

2018
CANBERRA
REGION
TOURISM
AWARDS

HANDBOOK
FOR ENTRANTS



Presenting partner



IMPORTANT DATES

2018 CANBERRA REGION TOURISM AWARDS—KEY DATES

Nominations open	9am, Tuesday 10 April
Entrant workshops	June and August
Nominations close	5pm, Friday 29 June
Site visits	July–August
Submissions close	5pm, Wednesday 6 September
Online judging	September
Canberra Region Tourism Awards Gala Event	Friday 23 November
Qantas Australian Tourism Awards Gala Event	February 2019, Launceston

CONTACT

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AND ANY QUERIES PLEASE CONTACT:

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This handbook is an initiative of the Canberra Region Tourism Awards Steering Committee.

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INTRODUCTION

The annual Canberra Region Tourism Awards (CRTA) provide an opportunity to showcase the best of our region's tourism operators as well as promote, encourage and recognise tourism excellence. This handbook is a useful resource for entrants, setting out key information on the Awards process, support services, rules and guidance for entering a submission.

WELCOME

The Canberra Region Tourism Awards are open to all tourism businesses and suppliers to the tourism industry in our Region, with categories covering all sectors of the tourism and events industries.

In entering the Awards you gain the opportunity to be recognised for your tourism excellence and innovation at a local and national level.

However, the real value of the Awards may be in the process of entering. The training, mentoring, judging, site visits (where applicable) and entrant feedback from our experienced mentors and judges will provide you with valuable business development insights, and the opportunity to benchmark your product against our leading tourism providers.

I look forward to your success in the 2018 Canberra Region Tourism Awards.



BRIAN WEIR

Chair, Canberra Region Tourism Awards Steering Committee

ENTERING THE CANBERRA REGION TOURISM AWARDS:

- ▶ Encourages and celebrates excellence, quality, professionalism and innovation
- ▶ Provides a benchmark for best practice
- ▶ Encourages continuous improvement
- ▶ Publicly recognises tourism excellence
- ▶ Assists as an excellent business planning and development tool
- ▶ Analyses the effectiveness of your marketing activities
- ▶ Reviews goals and records achievements
- ▶ Provides a networking opportunity with other entrants, sponsors and the broader tourism industry

TOURISM AWARDS PROCESS

STEP 1 NOMINATE ONLINE

Complete a nomination online and make your entry fee payment prior to **29 June 2018**. Please visit the portal at online.australianaward.com.au

STEP 2 SUBMISSION PREPARATION

Start preparing your submission in accordance with the Rules for Entry and utilise CRTA's entrant support.

STEP 3 SITE VISITS

If applicable, a site visit will be carried out by CRTA judge (during July and August).

STEP 4 SUBMISSION LODGEMENT

Lodge your award submission online by **5pm, Wednesday 6 September 2018**.

STEP 5 SUBMISSION JUDGING

Your submission will be assessed by the judging panel during September. An independent auditor reviews judging process and outcomes.

STEP 6 CRTA WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Winners and Commendation recipients will be announced at the Canberra Region Tourism Awards Gala Event on **Friday, 23 November 2018**.

STEP 7 QANTAS AUSTRALIAN TOURISM AWARDS ENTRY

Winners of categories 1–25 qualify as Qantas Australian Tourism Award (QATA) finalists.

STEP 8 NATIONAL JUDGING

National judging takes place for the Qantas Australian Tourism Awards. An independent auditor reviews judging process and outcomes.

STEP 9 FEEDBACK SESSIONS

One-on-one judge feedback sessions are provided for non-QATA finalists (including Winners and Commendation recipients of local categories 27, 28, 29 and 32) following the CRTA Gala event.

STEP 10 NATIONAL WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Winners will be announced at the Qantas Australian Tourism Awards Gala event, held in **February 2019 in Launceston**. One-on-one judge feedback sessions are provided for QATA finalists following the Gala event.

CANBERRA REGION TOURISM AWARDS

2018 CATEGORIES

- 1 Major Tourist Attractions**

This category recognises natural or built tourist attractions that attract amongst the highest visitor numbers during the qualifying period.
- 2 Tourist Attractions**

This category recognises natural or built tourist attractions that attract significant visitor numbers during the qualifying period.
- 3 Major Festivals and Events**

This category recognises festivals, events and exhibitions that attract over 50,000 visitors, enhance the profile and appeal of the destination in which they are held and create substantial economic impact for the destination.
- 4 Festivals and Events**

This category recognises festivals, events and exhibitions that attract fewer than 50,000 visitors, enhance the profile and appeal of the destination in which they are held and create a significant economic impact for the destination.
- 5 Ecotourism**

This category recognises ecologically sustainable tourism with a primary focus on experiencing natural areas that foster environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation.
- 6 Cultural Tourism**

This category recognises tourism operations that foster a greater understanding and appreciation of authentic culture, history, heritage and/or the arts.
- 7 QANTAS Award for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Tourism**

This category recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tourism operations that demonstrate authenticity and cultivate a greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, history and traditions.
- 8 Specialised Tourism Services**

This category recognises the outstanding delivery of specialised or distinct tourism products/services that enhance the visitor experience and integrate with other tourism products. This category is only open to those businesses who do not meet the criteria of any of the other award categories. Entrants in this category could include—but are not limited to—service providers, shopping precincts, retailers, online information and booking systems, member services, money exchange services, language and interpreter services.
- 9 Visitor Information Services**

This category recognises the consistent delivery of high quality and face to face information services to the visitor. It is open to Visitor Information Centres/Tourist Offices, Local Tourist Associations and Regional Tourism Organisations.

