

CATEGORY 4. ECOTOURISM

This category aims to recognise ecologically sustainable tourism with a primary focus on experiencing natural areas that foster environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation.

Important reminders:

- *Entrants must ensure their answers refer specifically to the product and category they are entering.*
- *Entrants are encouraged to answer questions to highlight participation in tourism-related accreditation programs.*

Question 1. Product (20 points)

- Provide a general overview of the nature and history of your business. You must demonstrate your eligibility for entry in this category as outlined in the descriptor above.
- Describe your services and/or facilities and the tourism experiences offered.
- How do you foster a greater understanding and appreciation of ecotourism?

TIPS: *Part a) Consider stating where you are located geographically (perhaps include a map shot) and including a picture to help judges visualise your business.*

Part c) Explain how your product meets the key principles of ecotourism. For example providing positive experiences for visitors, contributing towards conservation, building environmental and cultural awareness and respect, promoting responsible travel etc.

Question 2. Business Plans (20 points)

- Describe the key features of your business plan for example goals, strategies and outcomes.
- Demonstrate your financial viability. If your business has not experienced growth, explain.
- Describe the risk issues you have identified for your business and summarise the risk mitigation strategies you have put in place.
- Demonstrate your involvement in, and contribution to, the tourism industry. Explain how it contributes to the success of your business and the tourism industry as a whole.

TIPS: *Part a) Explain what were you trying to achieve i.e. your business vision, how you went about it and the related outcomes.*

Part b) would benefit from the inclusion of graphs illustrating income and expenditure and/or nett profit/loss for the qualifying period. This could be presented as a percentage or dollar value.

To demonstrate if your business is viable you can show:

- *An increase in average spend*
- *Reduction in loans*
- *Amount of forward bookings compared to previous year*
- *Agents/wholesalers – 3rd party referrals*
- *A percentage increase*
- *Visitation numbers (have they increased?)*

Judges want to see that you've got plans in place (particularly if you're a new business) to ensure the continuity of your business, that you have a pipeline. That could be:

- *You have a relationship with local Visitor Information Centre or other sources for referrals*
- *Repeat customers*

You can also show that you've done research into things like the lifetime value of a customer.

Part c) Risk management relates to all parts of your business including risk to the visiting public, specific business related risk and Occupational Health and Safety. Consider using a practical example or detail an incident and outcome to prove how your risk management strategy works. Also consider displaying information in a matrix form and identifying levels of risk.

Part d) Demonstrate your involvement at local, state and/or national level. Examples could include pre and post touring, cooperative marketing, media famils, cooperation with local and state tourism authorities, tourism accreditation, active membership of industry associations, leadership in industry forums, involvement in tradeshows, other partnerships and alliances etc.

Question 3. Marketing (20 points)

- a) Who are your target markets and how did you identify them?
- b) Describe the marketing strategies used to attract each target and detail the success/outcomes of those strategies.
- c) What is your distinctive difference and how do you promote it to attract each of your target markets?
- d) Demonstrate how potential visitors are provided with an accurate and responsible depiction of what to expect from the experience/product.

TIPS: *Consider all arms of marketing (e.g. sales, advertising, public relations, word of mouth and e-marketing) where appropriate. Your objective should be to demonstrate a clear plan, supported by market research, and the results achieved.*

Part a) Explain what research you used to identify them.

Part b) Consider displaying your target markets and the strategies and outcomes for each in a table format. Ideally there should be a strategy described for each target market listed in part a).

Part d) relates to your marketing material e.g. brochures, flyers, advertising, website etc. and keeping it up to date.

Question 4. Customer Service and Professional Development (20 points)

- a) Explain how you achieve and maintain quality customer service throughout your organisation.
- b) How do you identify and provide for people with specific needs?
- c) State the number of people working in the business and explain how you identify and determine professional development needs.
- d) Describe the range of training/skills development programs undertaken.

TIPS: Part a) Consider how you stay abreast of industry developments. Other points to consider could include your repeat business strategy, feedback collection and changes implemented based on feedback.

Part b) Specific needs could include language, physical, intellectual, dietary and other special needs e.g. groups, special interest etc.

Part c) You should consider fulltime, part-time, casual and volunteers.

Part d) Points to consider could include the objective of staff/self training/skill development programs, how they were measured, the extent of uptake and outcomes for the business.

Question 5. Sustainability and Innovation (20 points)

- a) Describe and demonstrate your commitment to environmental sustainability.
- b) Describe how your business benefits and respects the local community values and culture.
- c) What innovations have taken place during the qualifying period to improve the nature of the visitor experience and minimise possible impacts on the environment?

TIPS: Part a) could include energy and water conservation, building design and location, waste management, recycling, tree planting, engaging environmentally sensitive procedures and accreditation programs.

Part b) Benefits to the local community could include apprenticeships, in-kind contributions, employment of local residents, partnerships with community-based organisations etc. The use of local products and services could include food and beverage suppliers, service providers, tradespeople, and local building material. If local products and services are not available, briefly explain.

Part c) Include innovations that have taken place to improve your visitor experience, infrastructure development, new marketing ideas or sales activities. Innovations do not include routine repairs and maintenance.

Total score: 100 points