

BUSINESS
NSW

2026
**BUSINESS
AWARDS**

2026
Call for Entries

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Call for Entries

The Business Awards program recognises growth, entrepreneurship and success across NSW. It is an opportunity for entrants to showcase their business or an outstanding individual and gain recognition for the hard work and results achieved.

This document contains information on categories included in the Business NSW Business Awards program and how entries are scored.

BUSINESS
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The Categories

Individual Recognition

Categories

Outstanding Employee
Outstanding Young Business Leader
Outstanding Business Leader - (20 Employees and Under)
Outstanding Business Leader - (21 Employees and Over)

Visitor Economy Categories

Outstanding Experience
Outstanding Visitor & 24-Hour Economy Collaboration
Excellence in Sustainable Tourism

Business Recognition Categories

Excellence in Micro Business
Excellence in Small Business
Excellence in Medium Business
Excellence in Large Business
Outstanding New Business
Excellence in International Business
Employer of Choice - 20 Employees and Under
Employer of Choice - 21 Employees and Over
Excellence in Innovation
Excellence in Sustainability
Excellence in Diversity & Inclusion
Excellence in Workplace Health & Wellbeing
Excellence in Community Organisation
Outstanding Local Chamber

Outstanding Young Business Leader

The Outstanding Young Business Leader Award recognises an inspirational business leader, aged 35 or under at the time of entry, who has demonstrated a commitment to their workplace, industry, and the community through leadership.

Entrants must demonstrate their ability to lead and inspire people, showcasing exceptional leadership skills, while demonstrating how they have effectively utilised resources to achieve strong organisational outcomes, and deliver measurable success.

To be eligible for this category, the individual must have held a senior management or executive-level position within their organisation for a minimum of 18 months at the time of entry.

Tip:

Judges will assess how effectively the entrant demonstrates leadership maturity, resilience, innovation, strategic thinking while contributing to organisational growth and long-term sustainability

Scoring

Leadership Profile

5%

Leadership Impact

40%

Resilience

20%

Future Vision

10%

Leadership Excellence

25%

Outstanding Business Leader

The Outstanding Business Leader Award recognises an inspirational business leader, aged 36 or over at the time of entry, who has demonstrated a commitment to their workplace, industry, and the community through leadership.

This category is subdivided by the employee size of the organisation within which the individual resides.

Entrants must demonstrate their ability to lead and inspire people, showcasing exceptional leadership skills, while demonstrating how they have effectively utilised resources to achieve strong organisational outcomes, and deliver measurable success.

To be eligible for this category, the individual must have held a senior management or executive-level position within their organisation for a minimum of 18 months at the time of entry.

Outstanding Employee

The Outstanding Employee recognises an inspirational employee who has demonstrated a passion for their role and a commitment to their workplace and the community.

This category is only submitted by employers on behalf of their employees. Employers are required to highlight their employees' commitment over the past 12 months to their workplace and community.

Employees nominated must have been employed by their current employer for a minimum of 18 months at the time of entry.

Tip:

Judges will assess how the employee goes above and beyond in their role and make a positive difference to their workplace and community

Scoring

Roles & Responsibilities

5%

Achievements

15%

Professional Conduct

10%

Initiative & Commitment

40%

Employee Excellence

30%

Employer of Choice

The Employer of choice, subdivided by employee size recognises a business that has implemented strategies and initiatives to create a stimulating and supportive workplace environment. Entrants must demonstrate their achievements over the past 12 months in key areas of employee recruitment, engagement, and retention.

Tip:

Judges are looking for how you create a positive, supportive workplace where employees feel valued, engaged, and motivated to stay and grow, taking into account the size of employees within your organisation

Scoring

Workplace Culture

5%

Inclusive Practices

40%

Staff Retention

15%

Employee Engagement

10%

People Outcomes

30%

People Categories

How to Enter

A GUIDE TO PEOPLE-BASED CATEGORIES

These categories can be self-entered or nominated by the person's organisation. Except the Outstanding Employee category which has to be nominated by an employer.