- 10 Business Event Venues**
This category recognises venues who provide high quality facilities specifically designed for business events e.g. meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions.
- 11 Major Tour and Transport Operators**
This category recognises a major contribution to tourism through the combined provision of touring and transport services. It is open to businesses with 15 or more annual full time equivalent employees.
- 12 Tour and Transport Operators**
This category recognises a significant contribution to tourism through the combined provision of touring and transport services. It is open to businesses with fewer than 15 annual full time equivalent employees.
- 13 Adventure Tourism**
This category recognises outdoor adventure tourism experiences that involve visitor participation and a personal challenge.
- 14 Destination Marketing**
This category recognises creativity and innovation in fully integrated destination marketing activities. This category is open to Regional Tourism Organisations, Local Tourist Associations, Visitor Information Centres, local government and marketing alliances.
- 15 Tourism Restaurants and Catering Services**
This category is open to all restaurants and catering services offering a tourism experience and/or servicing the tourism industry. It is not a food award but does recognise a significant contribution to tourism through the provision of food and beverage. Entry is open—but not limited to—hotel or stand-alone restaurants, event caterers, pubs and cafes.
- 16 Tourism Wineries, Distilleries and Breweries**
This category recognises wineries, distilleries and boutique breweries that offer a cellar door experience and create a significant contribution to tourism.
- 17 Caravan and Holiday Parks**
This category recognises excellence in caravan or holiday parks that offer cabin and tenting accommodation and enhance the tourism experience in the destination.
- 18 Hosted Accommodation**
This category is open to owner/operator accommodation providers offering a high degree of personal contact with guests. Entry is open—but not limited to—bed-and-breakfast, farmstay, cottage or other intimate, boutique, colonial or heritage accommodation.
- 19 Unique Accommodation**
This category is open to properties developed around unconventional accommodation infrastructure. The focus of this award is on the uniqueness of the tourism experience. Entry is open—but not limited to—tented holidays, houseboats, tree houses, underground accommodation and yacht charters.

20 Self Contained Accommodation

This category recognises operators of a quality stand-alone, self-contained property offering guests with non-serviced accommodation and the freedom of self-sufficiency. Properties may include cabins, lodges and houses.

Serviced apartments, hotels and resorts should consider entry into one of the categories 21–24 which best fits their product. For companies that are managing multiple self-contained properties it is recommended they focus on one of their properties or enter the Specialised Tourism Services category as a service provider.

21 Standard Accommodation

This category is open—but not limited to—motels, hotels, self-catering, cabins, backpackers and pub accommodation. The focus of this award is on both the facilities and services that enhance the tourism experience.

22 Deluxe Accommodation

This category is open to properties who achieve a deluxe guest experience which includes a wide range of facilities and superior design qualities, typically complemented by service standards that reflect the varied and discerning needs of the guest.

23 Luxury Accommodation

This category is open to properties that typify luxury across all areas of operation.

Guests should enjoy an extensive range of facilities and comprehensive or highly personalised service relevant to the accommodation type. Properties at this level will display excellent design quality and attention to detail.

24 New Tourism Business

This category recognises new tourism businesses that have commenced operations during the qualifying period. This award recognises excellence in the planning and development of new tourism infrastructure and/or services. [Tourism businesses that have commenced a new product or opened new infrastructure need to enter another category most applicable to the business.]

25 Excellence in Food Tourism

This category is open to food producers, providores, tour operators, cooking schools, food attractions, farm gate experiences, farmers markets, trails and other food tourism experiences featuring produce as the core component.

LOCAL AWARDS

26 Outstanding Contribution by an Individual*

This award recognises the outstanding contribution by an individual to the Canberra Region tourism industry.

27 Canberra Region Local Government Award for Tourism*

This category is open to all Canberra Region councils and recognises ANY of the following: excellence in tourism planning; the provision of tourism and events services and facilities; marketing; tourism product and event development and management; and the contribution made to their local tourism and events industry.

28 Tourism Education and Training*

This category is open to individual tourism businesses and tourism education and other registered training providers working to raise professional standards within the tourism industry by delivering tourism training, including online.

29 Tourism Visitor Education*

This category is open to attractions or businesses that deliver an education program/s to schools and/or groups to enhance the visitor experience and successfully interpret the vision of the business. An individual program or suite of programs can be entered. The program/s should be fully or partly facilitated by the organisation.

30 Markus Gibson-Huck Young Achiever Award*

This category recognises individuals, 30 years of age or younger, for their contribution to the development of a successful and professional Canberra or region tourism and events industry. This Award commemorates the contribution Markus Gibson-Huck made to tourism in Canberra over many years, and is sponsored by a Canberra Accommodation Association legacy and VisitCanberra.

31 Visitor Experience Award*

This award recognises quality visitor experiences and is awarded to the three top scoring tourism operators and businesses based on the visitor experience survey program (outrate.com.au) conducted as part of the tourism award program. The survey assesses the visitor experience for each entrant.

32 International Ready*

This category is open to Canberra and region tourism businesses or attractions delivering or aiming to deliver tourism products or service to international visitors. Entrants must demonstrate understanding of the international visitor and international markets.

** This Award is only offered at the Canberra Region Tourism Awards level. Winners will not proceed to the Qantas Australian Tourism Awards.*

For further information and full descriptions of categories and questions, please visit canberratourismawards.com.au/entrants/entry-categories/

2018 RULES FOR ENTRY

To ensure consistency and fairness in judging, the Rules for Entry must be strictly met.

- 1. You are encouraged to enter the category that best reflects your core business.**

If you are entering more than one category, a separate *and* complete nomination and submission must be submitted electronically for each category.

