



focus  **Business**
Excellence Awards 2023

PRESENTED BY:



TOOWOOMBA
CHAMBER

#focusrbea23



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APPLICATION GUIDE



WELCOME

The Toowoomba Chamber invites you to engage and participate in the Focus HR Business Excellence Awards 2023.

In 2023, we want to hear our businesses **“Tell Their Story”**. Storytelling is one of the most powerful crafts in the world.

Business storytelling can bring you PR, media attention and even fame. However, it is more than that, your business stories are what weaves your company together:

- It is why you get up in the morning.
- It is why people buy from you.
- It is why people work with you and it is how your product or service came about.
- It is why your company is relevant today and it is the values and code of conduct for how you operate.

When you know your story, you know your relevance and everyone else will too!

The Toowoomba Region has a rich and diverse economy. An economy based on a range of industries, including mining and manufacturing industries, robust agricultural and horticultural industries, a growing hospitality and tourism market, a large health and wellness sector and a diverse and growing small business sector.

An economy led by our top five industries (by business count):

1. Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries
2. Construction
3. Rental, hiring and real estate services
4. Professional, scientific, and technical services
5. Transport, postal and warehousing.

An economy consisting of a vast array of over 16,000 businesses, with 62.6% non-employing sole traders, 35% with one to 19 employees, 2.3% with 20 to 199 employees and 0.1% with 200 plus employees.

The large and diverse business base is supported by places of natural and man-made beauty, including the Toowoomba Wellcamp Airport which connects us to the world and beyond; a community spirit second to none.

Hosted by the Toowoomba Chamber, the Focus HR Business Excellence Awards 2023 are designed to celebrate the efforts and achievements of our diverse and dedicated business community and recognise their contribution, not only to economic vitality but to creating a strong, healthy, innovative, vibrant and nation leading regional community that is the Toowoomba Region.



ABOUT THE FOCUS HR BEA 2023

This year, the Focus HR Business Excellence Awards 2023 is about business storytelling. Stories about strength, aptitude, and resilience of our businesses.

The application process includes a written application, judges' site visits and the production of a short 30 second to 1 minute video where applicants get to describe who they are and what their business is.

The Toowoomba Chamber will work in partnership with a range of representatives from business, industry, rural and resources sectors to deliver the Focus HR Business Excellence Awards 2023.

The Business Excellence Awards aim to:

- showcase the diversity and dedication of the Toowoomba Region's business community
- celebrate the efforts and achievements of local business
- promote best practice in strategic business planning and delivery
- recognise the contribution of local business, not only to economic vitality but to creating a strong, healthy, vibrant regional community.

AWARDS AND CATEGORIES

Agriculture

Includes but not limited to businesses that are actively cultivating, operating, or managing land (e.g., livestock, dairy, poultry, fish, vegetables, and fruit) and other primary production, (e.g., growing, and felling timber plantations).

Best Regional Business

Includes but not limited to any business that operates and services the Toowoomba region, while also servicing outside Toowoomba Regional Council. This greater region is not limited and could include state and national operations and servicing.

Community and Not for Profit

Includes businesses, registered as not for profits both government and non-government funded.

Gerry Doumany Export

Includes any business that is trading in goods and services from one country to another country. This may include exporting food (e.g. chocolate, beef, grain), art, or professional services.

Health and Wellbeing

Includes but not limited to professional coaches' mentors, personal trainers, gyms, health providers, well-being providers, fitness coaches, beauty services, hairdressers, and other related businesses.

Hospitality

Includes but is not limited to restaurants, catering and equipment services and food service providers.



Industry

Includes but is not limited to manufacturing, building, construction, suppliers and contractors, engineering transport and logistics.

Innovation and Technology

Includes but not limited to businesses with commercially available products or services that demonstrate innovation in biosciences and genetics, marketing and communication, sustainability initiatives, information technology, software, app and device development, advanced engineering and/or other manufactured goods.

Professional Services (Up to 10 Employees)

Includes but not limited to legal, accounting and finance, financial planning, mortgage and insurance brokers, real estate, business broking, creative industries (PR, Graphic Design and Marketing), and human resources.

Professional Services (11 Plus Employees)

Includes but not limited to legal, accounting and finance, financial planning, mortgage and insurance brokers, real estate, business broking, creative industries (PR, Graphic Design and Marketing), and human resources.

