur and/or the entrepreneurial function in a wider sense (at the level
188 of the community, region, country, industry).⁶ All three aspects are highly relevant,
189 and a scholar may be rewarded for contributions to any one of them. High-quality
190 research that manages to connect two or all three aspects in a coherent framework
191 is rare, and is therefore looked upon favorably.

192 When selecting prize worthy contributions (both actual winners and nomi-
193 nees added to the shortlist of individuals evaluated by an outside specialist), the
194 Committee has and will emphasize the *qualitative* aspect of the research con-
195 tribution. Quantitative methods like citation counts and impact factor adjusted
196 publication volumes will continue to provide important complementary informa-
197 tion about candidates, but they will never substitute for qualitative judgment. Nor
198 will the prize be given as a sort of life-time achievement award to scholars who
199 have managed to publish an extraordinary volume of solid, well-published work,
200 but whose research fails to stand out as original and truly influential. Hence, quan-
201 tity cannot substitute for quality – it is even possible to give the Award to a scholar
202 for a single landmark contribution.⁷

205 **Presentation and Categorization of Previous Winners**

207 Although entrepreneurship and small business research is a young field and has but
208 a short history, the Award Committee has chosen from a pool of excellent people. In
209 particular, there were several pioneers who are highly visible and readily recognized
210 by virtually every scholar working in the field. Even a cursory look at the list of win-
211 ners in Table 1 reveals that virtually every winner so far can be labeled a pioneer in
212 some important respect. In most cases, these pioneers have not only contributed in
213 terms of their own research; they have also been active in promoting entrepreneur-
214 ship education and the field itself by starting journals, organizing conferences, and
215 writing influential surveys setting the agenda for further research.

218 ⁶These three aspects can be seen as one way of operationalizing Venkataraman's (1997, p. 120)
219 definition of entrepreneurship as a scholarly field: it "seeks to understand how opportunities to
220 bring into existence 'future' goods and services are discovered, created, and exploited, by whom,
221 and with what consequences".

222 ⁷This is not without precedent. Among the Nobel Laureates in Economic Sciences this is
223 fairly common. Ronald Coase, John Nash, Michael Spence, Myron Scholes, Bertil Ohlin, Harry
224 Markowitz, George Akerlof, Finn Kydland, and Robert Solow are prime examples. A few of them
225 have fairly long publication lists, but it was one or two fundamental contributions that earned them
the Nobel Prize (Lindbeck, 2007).

Table 1 Award winners 1996–2010 (affiliation and country pertains to the situation at the time of receipt of the Award)

Year	Winner(s)	Birth year	Country	Field	Prize citation	Remark
1996	<i>Macro-importance of new and small firms</i> David L. Birch MIT/Cognetics, Inc.	1937	USA	Economics/ Management	“For having identified the role of new and small firms for job creation”	Great impact on policymaking
1998	David J. Storey Univ. of Warwick	1947	UK	Economics/ Management	“Responsible for the increased focus in research on unbiased large-scale and high-quality empirical work”	Large impact on policies for regional development; outstanding synthesizer
2001	Zoltan J. Acs Univ. of Baltimore David B. Audretsch Indiana Univ.	1952 1954	USA USA	Economics Economics	“For empirical analyses of an impressive number of important questions concerning the role of small firms in the economy” and “the role of small firms in innovation”	Bridge-builders between economics and related fields; founders of <i>SBE</i> , tireless promotion of the field. Impact on policymaking.
2002	Giacomo Beccatini Univ. of Florence Charles F. Sabel Columbia Univ.	1927 1947	Italy USA	Economics Political Science/Law	For revitalizing Marshalls’ ideas of the “advantages of geographical agglomeration of specialized small firms” and furthering “our understanding of flexible specialization of co-operating small firms” and the “importance of networks”	Emphasize the systemic perspective. Impact on policymaking

Table 1 (continued)

Year	Winner(s)	Birth year	Country	Field	Prize citation	Remark
2004	Paul D. Reynolds Babson College & London Bus. School	1938	USA & UK	Sociology	“Has taken entrepreneurship research to new levels, given it new directions and organized several innovative and large-scale empirical investigations into the nature of entrepreneurship and its role in economic development”	Initiator and coordinator of two massive projects: PSED and GEM. Impact on policymaking. The importance for the field cannot be overrated
2003	William J. Baumol New York Univ.	1922	USA	Economics	“His insistence that the entrepreneur should have a key role in the theory of the firm;” “his studies of the role of institutions for the channeling of entrepreneurship into productive use;” “his early formulation of a competition policy emphasizing the disciplinary effect of dynamic entrepreneurship”	A highly reputed mainstream economist who very early on and with great consistency has urged the professions to heed the instrumental role of the entrepreneur in their analyses

Role and aggregate importance of entrepreneurship/the entrepreneurial function

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Table 1 (continued)

