

Guide to Completing Your Business of the Year Award Entry

1. About the Awards

The Whitsunday Business Awards recognises outstanding achievement, leadership, and contribution across the Whitsundays business community.

With judging led by respected regional and external experts, and an Awards Ceremony held 5:30pm Friday 9 October 2026, this is one of the region's premier cross-sector business celebrations.

In 2026, the following awards will be presented:

1. **Business Legends of the Whitsundays:** Celebrating businesses or individuals that have achieved long-term success and made an enduring impact on the region.
2. **Best of the Whitsundays – Business of the Year:** Recognising outstanding businesses that set the benchmark for excellence, innovation and leadership. *Includes Small Business and Medium to Large Business award divisions.*
3. **Business Leader of the Year:** Recognising inspiring leaders whose vision, dedication and influence have driven exceptional business and regional success. *Includes Small Business and Medium to Large Business award divisions.*
4. **Rising Star – Employee, Apprentice or Trainee:** Highlighting exceptional individuals who have demonstrated outstanding growth, dedication and contribution.
5. **Customer Service Excellence Award:** Celebrating businesses and individuals who consistently go above and beyond to deliver outstanding customer experiences. *Includes Small Business and Medium to Large Business divisions.*
6. **Community Champion Award:** Recognising businesses and organisations making a meaningful difference through community contributions and initiatives.
7. **Think Big Award:** Recognising businesses or individuals demonstrating bold vision and turning opportunity into action through innovation, expansion, investment and future-focused thinking, including opportunities connected to Brisbane 2032.

Hosted by

2. About This Award

The **Best of the Whitsundays – Business of the Year** recognises outstanding small and medium-to-large businesses that set the benchmark for excellence, innovation and leadership.

There are two divisions for this award one for *Small Business* (defined as sole trader and/or less than 20 employees) and *Medium to Large Business* (with over 20 employees).

Who Can Enter

This award is open to businesses that:

- are registered and operating within the Whitsunday Regional Council area; and
- have been operating continuously for at least 12 months as of Monday 1 June 2026.

and can demonstrate:

- Consistent business growth and success.
- High standards of customer service and professionalism.
- Innovation in products, services, or business processes.
- Positive contribution to the local economy or community.

Entry Format

Entries must be submitted via the **official online application form** available at:

<https://www.whitsundaycoastchamber.com.au/business-awards/>

We recommend you review the Top Tips section on the next page.

2026 Key Dates

- **09:00am Monday 1 June:** Applications open for six weeks.
- **11:59pm Friday 17 July:** Applications close. Late applications will not be accepted.
- **05:30pm Friday 9 October:** Awards Ceremony at Proserpine Entertainment Centre.

Need help?

Please contact the Whitsunday Business Awards administration team with any questions via admin@whitsundaycoastchamber.com.au

3. Top Tips!

Start early: Give yourself enough time to gather information, data, photos and supporting documents rather than rushing close to the deadline.

Prepare your responses before applying: The online application form cannot be saved and returned to later. Draft your answers in a Word document first, then copy them into the application form. Supporting documents can be uploaded separately.

Answer every part of the question: Review the judging criteria and question prompts carefully (starting on the next page). Strong applications directly address the bullet points and provide clear examples.

Keep it clear and easy to read: Write in plain English and avoid jargon. Focus on communicating your story, achievements, and impact clearly for judges from a range of industries. You are welcome to use AI tools to help structure, refine, or proofread your responses but ensure the content remains authentic and reflects your voice.

Be specific rather than general: Instead of saying “we provide great service,” explain what you do differently and the results it achieves.

Support your claims with evidence: Include data, results, testimonials, growth figures, achievements, or short examples to demonstrate outcomes and credibility.

Include strong supporting material: Upload documents, photos, reports, media coverage or other evidence that strengthens your application and supports your claims.

Ask someone to review your application: A fresh set of eyes can help identify gaps, spelling mistakes, or areas that could be clearer before submission.

4. Award Questions: What You'll Need to Complete

Below is an overview of the key questions included in the award entry form, along with guidance on what to consider when preparing your responses.

- Questions marked with an asterisk (*) are mandatory.
- The points listed next to each question indicate its weighting in the judging process.
- Each response has a maximum word limit.

Acknowledgement

As part of the entry process, applicants must confirm that they:

- * Have read, understood, and agree to the terms and conditions of the Whitsunday Business Awards and their selected award category.
- * Are willing and able to provide evidence, if requested, demonstrating ethical business practices and compliance with all relevant laws and regulations.
- * Grant permission for their contact details to be shared with regional media for potential interviews and publicity opportunities.