Property Construction and Development

Includes any business involved in property, construction and development including builders, developers, architects, engineers, project managers, town planners, real estate agents, and subcontractors.

Retail

Includes but not limited to all retail-based businesses.

Tourism

Includes but is not limited to accommodation, transportation (e.g., airlines, car rental), travel facilitation and information (e.g., tour operators, travel agents, tourist information centers), and attractions and entertainment (e.g., heritage sites and theme, national, and wildlife parks) and events.

People's Choice

Includes all award categories (except Future Leader of the Year). All applicants will be voted for by the Toowoomba community via The Chronicle platform. This award will not be considered for the overall Business of the Year winner.

Employer of Choice

Recognises and celebrates businesses whose outstanding service capabilities are also complimented by their commitment to their employees. This category involves the completion of a separate Employer of Choice Application along with an online employee survey that will contribute to the business's overall application.



Future Leader of the Year

Recognises young business leaders who demonstrate outstanding entrepreneurial spirit, strategic direction, and innovative ideas, whilst providing inspiration to a new generation of upcoming young businesspeople. Nominations are sought from individuals 35 years of age and younger (at the time of the award nominations opening) and who have had significant success in their business.

Sole Trader of the Year

Recognises the very best sole trader/owner-operator of the year. The winner of this award will be selected by an independent judging panel. All applicants must have applied in one or more of the following categories:

- Agriculture
- Best Regional Business
- Community and Not-For-Profit
- Gerry Doumany Export
- Health and Wellbeing
- Hospitality
- Industry
- Innovation and Technology
- Professional Services (Up to 10 Employees)
- Property, Construction and Development
- Retail
- Tourism.

The judges from each category may select any sole trader application, to be in the running for the Sole Trader of the Year Award.



Micro-Business of the Year

Recognises the very best micro-business (2-4 employees) of the year. The winner of this award will be selected by a completely independent judging panel. All applicants must have applied for one or more of the following categories:

- Agriculture
- Best Regional Business
- Community and Not-For-Profit
- Gerry Doumany Export
- Health and Wellbeing
- Hospitality
- Industry
- Innovation and Technology
- Professional Services (Up to 10 Employees)
- Property, Construction and Development
- Retail
- Tourism.

The judges from each category may select any micro-business application, to be in the running for the Micro-Business of the Year Award.

Focus HR Business of the Year

Recognises the very best from across our region. The winner of this most prestigious award will be selected by a completely independent judging panel.

All winners from the below categories will be in the running for our Focus HR Business of The Year 2023:

- Agriculture
- Best Regional Business
- Community and Not-For-Profit
- Gerry Doumany Export
- Health and Wellbeing
- Hospitality
- Industry
- Innovation and Technology
- Professional Services (Up to 10 Employees)
- Professional Services (11 Plus Employees)
- Property, Construction and Development
- Retail
- Tourism.



Toowoomba Chamber, Hall of Fame Inductee

Recognises long standing Toowoomba based businesses who have excelled in their industry along with their enduring contributions to the overall Toowoomba regional community. Businesses are nominated by the Toowoomba Chamber Board and are critically assessed by the board across all areas of the business and their commitment to engage with the economic vitality of our region. This award carries true prestige and all previous inductees still to this day continue to epitomise the values.

APPLICATIONS

Applications Overview

- All applications are strictly confidential.
- All judges are required to sign a confidentiality agreement.
- All judges must declare any conflicts of interest.
- A minimum of two and maximum of three independent expert judges will be allocated to each category.
- All applications are to be lodged via the Toowoomba Chamber website.
- The judges from each category may select a sole-trader and micro-business application, to be in the running for the Sole-Trader of the Year Award and the Micro-Business of the Year Award.

Application Key Dates

EVENT	DATE
BEA nominations open	25 May 2023
BEA applications open	31 May 2023
BEA nominations and applications close	24 July 2023
Judges Site Visits	14-18 August (<i>Judges MUST be available during this week to participate as a judge</i>)
Finalist Announcement Function	5 October 2023
Gala Awards Dinner	21 October 2023
Judges Feedback to Applicants	27 November 2023

Site Visits

The Judges' site visits **14-18 August 2023** give applicants the opportunity to showcase their businesses. When applying, applicants will be required to identify at least three, four-hour slots in preference for a site visit.