Entrants may only enter *one* submission in any *one* of the following group of categories:

 - ▶ *Attractions*—either category 1 or 2
 - ▶ *Festivals & Events*—either category 3 or 4
 - ▶ *Tour and/or Transport Operators*—either category 11 or 12
 - ▶ *Accommodation*—either category 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 or 23
- 2. Achievements or activities referred to within your entry must relate to the qualifying period 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018.**

Entrants must have traded for the *entire* qualifying period.

Exceptions apply to seasonal facilities and the following categories:

 - ▶ *3—Major Festivals & Events*
 - ▶ *4—Festivals & Events*
 - ▶ *14—Destination Marketing*
 - ▶ *24—New Tourism Business*

The activity being put forward for consideration must have occurred *within* the qualifying period.
- 3. Unanswered questions will attract zero points.** If you feel that you cannot answer a question please discuss this with the Canberra Region Tourism Awards Coordinator. If you still feel the question is not relevant please explain your reasons within your submission.
- 4. Entrants must be based or operate in the state or territory of their nomination.** An exception to this rule exists where there is a genuine community of interest allowing an entrant to choose to nominate in another state/territory's Awards program. To qualify for this exception the entrant must be able to demonstrate proof of membership in a relevant association *or* provide a letter from that state/territories tourism office confirming the entrant's participation in marketing campaigns or activities.

Should a company have individual operational branches or properties in other states/territories they may enter the individual state/territory awards as long as the majority of the submission focuses on the activities undertaken in that state/territory.
- 5. An entrant, such as a chain or franchise that has multiple products, must enter each product individually** if they want each business to be able to promote the achievement of winning a tourism award. Alternatively the business may enter but the logo may only be used by the corporate entity, not the individual products.

6. **An entry cannot be moved into another category following the closing date for lodgement of submissions.**
7. **If at any time following submission of an entry the business being put forward goes into administration, voluntary receivership, liquidation or bankruptcy,** the entrant is required to advise the Canberra Region Tourism Awards Coordinator and accepts that the submission will no longer be eligible for an award.
8. **There is no direct entry into the Qantas Australian Tourism Awards.** Only state or territory tourism award winners in categories 1 through 25 will automatically become a finalist in the Qantas Australian Tourism Awards.

COMPLIANCE WITH COMPETITION RULES

The Australian Tourism Industry Council (ATIC), owner of the Australian Tourism Awards continues to work with the online portal that was introduced in 2017.

In 2018 they have developed a Tourism Awards User Guide to assist with all elements of the online portal. It shows you ways to make sure your submission adheres to the compliance of all elements of your submission.

Upon nominating for the Canberra Region Tourism Awards you will be forwarded a copy of this Guide.

2018 SUMMARY OF CHANGES

1. Category changes

▶ *Category 8—Specialised Tourism Services*

This category recognises the outstanding delivery of specialised or distinct tourism products/services that enhance the visitor experience and integrate with other tourism products. This category is only open to those businesses who do not meet the criteria of any of the other award categories. Entrants in this category could include—but are not limited to—service providers, shopping precincts, retailers, online information and booking systems, member services, money exchange services, language and interpreter services.

▶ *Category 18—Hosted Accommodation*

This category is open to owner/operator accommodation providers offering a high degree of personal contact with guests. Entry is open—but not limited to—bed-and-breakfast, farmstay, cottage or other intimate, boutique, colonial or heritage accommodation.

▶ *Category 20—Self Contained Accommodation*

This category recognises operators of a quality stand-alone, self-contained property offering guests with non-serviced accommodation and the freedom of self-sufficiency. Properties may include cabins, lodges and houses.

Serviced apartments, hotels and resorts should consider entry into one of the categories 21–24 which best fits their product. For companies that are managing multiple self-contained properties it is recommended they focus on one of their properties or enter the Specialised Tourism Services category as a service provider.

2. Rules for Entry Amendments

- ▶ The submission will be up to **a maximum of 12,500 words in length** and will be entered via the Awards Online Program. However, category 25 Excellence in Food Tourism, will have a maximum 8,000 word limit. Individual categories 26 and 30 will have a 2,500 word limit and categories 27, 28, 29 and 32 will have a 6,000 word limit. A word limit is not applicable to category 31.

3. The submission will include up to 25 images with captions.

- ▶ Images include the use of charts, graphs and pictures.
- ▶ Captions are allowed for each image, with a maximum of 6 words and will not be included in overall word count.

WHAT DO I SUBMIT ONLINE?

- ▶ Your nomination details through the new Australian Tourism Awards online portal. The web address for the portal is online.australianaward.com.au Please fill out all the available fields that relate to your category. **Note: nominations close 5 pm, Friday 29 June 2018.**
- ▶ A description of no more than 100 words of your company/product, which will be used to determine your eligibility for that category and will also be used by media, for announcements at the presentation ceremony, in promotional material and on website listings.
- ▶ 10 promotional images (additional to those provided throughout your submission) in jpeg format only, illustrating your business. By supplying these images you ensure maximum exposure at the Gala event and in official advertising and publications.
- ▶ Your submission can be added to regularly by logging into the new online Awards portal, and the **final submission must be submitted by 5pm, Wednesday 6 September 2018.**

OUR ASSURANCE

All information submitted is strictly confidential. All persons, for example Tourism Awards Coordinators and judges who may come into contact with your submission, are each required to sign a confidentiality agreement and at no time will your submission be downloaded.

LODGEMENT

Please ensure your submission is lodged to the online portal by **5pm, Wednesday 6 September 2018. Late entries will not be accepted.**

DISCLAIMER

By entering the 2018 Canberra Region Tourism Awards, you authorise the use and/or reproduction of images and the 100-word description provided in relation to any editorial/advertising purposes initiated in conjunction with the awards and the Qantas Australian Tourism Awards.

