

Employer of Choice Award

The Employer of Choice Award recognises a tourism business that has risen to workforce challenges, and is maintaining a positive and high performing workplace, with industry leading practices and innovations to retain and recruit staff. The tourism business is supporting its workforce to flourish and succeed, is inclusive and responsible, and pays a fair wage to all staff.

What are the judges looking for?

- **Leadership** – Evidence that you are an outstanding employer of choice, with results over a sustained period of time (12-24 months).
- **Operational excellence** – Workplace and employee policies are well thought out, comprehensive, effective and evaluated to retain and develop staff.
- **Impacts and outcomes** – evidence of positive impacts on your business, community and employees.

New Zealand Tourism Sustainability Commitment

This Award specifically relates to tourism businesses showing leadership on business commitment 7, while advancing other elements of sustainability.

Commitment 7: Employer of Choice. We attract, support and develop the workforce we need to flourish and succeed.

Judging criteria

Your entry should include the following and must be submitted using the online portal.

Your organisation statement* (150 words)

A short statement about your organisation and why you should win this award.

Award statements

Award statements should concisely outline how you have demonstrated the criteria for this award, for each of the areas below:

1. Leadership (up to 300 words) – 30 points

- How do you create a distinct company culture and use this as a driver to motivate and retain great staff?
- Do you provide professional development and training, and clear career paths?
- Do you pay a fair wage to all staff, appropriate for the skills and attributes they bring to the job?
- Do you actively encourage the sharing of ideas and knowledge, and allow constructive criticism?
- How do you connect with employees to drive engagement, communicate a clear vision and exert strong personal values?
- How do you support and manage your workforce through uncertainties e.g. uncertain demand patterns, seasonality, lack of staff housing, remote location, language barriers?
- What have you done to ensure the wellbeing of your staff?

2. Operational excellence (up to 350 words) – 35 points

- Do you have strategic business plans, clear objectives, vision, etc. developed with staff input and referencing people initiatives?
- Is there documentation of key processes and standard operating procedures?
- Do you provide staff feedback opportunities, including satisfaction surveys and systems to respond to staff feedback?
- Do you have annual performance plans and KPIs?
- Are there comprehensive and up-to-date policies, e.g. health and wellbeing, flexible working hours and working from home?
- Do you have salary benchmarking with fair pay and benefits?
- How are you championing the New Zealand Tourism Sustainability Commitment?
- What carbon measurement and reduction programme do you have in place? When was this introduced and how has it evolved?
- What actions are you taking to support New Zealand’s Predator Free 2050 goal or champion biodiversity and conservation efforts?
- How are you embracing Te Whakarae Māori (Māori approaches and knowledge) within your organisation and team?
- How do you utilise and promote the Tiaki Promise? What initiatives do you have in place to educate visitors about New Zealand’s cultural and behavioural expectations?

3. Impacts and outcomes (up to 350 words) – 35 points

- What have the impacts been on your business and employees (improved morale, improved job satisfaction)?
- Have you received any external recognition, e.g. awards for your employment practices?
- Has there been a link between enhanced workplace practices and improved customer feedback?
- What are you most proud of as an employer?

Financial Performance and Compliance Statement

As part of the submission process, you will be asked to confirm that:

- Your business is financially sound.
- The entrant (individual or organisation) is not under investigation or been prosecuted by any New Zealand or international statutory body.
- All the information provided in your application is true and verified where possible.

This will be a tick box in the submission form.

* This information may be used in TIA and Award partners in marketing material.



Supporting material

While not mandatory, we strongly encourage all entrants to submit supporting material, as it provides valuable context for the judges and can strengthen your entry. However, it must clearly relate to the relevant question and written response. All information required for judging must be included within the designated answer fields. Supporting material is supplementary and will not be assessed as a standalone component.

Supporting material should be a single document in PDF format of no more than 10 pages and a max of 2MB. You may include graphs, screenshots, testimonials or a link to video content (no more than three minutes video footage in total). Documents exceeding 10 pages will not be considered.

Use of AI tools

Applicants may use AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT, Copilot etc) to assist with drafting and support the preparation of their submission. However, all content must be factually accurate, reflect the applicant's genuine work and achievements, and be verifiable by the applicant.

AI must not be used to fabricate data, outcomes, testimonials, or experiences. The applicant remains fully responsible for the integrity of their submission.

Referee

You will be asked to provide the name of a referee, including their contact email and phone number. If you are selected as a finalist, your referee may be contacted by a member of the judging panel.

Questions?

If you have any questions about the awards or the entry and submission process, please contact events@tia.org.nz.

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2026 Entry Terms and Conditions

- You must complete an online entry form for each of the awards you wish to enter.
- **Entry Fees:** An entry fee is applicable for each award category (excluding the Sir Jack Newman Award). The entry fee is non-refundable.
- Payment by credit card is required at the time of registration. If you'd like to pay by invoice, please email us. Failure to pay the full amount by the required date may result in the entry being removed.
- For individual awards, you can only enter yourself or an employee.
- For business awards, you can only enter your own organisation.
- Entry for the Sir Jack Newman Award is by nomination only and nominations need to be submitted via the awards portal by the awards closing date.
- The judges' decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
- **Previous Award Winners and Finalists:** Previous winners and finalists are welcome to enter the New Zealand Tourism Awards. The only exception to this is the Toroa ā-uta, Toroa ā-tai Māori Tourism Award which a three year stand down period applies for the previous year's winners of this award (2023-2025). Previous winners of this award can still enter other categories.
 - For all other categories, if you were a winner or finalist in 2025 and are eligible to enter into the same award category again for 2026, your entry must clearly demonstrate significant improvements or changes compared to your 2025 submission. You will be required to provide this information in a separate text box on your entry form.
- Current employees of Tourism Industry Aotearoa cannot enter the awards.
- All finalists and winners agree to media coverage. All entry information is held on a commercial-in-confidence basis. No entry information will be shared or distributed to third parties (with the exception of the judging panel). Where an award sponsor requests information to promote the finalists or winner in their category, TIA reserves the right to provide them with the organisational statement provided on entry. Entrant's contact details may be provided to the Awards sponsors and Tourism Industry Aotearoa Strategic Partners.
- TIA reserves the right to cancel the Awards programme or individual award categories within the programme.
- TIA reserves the right to remove an entrant or entry for risk of reputational damage or events that occur between entry and awards night that necessitate action by TIA.
- The entrant (individual or organisation) confirms that they are not under investigation nor have been prosecuted by any New Zealand or international statutory body (for example Accident Compensation Corporation, New Zealand Police, Health and Disability Commission, Inland Revenue Department, Immigration, WorkSafe NZ, Commerce Commission or other). If this is to be found untrue, it will result in the entrant being removed from the Award category.
- TIA may choose to conduct their own research from public sources on entrants. This may result in information being provided for judges consideration as part of the judging process.

If you have any questions, please contact events@tia.org.nz

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