During the site visit, judges will want to see evidence of strategy, vision, and values coming to life in your business. All judges are to visit each applicant together to reduce disruption to the business. Site visits will be 45 minutes in duration.



Feedback Provided to Applicants

By **27 November 2023**, the Toowoomba Chamber will provide all applicants with judges' feedback.

Applicant Assessment and Criteria

Assessment for the Focus HR Business Excellence Award 2023 are outlined in Appendices as follows:

- **Appendix A** | Category Assessment Criteria
- **Appendix B** | Employer of Choice Assessment Criteria
- **Appendix C** | Future Leader of the Year.

This year the process will follow a similar path to 2021 and 2022, with a shorter and simpler application form followed by an onsite visit from the judging panel. This process has been chosen to ensure the best applicant wins rather than best writer.

Please note if the applicants place of employment is not suitable for onsite visits, then the judges will book in an alternative interview location instead – either face-to-face or over the phone.



APPENDIX A

JUDGING | CATEGORY ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

This assessment criteria relates to the following categories:

- Agriculture
- Best Regional Business
- Community and Not-For-Profit
- Gerry Doumany Export
- Health and Wellbeing
- Hospitality
- Industry
- Innovation and Technology
- Professional Services (Up to 10 Employees)
- Professional Services (11 Plus Employees)
- Property, Construction and Development
- Retail
- Tourism.

The assessment breakdown for the Focus HR Business Excellence Award 2023 is as follows:

- written application | 45%
- site visit and presentation from the applicant | 45%
- the 30 second – 1minute video of the business | 10%.

Note: Judges will be advised that they **should** reduce applicant scores who exceed word and video limits length limits. The site visit will give you the opportunity to showcase your business. During the site visit, judges will want to see evidence of your strategy, vision, and values coming to life in the applicant's business. All judges are to visit each applicant together to reduce disruption to the business.

Assessment Criteria

Business Strategy

Business strategy is key to success. This section is about demonstrating a sound understanding of business goals and objectives including evidence of strategic direction, goal setting and the processes you have in place to achieve them.

Did you:

- submit a summary of your strategic plan or business plan (maximum three pages)
- describe your strategic or business planning process
- outline how you link your strategic plan or business strategy to day-to-day operations
- outline your vision and values and how they are embedded in the organisation and communicated to the team
- describe what benefit your business has received from strategic planning and business planning.



Business Performance & Improvements

Successful businesses know what drives their economic engine and what they need to measure to ensure they are building a long-term sustainable and profitable business. Metrics are important to a business. It helps track how a business is performing and how it benchmarks itself.

Did you:

- outline the key indicators on how your business measures its performance
- provide evidence of financial literacy, financial management practices and performance (profitability, liquidity, sustainability of the business) such as graphic representations of financial performance
- demonstrate how you measure customer relationships, customer retention, customer growth
- show the other tools and measures you use to monitor performance
- outline your quality assurance processes and procedures
- outline how your business focuses on continuous improvement.

People Management and Development

People are the central component of all businesses. How businesses manage this important resource and the initiatives they put in place to ensure the development and professional progression of their staff is a critical component of excellence in business.

Did you:

- describe your people practices your business has in place for the life span of an employee – from hire until the leave the business
- outline your attraction and retention strategies
- illustrate how you onboard new employees
- describe your training and development programs
- highlight your inclusion and diversity policies and practices and success stories
- outline how you focus on workplace culture and staff engagement and staff wellbeing
- demonstrate your leadership model and how they invest in their leaders.

Note: Sole Traders who choose not to complete this section will receive an automatic 3/5 score.

Customer & Market Focus

Businesses need to understand who their customers are, how to attract them, what their needs are and how to retain/create loyal customers from them.

Did you:

- describe your approach to attracting and retaining customers
- provide evidence of your understanding of your target market and customer needs
- demonstrate your marketing/promotional activities
- outline your unique selling proposition and what gives you, your competitive advantage
- articulate your unique value proposition identifying why your customers need your product and/or service
- show your customer service strategies/ethos
- outline how they keep abreast of customer needs and satisfaction.