Business Information

- * Your First and Last Name
- * Name of Business
- * Australian Business Number
- * Start date of the business
- * Number of employed staff
- * Your Email Address
- * Your Phone
- * Your Address/Business Location
- Business Website

Question 1

*** Tell us about your business and what drives your success.** (*maximum 600 words, 25 points*)

Please address:

- What your business does and the industry you operate in.
- Your products, services, customers, and target markets.
- Key goals, strategies, and areas of focus.
- What sets your business apart from competitors.
- How your business has evolved, adapted, or introduced innovation.
- Your marketing and customer engagement approach.

Question 2

*** How do you create a strong business and positive customer experience?** (*maximum 600 words, 25 points*)

For **micro and small businesses**, please address:

- Your approach to running and growing your business.
- How you create a positive workplace culture, even within a small team.
- How you support, develop, or work alongside staff, contractors, or collaborators.
- How you build strong customer relationships and deliver excellent service.
- How you gather feedback and improve your products, services, or operations.
- Examples of innovation, technology, creative problem-solving, or ways you work efficiently.
- Customer or team feedback that demonstrates your impact.

For **medium to large businesses**, please address:

- Your leadership approach and how it shapes organisational culture.
- How you attract, support, develop, and retain employees across the business.
- Initiatives relating to staff wellbeing, professional development, workplace engagement, or succession planning.
- How you deliver consistent customer service and manage stakeholder relationships at scale.
- Systems or processes used to gather feedback, measure performance, and drive continuous improvement.
- Examples of innovation, technology, automation, operational efficiency, or strategic problem-solving.
- Staff, customer, or stakeholder testimonials that demonstrate your impact and business culture.

Question 3

*** What impact does your business have on the Whitsunday region?** (*maximum 700 words, 30 points*)

Please address:

- How your business has grown or evolved and the contribution it makes to the local economy.
- Jobs, opportunities, or support provided through your business, even within a small team.
- Examples of business growth, customer growth, repeat business, or other measurable results.
- How you support local suppliers, contractors, collaborations, or partnerships.
- Community involvement, sponsorships, volunteering, fundraising, or social contribution.
- Any sustainability, environmental, or responsible business practices you have introduced.
- How your business positively contributes to the reputation, lifestyle, or future of the Whitsundays.

Question 4

*** What makes your business exceptional and deserving of this award?** (*maximum 400 words, 20 points*)

Please address:

- Key achievements, milestones, recognitions, or awards.
- Examples of how you exceed customer or industry expectations.
- Success stories, testimonials, or standout accomplishments.
- Your broader influence within industry or community.
- Why your business stands out as a leader in the Whitsundays.
- What receiving this award would mean to your business.

Supporting Material

* Supporting material is required for all applications. Please upload at one (1) supporting document that strengthens your submission, such as customer or team testimonials, photos, business performance data or graphs, media coverage, or other relevant evidence.

* Please upload a **high-resolution image** of your business logo.

5. Eligibility, Terms & Conditions

Eligibility

- Entrants must work in or operate a registered business within the Whitsunday Regional Council area.
- Businesses must have been operating continuously for at least 12 months as of Monday 1 June 2026, unless the specific award category states a different eligibility period or is open to new or emerging businesses.
- ‘Small Business’ is defined as sole trader and/or less than 20 employees, and ‘Medium to Large Business’ as those with over 20 employees.
- Employees, apprentices, or trainees must have been working in the business for at least 12 months as of Monday 1 June 2026.
- Businesses and individuals must apply directly for the awards. No third-party nominations will be accepted.
- 2025 Winners and Highly Commended Whitsunday Business Awards recipients are unable to apply for the same category in 2026.
- 2026 Sponsors are ineligible to apply for any award category.
- Applicants must demonstrate ethical business practices and compliance with all applicable laws and regulations.
- Sole traders, not-for-profits, incorporated associations, and social enterprises are eligible to apply where relevant to category criteria.

Entry Requirements

- All entries must be submitted via the official online application form by the published closing time and date of **11:59pm Friday 17 July 2026**. Entries submitted after this deadline will not be considered.
- Entrants can apply to a **maximum two award categories** but must submit a separate application for each.
- All responses must be truthful and accurate to the best of the entrant’s knowledge.

Judging

- Entries will be assessed by an independent panel of judges appointed by the award program partners.
- Applications that are incomplete, off-topic, or fail to sufficiently address the award criteria may be deemed ineligible and will not be forwarded to judges.
- Judges’ decisions are final, and no correspondence will be entered into regarding outcomes.
- The Judging Panel reserves the right to withdraw any entry if the applicant is found to have brought the Awards or award program partners into disrepute.
- The Judging Panel reserves the right to move entries between categories if deemed more appropriate.

Confidentiality

- All information submitted will be treated as confidential and used solely for the purpose of judging.
- Judges and award program administrators are bound by confidentiality agreements.

Promotion & Media

- By entering, applicants agree to have their business name, logo, and images used for promotional purposes related to the Awards.
- Event photography and videography may be used for marketing and reporting purposes by the award program partners.

Costs

- There is no cost to enter the Awards. Applicants are responsible for their own attendance and any associated costs to attend the Awards Event.