



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. Please note that the COVID-19 Impact question is not included in the word count and it will not contribute to the overall score.
- Submissions are made via the [Australian Tourism Awards portal](#).
- A good answer should include the:



COVID-19 Impacts (0 marks)

Please provide the judges with an understanding of your business's situation resulting from national and world events during the qualifying period. E.g., COVID-19, natural disasters (fire/flood).

NOTE: These responses do not contribute to your overall score but provide a clearer picture for judges to understand what you have been able to achieve. This is factual information only, allowing you to tell your business story in your written submission.

Bullet points are recommended. These responses should be short and sharp.

Q.1 Outline how many months of the qualifying period (1 July 2021 – 30 June 2022) you were operational for.

Q.2 Describe what the restrictions were on your business e.g., gatherings.

Q.3 Describe the impact of travel restrictions on your business e.g., border closures.

1. Introduction (15 marks)

A. Describe the nature and history of your tourism business as well as key features of your business plan. 4 marks

- Take the judge on a journey of your business product/service; how and when it began, where the business is located or services provided, who works in the business etc.
- How has the business developed over time?
- Describe the vision, mission and core values.

- Provide an overview of the key features of your business plan, including main goals and strategies. This will assist the judge to understand how business development (Q2) and marketing efforts (Q3) align with the business's overall strategies.

B. Provide an overview of your tourism products, experiences, and services available. 7 marks

- What products/experience/service are on offer to visitors?
- Highlight your points of difference and what makes your business stand out from others (your unique selling points). Consider your amenities, products, services, or facilities that enhance visitor satisfaction.
- This is where the judges (and auditors) will gain an understanding of how you fit 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.

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

- Demonstrate your commitment to tourism excellence by explaining the values and philosophy of your business. This should be reflected in your policies and procedures, on how staff is 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 you have won and accreditations you hold.

IMAGES

Attach a minimum of two graphics to support and enhance your response provided. Include:

- a map of where you are located, judges may not be based in NSW and therefore won't be as familiar with NSW and our regions
- 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 has your business implemented to improve your product/experience/service and/or to provide business recovery/resilience in the wake of national and world events? 5 marks

- This question seeks to understand how you have improved the product/experience/service within the qualifying period. Additionally, or alternatively, it seeks to understand what strategies were implemented for business endurance through another year of challenging national and world events.
- To respond, consider any innovations and/or developments that were implemented or enhanced across the different areas of the business 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.
- 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.

B. Why were these innovations/developments implemented and how does this align to the business overall goals and strategies? 5 marks

- Explain the decision-making process and what drove the business to implement the innovations/developments mentioned in the previous answer. Consider how these enhances the visitor experience and/or supported business endurance.

- The judges will be looking for an understanding of what prompted the innovations/developments 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/developments align with your business main goals and strategies. Ensure your goals are specific so you can link it to the outcomes in the next question.*

C. What were the outcome/s of the innovation/development? 5 marks

- Outline what measures you have in place to track the success of these innovations/developments,*
- Judges are looking for qualitative and quantifiable data that demonstrates what the expected outcomes of the innovations/developments were, and whether these were achieved.*
- If the anticipated outcomes were not reached, acknowledge this, and provide the judge with insight as to why. How did the business respond?*
- 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 to support and enhance your response provided. For example, an image of any new products or facilities, posters promoting changes that have been implemented.

3. Marketing (15 marks)

A. What marketing strategies did your business implement to maintain existing or attract new target markets? 7 marks

- This question is looking for a clear understanding of how you are marketing to your target market/s.*
- Begin by outlining who you have aimed your 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 your product meets their expectations.*
- Identify how the target market/s are right for your business. E.g. what research have you conducted or used to determine your target customer?*
- You should then provide a clear overview of the innovative approaches you have taken to marketing and what you have done differently to attract or maintain your customers within the qualifying period. Consider, for example, social media, digital or interactive advertising, apps, product packaging, tactical or paid advertising campaigns, relationship marketing.*

B. Why were these strategies chosen? 5 marks

- It is important that the judges understands whether the strategies were developed for business growth, business endurance, or whether the strategies were adopted to keep connected to your target market whilst normal business operations were unable to take place.*
- Outline why these marketing strategies were selected by aligning them with your target markets attributes as well as, where able, local, regional, or state marketing plans.*