Your contact details may also be supplied to agencies engaged on behalf of award organisers/committees for promotional purposes.

Under no circumstances will judges be held responsible for any comment, viewpoint or expression, whether expressed or implied, concerning the standard or quality of an entrant's submission. By ticking the terms and conditions box on submitting your entry, you agree not to bring a claim against any judge, mentor, VisitCanberra or the National Capital Attractions Association in relation to feedback on your submission.

JUDGES' DECISION

All submissions are independently scored by three members of the judging panel. Results are correlated by an independent auditor and Chair of Judges and an agreement reached on the winner with the judging panel. An agreed minimum score must be achieved for a Winner or Commendation to be determined in a category. A single entrant category does not guarantee the entrant as a winning entry.



Questacon team celebrate their win of the Tourist Attraction category at the 2017 Canberra Region Tourism Awards.

IMAGE COURTESY DEVELOPING AGENTS

ENTRANT SUPPORT

The Canberra Region Tourism Awards office provides the following FREE support and resources to entrants. For all enquires about support opportunities please contact the Canberra Region Tourism Awards Coordinator.

HANDBOOK FOR ENTRANTS

Provides background information, guidance and rules and can be downloaded from the Canberra Region Tourism Awards website canberratourismawards.com.au

JUDGE BRAINSTORM

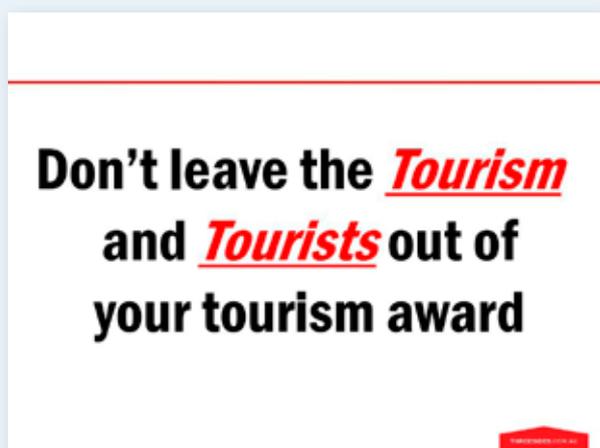
On request, a one-off Judge Brainstorm session can be arranged for businesses who are seeking initial guidance and advice prior to commencing their submission. This is an opportunity to get creativity flowing and to gain a clearer direction for your submission writing.

ONE-ON-ONE MENTORING

On request, experienced mentors can be paired with entrants to assist on a one-on-one basis throughout the submission process.

ENTRANT WORKSHOPS

Two workshops are offered per year by Todd Wright of Threesides Marketing, a past Outstanding Contribution by an Individual winner and national judge. At these engaging workshops, entrants will learn more about the process and how to prepare a winning entry. Information on how to book will be advertised.



ENTRANT WORKSHOP SLIDE COURTESY THREESIDES MARKETING



Todd Wright, Director of Threesides Marketing, CRTA workshop facilitator and judge, engages his audience. IMAGE COURTESY DEVELOPING AGENTS.

FINAL SUBMISSION REVIEW (JULY/AUGUST)

Our experienced, independent submission reviewer will read your final draft and provide a written report detailing areas for improvement and enhancement against each question answered. Information on how to book will be advertised. Entrants will have the opportunity to book their preferred date to send their completed draft submission (in Word or PDF format) to the Canberra Region Tourism Awards Coordinator, who will then send it to the submission reviewer. Entrants will then have time before the submission due date to incorporate feedback and suggestions.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

In partnership with the University of Canberra, the CRTA enables entrants of the International Ready category to obtain student assistance in the preparation of their entry. Students available through this program are studying at a tertiary level and undergoing professional training in the travel, tourism or hospitality industries. This opportunity is an industry initiative creating opportunities for and supporting tourism industry professionals of the future.

The Canberra Region Tourism Awards Coordinator makes every effort to match students to appropriate entrants. Both students and entrants will work to an agreed set of guidelines.

Students can assist you prepare your entry by:

- ▶ Being familiar with the Rules for Entry, relevant category and criteria;
- ▶ Collating relevant information;
- ▶ Researching
- ▶ Reading submission content and offering an outsiders' objective viewpoint

YOUR SUBMISSION

NOMINATE

Nominations open 9am Tuesday 10 April 2018.

View the list of categories and their criteria on the Canberra Region Tourism Awards website canberratourismawards.com.au/entrants/entry-categories/ to decide which category or categories to enter.

To nominate, visit the Australian Tourism Awards online portal online.australianaward.com.au to sign up and create an account. You will then be required to fill out all the available fields that relate to your category. This includes a description of no more than 100 words of your company/product, which will be used to determine your eligibility for that category. It will also be used by media, for announcements at the presentation ceremony, in promotional material and on website listings.

Nominations close Friday 29 June 2018.

NOMINATION FEES

Nomination attracts a non-refundable fee as per below. Nominees can pay by credit card via the portal or select the option to be invoiced. All fees include GST:

- ▶ *Businesses with up to and including 10 employees (full time equivalent)*
\$99.00 including GST
- ▶ *Businesses with 11 or more employees (full time equivalent)*
\$275.00 including GST
- ▶ *Entry to category 31 Visitor Experience Award*
\$150.00 including GST
- ▶ *There is no entry fee for individual categories—26 Outstanding Contribution by an Individual and 30 Markus Gibson-Huck Young Achiever Award.*

Terms and Conditions: Payments by invoice must be made within 14 days of nominating. All withdrawals and entries not submitted by the deadline still require the payment of the nomination fee.