Community Engagement and Activities

A key component of excellence is engagement with and support of the broader Toowoomba community. The Toowoomba business community has a legacy of engaging and giving back to the community including volunteering, sponsoring local charities and interest groups, and holding events to support and contribute to the development of the local community.

Did you:

- describe how your business engages with and helps to support the broader community
- identify what local community support (in-kind, financial etc.) you provide
- show how you are involved in community awards and accolades.

Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Resilience

Innovation, entrepreneurship, and resilience enable businesses to respond to challenges, capitalise on opportunities, adapt quickly, create efficiencies, and lead to long term growth and sustainability. Excellence in business does not necessarily mean being immune to the impact of the business environment, rather it is about the business' ability to face and recover from adversity and the agility to change and adapt when needed.

Did you:

- demonstrate your innovative practices implemented to drive success
- show your entrepreneurship in the development of a process or practice to enhance their business growth
- highlight the challenges your business faced, and measures put in place to be resilient in the changing business environment
- show your businesses changes and expected long-term impact on operations and overall net benefits
- discuss any unintended outcomes from the changes – positive and negative.

Business Summary Video

Applicants are afforded the opportunity to sell their 'business excellence' by highlighting how their business displays and delivers excellence.

Did your one-minute video pitch describe:

- who you are
- what your business does
- why you believe you are excellent and an award-winning business.

Note: All finalists will be offered the opportunity to complete a new video for the Focus HR Business Excellence Awards 2023 Gala Awards Dinner.



APPENDIX B

EMPLOYER OF CHOICE ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The assessment breakdown for the Focus HR Business Excellence Award 2023 is as follows:

- written application | 45%
- site visit and presentation from the applicant | 45%
- the 30 second – 1minute video of the business | 10%.

The site visit will give you the opportunity to showcase your business. During the site visit, judges will want to see evidence of your strategy, vision, and values coming to life in the applicant's business. All judges are to visit each applicant together to reduce disruption to the business.

Note:

Judges will be advised that they **should** reduce applicant scores who exceed word and video limits length limits.

The business is required to nominate key personnel to undertake a short survey as part of the process.

Assessment Criteria

Satisfaction and Wellbeing

Businesses that consciously focus on employee's wellbeing and satisfaction are typically more likely to produce exceptional products and services, have an aligned workforce and be successful. A focus on individuals, programs, processes, and systems can supercharge a workforce productivity.

Did you:

- demonstrate how you focus on staff culture and demonstrate that their work environment promotes the health and wellbeing, motivation and satisfaction of its employees
- identify any extra benefits or 'perks' you provide to your employees
- outline how you show your employees that they care about them
- provide evidence through results of staff surveys (or similar) of staff satisfaction, commitment and retention
- provide evidence of financial investment such as percentage (%) of turnover spent on benefits/wellness and dollars (\$) per head spend on benefits/wellness per annum or other relevant metrics)
- outline creative and innovative ways you are leading the way to promote workforce wellbeing within their specific industry
- outline how you stand out from other employers and go over and above.



Culture and Employee Engagement

Employees build the business brand. An employee that speaks positively about the business they work in, is considered motivated and connected. A strong and positive culture can enhance productivity and improve employee and customer experience. Committed employee engagement can lead to innovation, efficiency, and a real sense of employee belonging.

Did you:

- articulate how your people would describe their organisational culture and working environment
- outline initiatives you use to ensure effective communication with and involvement from their people
- outline how your business has created a culture that is consistent with its missions, vision and values
- demonstrate how you measure the level of employee engagement and how you share statistics and information with their team
- describe how your initiatives have made a real impact on their organisation and resulted in tangible results for your organisation
- outline challenges you faced and described your learnings.

People Development

People are the central component of all businesses. Employers that encourage and support employees to grow, and progress is an essential component of being an Employer of Choice. How businesses manage this important resource and the initiatives they put in place to ensure the development and professional progression of their staff is a critical component of excellence in business.

Did you:

- outline your employee training and development and growth initiatives
- detail your policies or practices (formal or informal) that you have in place for career progression
- provide evidence of financial investment such as percentage (%) of turnover spent on employee development and dollar (\$) per head spend on employee development or describe their professional development program for staff and leaders
- describe how your people initiatives improve productivity and commitment and support employees to achieve high performance and reach their full potential.
- outline how you engage employees in their own learning and development.

