



TE KUNENGA
KE PŪREHUROA
MASSEY
UNIVERSITY
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

TE KURA
WHAI PAKIHI
MASSEY
BUSINESS SCHOOL

NORTH SHORE BUSINESS EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2026

ENTRY GUIDE HANDBOOK

This handbook has been designed to support you in preparing a strong and compelling entry. It provides general guidance on what judges are looking for, along with specific advice for each award category and question. Whether you are entering your own business or nominating someone else, this guide will help you present your achievements clearly, confidently, and effectively.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This document is structured in two parts:

- **General Entry Guidance** – applies to all categories
- **Category-Specific Guidance** – tailored advice for each award category and its questions

We recommend reading the general guidance first, then referring to the section relevant to your chosen category.

AWARDS PROCESS

- Entries open 1 July 2026
- Entries close 7 August 2026
- Judging process commences 24 August 2026
- Finalists will be notified from 28 September to 2 October
- Judging process including Stage 1 and Stage 2, ends 20 October 2026
- Winners announced at the Gala Dinner on 13 November 2026
- Full information is contained in the Terms & Conditions found on the entry form

NEED HELP?

If you need assistance with your entry, please contact:

Debbie Cannon on debbie@businessnh.org.nz

Sandra Craze on sandra@businessnh.org.nz

Hannah Stoddart on hannah@takapunabeach.org.nz

GENERAL ENTRY GUIDANCE

WHAT JUDGES ARE LOOKING FOR

Judges will assess your entry based on:

- Clear and well-structured responses
- Evidence of success and measurable results
- Demonstrated impact (business, people, community, or environment)
- Innovation, leadership, and continuous improvement
- What sets you apart from others in your field

HOW TO WRITE STRONG ANSWERS

- **Be specific** – Avoid general statements
- **Use evidence** – Include numbers, percentages, or measurable outcomes
- **Provide examples** – Show how and why something worked
- **Focus on results** – Not just what you did, but what it achieved

TOP TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Answer the question directly
- Keep your responses concise and focused
- Use plain, professional language
- Highlight your unique strengths
- Show pride in your achievements

COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID

- Being too vague or generic
- Not including measurable outcomes
- Repeating the same answer across questions
- Leaving questions partially answered

IMPORTANT NOTE

Example answers are provided as a guide only. Judges are looking for detailed, specific responses that reflect your unique achievements and impact.

FINAL CHECKLIST BEFORE SUBMISSION

Before submitting your entry, ensure:

- All questions have been fully answered
- Responses are clear and concise
- Evidence and measurable results are included
- Spelling and grammar have been checked
- Your key strengths and achievements are clearly demonstrated

THE RSM EXCELLENCE IN BUSINESS AWARD – SMALL ENTERPRISE

This category celebrates a highperforming small business of 1–10 employees that delivers consistent commercial success, exceptional customer experiences and a clear, positive contribution to its community. It highlights organisations that show agility, professionalism and a commitment to excellence.

PROUDLY SPONSORED BY



ENTRY QUESTIONS, GUIDANCE & EXAMPLES

1. Describe your core products or services

Explain what you offer and who your customers are.

Example: *We provide mobile car grooming services across Auckland.*

2. What measurable growth have you achieved in the past 2 years

Include figures such as revenue, customers, or expansion.

Example: *We increased bookings by 40% and added two new vans.*

3. What improvements have you made to your operations or customer experience

Show innovation or efficiency improvements.

Example: *We introduced online booking and reduced wait times by 30%.*

4. How do you contribute to your local community or industry

Highlight community or industry involvement.

Example: *We offer free grooming for community fundraising events.*

5. What makes your business exceptional compared to others in your sector

Emphasise your unique strengths.

Example: *Our same-day service and eco-friendly products set us apart.*

THE RSM EXCELLENCE IN BUSINESS AWARD – MEDIUM TO LARGE ENTERPRISE

This category honours a medium to large business with 10+ employees that demonstrates operational excellence, strong commercial performance and a sustained commitment to its customers and community. It highlights organisations that lead with integrity, deliver consistent results and actively contribute to longterm regional prosperity.

PROUDLY SPONSORED BY



ENTRY QUESTIONS, GUIDANCE & EXAMPLES

1. Summarise your organisation's main services and customer base

Provide a clear overview of your business and target market.

Example: *We are a commercial construction company serving Auckland and Waikato.*

2. What major milestones or results have you achieved in the last 2 years

Focus on key achievements and measurable success.

Example: *We completed 18 major builds and improved delivery times by 22%.*

3. What systems or processes ensure consistent quality

Describe frameworks, tools, or standards you use.

Example: *We use digital project tracking and strict quality audits.*

4. How do you invest in staff development and wellbeing

Highlight training, leadership, and support initiatives.

Example: *We run leadership training and a strong health and safety programme.*

5. What long-term strategy guides your organisation's growth

Explain your vision and future direction.