Please ensure the business/product/event name you enter when nominating is exactly how you wish to be listed on websites, certificates, at the Gala dinner, etc. For example, nominate as 'Canberra and Region Visitor Information Centre', instead of 'CRVC' or 'Canberra Visitor Info Centre'.

PREPARE YOUR SUBMISSION

WHERE TO START

Having completed and paid for your nomination online, it's now time to start preparing your entry.

- ▶ **Read this handbook carefully** to help you get a feel for the process and the material you will need to prepare.
- ▶ Familiarise yourself with the **2018 Rules for Entry** (see page 10).
- ▶ Make use of the **free support and resources** available to entrants (see page 14).
- ▶ Questions? Contact the Canberra Region Tourism Awards Manager (see page 2).

Make sure you start early to ensure you have plenty of time to prepare and polish your entry!

DOES PRESENTATION MATTER?

With formatting rules no longer applicable, **making your submission attractive through means of layout and design is no longer necessary.** This means the quality of your written content, as well as the images and tables/graphs you choose to include will be most important.

HOW DO JUDGES ASSESS SUBMISSIONS?

When assessing submissions, judges will be looking for entrants who demonstrate:

- ▶ Financially sound and well managed businesses
- ▶ Demonstrated flair and innovation
- ▶ Awareness of industry segment/marketplace
- ▶ Measurable goals and outcomes
- ▶ Passion and enthusiasm for their business and its story
- ▶ Well written submissions

JUDGES SCORE HIGHER FOR

- + Logical and succinct answers
- + Charts and diagrams
- + Images that tell a story
- + Great ideas and innovation
- + Quotes that back up an answer
- + Measurement tools
- + An engaging, inspiring story

JUDGES SCORE LOWER FOR

- Hard to read entries
- Meandering answers and waffle
- Missed questions or parts of questions
- Promising submissions that lose steam
- Generic responses using sweeping statements
- Non-substantiated claims
- Academic-style writing

HOW MUCH DETAIL SHOULD I INCLUDE?

Start with the judges in mind—a national judge who won't necessarily know your product or business. You will need to tell your story to inspire them and allow them to believe you are the best in your category. Tell them all they need to know, as clearly and concisely as possible, while keeping in mind the maximum length for answers.

It's important to ensure you back up all your claims with documentary evidence. The Canberra Region Tourism Awards judges will visit your property to verify your claims (depending on the category), but you must also present verification for every claim you make. Substantiate your claims with figures and statistics wherever possible. Shoot for the stars! Aim for a national audience.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A STATEMENT AND AN ANSWER?

It's vital to remember that the judges are looking for specific answers to specific questions when they read your submission, not general statements!

Answer the question and substantiate your answer with measurements (where possible) and documentation.

The **difference between statements and answers** can be illustrated with a few examples:

STATEMENT

The company has been successful and increased business by 21%

ANSWER

The company has increased business by:

- ▶ Extending its client base through TV adverts; and
- ▶ Offering incentives to new clients

Results

- ▶ 4% increase in client expenditure
- ▶ 7% increase in new clients
- ▶ 21% increase in turnover
- ▶ 14% increase in profit

STATEMENT

Customer satisfaction has increased by 11%, resulting in increased business

ANSWER

Customer satisfaction has increased 11% on 2016 figures, verified by:

- ▶ Customer survey (81% return rate), showing a satisfaction level of 97%

STATEMENT

The introduction of new technology has streamlined the business and allowed for efficiencies in the overall operation.

ANSWER

The introduction of new computer software (including Microsoft Office 2016 and MYOB) has allowed previous manual processes to be automated. These include:

- ▶ Salaries
- ▶ Invoicing; and
- ▶ Debtor notices

Results

- ▶ Reduction in workload (10% salary savings); and
- ▶ Higher client satisfaction (survey results showed 20% increase)

ADDRESSING GENERAL CRITERIA

The following information is provided as a benchmark for how judges assess Award submissions and is based on Category 1—Major Tourist Attractions. It is recommended that entrants refer to the criteria and associated tips to ensure additional insight into the required responses.

Example:

CATEGORY 1—MAJOR TOURIST ATTRACTIONS

1 TOURISM EXCELLENCE (20 marks)

- a** *Demonstrate your eligibility for this category as related to the descriptor above and provide a brief overview on the nature and history of the business. (6)*
- b** *What tourism products, experiences and services do you offer visitors? (6)*
- c** *Describe your commitment to tourism excellence. (4)*
- d** *Describe your involvement in the tourism industry. (4)*

Excellent submissions will:

- ✓ Show proof of your eligibility for this category in line with the category descriptor.
- ✓ Provide the judges with an immediate understanding of the business and the area in which they operate.
- ✓ Explain the history of the business—when the business started, who established the business, why it was established, growth over the years, how many people are employed.
- ✓ Show clear understanding about the difference between services (intangible) and facilities (tangible) and include a breakdown into segments of the operation.
- ✓ Clearly articulate your unique attributes and experiences and the emotional connection your customers have with those experiences.
- ✓ Explain your understanding of tourism excellence and how you apply that to your business e.g. accreditation, awards, and accolades.
- ✓ Detail your involvement in the Australian tourism industry in terms of your positive and active contribution to development of tourism in the region; participation in cooperative marketing campaigns; contribution to strategies; involvement in Boards/ Committees; mentoring; supporting the industry through product packaging or offering familiarisations to media and trade.
- ✓ Convey a strong sense of passion for your business and the experiences it offers.

