CAPITAL PIONEER AWARDS 2027

BY RHOTIC



ENTRY GUIDANCE AND JUDGING RUBRIC

The Capital Pioneer Assessment Framework

One framework, nine categories, 100 marks.

Thursday 20 May 2027
London Museum, Docklands

Entries close
Friday 5 March 2027

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KEY DATES

The 2027 timeline

1 December 2026
Entries open

5 March 2027
Entries close

8–19 March 2027
Blind scoring

23 March 2027
Judging morning

29 March 2027
Shortlist announced

20 May 2027
Winners revealed at The Pioneers' Dinner

This guide is written for entrants and judges alike. Entrants can see exactly how their work will be assessed; judges have a single, published reference for every score they give.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome from Joe McGrath

Dear colleague,

Welcome to the Capital Pioneer Awards 2027. Whether you are preparing an entry or joining our judging panel, thank you for being part of the programme.

The awards were created to celebrate the people and organisations moving institutional capital markets forward. Our first year, in April 2026, showed how much of that progress happens quietly and behind the scenes, in custody, settlement, trading, data and the systems markets run on. These awards exist to bring it into the light.

For 2027 we have refocused the programme into nine categories and, with them, a single way of judging. Every entry, in every category, is now scored against the same Capital Pioneer Assessment Framework: ten criteria, each worth ten marks, for a total of 100. Short category notes then tell judges where to place particular emphasis. One framework makes judging easier, keeps it consistent from category to category, and produces results that stand up to scrutiny.

To entrants: read the framework before you write. The strongest entries answer every criterion, back their claims with numbers and show what has changed in the market because of their work. Judging is blind and independent, so the evidence on the page is what counts.

To our judges: thank you for lending your time and expertise. We ask for thoughtful, balanced and rigorous consideration of each submission, using the scoring scale in this guide so that every mark means the same thing across the panel.

And to our partners, thank you. Your support makes the evening possible. It never buys a result, and that independence is what makes these awards worth winning.

We look forward to celebrating with many of you at London Museum, Docklands, on Thursday 20 May 2027.

Best wishes,
Joe McGrath
Rhotic Media, publisher of Capital Pioneer

THE CATEGORIES

Capital Pioneer Awards 2027 categories

Nine awards, every one open for entry and every one scored out of 100 against the same framework.

01 Capital Pioneer of the Year

The highest accolade of the evening, for the individual, organisation or initiative that has done most to advance innovation in institutional capital markets, anticipating change and shaping it, with lasting influence on the direction of global markets.

02 AI Pioneer of the Year

For an organisation, team or individual harnessing artificial intelligence to transform institutional capital markets, across trading, investment management, operations, risk, compliance, client servicing or market infrastructure.

03 Innovation Marketer of the Year

For a marketing, communications or brand team that has brought innovation to market in the institutional financial sector, with creativity, strategic thinking and measurable impact.

04 Insurance Pioneer of the Year

For an insurer, reinsurer, broker, managing general agent, technology provider or market participant driving innovation across the insurance value chain.

05 Digital Assets & Tokenisation Pioneer Award

For an organisation leading the development, adoption or enablement of digital assets, tokenised securities and next-generation market infrastructure.

06 Institutional Adoption Award

For a market participant that has taken innovation beyond experimentation and into production, from digital assets and tokenisation to automation and AI, with measurable benefits at scale.

07 Market Structure Initiative of the Year

For an organisation, consortium or market-led initiative that has transformed market structure, transparency, efficiency or access.

08 Infrastructure Pioneer Award

For a firm advancing the foundations markets run on: infrastructure, technology, custody, settlement, clearing, data or operational resilience.

09 Liquidity & Trading Innovation Award

Open to exchanges, venues, market makers, brokers, technology providers and buy-side firms whose innovation has improved execution quality, market access, transparency or liquidity formation.

METHODOLOGY

How judging works

Every entry is scored out of 100 by an independent panel of ten: senior industry practitioners, advisers and a single Capital Pioneer representative.