Each entry question is guided by a word count. Try your best to utilise the word count as best you can.

Entries should be structured under the following heads:

- **Start with your roles and responsibilities:** Describe your current position, leadership scope and key responsibilities. This sets the context for your achievements.
- **Highlight your achievements and leadership impact:** Use specific examples and outcomes where possible
- **Explain challenges and how you overcame them:** Focus on problem-solving, resilience, adaptability and leadership under pressure.
- **Show your values and professionalism:** This may include how you support others, build trust, uphold standards or influence positive workplace culture
- **Future focus:** This may include progression, business growth and industry impact
- **Why do you stand out:** Reinforce what makes your contribution unique, meaningful and worthy of recognition

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Excellence in **International Business**

This award celebrates the NSW businesses taking Australian excellence to the world whether through exporting, technology, partnerships, international expansion, global trade, or digital service delivery. It recognises the businesses shaping Australia's global reputation and creating opportunities for growth, innovation, and influence overseas.

Entrants must demonstrate achievements over the past 12 months in at least one of the following areas:

- Exporting products or services
- International market expansion or market entry
- Cross-border digital trade
- International partnerships or alliances
- Licensing, franchising, or distribution overseas
- International brand or reputation building

Tip:

Judges will be looking for clear examples of how your business has measurably succeeded in international markets and strategies that demonstrates how the business has built a strong reputation for Australian products or services and achieved growth in international markets,

Scoring

Leadership Profile

5%

Leadership Impact

40%

Resilience

20%

Future Vision

10%

Leadership Excellence

25%

Excellence In Business

Subdivided by employee size. These categories recognises businesses that have driven growth and can demonstrate the specific strategies implemented to achieve business success and/or resilience. Open to businesses who have been trading for more than 24 months at the time of entry. Entrants must demonstrate their achievements in business excellence over the past 12 months. Categories in this section include:

- Excellence in Micro Business (Under 5 Employees)
- Excellence in Small Business (6-20 Employees)
- Excellence in Medium Business (21 - 99 Employees)
- Excellence in Large Business (99+ Employees)

Tip:

Judges will be looking for clear evidence that your business is well run, had strong leadership and direction and has achieved real results, taking into account the size of your business and the resources available to you.

Scoring

Business Overview

5%

Growth Strategy

15%

Market Differentiation

10%

Growth and Milestones

Achieved

40%

Challenges and Resilience

30%

Excellence in **New Business**

The Outstanding New Business Award recognises a start-up that has effectively driven growth and is able to demonstrate potential to achieve future success.

Entrants must demonstrate their commitment to being an outstanding start-up over the past 12 months. This category is open to businesses that have been trading for less than 24 months at the time of entry.

Tip:

Judges will be looking for clear evidence of a strong business idea, market differentiation, early signs of success, and how you've overcome challenges while building a sustainable future.

Business Categories

How to Enter

A GUIDE TO PEOPLE-BASED CATEGORIES

Each entry question is guided by a word count. Try your best to utilise the word count as best you can.

Entries should be structured under the following heads:

- Start with a **clear overview of your business**, what you do and who you serve.
- Explain your **business strategy and goals**, including where you are heading as a business
- Highlight what makes your **business different or competitive** in your industry
- Show **measurable results and performance** from the past 12 months
- Be honest about **challenges faced** and how you managed or overcame them

For entries into the Outstanding New Business categories, remember momentum, clarity and resilience matter more than scale.

For entries into Excellence in International Business, focus on outcomes and growth not just intention to export.

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Excellence in Innovation

The Excellence in Innovation Award recognises a business that has implemented innovative solutions for new and existing needs through the introduction or improvement of a product, technology, or application that impacts the wider community.

Tip:

Judges are seeking a clearly articulated innovation that addresses a real need, demonstrates originality, and delivers measurable benefits to the business, customers and the wider community.

Scoring

Innovation Overview

10%

Market Differentiation

20%

Market Reception

5%

Community Impact

25%

Measurable Results

40%

Excellence in Diversity & Inclusion

The Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion Award recognises businesses that champion inclusivity for diverse communities, such as older people, people from culturally diverse backgrounds, and people with disability. An inclusive business facilitates the needs of all its employees and customers.

