

Visitor Experience Award

The Visitor Experience Award recognises a tourism business that is meeting and exceeding the expectations of visitors.

The business can demonstrate how it is delivering a consistently excellent visitor experience, by focusing on the unique experience it offers its visitors. It will show what steps it has taken to improve the end-to-end visitor experience. The business will actively support and promote the Tiaki Promise both internally and with their visitors. They will convey the essence of Tiaki to visitors to educate them about Aotearoa New Zealand's cultural and behavioural expectations.

What are the judges looking for?

- **Leadership** – A clearly defined Visitor Experience programme which has been successfully implemented and is having a significant and positive impact on visitor satisfaction.
- **Operational excellence**
 - A coordinated approach with strong project management. The Visitor Experience programme includes actions to educate visitors about New Zealand behaviour and culture – the business actively supports and uses the Tiaki Promise.
 - Visitor satisfaction improvements are being driven by business improvements based on strong insight and data. You should be an active supporter of the Tourism Sustainability Commitment which aligns with TIA's Tourism 2050 strategy, recognising its environmental, economic, cultural and community goals.
- **Organisational development** – The programme is integrated throughout the business, has staff buy-in, and is underpinned by staff training and development.
- **Impact and outcomes** – Demonstrable results are documented over a sustained period of time (at least 12 months) and the impact measured.

New Zealand Tourism Sustainability Commitment

This Award specifically relates to tourism businesses taking a lead role on the TSC's Visitor element – "New Zealand provides world-leading experiences for both international and domestic visitors" This award focuses on business commitments 4, 5 and 6, while advancing other elements of sustainability."

Commitment 4 – Visitor Satisfaction. We strive to always meet or exceed visitor expectations.

Commitment 5 – Culture and Heritage. We embrace Aotearoa New Zealand's culture and heritage as part of delivering a unique and authentic visitor experience.

Commitment 6 – Visitor engagement. We engage with visitors about how to be great travellers within Aotearoa New Zealand.

Judging criteria

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

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 the organisation has demonstrated the criteria for this award, for each of the below areas:

1. **Leadership** (up to 200 words) – 20 points

- Tell us about your Visitor Experience programme and why it is industry-leading.
- Why was it developed and implemented?
- What are the objectives?

2. **Operational excellence** (up to 250 words) – 25 points

- Who did you consult with in the development of your Visitor Experience programme?
- What role does data and insight play in this programme?
- How is progress evaluated and feedback acted on?
- What business improvements have been introduced as a result of visitor feedback?
- How do you use and promote the Tiaki Promise? What initiatives do you have in place to educate visitors about New Zealand's cultural and behavioural expectations?
- 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/or visitor experience?

3. **Organisational development** (up to 250 words) – 25 points

- How is your Visitor Experience programme integrated throughout your business?
- What staff training or professional development underpins this programme?
- Was there strong staff buy-in?
- How are key learnings being shared beyond your organisation?
- Have you encountered any challenges in developing/implementing this Visitor Experience programme, and if so, how were these overcome?



4. **Impact and outcomes** (up to 300 words) - 30 points

- What results has this programme achieved over a sustained period of time (at least 12 months)? Provide before and after metrics, where relevant.
- Has it had benefits beyond what was expected?
- What plans do you have to improve or evolve the programme?
- How does this programme contribute to growing a sustainable tourism industry that benefits Aotearoa New Zealand?

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.

Brought to you by:





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.

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