

Submission Preparation Tips by Question for the Mildura Business Excellence Awards

Section 1: Overview & History

Overview	Judges Tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is the 'executive summary'. The purpose of this question is to set the scene for the reader of the submission. This is where you need to focus on selling your product by drawing out the key strengths and identifying what makes you different from your competition. This is a good place to identify what innovation has occurred during the qualifying period 1 January – 31 December 2009. To avoid disqualification it is a requirement that you state your eligibility for entry into this category. The maximum length of this answer should be 1 page.
	Image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An image that represents the core business. If your business is diverse select the image that best reflects the product being entered.
	Supporting documents for site visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation to support your eligibility to enter the category selected, for example: - a certificate confirming AAAT star rating of entering an accommodation category; a document substantiating the number of full-time employees; etc

Section 2: Product or Service

Product	Judges Tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When answering this question it is important to show your business in light of the industry, not in isolation. Identify and communicate what makes you different, better, innovative or unique from your competition. The word innovation is often misunderstood. Innovation is not limited to infrastructure and could include marketing ideas or sales activities. Routine maintenance and repairs do not constitute innovation unless they have substantially changed the business. <p>Definition of innovation: Introduction of a new idea into the marketplace in the form of a new product or service, or an improvement in organisation or process.</p>
	Image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Images reflecting the business, especially the area in which innovation has occurred (if possible). Images that reinforce the product's strength or point of difference (if possible).
	Supporting documents for site visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Samples of product A copy of your product brochure. A copy of key pages from your website or your website up on screen.

Section 3: Business Planning

Business Planning	Judges Tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a business question and the answer should display strategic thinking and planning. • Make sure that you substantiate your claims. This does not require an academic thesis, more a clear explanation of the process followed to achieve business success. • “Describe the key features of your business plan” is asking you to explain what you were trying to achieve, how you went about it and the related outcomes. Presenting this part of the question in a table often lends clarity. • “Demonstrate your financial viability” can be done in a multitude of ways. Make sure you consider income, expenses and profit. Graphs showing actuals or percentage change are valuable, as is the inclusion of a Profit and Loss statement in your appendix.
	Layout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presenting key points in a table format may improve the clarity of your response.
	Image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graphs • Images of your target markets
	Supporting documents for site visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extracts from a detailed business plan eg index • Samples of research tools • Details behind the graphs • Details behind the selected target markets • Copy of accreditation certificates (if appropriate) • Extracts from your risk management plan. • If an audit has been undertaken include a copy of the report. • Copies of checklists, sample report forms etc, used for ongoing assessment of risk.
	Judges Tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk management relates to all parts of the business. This question is looking for a broad understanding of risks – Occupational Health and Safety (OHS), public liability, professional indemnity, technology, financial, political, environmental, natural events and vilification. • Not only should you be able to identify risk, but also how these can be minimised.

Section 4: Marketing

Marketing	Judges Tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your response needs to be more than a list of where you advertise. Consider all arms of marketing such as the traditional 4 P's: price, promotion, place and product where appropriate. Other examples include sales, advertising, public relations, word of mouth and e-marketing etc. Your objective should be to demonstrate a clear plan, linked to the target market and objectives identified in the Business Plan question. This should be backed by market research and some means of tracking results. Innovative marketing ideas and programs, research behind activities, and marketing strategies that illustrate vision/long term commitment. The market research does not have to be expensive or complicated. The rationale as to why certain activities were undertaken. This answer should clearly relate to how it helped you achieve the results that were demonstrated in your business plan.
	Layout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presenting key points in a table format may improve the clarity of your response.
	Image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scanned samples of marketing collateral Graphs showing outcomes Scanned samples of research tools eg surveys

	Supporting documents for site visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your marketing plan Samples of marketing collateral eg brochures Samples of research tools Copies of research reports
	Useful Web Sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Australian Marketing Institute www.ami.org.au Tourism Victoria www.tourismvictoria.com.au