Entrants must demonstrate their commitment over the past 12 months to address the needs of a diverse community.

Tip:

Judges are seeking genuine, embedded inclusion practices that improve employee and customer experiences that go beyond compliance and demonstrates real cultural and operational impact.

Scoring

Workforce diversity

5%

Inclusive Practices

15%

Inclusive Hiring

30%

Customer Accessibility

40%

Inclusion Journey & Future Actions

10%

Scoring

Safety & Policy
Implementation

5%

Innovation in Safety &
Wellbeing

15%

Employee Engagement

30%

Safety Outcomes

40%

Safety Culture

10%

Excellence in

Workplace Health & Wellbeing

The Excellence in Workplace Health & Wellbeing Award recognises a business that demonstrates an outstanding and holistic commitment to protecting and enhancing the health and wellbeing of its people. This award celebrates organisations that create physically and psychologically safe workplaces, reduce incidents and risks, support mental health, promote respectful behaviour, and embed a strong culture of proactive health & wellbeing leadership. This award acknowledges businesses that go beyond compliance, those that integrate modern best practice across mental health, wellbeing, and respectful workplace conduct to ensure every employee feels safe, supported, valued and able to thrive.

Tip:

Judges will evaluate how well the business embeds physical and psychological safety into everyday operations, demonstrates leadership commitment, and achieves measurable wellbeing outcomes.

Excellence in Sustainability

The Excellence in Sustainability Award recognises a business that has demonstrated its commitment to sustainable business practices and is working to reduce the impact of its operations on the environment.

The category criteria are based on initiatives and projects within the business that are not related to its core offering.

Tip:

Judges will evaluate how effectively the business embeds sustainability into operations, engages stakeholders, and delivers measurable environmental and business outcomes beyond compliance.

Scoring

Sustainability Goals

5%

Sustainable Actions

10%

Environmental Impact

15%

Stakeholder Engagement

30%

Business Impact

40%

Outstanding Community Organisation

The Outstanding Community Organisation Award recognises an organisation that works to improve the social, cultural, or environmental wellbeing of the community.

This category is open to social enterprises and not-for-profit organisations that have been trading for a period of over 24 months at the time of entry.

Tip:

Judges are seeking genuine understanding on how your organisation has made a real and measurable difference to the community you serve.

Scoring

Community Purpose

10%

Product/Service Delivered

5%

Future Planning

15%

Local Economy Contribution

30%

Challenges and Response

40%

Scoring

Chamber Initiatives

5%

Collaboration

15%

Member Impact & Growth

10%

Long-term Benefits

30%

Measurable Outcomes

40%

Outstanding Local Chamber

The Outstanding Local Chamber Award recognises a chamber that has made a meaningful and measurable impact on its local business community over the past 12 months. This category celebrates chambers that champion local economic growth, strengthen business capability, foster collaboration, and deliver initiatives that create positive economic, environmental, or social outcomes.

Examples of Eligible Chamber Activities but not limited to:

- Business networking or training workshops
- Mentoring or training programs
- Local advocacy wins or policy influence
- Events that supported local operators or industries
- Community business collaboration initiatives
- Campaigns that lifted local business visibility
- Initiatives improving business resilience after natural disasters
- Projects that strengthened business confidence or resilience

Tip:

Judges are seeking clear evidence of purposeful initiatives, strong stakeholder collaboration, measurable member impact and sustainable benefits to the local business community.



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Community Impact Categories

How to Enter

A GUIDE TO PEOPLE-BASED CATEGORIES

Each entry question is guided by a word count. Try your best to utilise the word count as best you can.

