

19. UNIQUE ACCOMMODATION

This category recognises tourism excellence in accommodation providing a unique tourism experience that includes an overnight accommodation experience with an included activity. The focus of this award is on the uniqueness of the tourism experience.

This category is open to properties developed around unconventional accommodation infrastructure that includes an activity (passive or active). Entry is open – but not limited to – tented holidays, houseboats, tree houses, underground accommodation and yacht charters.

SCORING

Entrants in this category will be scored from the following sources:

- Written submission: 70 marks. The score for each question is highlighted below.
- Online review: 10 marks
- Consumer rating: 20 marks
- Business verification meeting: 0 marks (applies for first time entrants and those returning to the program after a break of more than two consecutive years)

Total score: ___/100 marks

WRITTEN SUBMISSION

- Respond to the following questions using maximum 10,000 words and 25 images.
- Submissions are made via the [Australian Tourism Awards portal](#).
- **A good answer should include the: What, Why & Measured Results**

Business Impact Summary (0 marks)

Please provide the judges with an understanding of any impact to the business's situation resulting from natural, national and/or world events during the qualifying period. E.g., natural disasters (fire/flood), pandemic.

NOTE: This response does not contribute to the overall score but provide a clearer picture for judges to understand what the business has been able to achieve. This is factual information only, allowing you to tell the business story in the subsequent questions.

NOTE: If no impact to the business has occurred in the qualifying period, this question does not need to be answered.

Bullet points are recommended. The response should be short and sharp. (Max 250 words overall)

List any issues that have had a significant impact on the business during the qualifying period (1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023).

Include the following information:

- What the event/situation was (fire, flood, business restrictions).
- How it impacted the business (e.g., closure of business, staff shortages, stock levels, cash flow).
- The severity of the impact.
- For what period (e.g., how many months within the qualifying period).

1. Introduction (15 marks)

A. Provide an overview of the tourism products, experiences, and/or services including the nature and history of the business. 7 marks

Take the judge on a journey of the business products and/or service; how and when it began, where the business is located or where the services are provided, who works in the business etc.

How has the business developed over time? For example, what new additions to the infrastructure were made (and when), how have staffing levels grown, what significant improvements have been made to the product/service?

What are the products, experiences and/or services on offer to visitors? Provide sufficient detail to ensure the judge can obtain a good understanding of what is on offer.

Highlight the businesses points of difference and what makes it stand out from others (its unique selling points). Consider the amenities, products, services, or facilities that enhance visitor satisfaction.

This is where the judges (and auditors) will gain an understanding of how the business fits into the category; therefore, it is important to clearly demonstrate your eligibility by aligning with the category criteria to ensure that there is no misunderstanding as to why you have entered this category.

The judges may not be familiar with the business – your submission may be judged nationally and could have judges that are not from your state/territory. Therefore, explain everything from the ground up.

B. Outline the key features of your business plan. 4 marks

Provide an overview of the key features of your business plan. This should include the overall vision of the business and its main goals, strategies.

Provide insight as to the rationale for these goals/strategies.

This will assist the judge to understand how business development (Q2) and marketing efforts (Q3) align with the business's overall strategies.

C. How does the business demonstrate tourism excellence? 4 marks

Demonstrate the business' commitment to tourism excellence by explaining the values and philosophy of the business. How does the business go above and beyond to provide an exceptional visitor experience?

This should be reflected in the business' policies and procedures, how staff are inducted, incentivised and/or trained – so include details of these to show the business commitment to excellence.

How has the business been actively involved with and contributed to the tourism industry (locally, regionally, and nationally) through both business and personal participation?

Tourism excellence can also be demonstrated by listing any awards won and accreditations held.

IMAGES

Attach a minimum of two graphics throughout Question 1. (accurately named) to support and enhance the response. For example, a map of where you are located, images of the product/service and any specific facilities/amenities/services you have highlighted in your response, a collage of the accreditation programs you participate in and/or any award achievements.

2. Business Development (15 marks)

A. During the qualifying period, what innovations/enhancements has the business implemented to improve the product/experience/service and why? 10 marks

This question seeks to understand how the business has improved the product/experience/service within the qualifying period and the rationale behind the enhancement.