Year	Winner(s)	Birth year	Country	Field	Prize citation	Remark
2006	Israel M. Kirzner New York Univ.	1930	USA	Economics	“Clarifies the role of the entrepreneur in society and emphasizes that the behavior of a single entrepreneur may be of importance for the renewal and rationalization of markets.” . . . “the most prominent contemporary advocate of the Austrian School”	Explains the instrumental role of the entrepreneur in the capitalist system, and why the insistence on general equilibrium in economic modeling makes the entrepreneurial function superfluous
<i>Micro-level analyses of entrepreneurship and small businesses</i>						
1997	Arnold C. Cooper Krannert School of Management, Purdue Univ.	1933	USA	Management	His “pioneering work on technical entrepreneurship, new technology-based firms, and incubator organizations has significantly enhanced our understanding of entrepreneurial phenomena”	Masters both qualitative and quantitative methods. Has improved data quality and insisted on use of sophisticated methods

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Table 1 (continued)

Year	Winner(s)	Birth year	Country	Field	Prize citation	Remark
1999	Ian C. MacMillan Wharton School, Univ. of Pennsylvania	1940	USA	Management	“Instrumental in introducing an international perspective to entrepreneurship research, exemplified by the international comparative studies on cultural differences in entrepreneurship and small business behavior;” “the integration of two separate research fields: entrepreneurship/small business research and management/strategy research”	Important pioneer
2000	Howard E. Aldrich Univ. of North Caro-lina at Chapel Hill	1943	USA	Sociology	“Has generated significant insights into the knowledge of formation and evolution of new and small firms”; “major contributions ... by integrating the most central research questions of the field into a broader sociological research context.”	Leading sociologist highlighting entrepreneurship

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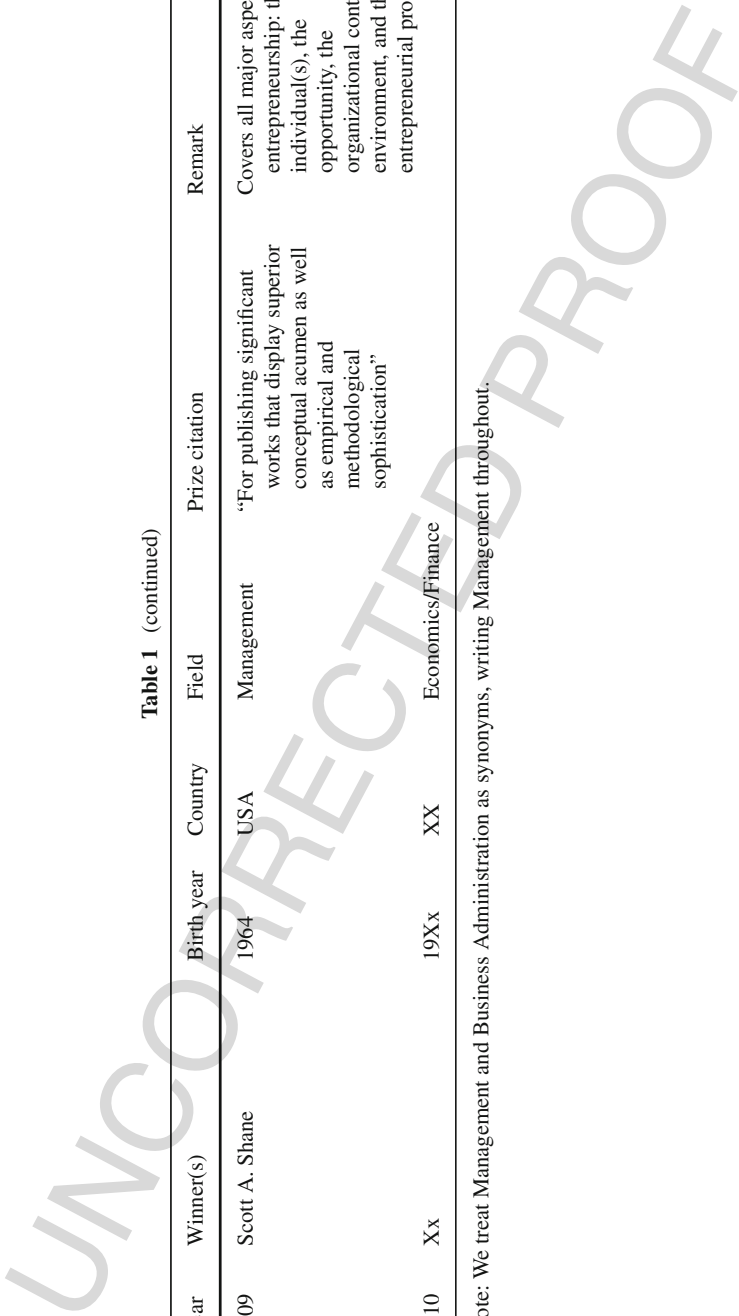
Year	Winner(s)	Birth year	Country	Field	Prize citation	Remark
2005	William B. Gartner Clemson Univ.	1953	USA	Management	For his research on “new venture creation and entrepreneurial behavior,” he has shown mastery in combining “the best of two research traditions:” US style positivism and hermeneutics	Important in promoting entrepreneurship education, and in forming connections between scholars working in different fields
2007	The Diana Group: Candida G. Brush Babson College Nancy M. Carter Univ. of St. Thomas Elizabeth J. Gatewood Wake Forest Univ. Patricia G. Greene Babson College Myra M. Hart Harvard Bus. School	1948 1949 1944 1954 1941	USA USA USA USA USA	Management Management Management Sociology Management	For their unique effort to pool “their competencies to create a research team examining women’s entrepreneurship. An important contribution lies in the identification of growth oriented women entrepreneurs and issues of access to and usage of resources”	Impact on policymaking. Particularly in creating awareness of gender differences in the availability of external finance. Partly also on the macro-importance of women entrepreneurship
2008	Bengt Johannisson Växjö University	1942	Sweden	Management	“The furthering of our understanding of the importance of social networks of the entrepreneur in a regional context. He has also documented and explained how the social networks of the entrepreneur are related to the “life” of the entrepreneur”	Key contributor to the organization of the European entrepreneurship and small business research fields