Entries should be structured under the following heads:

- Start by explaining **the need you identified** and why it was important for your community, members or stakeholders.
- Outline the project, initiative, event delivered. Explain how it was developed and the **key objectives you aimed to achieve**.
- **Highlight collaboration and engagement.** How you worked together with others to deliver your outcomes.
- Show **how your work made a difference**. Include measurable outcomes such growth, environmental improvements, and community benefits.
- Explain **sustainability and long-term benefit**. This may include ongoing programs, improved capability, or systems that ensure lasting impact.
- Reflect on **challenges and learning**. Judges value adaptability, learning and continuous improvement.
- Conclude with **why your impact matters**. How does your efforts contribute positively to business, the community and/or environment.

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Scoring

Project Overview

5%

Collaboration

10%

Economic Impact

15%

Long-term Legacy

30%

Demonstrated Outcomes

40%

Outstanding Visitor & 24-Hour Economy Collaboration

The Outstanding Visitor & 24-Hour Economy Collaboration Award recognises a collaborative project, initiative, or partnership that has strengthened and enhanced the visitor economy including the 24-hour economy over the past 12 months. This category celebrates efforts led by Local Business Chambers, Local Government, Visitor Information Centres, Tourism Industry Associations, and groups of two or more operators who have worked together to deliver exceptional visitor experiences and increase the economic, social, and cultural value of their region.

Projects may include but are not limited to:

- new product or innovative product development
- upgrades or enhancements to tourism infrastructure or services
- generating knowledge and/or insight to improve decision making
- creating partnerships to advance industry performance
- a marketing or awareness campaign, and
- an initiative to address a sector specific challenge.

Tip:

Judges will be looking for clear evidence of how strong collaboration has resulted in stronger visitor experience, supported local businesses and boosted economic activity across day or night-time experiences.

Scoring

Business Overview

5%

Experience Differentiation

10%

Customer Experience

30%

Visitor Engagement

40%

Future Planning

15%

Outstanding

Visitor Experience

The Outstanding Visitor Experience award recognises a business that understands the importance of visitor engagement for a region's economy* and reputation. The business needs to articulate how they promote the region while as well an offering an exceptional visitor experience.

Entrants must demonstrate how their business showcases the region/community and how their offering is unique within their industry.

**The visitor economy encompasses the direct and indirect contributions to the economy resulting from a person (a visitor) travelling outside their normal place of residence.
[\(NSW Visitor Economy Strategy 2030\)](#)*

Tip:

Judges will assess how effectively the business delivers exceptional customer experiences while actively promoting and strengthening the region's visitor economy.

Scoring

Excellence

Sustainable Tourism

Sustainability Goals

5%

Sustainable Practices

10%

Environmental Outcomes

30%

Stakeholder Engagement

15%

Impact

40%

The Excellence in Sustainable Tourism* Award recognises a tourism business that has demonstrated its commitment to sustainable business practices both internally and in customer interactions. The award recognises efforts to minimise environmental impacts from its operations.

Entrants must demonstrate their achievements in sustainable tourism* over the past 12 months. The category criteria are based on initiatives and projects within the business that are not related to its core offering.

Tip:

Judges will evaluate how well sustainability is integrated into operations and customer experiences, supported by measurable environmental, business and visitor outcomes.

Visitor Economy Categories

How to Enter

A GUIDE TO PEOPLE-BASED CATEGORIES

Each entry question is guided by a word count. Try your best to utilise the word count as best you can.

Entries should be structured under the following heads:

- Start with a clear overview of your business/project. Explain **how your offering or initiative contributes to the visitor or 24-Hour economy.**
- Explain **what sets your offering or project apart.** This may include innovation, quality of experience, partnerships or sustainability focus.
- Describe **how visitors are engaged and supported.** This may include customer service strategies, accessibility, partnerships etc.
- Demonstrate impact on the visitor economy. **Include measurable outcomes such as increased visitation, economic impact, and regional promotion.**
- Highlight **sustainability and long-term benefits.** This may include workforce involvement, stakeholder collaboration, and repeat visitation.
- Support your entry with data, metrics and feedback. This may include visitor numbers, revenue growth, and community impact.
- Conclude with your plans for the next 12 months and how you will continue to strengthen the visitor or 24-hour economy through experience, sustainability or collaboration.

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For all enquiries please contact the Business NSW Business Awards team at
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For further information, please visit the Business Awards website

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