1

Blind scoring

Each judge scores every entry in their categories independently, without sight of the panel's other marks. 8 to 19 March 2027.

2

Judging morning

The panel meets to bring individual scores together and debate the leading entries. 23 March 2027.

3

Final scores agreed

Winners are confirmed on agreed final scores against this framework. Shortlist 29 March; winners 20 May.

The scoring scale

Each of the ten criteria is marked from 0 to 10. Use the same scale for every criterion and every category.

MARKS	LEVEL	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE
9–10	**Exceptional**	Compelling, quantified evidence. Clearly industry-leading; sets a benchmark others will follow.
7–8	**Strong**	Clear, well-supported evidence. Well ahead of most peers, with only minor gaps.
5–6	**Good**	Credible claims with some supporting evidence. Solid, but not yet distinctive.
3–4	**Limited**	Mostly assertion. Little data or independent support for what is claimed.
1–2	**Weak**	The criterion is touched on, but not meaningfully addressed.
0	**Not addressed**	No relevant information is given.

Judge the evidence

Score what the entry shows, not what you know or assume. Unsupported claims score in the lower bands.

Keep it confidential

Entries, scores and discussions stay within the panel. Shortlists and winners are announced only by Capital Pioneer.

Declare conflicts

Tell the awards team before scoring if you have a commercial or personal link to an entrant. You will not score that entry.

Independent of sponsors

Category Partners present awards on the night but play no part in judging. Sponsorship never influences a score.

UNIVERSAL ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK · 100 MARKS

Ten criteria, equally weighted

The same ten criteria apply to every category. Each is worth ten marks.

01 Innovation & Originality — 10 marks

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Evidence of genuine innovation rather than incremental improvement or repackaging of existing solutions.

HIGH-SCORING EXAMPLE

A market participant introducing a new approach to settlement, trading, tokenisation, automation or market engagement that materially changes industry practice.

02 Strategic Vision — 10 marks

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

A clear understanding of future market direction and a well-defined strategy for addressing emerging opportunities or challenges.

HIGH-SCORING EXAMPLE

Demonstrating leadership in areas such as AI adoption, digital assets, market structure reform or infrastructure modernisation ahead of broader industry adoption.

03 Market Impact — 10 marks

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Tangible influence on clients, counterparties, industry participants or wider markets.

HIGH-SCORING EXAMPLE

Innovation resulting in measurable improvements to efficiency, access, transparency, liquidity or investment outcomes.

04 Execution & Delivery — 10 marks

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Strong implementation rather than aspirational concepts or pilot-stage initiatives.

HIGH-SCORING EXAMPLE

Delivery of a complex programme into a live production environment with demonstrable operational success.

05 Technology & Operational Excellence — 10 marks

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Robust systems, processes and capabilities supporting the initiative.

HIGH-SCORING EXAMPLE

Highly resilient infrastructure supporting institutional-scale activity while maintaining strong governance and controls.

UNIVERSAL ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK · CONTINUED

Criteria 6 to 10

Total available: 100 marks.

06 Adoption & Commercial Success — 10 marks

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Evidence that the innovation has achieved meaningful market acceptance.

HIGH-SCORING EXAMPLE

Growing client numbers, transaction volumes, assets under management, market participation or measurable stakeholder engagement.

07 Measurable Outcomes — 10 marks

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Quantifiable evidence supporting claims made within the submission.

HIGH-SCORING EXAMPLE

Reduced costs, improved performance, increased efficiency, faster processing times or enhanced customer outcomes.

08 Scalability & Sustainability — 10 marks

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Evidence that success can be maintained and expanded over time.

HIGH-SCORING EXAMPLE

Solutions capable of scaling across markets, jurisdictions, asset classes or client segments.

09 Industry Leadership & Influence — 10 marks

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Contribution to broader market development beyond the organisation's own commercial objectives.

HIGH-SCORING EXAMPLE

Participation in standards development, industry working groups, market consultations or ecosystem-building initiatives.