Performance, Recognition and Reward

Employees need to understand the organisation's goals and the impact of their personal contribution positively reinforced. Businesses with excellent recognition and reward programs demonstrate increased productivity and higher levels of employee engagement and conversation. It typically decreases employee turnover, results in enhanced employee satisfaction and an enjoyable and engaging work environment.

Did you:

- demonstrate how your employee performance reviews/appraisals support employees achieve high performance
- articulate your approach to providing feedback to their people, for example when, how, and why
- identify how you approach performance improvement and the impact of this
- show how you effectively remunerate, reward, and recognise their employees' efforts.



Committed Leadership and Strategy

Leaders connect in a meaningful way, with employees, with their business vision and with their business strategy. Only committed connection brings employees and strategy.

Did you:

- describe your approach to people management aligned to your organisation's strategic objectives
- describe how your senior leaders demonstrate organisational culture, values, objectives and expectations through effective leadership behaviour
- outline how you go about developing leaders in their business
- articulate how you get employees on board with their strategic direction of the organisation
- describe your practices to maximise employee engagement and communication within their organisation.

Strong Employer Brand for Attraction

A business needs a strong supply of qualified and quality talent to achieve business goals. Employee attraction and retention can help businesses maintain a competitive advantage of like companies. The ability to attract and retain staff has been demonstrated as a key tool in business growth and success.

Did you:

- outline techniques you use to attract and retain talent?
- demonstrate how you actively promote their employee value proposition, that is, promoting why they are great to work for
- describe how you have increased your ability to attract quality people in their field.

A Short Staff Survey

Applicants are required to nominate some staff to complete a short staff survey to be filled out as part of the application process.

Business Summary Video

Applicants are afforded the opportunity to sell their 'business excellence' by highlighting how their business displays and delivers excellence.

Did your one-minute video pitch describe:

- who you are
- what your business does
- why you believe you are excellent and an award-winning business.

Note: All finalists will be offered the opportunity to complete a new video for the Focus HR Business Excellence Awards 2023 Gala Awards Dinner.



APPENDIX C

FUTURE LEADER OF THE YEAR ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

This award recognises young business leaders who demonstrate outstanding entrepreneurial spirit, strategic direction, and innovative ideas, whilst providing inspiration to a new generation of upcoming young businesspeople.

Nominations are sought from individuals who are 35 years and under (at the time of award nomination opening) and who have had significant success in business.

The Future Leader of the Year assessment process consists of three parts:

- written application – 25% of the assessment
- an interview – 50% of the assessment
- a one-minute video – 25% of the assessment.

Judges may seek further information or clarification from any applicant or referee, at their discretion. This may be in the form of further written information or verbal contact. All interviews will be held at the Toowoomba Chamber office.

Note: Judges have been advised that they should reduce applicant scores who exceed word and video limits length limits.

Submission Requirements/Interview Tips

A future leader embodies the necessary skills and characteristics required to successfully lead a workforce or team of the future. While setting a vision and executing a strategy is expected from a leader today, achieving these company goals also relies on the ability to motivate, communicate, and inspire a workforce (Think Big, 2023).

Did you:

- submit a current resume (maximum 2 pages) and 1 referee that can be contacted
- describe what professional and personal success means to you
- outline your most significant career or personal achievement to date
- illustrate your five-year plan for yourself
- make clear the obstacles you have faced as a young business leader and how you have dealt with each of those challenges
- detail your approach to leadership, diversity and inclusion, and how it influences your actions and activities within the company
- highlight initiatives that you have developed as a leader in your business, detailing your success
- describe your leadership style, what makes a good leader and any areas you need to work on in terms of your personal leadership style
- outline how your leadership positively impacted on resolving a matter in your business, workplace and or community
- present your contribution, interests and involvement in the community



- profile how you have contributed to the Toowoomba business community, including the period, amount, nature and level of the contribution
- articulate why you should be Future Leader of the Year 2023.

Future Leader of the Year Summary Video

Applicants are afforded the opportunity to sell themselves by highlighting how they have the characteristics and skills to lead Toowoomba's future.

Did your one-minute video pitch describe:

- who you are
- what you do
- why you believe you are the Future Leader of the Year 2023.

Note: All finalist will be offered the opportunity to complete a new video for the Focus HR Business Excellence Awards 2023 Gala Awards Dinner.

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