**Site visit guide for entrants**

The site visit is a single visit by two of the judges to your business prior to the closing date for Award submissions. It will be at a pre-arranged date and time that is convenient to you and the judges, and will allow the judges to experience your business, and talk through your activities.

Judges will also ask to see relevant manuals and policies for OH&S, Risk Management and Environmental Sustainability, as well as Business and Marketing Plans, and evidence of staff training and customer service.

It is essential that you are ready for the judges at the appointed date and time of the site visit, and have the relevant documentation prepared to show them.

Treat the judges as though they have never been to your business, and show them the highlights of your operation. Detail your unique points and what sets you apart from other entrants.

**Tips**

* Make sure all your staff are aware the visit is taking place.
* We suggest that a couple of staff attend the site visit and accompany the judges. Have at least one person leading the visit and one person taking notes (the judges will give you hints as to what they’d like to see in your written submission!)
* Feel free to get other staff involved. If you’re talking about your maintenance procedures – get the relevant staff member to lead, or join in, the discussion.
* Don’t give the judges a USB with your manuals/procedures on it, or ask them to go on your website after the visit – they need to see the info there and then when they’re on site. The judges do this in their own time, so it’s important you make it easy for them.

**The visit**

When the judge is inspecting an entrant they will focus on activities/updates/innovations that have occurred in the last twelve months - this includes keeping training manuals, policies and procedures up to date.

The following covers the questions in each section, and provides a guide for what the judge will be looking for during the visit.

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| **Section** | **What the judge will be scoring you on** | **Tips** |
| **Product** | * Initial impact and appeal
* Additional services and facilities available to enhance the tourism experience
* Appearance/presentation – including (where applicable) building, vehicles, public areas
* Access, signage and parking
* Acquisitions and improvements made in the last 12 months, or realised benefits from last year
 | * 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.
* Show the judge any improvements you have made eg: new tour bus, facility renovations, new uniforms etc.
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| **Business planning** | * Business plan
* Vision/mission statement
* Risk management, WHS policies and procedures
* Membership of organisations/associations
* Association with other tourism organisations
* Accreditation and awards
 | * 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
* 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).
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| **Marketing** | * 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
 | * 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 – eg tours, packages, and markets.
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| **Customer service and professional development** | * Customer service training programs
* Staff training/development
* Customer feedback provisions
* Online interaction
* Catering for those with specific needs
 | * Display your customer feedback/questionnaire forms, discuss how you use them. Give an example of how you’ve acted on feedback.
* Display staff training plans, induction processes, etc.
* Online interaction – do you monitor TripAdvisor reviews? Do you have social media channels and how do you manage/monitor them?
* 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 eg specific menus, wheelchair access, special programs for school groups, etc.
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| **Sustainable Tourism** | * Water / waste and energy actions and supporting policies and procedures
* New environmental initiatives
* Contribution to broader tourism development
* Support to the local economy Involvement in local community and business benefits.
* Promoting your sustainability – consider internal and external customers
 | * Provide any policies and procedures supporting your environmental actions. Demonstrate how you measure your carbon footprint.
* Show how you train staff in regards to environmental sustainability. Is there a culture of change?
* Provide detail on any new environmental initiatives you’ve undertaken – this should be more than the basics of recycling paper and using energy efficient lightbulbs.
* Show the judge that you are using locally made soap in accommodation, or locally produced food in restaurants. Employing local people, how you support local charities, how you include local businesses in your tours etc.
* 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.
* Do you tell guests/visitors about your sustainability efforts? What about staff?
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