Consider any innovations and/or enhancements that were implemented to develop the visitor experience/service over this period. If many, include the most significant ones.

An innovation can be defined as “The process of introducing new or significantly improved goods or services and/or implementing new or significantly improved processes.” (Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics).

An enhancement could include, for example, a new experience or facility, updating point of sale processes to changing to ethically sourced supplies.

If the business has been significantly impacted by natural or world events within the qualifying period, describe what the business implemented to support its recovery/resilience. Outline the strategies implemented for business endurance through the challenging events.

Actions that supported the ongoing survival of your business could include, for example, diversifying your product/experience, seeking alternative ways for the delivery of the experience/product/service, etc.

Explain the decision-making process that drove the business to implement the innovations/enhancement. Consider how these enhance the visitor experience and/or supported business endurance.

The judges will be looking for an understanding of what prompted the innovations/enhancement e.g., was it a result of guest feedback, change in market demand, etc., or how it was anticipated to support business endurance in the current climate.

Your response should include the research and planning undertaken by the business to reach the decisions taken. For example: external research that was considered, past customers surveyed, etc.

Include how the innovations/enhancement align with the business's main goals and strategies that were outlined in Q1.B. Ensure the goals are specific so you can link it to the outcomes in the next question.

B. What were the outcome/s of the innovation/enhancement? 5 marks

Judges are looking for qualitative and quantifiable data that demonstrates what the expected outcomes of the innovations/enhancements were, and whether these were achieved. If able to, provide previous years data to assist to demonstrate improvements.

Outline what measures are in place to track the success of these innovations/enhancements.

The response is looking for more than the innovation/enhancement being successfully created e.g., 'new infrastructure was successfully built', rather, it is looking for insight as to how it supported the business to reach its goals/strategies e.g., visitation increased by an average of 10 visitors per day, visitor satisfaction improved by 13%, engagement with the website increased from an average of 3 mins to 11 mins etc.

If the anticipated outcomes were not reached, acknowledge this, and provide the judges with insight as to why. How did the business respond?

Consider using a table to clearly assist in aligning your answer to Question 2.A.

If the outcomes are still pending, provide what data is available and what the forecasted results may be.

IMAGES

Attach a minimum of two graphics throughout Question 2. to support and enhance your response. For example, an image of any new products or facilities, posters promoting changes that have been implemented.

3. Marketing (15 marks)

A. Who are the business' target market/s, and what marketing strategies did the business implement to maintain or attract these markets. Why were they chosen? 10 marks

This question is looking for a clear understanding of how the business is marketing to its target market/s and why these strategies were chosen.

The response should outline the target market and describe what the marketing strategies were to attract or maintain them.

Begin by outlining who the business has aimed the marketing towards and demonstrate a clear understanding of this market. Consider, for example, who they are, where they are from, how old they are, how they purchase travel, what motivates and inspires them and how the product meets their expectations.

Identify how the target market/s are right for the business. E.g., what research has been conducted or used to determine the target customer?

Next, outline the marketing strategies identified for the business. Demonstrate how these marketing strategies were formulated by outlining the research undertaken and how the strategies align with the target markets attributes as well as, where able, with local, regional, or state marketing plans.

How do the marketing strategies align with the Business Plan as outlined in Question 1.B?

Then, describe the tactics used to achieve these strategies.

What has been done differently to attract or maintain customers within the qualifying period? Consider, for example, social media, digital or interactive advertising, apps, product packaging, tactical or paid advertising campaigns, relationship marketing. Outline what channels were chosen and why they would be the best fit for the targeted audience?

If the business has been impacted by natural or world events it is important that the judges understand whether the strategies were developed for business growth, business endurance, or whether the strategies were adopted to keep connected to the businesses target market whilst normal business operations were unable to take place.

B. What was the outcomes of these marketing strategies? 5 marks

Detail how the marketing strategies provided in Q3.A have been successful.

Outline what measures are in place to track the success of these marketing strategies.

Use metrics to measure the outcomes and consider media coverage, social media engagement, increased web traffic, increased bookings, etc. to quantify your response. If available, use previous years/projected data to demonstrate improvements or how outcomes have been achieved.

If providing a snapshot of data within your image allocation, ensure you provide an analysis and/or interpretation of this in your written response, rather than leaving it to the judges to decipher.

