



## Lake Macquarie Business Excellence Awards

### FAQs & Helpful Guidance for Applicants

#### About the Awards

#### **What are the [Lake Macquarie Business Excellence Awards](#)?**

The Lake Macquarie Business Excellence Awards celebrate outstanding local businesses, leaders and employees across a wide range of categories. The awards are run by Lake Macquarie City Council and are the only council-run local business awards program in the Hunter region. Applications are now open and close Monday 4 May 10pm. [Apply online today](#).

#### **Who can enter?**

Businesses and community organisations must be registered within the Lake Macquarie local government area and meet the eligibility criteria for their chosen category. Eligibility requirements vary by category, so it's important to check these carefully before starting your application.

#### **Is there a cost to enter?**

No. Entry to the Lake Macquarie Business Excellence Awards is completely free. Attending the awards dinner is optional.

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### [Categories & Eligibility](#)

#### **How many categories can I enter?**

You can enter more than one category, provided you meet the eligibility requirements. Applicants are encouraged to focus on quality over quantity. We recommend you submit one strong application then decide if you can leverage this information for any other categories.

#### **What size categories are available?**

Business size categories include:

- Excellence in Micro Business (0-5 employees)
- Excellence in Small Business (6-20 employees)
- Excellence in Medium Business (21-99 employees)
- Excellence in Large Business (100+ employees)

There are also awards for individuals and specialist categories such as Employer of Choice Innovation, Sustainability, Diversity & Inclusion, Outstanding Visitor Experience, and Community Organisation.

#### **What is the New Business category?**

The Outstanding New Business category is open to businesses that have been operating for less than two years (at the time of entry). This is the only category specifically designed for newer businesses. You can't enter other business categories if you have been operating for less than two years.



### **Are there individual awards?**

Yes. Individual awards include Outstanding Employee, Young Business Leader and Business Leader of the Year. These recognise individuals rather than organisations.

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## Writing a Strong Application

### **How long does an application take to complete?**

A strong application typically takes 4–6 hours to prepare. This includes reading the criteria, selecting the right category, and drafting thoughtful, evidence-based responses. You can read the [Guide to Applying](#) for more information and a scoring matrix.

### **What are judges looking for?**

Judges assess applications based solely on the information provided. They are looking for:

- Clear, concise answers that directly address each question
- Evidence and data to support claims
- Demonstrated outcomes, not just intentions
- Alignment with the intent of the chosen category

### **Should I assume judges know my business?**

No. Judges will only research your website and social media to fact check. Your application should assume the reader knows nothing about your business and clearly explain what you do, why it matters, what you've achieved and how.

### **Can I use bullet points?**

Yes. Bullet points are encouraged where appropriate. Applications are not judged on creative writing. Clarity, relevance and substance matter most.

### **What makes an application stand out?**

Strong applications clearly connect:

- A business goal
- The strategy used to achieve it
- The measurable outcome

For example, instead of saying “we aimed to grow,” explain *how* you grew and *what changed as a result*.

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## Application Structure & Key Sections

### **What is the 100-word summary used for?**

The 100-word summary is not scored but may be used for promotional purposes if you become a finalist or winner. Avoid including confidential information in this section. It might be easier to write this summary once you've completed the application questions.

### **Are the remaining answers confidential?**

Yes. The detailed application responses are confidential and are only viewed by the assigned judging panel.



### **Is the optional 200-word section required?**

No. The optional 200-word section provides additional context about your business which will provide context for the judges but it is not scored.

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## Judging & Finalists

### **Who judges the awards?**

Each category is assessed by a panel of three independent judges with relevant industry and sector experience. Conflicts of interest are managed through a formal process.

### **How many finalists are selected?**

The number of finalists varies by category and depends on the volume and strength of applications received. Typically, around 60 finalists are selected across all categories.

### **What is Business of the Year?**

The Business of the Year award winner is selected from category winners. No additional application is required. The final decision is made by the full judging panel.

### **What about People's Choice?**

All finalists are automatically eligible for the People's Choice Award, which is decided by a public vote. To win this award you will need to encourage your contacts to vote for you online. You will receive information about this if you are chosen as a finalist.

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## Helpful Tips Before You Submit

- Read the [category description](#) carefully and tailor every answer to its intent
- Double-check eligibility before starting
- Register and complete the [online application form](#)
- Don't undersell your achievements this is your opportunity to showcase your business
- Ask someone who knows your business well to review your application
- Make sure you click submit! Drafts are not automatically entered.
- You can submit early and continue editing up until the closing date