Example:

2. BUSINESS PLANNING (20 marks)

- a *Provide an overview of the key features of your business plan including goals, strategies and outcomes. (6)*
- b *Describe any innovations that have taken place during the qualifying period to improve your tourism business and demonstrate how these innovations enhance your tourism experiences/services. (6)*
- c *What investment has been made in staff training and development and how has this improved the services provided to your visitors? (4)*
- d *Describe the main risks for your tourism business and the risk mitigation measures you have implemented. (4)*

Excellent submissions will:

- ✓ Introduce this section with your vision/mission statement.
- ✓ Display the goals, strategies and outcomes in an easy to digest format such as a three column table with goal (what we wanted to achieve), strategy (what actions did we take), outcome (what happened as a result) to clearly answer this question.
- ✓ Highlight your key performance indicators across all sectors of the business.
- ✓ Use SMARTT (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely, Targeted) business goals and objectives.
- ✓ Be specific and measurable (% , \$, passenger numbers, visitor numbers, average spend, average night stay, occupancy levels, profit, revenue, expenditure, staff retention etc) to quantify goals.
- ✓ Clearly relate outcomes to predetermined goals. For example: Goal—to increase international visitors from 17% to 20%; Outcome—International visitors increased to 23% compared to previous year.
- ✓ Include sufficient detail to show what you wanted to do and how you got there.
- ✓ Understand innovation and clearly explain rationale and outcomes for any innovations introduced to the business.
- ✓ Demonstrate a strong commitment to training and development and specific outcomes for this investment.
- ✓ Focus on the main risks for the business, how they were identified and what measures you have in place to prevent them from occurring. Risks should extend beyond staff and customer health and safety.

Example:

3. MARKETING (20 marks)

- a** *Who are your target markets? (4)*
- b** *How do you know your product/service meets the needs of your target markets? (4)*
- c** *What are your unique selling points and demonstrate how you communicate these to your target markets? (6)*
- d** *Describe the innovative marketing strategies you have implemented to encourage new and/or repeat business and demonstrate the success of these initiatives. (6)*

Excellent submissions will:

- ✓ Identify who the business is aiming its marketing towards and demonstrate who the customers are, where the customers are from, how old the customers are, how the customers purchase travel, what motivates and inspires the customers and how the product meets target market expectations.
- ✓ Use charts and diagrams to visually enhance the information.
- ✓ Demonstrate what research has been conducted or used to determine the target markets needs.
- ✓ Clearly show what attributes makes the business different from your competitors. It may consider for example; size, location, exclusivity, services, facilities. You may include a competitor matrix here.
- ✓ Demonstrate what the business has done differently to attract its customers across various marketing platforms. You may provide details of social media, digital advertising, apps and partnerships etc and other marketing strategies.
- ✓ This response will highlight and focus on innovative approaches to marketing not just the traditional activities such as brochure production.
- ✓ Ensure you answer the second part of the question and expand on how the new activities have been successful in measurement terms.

Example:

4. CUSTOMER SERVICE (20 marks)

- a** Describe your customer service philosophy/values. (5)
- b** Explain how you provide for visitors with specific needs. (5)
- c** Describe how you measure customer satisfaction and identify areas for improvement. (5)
- d** What processes do you have in place to respond to customer complaints? (5)

Excellent submissions will:

- ✓ Showcase the systems and procedures you have in place to deliver outstanding service.
- ✓ Detail how you make an effort to understand visitor needs, welcome them, respect them, thank them and do business with them.
- ✓ Provide an example to demonstrate success in this area.
- ✓ Demonstrate how you consider special and specific needs, including those beyond disability access.
- ✓ Detail the processes you have in place to understand how your customer feels about their product/service—provide information on feedback forms, monitoring social media, blogs, mystery shoppers etc.
- ✓ Describe how you receive and respond to feedback, for example, telephone, email or User Generated Content such as blogs and TripAdvisor.



Canberra Region Tourism Awards Gala Event, November 2017, National Museum of Australia. IMAGE COURTESY DEVELOPING AGENTS



Guests enjoy pre-dinner drinks at the 2017 Canberra Region Tourism Awards Gala Event held at the National Museum of Australia. IMAGE COURTESY DEVELOPING AGENTS

Example:

5. SUSTAINABILITY (20 marks)

- a *Demonstrate how your business contributes to the local economy. (6)*
- b *Demonstrate how your business engages with and brings benefits to the local community. (7)*
- c *Describe how your business cares for the local environment. (7)*

Excellent submissions will:

- ✓ Explain how the business financially contributes to the local economy in the region, for example; local purchasing, employing local people etc.
- ✓ Include measurement data in terms of \$ spent locally or on employment.
- ✓ Detail the social benefits they provide to the local community, for example, supporting local businesses, product packaging, charitable donations, sponsorship, engagement with community groups, or how you work with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- ✓ Explain your commitment to environmental sustainability and detail the activities you conduct in relation to conserving and measuring water, waste management and energy.
- ✓ Show measurement data to substantiate the success of your initiatives.

ADDRESSING SPECIFIC CRITERIA

While each of the 32 categories in the Canberra Region Tourism Awards program have their own specific criterion, this section serves to offer general advice on answering the criteria.

Carefully read the category title and description for clues on how to answer the criteria.

Example:

CATEGORY 2—TOURIST ATTRACTIONS

‘This category recognises natural or built tourist attractions that attract significant visitor numbers during the qualifying period for Canberra and the region.’

Does this sound like your attraction? If not, then you may be entering the wrong category. If it does sound like your attraction, then keep in mind the key words from the description—‘designed to attract tourists to a specific area of Australia’—when preparing your responses to the specific criteria.