Example: *Our strategy focuses on sustainable, future-ready infrastructure.*

THE ASSA ABLOY EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP AWARD

This category honours an individual who exemplifies exceptional leadership through vision, integrity and the ability to inspire and elevate others. It recognises leaders who drive meaningful change, empower teams, make sound strategic decisions and demonstrate resilience and measurable impact in pursuit of longterm organisational success.

PROUDLY SPONSORED BY

ASSA ABLOY

ENTRY QUESTIONS, GUIDANCE & EXAMPLES

1. Describe your leadership role and responsibilities

Outline your role, team size, and scope.

Example: *I manage a team of 15 in customer service.*

2. What improvements or results have you achieved through your leadership

Provide measurable team or business outcomes.

Example: *I introduced training that lifted satisfaction from 78% to 92%.*

3. How do you support team performance and morale

Describe your leadership style and team practices.

Example: *I hold weekly check-ins and encourage open communication.*

4. Describe a challenge you led your team through

Focus on problem-solving and outcomes.

Example: *I led the team through a major system upgrade with no downtime.*

5. What leadership principles guide your decisions

Explain your values and how they influence your leadership.

Example: *I value honesty, fairness, and leading by example.*

THE SPARK EXCELLENCE IN YOUTH ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

This category celebrates a young person who demonstrates outstanding drive, talent and leadership potential. It highlights emerging achievers who contribute meaningfully to their community, show dedication to personal development and display resilience, ambition and the capacity to become influential future leaders.

PROUDLY SPONSORED BY



Business Hub
Auckland
North

ENTRY QUESTIONS, GUIDANCE & EXAMPLES

1. Describe your business, project, or initiative

Explain what you created and why.

Example: *I run an online store selling handmade jewellery.*

2. What motivated you to start it

Share your story and inspiration.

Example: *I wanted to create affordable pieces for young people.*

3. What key achievements have you reached so far

Include measurable results where possible.

Example: *I reached 1,000 sales in my first year.*

4. How does your work benefit others

Show impact on customers or the community.

Example: *I donate 5% of profits to youth mental health.*

5. What are your next goals

Outline your future plans and ambitions.

Example: *I plan to expand into local markets.*

THE TURNER HOPKINS EXCELLENCE IN NOT-FOR-PROFIT AWARD

This category honours a notforprofit organisation that creates significant community impact through purposedriven work, strong governance and responsible stewardship of resources. It highlights organisations that innovate for social good and demonstrate a clear, measurable commitment to improving the wellbeing of the people and communities they serve.

PROUDLY SPONSORED BY

TurnerHopkins

ENTRY QUESTIONS, GUIDANCE & EXAMPLES

1. What is your organisation's mission

Clearly state your purpose.

Example: *We support families experiencing food insecurity.*

2. Who do you support and what services do you provide

Describe your audience and activities.

Example: *We run weekly food parcels and cooking classes.*

3. What measurable outcomes have you achieved in the past 2 years

Use data to demonstrate impact.

Example: *We delivered 12,000 food parcels this year.*

4. How do you ensure funding is used effectively

Highlight transparency and efficiency.

Example: *We keep admin costs under 8% and rely on volunteers.*

5. What impact are you most proud of

Show meaningful outcomes and stories.

Example: *We helped 3,500 families access healthy meals.*

THE SECOND AVENUE EXCELLENCE IN SUSTAINABILITY AWARD

This category acknowledges a business that leads in sustainable practice, demonstrating measurable progress across environmental stewardship, social responsibility and longterm sustainability innovation. It highlights organisations embedding enduring practices that support New Zealand’s Net Zero Carbon 2050 goals and create meaningful, futurefocused impact.

PROUDLY SPONSORED BY



ENTRY QUESTIONS, GUIDANCE & EXAMPLES

1. What sustainability initiatives have you implemented

Describe actions taken to reduce impact.

Example: *We switched to compostable packaging and reduced waste.*

2. What environmental issue were you aiming to address

Explain the problem and why it matters.

Example: *We wanted to cut single-use plastics.*

3. What measurable results have you achieved in the past 2 years

Provide data (e.g. waste reduction, emissions).

Example: *We reduced landfill waste by 65% in 24 months.*

4. How do you involve staff, customers, or suppliers

Show engagement and influence.

Example: *Staff take part in monthly “green challenges.”*

5. What future sustainability actions are planned

Demonstrate commitment to ongoing improvement.

Example: *We plan to install solar panels next year.*

THE BUSINESS NORTH HARBOUR EXCELLENCE IN INNOVATION AWARD

This category celebrates a business that has delivered measurable success through a standout innovation — whether a product, service, technology, sustainability initiative or operational improvement. It recognises organisations that challenge convention, create meaningful value and demonstrate clear, evidencebased impact.

PROUDLY SPONSORED BY



ENTRY QUESTIONS, GUIDANCE & EXAMPLES

1. Describe the new product, service, or process you developed

Explain what you created.

Example: *We created an app that tracks home energy use in real time.*

2. What problem or need does it solve

Focus on customer or market need.

Example: *It helps households reduce power bills.*

3. How is it different from existing solutions

Highlight uniqueness and advantage.