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Table 1 (continued)

Year	Winner(s)	Birth year	Country	Field	Prize citation	Remark
2009	Scott A. Shane	1964	USA	Management	“For publishing significant works that display superior conceptual acumen as well as empirical and methodological sophistication”	Covers all major aspects of entrepreneurship: the individual(s), the opportunity, the organizational context, the environment, and the entrepreneurial process
2010	Xx	19Xx	XX	Economics/Finance		

Note: We treat Management and Business Administration as synonyms, writing Management throughout.



496 The Award was twice shared between two scholars (Acs/Audretsch and
 497 Beccatini/Sabel), in addition to once being awarded to a specific research effort
 498 (Diana) involving five scholars Brush/Carter/Gatewood/Greene/Hart). Hence, there
 499 are 20 award winners. Normally, the prize is given to one person only, but in the case
 500 of the Award shared by Acs and Audretsch, the Committee felt that the contribution
 501 was inseparably tied to the joint effort of the two scholars. In the case of Beccatini's
 502 and Sabel's shared prize, the analysis of a particular phenomenon was rewarded,
 503 namely the advantages of a geographical agglomeration of specialized small firms
 504 ("Industrial Districts"). The Committee decided to give the Award to those they con-
 505 sidered to be the two most influential contributors on this issue. Similar reasoning
 506 underlay giving the Award to the five scholars behind the Diana project for their
 507 influential contributions to the field of female entrepreneurship.

508 Bearing in mind the difficulties of drawing a sharp demarcation line between
 509 micro- and macro-oriented research on entrepreneurship and small businesses, the
 510 Committee tries, nevertheless, to categorize the winners' work in this dimension.⁸
 511 As shown in Table 1, five prizes have been awarded to research dealing with the
 512 macro-importance of new and small firms, two prizes (Baumol and Kirzner) to
 513 research focusing on the role and aggregate importance of entrepreneurship (viz.
 514 the entrepreneurial function) in the economic system, and seven prizes to scholars
 515 conducting micro-level analyses of entrepreneurship and small businesses.

516 In summary, there is great diversity in the work and achievements of previous
 517 award winners. Their research showcases both quantitative and qualitative work
 518 and micro- and macro-oriented foci, while promoting education and training in
 519 entrepreneurship as well. Likewise, their work is vastly diverse: its publication
 520 ranges from easily accessible books and reports to highly specialized scholarly
 521 articles, its methods span the development of new datasets to conceptual and
 522 methodological improvements, and its impact touches both the research community
 523 and policymakers.

524 **Concluding Remarks**

528 The development and dynamics of any society, economy, or organization requires
 529 micro-level actors – individuals, entrepreneurs, and small businesses – that have the
 530 ability and persistence to incite change. Institutions and market and organizational
 531 structures do not create change in the absence of human actors. Rather, the unique
 532 knowledge, perceptions, and goals of individuals equipped with the drive to take
 533 action initiate novelty and create value. However, this is by no means conventional
 534 wisdom in mainstream management and economics. Achieving a better understand-
 535 ing of the issues related to entrepreneurship and small businesses requires insights
 536 from several disciplines.

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 539 ⁸This is also done by Landström (2005) for all winners through 2002. Our classification concurs
 540 with Landström's in this respect.

541 The recent, albeit limited, progress in our understanding of entrepreneurship
 542 and small businesses stems from varying academic traditions and perspectives. We
 543 believe that deepening our insights regarding the conditions, characteristics, drivers,
 544 and effects of entrepreneurs and small business in a societal context, and formulat-
 545 ing adequate policy recommendations, requires acuity from several disciplines. With
 546 the *Global Award* helping to disseminate state-of-the-art research among scholars,
 547 practitioners, and people involved in small business development, considerable good
 548 can be achieved. It is also our hope that it will provide a source of inspiration for
 549 entrepreneurship scholars across the globe.

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