Also carefully consider the language used in the category questions, when responding to them. Usually, the first word in the criteria provides the clue. For example:

- ▶ **‘what was or is the philosophy behind the development of your attraction?’**
Here you should explain your philosophy—what is the driving force behind your efforts to develop your attraction.
- ▶ **‘how does your event integrate with the natural/cultural environment?’**
Spell out the ways your event integrates with the natural/cultural environment.
- ▶ **‘explain the funding of your event?’**
Make sure you fully spell out your funding—where from, how much, etc.
- ▶ **‘supply evidence of the heritage or cultural significance of the site or activities.’**
Provide evidence on the matters raised. Documents or other supporting material could be referred to in your answer and placed in your submission for the judges to inspect.
- ▶ **‘demonstrate how your business preserves, interprets or celebrates its heritage?’**
Here you should substantiate the heritage or cultural significance.
- ▶ **‘describe the environmental value of the site?’**
Here you should paint a word picture of the environmental value of your site.
- ▶ **‘detail how your project complements its natural environment.’**
Respond to this by giving the detail requested. You may wish to provide supporting material for the points you make in your response here.

Make sure you answer all elements of the criteria. For example, **‘what maintenance and safety standards do you have in place?’** Here you should spell out both the maintenance and safety standards.

Addressing Specific Needs Criteria

Several of the categories ask a question worded as follows:

‘What services do you provide for visitors with disabilities, specific needs, e.g. language assistance, non-smokers, etc?’

There are *two* elements to this question—services provided for people with *disabilities or special needs*, and services provided for people with *specific needs*.

You may wish to provide your response in table form, for example:

DISABILITIES

- ▶ Wheelchair access/toilets/bathroom wheelchair access
- ▶ Assistance for visitors with impaired vision
- ▶ Large print for people with poor eyesight
- ▶ Can accommodate seeing eye dog
- ▶ Brochures in braille

SPECIFIC NEEDS

- ▶ Signs in different languages
- ▶ Brochures in other languages
- ▶ Babysitting
- ▶ Special dietary needs
- ▶ After hours service
- ▶ Smoke-free environment



Winner of the Unique Accommodation category at the 2017 Canberra Region Tourism Awards, Jamala Wildlife Lodge.

IMAGE COURTESY DEVELOPING AGENTS

SITE VISIT GUIDE

The purpose of the site visit is to assess the business being nominated and for verification of claims that may be made within the submission. Operations are under no obligation to offer a free experience of their product. The site visit will be prearranged at a mutually convenient time and the judges have a proforma from which they work.

1. Site visit judges will ask to see the following:
 - ▶ Customer Service Policies
 - ▶ OH&S policies and Risk Management Policies
 - ▶ Human Resources Policies
 - ▶ Sustainability Policies
 - ▶ Marketing Plans
 - ▶ Business Plans

The absence of these documents will be reflected in the score.

2. The **site inspection is worth 20 points** of the total score being added to the submission score.
-

3. All entrants will receive a site visit with the following exceptions:
 - ▶ **Categories 3 and 4**
Entrants in these categories will be asked to provide relevant documents via email. The allocated judge will call the entrant direct to discuss requirements and where applicable will visit their workplace/site office. There will be no points awarded.
 - ▶ **Categories 8 and 24**
These categories will be visited and evaluated but due to the potential diversity of entrants, will not be awarded any points.
 - ▶ **Category 14, 26, 30, 31 and 32**
These categories do not undergo a site visit.
 - ▶ **Category 27**
Entrants to this category may require a site visit.
-

4. Scores from the site visit *do not* apply at the Australian Tourism Awards.
-

SITE VISIT TIPS

- ▶ As a guide, put aside a maximum of 1.5 hours for the visit, keeping in mind the purpose is for the judges to assess the business and for verification of claims that may be made within your submission.
- ▶ It is advisable for at least two staff members to host the visit—this may include your submission writer. You may also like to call on relevant staff members where appropriate. For example, if you're talking about your sustainability policies, arrange for the relevant staff member to lead, or join in, the discussion.
- ▶ Judges will provide informal feedback (not mentoring advice) during the visit. It can be difficult to remember what valuable hints and encouragement they may give you, so to capture these points, one person could take notes or you could record the session on your phone.
- ▶ Allow the judges some time initially to look over the documentation (outlined above)—perhaps you could offer them a cup of tea or coffee while they do so. Put your best foot forward and make it easy for them with well prepared and presented documents which reflect the professionalism of your business.
- ▶ Ensure your policies and plans (see above) are up to date. Judges will focus on activities, updates and innovations that have occurred in the last twelve months which will be evident in these documents. Don't forget the absence of these will be reflected in the score.
- ▶ While entrants are under no obligation to offer a free experience of their product, once the judges have viewed the required documentation, you may like to show them the highlights of your operation. Feel free to curate the visit so that the judges see your property in the best light. While it's enjoyable to share your business with the judges, don't forget to keep an eye on the time! Align the tour with the business highlights in qualifying period.
- ▶ Treat the judges as though they have never been to your property. Allow them to enjoy the experience you may provide (while you are not obliged to offer this), but keep in mind, they are not there to be wined and dined, rather to better understand and verify your product and business!

The following table covers the questions in each section of the judge’s site visit guide and provides insight into what judges will be looking to assess and verify during the visit:

TOURISM EXCELLENCE

WHAT THE JUDGE IS LOOKING FOR

- ▶ Initial impact and appeal
- ▶ Additional services and facilities available to enhance the tourism experience
- ▶ Appearance/quality/presentation—including premises, building and public areas, vehicles, cleanliness, atmosphere, ambience.
- ▶ Access/signage/parking
- ▶ Promotion of accreditation/honours/awards
- ▶ Evidence of involvement with other tourism organisations

TIPS

Services and facilities—what do you offer that is above and beyond what is expected.

Explain to the judge if you have any signage/access restrictions eg: due to Government/council restrictions.