Section 5: Customer Service and Professional Development

Customer Service	Judges Tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be careful to avoid ‘motherhood statement’, for example “I provide excellent customer service”. Expand such an answer to explain why, how and the outcome of your actions. • The judges are looking for business activities that are specifically designed to deliver high levels of customer service, innovative approaches to service, and how exceptional service is guaranteed and delivered consistently. • Points to consider could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Your repeat business strategy; - Feedback collection: - How feedback is acted upon; and/or - How complaints are managed. • “Specific needs” could include language, physical, intellectual and other special needs eg family, single females, the elderly etc. • Demonstrate an understanding that customers come to you with the expectation that you will fulfill a promise to deliver a positive experience.
	Image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers interacting with staff, in a positive situation. • Scanned letter from satisfied customers.
	Supporting documents for site visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copies of letters from customers highlighting the quality customer service that they have received (make sure dated during the qualifying period). Excerpts from these could be used to support your answers in the main submission. Remember to cross reference back to your appendix. • Copies of tools used to gather customer feedback. • Your policy/procedures manual outlining the process for handling customer complaints, feedback, and the process you have in place to deliver consistent high levels of customer service. • Your guest books.
	Useful Web Sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International customer Service Professionals www.icsp.com.au

Professional Development

Judges Tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to show you understand the benefit of retaining a GREAT team of employees and how are you pro-active in attaining this. • Can you show a collaborative approach, with employees, to achieve both work and lifestyle objectives? • The range of professional development themes are important and will probably address areas identified under other headings within the submission eg customer service, productivity, risk minimisation, environmental practices. Obvious examples of professional development include University, TAFE and other registered training provider courses. Less obvious examples could include: mentoring, staff swaps, industry magazine subscriptions, contribution on committees etc. • Can you demonstrate examples of when investment in your human capital has impacted on the business? • Are you a forward thinking company that views your employees as more than business assets, seeing them as whole people, with lives and commitments outside of work? • Whilst most training will be business oriented, training directed towards the well being of employees might demonstrate a commitment to staff that flows on to the success of the business.
Image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copies of training certificates. (Make sure they relate to the qualifying period). • Scanned images of professional development tools that you use eg magazines, internet, other publications. • Pictures of staff in a training session.
Supporting documents for site visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-size copies of training certificates • Include a program/plan for staff training • Documentation to confirm the number of full-time equivalent staff.
Useful Web Sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Skills Victoria (formerly Tourism Training Victoria) www.ssv.org.au

Section 6: Sustainability & Innovation

	Layout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presenting key points in a table format may improve the clarity of your response.
	Image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Before' and 'After' shots Graphs showing decline in accidents Signage Scanned sample briefing notes

Environmental Sustainability	Judges Tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The judges are looking for businesses that look broadly at their responsibility as a caretaker of the environment, to ensure the longevity of our industry. For some businesses, environmental protection may be a marketing strength, especially where they have initiated 'best practice' for their industry sector. Demonstrate your understanding that benchmarks in this area are constantly moving. To merely state "we recycle photocopying paper" is insufficient. Environmental sustainability initiatives could include energy and water conservation, building design and location, waste management, recycling, tree planting, engaging environmentally sensitive procedures, selection of suppliers. If you have considered adopting a more environmentally friendly process, but have made a business decision not to, briefly explain why.
	Image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant 'Before' and 'After' shots. Photos of activities specifically related to environmental practices eg worm farm, tree planting. Signage
	Supporting documents for site visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your environmental risk management plan (ERM) Copies of statements of best practice in your sector against which you have been able to benchmark your business. Eg articles from industry newsletters or copies of material from competitor websites. If an audit has been undertaken include a copy of the report. Copies of membership certificates for organisations such as Ecotourism Australia, Green Globe, etc.
	Useful Web Sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider visiting www.ecotourism.org.au; www.seav.vic.gov.au; www.ecorecycle.vic.gov.au if you need some ideas.

Community Sustainability

Judges Tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The judges are looking for leaders introducing cultural and social environment best practice for their industry sector. That is, businesses that consider how they could impact on, and thus do not undermine the integrity, authenticity or viability of the community in which they operate.• ‘Benefits to the local community’ could include apprenticeships, in-kind contributions, employment of local residents, sponsorship, partnerships with community-based organisations etc.• The ‘use of local products and services’ could include food and beverage suppliers, service providers, local trades people, use of local building material. If local products and services are not available, briefly explain why.
Image	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local products (provided or sold)• Copies of menus identifying local product• Letters of thanks from the local community• Pictures at functions where you have donated prizes• Staff meeting with indigenous people (if appropriate)
Supporting documents for site visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Letters of acknowledgement of your support from non-tourism community bodies