If the anticipated outcomes were not reached, acknowledge this, and provide the judges with insight as to why. How did the business respond?

Consider using a table to clearly assist in aligning your answer to Question 3.A.

If the outcomes are still pending, provide what data is available and what the forecasted results may be.

Images

Attach a minimum of two graphics throughout Question 3. to support and enhance your response. For example, images of marketing placement (social media screen shots, website, advertisements).

4. Customer Experience (15 marks)

A. How does the business provide quality customer service pre, post and during the visitor experience? 7 marks

This question requires you to outline the practices put in place to ensure the delivery of high-quality customer service throughout the visitor experience journey.

Outline how the business is committed to quality customer service throughout all areas of the business. This could include areas such as staff training, service principles and policies and staff reward systems.

Consider all points of customer engagement e.g., email, phone, guest greetings/welcome and interaction before, during and after the experience.

Ensure you consider all touch points of the visitor journey pre, post and during the visitor experience.

For those businesses that had significant disruption during the qualifying period, consider how you provide quality customer experiences in the alternative ways in which you operated, such as changed opening times, restricted access to business, kept customers informed during closures etc.

B. How does the business monitor and assess customer satisfaction to improve the visitor experience? 4 marks

Describe how the business monitors and assesses customer satisfaction to ensure continued quality delivery. For example, feedback forms, monitoring social media, blogs and mystery shoppers.

Consider how feedback is actively encouraged and how feedback is used to improve the visitor experience.

Provide a case study/example where a change has been implemented based on customer feedback and/or testimonials that further demonstrate outcomes of quality customer experiences.

C. Describe the inclusive practices integrated across the business. 4 marks

As a part of the delivery of quality customer experiences, demonstrate how the business considers the specific needs of a diverse community.

Provide examples of how the business has made the product/service inclusive or accessible to specific individuals/groups that may have faced barriers to participation previously.

Barriers to participation could include, but are not limited to, cultural reasons, language, physical constraints, intellectual capability, cognitive constraints, dietary requirements, or other specific needs groups.

Explain the outcomes achieved from making the product/service inclusive or accessible to specific individuals/groups. Include a case study to support your answer.

Refer back to the business' target markets – consider each market and what specific products/services are offered to those guests to accommodate their needs.

IMAGES

Attach a minimum of two graphics throughout Question 4. to support and enhance your response. For example, staff communications posters, flow charts of customer service processes, reception cards encouraging feedback.

5. Responsible Tourism (10 marks)

A. Demonstrate how the business has made a positive impact through being environmentally, socially, economically, and ethically responsible. 10 marks

This question requires you to consider how the business has made a positive impact on the local and/or broader community.

For example;

- *Environmental*
 - *How has the business been developed to minimise its impact on the environment e.g., water conservation, waste management/reduction/recycling, fuel and energy reduction, carbon reduction/offset, refuse initiatives in place, noise cancellation, wildlife destruction/interruption measures in place.*

- *The inclusion of actual measurement data including the amounts saved/reduced in comparison to the previous year (or multiple years if you have good records) will enhance the response.*
- **Social**
 - *What strategies are in place for the business to support the local community e.g., supporting local businesses, product packaging, charitable donations, sponsorship, engagement with community groups, supporting local talent, school education and involvement, work experience, support of community fundraising.*
- **Economic**
 - *What strategies are in place for the business to support the local economy e.g., local purchasing, creating job opportunities, promotion of local businesses, support of community funding initiatives, understanding of spend by the business' customers to the region/community.*
 - *Where able, use metric examples to demonstrate the contribution made. For example, "75% of all our expenses were spent in X region."*
- **Ethical**
 - *How has the business considered its ethical responsibilities throughout its development e.g., through its engagement and representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, cultural or historical representation, animal welfare, restoration.*

For all examples, ensure that you outline how a positive impact has been made.

IMAGES

Attach a minimum of two graphics throughout Question 5. to support and enhance your response. For example, certificates of appreciation from community groups, signage demonstrating environmental sustainability measures, participation in community activities.

Prerequisite to enter:

The business must be able to demonstrate that they meet base business operating standards. This can be done by either a) holding current sustainable tourism accreditation through the Quality Tourism Framework, or b) completing the Business Standards within their awards submission online.