Display any accreditation, awards, and membership certificates, etc you may have. Demonstrate how you have benefitted from awards you’ve won, memberships you have (it’s not enough to just have them—show how you use them).

BUSINESS PLANNING

WHAT THE JUDGE IS LOOKING FOR

- ▶ Business plan
- ▶ Vision/mission statement
- ▶ Risk management, WHS policies and procedures
- ▶ Staff training
- ▶ Acquisitions and improvements made in the last 12 months

TIPS

Have your documents ready for the judge to sight. They don’t want to read them in full, but want to see you have them accessible and available to all employees.

Show the judge any improvements you have made e.g. new tour bus, facility renovations, new uniforms etc.

Display staff training plans, induction processes, etc.

MARKETING

WHAT THE JUDGE IS LOOKING FOR

- ▶ Current marketing plan
- ▶ Tracking/monitoring of your marketing plan
- ▶ Website
- ▶ Marketing collateral—does it fit target markets?
- ▶ Packaging/innovative marketing efforts
- ▶ New programs for the year

TIPS

Demonstrate that your marketing plan reflects your marketing practices.

Demonstrate that your services/facilities align with your target markets.

The judge will look at your website prior to the visit—is it up to date, appealing, easy to navigate and does it provide an accurate depiction of your business?

Demonstrate if you introduced any new programs, or modified any current programs—e.g. tours, packages

CUSTOMER SERVICE

WHAT THE JUDGE IS LOOKING FOR

- ▶ Customer feedback provisions
- ▶ Online interaction
- ▶ Catering for those with specific needs

TIPS

Display your customer feedback/questionnaire forms, discuss how you use them. Give an example of how you've acted on feedback.

Show the judges some of your online activities (e.g. Trip Advisor)

Demonstrate that you cater for specific needs (this is NOT just special needs) including dietary, physical, intellectual, smokers, business travellers, families, school groups, special interest groups, etc. This provides an opportunity to show the judge any initiatives that you have implemented e.g. specific menus, wheelchair access, special programs for school groups, etc.

SUSTAINABILITY

WHAT THE JUDGE IS LOOKING FOR

- ▶ Contribution to the local economy.
- ▶ Engagement with the local community, e.g. charitable donations, volunteer programs
- ▶ Evidence of water, waste and energy actions and supporting procedures
- ▶ Promotion of sustainability

TIPS

Employing local people, how you support local charities, how you include local businesses in your tours etc. E.g. show the judge that you are using locally made soap in accommodation, or locally produced food in restaurants.

Show the judge that you are displaying other tourist information.

Demonstrate your contribution to development of tourism in your area—lobbying, investment, mentoring, and membership of organisations.

Provide any policies and procedures supporting your environmental actions. Demonstrate how you measure your carbon footprint.

Do you tell guests/visitors about your sustainability efforts? What about staff?

TEN WINNING TIPS

1 FOLLOW THE RULES OF ENTRY

The Rules of Entry have been prepared to help you answer the questions. Read these carefully and follow them closely.

2 ANSWER THE QUESTION

Your submission must answer the question asked! Do not just make statements. After you have prepared your response, go back to the question and make sure you specifically answer the questions.

3 SUBSTANTIATE YOUR CLAIMS

Make sure you substantiate all your claims. If possible use quantitative measure such as percentages. Document your measurements wherever possible. The financial data, for example, must be verified by an independent third person, e.g. accountant, finance officer, bank manager, or you may sign a Statutory Declaration.

4 BE TOURISM FOCUSED

Remember that this is a tourism industry awards scheme! Keep your answers tourism focused. In particular, if your business spans a number of industries, be careful how you present it in the submission. For example, if your accommodation business also has a big wedding market it is only relevant to the Tourism Awards if you can clearly demonstrate how it contributes to tourism.

5 PAINT THE PICTURE

You must paint a convincing picture of your business in your submission—this means engaging the judges with your story. Write as if the reader will have no concept of your business. Never assume the judges will know your business, particularly at a national level. Get them as excited as you are!

6 BE CLEAR

Be as clear as possible in your submission. Make it as easy as possible for the judges to understand what you are trying to say. Once again, make it easy for the judges by keeping your entry concise and focused.

7 TELL THE WHOLE TRUTH AND NOTHING BUT

The judges come from the tourism industry. The ACT judges will visit your operation, and the national judges will rely on the CRTA judges' inspection reports on your property. They know when they read an exaggerated claim and it does not lend credibility to your entry.

8 PUT YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD

Too frequently good information is overlooked. Make sure you put the good news in your entry. Highlight areas of strength, creativity, innovation and flair, in relation to your contribution to the tourism industry.

9 BUT DON'T OVERDO IT

Keep it simple. There is no correlation between the amount of money spent on a submission and its likelihood of success. The largest businesses do not always win the category. Each entry is assessed in terms of its achievements and contribution and assessed against criteria. Small operators are as likely to win as the big ones.

10 USE SUPPORTING MATERIAL

Supporting material adds to your case.

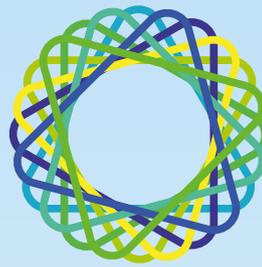
Tables, graphs, and diagrams: these provide a snapshot of growth and trends, and assist the judges in assessing your claims. Ensure you accompany each diagram with a clear explanation.

Images: make sure your photographs are attractive and are taken close enough to give a favourable impression of your organisation. Give some thought to the quality and relevance of your photographs. Does your supporting material provide evidence of statements, or have you included it 'just in case'?

GOOD LUCK!

THANK YOU

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