Example: *It gives personalised tips based on actual usage.*

4. What results, uptake, or feedback have you seen

Provide evidence of success.

Example: *Users report saving an average of 18% on power.*

5. What improvements or next steps are planned

Show future development.

Example: *We plan to add solar tracking features.*

THE VOYAGER EXCELLENCE IN EMPLOYEE HEALTH & WELLBEING AWARD

This category celebrates a business that places the health, safety and wellbeing of its people at the centre of its culture. It recognises organisations that create supportive, inclusive workplaces, champion mental and physical wellbeing and implement initiatives that strengthen engagement, resilience and longterm staff satisfaction.

PROUDLY SPONSORED BY



ENTRY QUESTIONS, GUIDANCE & EXAMPLES

1. What wellbeing programmes or initiatives do you offer

Describe your support systems.

Example: *We offer flexible hours, free counselling, and wellness workshops.*

2. What prompted you to introduce these initiatives

Explain the need or motivation.

Example: *Staff feedback showed high stress levels.*

3. What positive changes have you seen in staff wellbeing in the past 2 years

Provide measurable or observable outcomes.

Example: *Sick days dropped by 25% and engagement improved.*

4. How do you support mental health in the workplace

Highlight specific initiatives or resources.

Example: *We provide confidential support and regular check-ins.*

5. How do you measure the success of your wellbeing efforts

Include metrics or feedback tools.

Example: *We track participation and wellbeing survey results.*

THE INSPHIRE EXCELLENCE IN HOSPITALITY AWARD

This category celebrates a hospitality business that consistently delivers exceptional guest experiences through outstanding service, quality and operational excellence. It highlights organisations that create memorable, welcoming environments and showcase the best of the sector through innovation, professionalism and genuine care.

PROUDLY SPONSORED BY

inspire★

ENTRY QUESTIONS, GUIDANCE & EXAMPLES**1. What type of hospitality business do you operate**

Provide an overview of your offering.

Example: *We are a family-run café using local ingredients.*

2. What makes your customer experience stand out

Highlight service and differentiation.

Example: *We greet customers by name and tailor menu options.*

3. What achievements or improvements have you made in the past 2 years?

Include ratings, growth, or feedback.

Example: *We achieved a 4.8-star rating across platforms.*

4. How do you train and support your staff

Focus on service quality and development.

Example: *Staff receive customer care and food safety training.*

5. What are your future plans for the business

Outline your vision and growth.

Example: *We plan to open a second location.*

THE TAKAPUNA BUSINESS ASSOCIATION EXCELLENCE IN RETAIL AWARD

This category honours a retailer that excels in delivering exceptional customer experiences through quality products, service excellence and strong operational performance. It highlights businesses that deeply understand their customers, innovate in retail practice and create engaging, trustworthy shopping experiences that foster loyalty and longterm success.

PROUDLY SPONSORED BY



ENTRY QUESTIONS, GUIDANCE & EXAMPLES

1. What products do you sell and who are your customers

Describe your offering and target market.

Example: *We sell home décor and gifts to local families.*

2. What makes your retail experience unique

Highlight in-store or online experience.

Example: *We offer personalised styling and free gift wrapping.*

3. What growth or improvements have you achieved in the past 2 years?

Provide measurable results.

Example: *Sales grew 30% and we expanded our range.*

4. How do you use technology to improve operations or service

Show innovation and efficiency.

Example: *We use a smart inventory system to reduce stockouts.*

5. What are your goals for the next 12 months

Demonstrate forward planning.

Example: *We aim to launch an online store.*

THE PEOPLES CHOICE AWARD

This category celebrates a business championed by its customers, staff, stakeholders and wider community. Unlike paneljudged awards, the winner is determined solely by public online voting, reflecting authentic community support, trust and engagement.

If you qualify to be entered into the People's Choice Award, you will be asked to complete these questions. Your answers will be used in the public voting form.

ENTRY QUESTIONS, GUIDANCE & EXAMPLES

1. What does your business do

Clearly describe your services or products.

Example: *We run a local bakery specialising in sourdough.*

2. Why do customers choose you over others

Highlight your strengths and reputation.

Example: *Customers love our friendly service and fresh daily bakes.*

3. How do you positively contribute to your community

Show local impact.

Example: *We donate leftover bread to local shelters.*

4. What achievement are you most proud of this year

Share a standout result.

Example: *We reached 10,000 loyalty sign-ups.*

5. What message would you like to share with voters

Keep this engaging and authentic.

Example: *We appreciate every vote and love serving our community.*

THANK YOU

Thank you for taking the time to share your story. Every entry represents the passion, effort, and impact that make our business community thrive. We encourage you to put your best foot forward, celebrate your achievements, and be proud of how far you've come. We look forward to recognising your success at the North Shore Business Excellence Awards 2026.

ENTRIES OPEN 1 JULY
ENTRIES CLOSE 7 AUGUST
AWARDS DINNER 13 NOVEMBER

BROUGHT TO YOU BY