10 Contribution to the Future of Capital Markets — 10 marks

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

The extent to which the submission advances the evolution of institutional finance.

HIGH-SCORING EXAMPLE

Innovation that has the potential to become an industry benchmark or influence how markets operate in coming years.

CATEGORY-SPECIFIC GUIDANCE

Where to place the emphasis

Every category is scored against the same 100-point framework. These notes tell judges which evidence should carry particular weight within it. They do not change the marks available.

01 Capital Pioneer of the Year

Judges should look for the submission demonstrating the greatest overall contribution to innovation, modernisation and leadership across institutional capital markets.

02 AI Pioneer of the Year

Particular emphasis should be placed on the practical application of artificial intelligence, demonstrable outcomes and evidence of institutional deployment.

03 Innovation Marketer of the Year

Judges should consider effectiveness in communicating complex innovation, supporting adoption and delivering measurable commercial or reputational results.

04 Insurance Pioneer of the Year

Particular weight should be given to innovation in underwriting, claims, risk management, capital efficiency and insurance market modernisation.

05 Digital Assets & Tokenisation Pioneer Award

Judges should prioritise evidence of real-world adoption, institutional participation, market impact and advancement of digital asset infrastructure.

06 Institutional Adoption Award

Judges should focus on successful implementation at scale and measurable business outcomes beyond pilot or proof-of-concept stages.

07 Market Structure Initiative of the Year

Particular consideration should be given to initiatives improving transparency, efficiency, interoperability, access or market integrity.

08 Infrastructure Pioneer Award

Judges should emphasise resilience, scalability, security and the advancement of the underlying systems that support capital markets activity.

09 Liquidity & Trading Innovation Award

Judges should focus on measurable improvements to trading outcomes, execution quality, liquidity formation, transparency and market access.

FOR ENTRANTS

Preparing a strong entry

Entries are made online at the Capital Pioneer Awards website. Create an account, save drafts as you go, and submit when you are ready.

What an entry contains

- **A summary of up to 500 words** describing the organisation, team, individual or initiative, and why it deserves the award.
- **A response to each of the ten criteria**, written against the guidance in this document.
- **Supporting material**: up to ten files (PDF, Office documents or images) and links to video or online material.
- **Invoice details.** An entry is confirmed once you receive your invoice, payable by card.

Six ways to score higher

1. **Answer every criterion.** A blank criterion scores zero, and each one is worth a tenth of the total.
2. **Lead with numbers.** Volumes, assets, cost or time saved, client counts. Percentages or ranges are fine where figures are confidential.
3. **Show it is live.** Judges reward production over pilots and proofs of concept.
4. **Prove it independently.** Client testimonials, regulatory approvals and third-party coverage carry weight.
5. **Look beyond your firm.** Explain what has changed for the market, not only for your business.
6. **Read the category note.** It tells you where judges will place particular emphasis.

Entry fees and full terms are shown on the entry site. Questions about which category fits your work: events.team@rhoticmedia.com or +44 (0)20 3143 2245.

FOR JUDGES

Judge's score sheet

Judge _____ **Category** _____

Entrant _____ **Entry reference** _____

	CRITERION	MAX	SCORE	NOTES FOR THE JUDGING MORNING
01	**Innovation & Originality**	10		
02	**Strategic Vision**	10		
03	**Market Impact**	10		
04	**Execution & Delivery**	10		
05	**Technology & Operational Excellence**	10		
06	**Adoption & Commercial Success**	10		
07	**Measurable Outcomes**	10		
08	**Scalability & Sustainability**	10		
09	**Industry Leadership & Influence**	10		
10	**Contribution to the Future of Capital Markets**	10		
	Total	**100**		

Conflict of interest to declare? _____

Score each criterion from 0 to 10 using the scale on page 5, then apply the category note on page 8. Return completed sheets to the awards team by Friday 19 March 2027.

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THE KING'S AWARDS FOR ENTERPRISE 2026 PROMOTING OPPORTUNITY