C. What was the result of these marketing strategies? 3 marks

- Detail how these marketing activities mentioned in Q3.A have been successful.*
- Use metrics to measure the outcomes and consider media coverage, social media engagement, increased web traffic, increased bookings etc.*

Images

Attach a minimum of two graphics 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 your business provide quality customer experiences? 7 marks

- This question requires you to outline the practices you have put in place to ensure the delivery of high-quality customer service throughout the visitor experience journey.
- For those businesses that had significant disruption during this qualifying period, consider how you provided quality customer experiences in the alternative ways in which you operated, e.g., communicated to customers during changing restrictions, kept customers informed during closures etc.
- Outline how you are committed to quality customer service throughout all areas of the business. This could include staff training, service principles and policies, staff reward systems, etc.
- Consider all points of customer engagement e.g., email, phone, guest greetings/welcome and interaction during and after the experience.
- Once you have provided an overview of how customer service is delivered, describe how your business monitors and assesses customer service to ensure continued quality delivery. For example, feedback forms, monitoring social media, blogs, mystery shoppers, etc.

B. Describe the inclusive practices you integrate across your business. 4 marks

- As a part of your delivery of quality customer experiences you need to demonstrate how you consider their special and specific needs and recognise the needs of a diverse community. This can include, but is not limited to, cultural, language, physical, intellectual, dietary, and other specific needs e.g., groups, special interest, LGBTQ, etc.
- Provide examples of how you catered for customers with specific needs and explain the outcome or successes. A case study would be beneficial here.
- Refer back to your target markets – consider each market and what specific requirements you offer to those guests.

C. What processes does your business have in place to communicate with guests pre and post visit? 4 marks

- This question requires you to outline the practices you have put in place to ensure the delivery of high-quality customer service post the experience.
- This could be EDMs of upcoming events or specials, responding to feedback, or personalised emails, etc.
- Consider how you actively encourage feedback and how feedback is used to improve the customer experience. Provide a case study/example where you have implemented a change based on customer feedback and/or testimonials which further demonstrate outcomes of quality customer experiences.

IMAGES

Attach a minimum of two graphics 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. How have you considered and progressed your environmental responsibilities during the qualifying period? 3 marks

- This question requires you to outline how you have considered and acted on reducing or improving (whichever applied) your overall impact on the **environment** during the qualifying period. Consider the following:
 - How have you considered your environmental impact?
 - What have you done to be environmentally responsible?
- Some examples of how you demonstrate environmental responsibility are:
 - Water conservation, waste management/reduction/recycling, fuel and energy reduction, carbon reduction/offset, reuse initiatives 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.

B. How have you considered and progressed your social and economic responsibilities during the qualifying period?

4 marks

- This question requires you to outline how you have considered and acted on supporting the local community and businesses during the qualifying period.*
- For social responsibilities your response should consider non-monetary examples. Some examples of how you demonstrate social responsibility are:*
 - Supporting local businesses, product packaging, charitable donations, sponsorship, engagement with community groups*
 - Employing locals and the impact their employment has had on the person, mentoring other businesses, speaking at schools*
 - Work experience opportunities that are offered*
 - Offering gifts for the school raffle that allowed the school to raise money for an item they wouldn't have otherwise been able to afford*
- For economic responsibilities, detail how you supported the local economy during the qualifying period. Some examples of how you can demonstrate economic responsibility are:*
 - Local purchasing, % of employment of local people.*
 - Operators who stock and sell a local artisan's products, or stock local produce in minibars/hampers/outlets and how the business has boomed because of it for the manufacturer/producer (or something similar)*
 - Waiving conference room fees for local not-for-profit groups to give them somewhere to meet which allows the group to keep going*
- Your response should include metric examples. Determine the percentage of total contribution. E.g., '75% of all our expenses were spent in X region.'*

C. How have you considered and progressed your ethical responsibilities during the qualifying period? 3 marks

- This question requires you to outline how you have considered and acted on your business ethical responsibilities during the qualifying period. Some examples of how you demonstrate ethical responsibility are:*
 - The engagement and representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*
 - Cultural or historical representation*
 - Animal welfare, accessibility etc.*

IMAGES

Attach a minimum of two graphics to support and enhance your response.