

Category Criteria

Business in the Community

For businesses who play an active role in the community.

This award is for the business which demonstrates a significant and positive commitment in the community. Judges will select the business which has tackled pressing social issues and can provide a clear understanding of the positive impact their actions have had. Entrants will outline key facts and impact figures to support their submission.

Entrants must:

- **Community Commitment & Engagement** - Demonstrate a significant and positive commitment to the community, showcasing ongoing efforts to address social issues and support local initiatives.
- **Impact & Measurable Outcomes** - Show how their business has tackled pressing social challenges, with a clear demonstration of the positive impact achieved through specific projects, providing a clear understanding of the impact they have had.
- **Supporting Evidence & Key Metrics** - provide key facts, figures, and measurable impact data to validate their contributions and show the tangible difference their efforts have made.
- Include any other work their organisation undertakes to realise its ambitions.

Category Criteria

Business in Schools

For businesses to share how they work with their local schools.

This category is open to all businesses regardless of size, sector or type, who work with education partners and can show a significant positive impact on students, their school community and the wider community. They will show how they enthuse pupils, plus other achievements through data, testimonials, case studies, media coverage or other relevant evidence.

Entrants must:

- **Educational Partnerships & Engagement** – Demonstrate their strong collaboration with local schools, and education partners and their active contribution to student development and school communities. They must also include how their business has engaged and motivated local school children to explore career opportunities in their sector.
- **Positive Impact & Achievements** – Provide clear evidence of significant positive effects on students, schools, and the wider community, showcasing how they inspire and support pupils.
- **Supporting Evidence & Recognition** – Include data, testimonials, case studies, media coverage, or other relevant proof to highlight achievements and validate their impact.
- Include any other work their organisation undertakes to realise its ambitions.

Category Criteria

Employer of the Year

Open to any business that employs staff and wants to showcase how their employees are being developed.

The award to recognise employers who excel in developing their workforce and engage employees in company values. Entrants must detail successful plans to develop employees and policies to promote diversity, equality and inclusion, including any impact on retention and recruitment. Entrants must also outline efforts to promote employee welfare and engagement.

Entrants must:

- **Workforce Development & Growth** – Demonstrate successful strategies for employee training, career development, and skill enhancement, showcasing measurable outcomes.
- **Diversity, Inclusion & Equality** – Provide evidence of policies that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, along with their impact on employee retention and recruitment.
- **Employee Engagement & Wellbeing** – Highlight initiatives that foster a positive workplace culture, improve employee engagement, and support overall staff welfare.
- Include any other work their organisation undertakes to realise its ambitions.

Category Criteria

Black Country Future Star

For employees under the age of 25 who have taken strides to stand out.

We are looking for a Future Star who is under the age of 25 and has made a real difference within a Black Country business. Employers should nominate those who have made a real impact on their place of employment whilst boosting their career and building skills for life.

Entrants must:

- **Impact on the Business** – Demonstrate how the nominee has made a significant contribution to their company, showcasing achievements and value added.
- **Career Development & Ambition** – Highlight the nominee's dedication to personal and professional growth, including efforts to develop new skills and seize career opportunities.
- **Future Potential & Leadership** – Show how the nominee is building skills for life, demonstrating initiatives, resilience, and the potential to become a future leader in their industry.
- Include any other work their organisation undertakes to realise its ambitions.

Category Criteria

Employee of the Year

For employees aged 25 or over who demonstrate exceptional performance.

This award recognises an outstanding employee who is aged 25 or over and has been with the company for at least one year. Nominated by their employer, the recipient must have made a significant impact beyond their daily responsibilities. This could be through exceptional support of a colleague, spearheading a successful fundraising initiative for the company's Charity of the Year (if applicable), or implementing a major improvement to company systems. The change must be meaningful and demonstrate dedication, innovation, and a commitment to excellence in the workplace.

Entrants must:

- **Significant Impact Beyond Job Role** – Demonstrate how the nominee has gone above and beyond their daily responsibilities to create a meaningful and lasting impact within the company.
- **Initiative & Innovation** – Highlight specific contributions, such as supporting colleagues, leading successful initiatives, or implementing improvements that have positively influenced the business.
- **Commitment to Excellence** – Showcase the nominee's dedication, leadership, and drive to make a difference, reflecting their long-term value to the organisation.
- Include any other work their organisation undertakes to realise its ambitions.

Category Criteria

Family Business of the Year

For businesses owned and managed by a family.

Celebrating the best, established family business from any sector, entrants will need to show how they work together to achieve ambitions for growth. As well as strong financial performance, they will deliver against defined family values that shape company culture, decision-making and overall business operations as well as innovation amid changing market conditions.

Entrants must:

- **Family Values & Company Culture** – Demonstrate how defined family values shape business operations, decision-making, and workplace culture.
- **Business Growth & Financial Performance** – Showcase strong financial results alongside a clear strategy for sustainable growth and long-term success.
- **Innovation & Adaptability** – Highlight how the business has embraced innovation and adapted to changing market conditions to remain competitive and resilient.
- Include any other work their organisation undertakes to realise its ambitions.

Category Criteria

Start-up Business of the Year

For businesses registered since 2023 that are having a positive impact and showing solid plans for growth.

Open to businesses registered since January 2023, the business will have made a positive impact, growing revenues and customer satisfaction. Already gaining traction in either the private or public sector, they must show credible plans for the next 12 months, demonstrating the businesses opportunities for growth and how they plan to scale up.

Entrants must:

- **Business Growth & Impact** – Demonstrate strong revenue growth, increasing customer satisfaction, and measurable success since launching.
- **Vision Execution** – Show what their next steps are to take their vision further and how they ensure that they are delivering their start-up's vision whilst driving its success.
- **Future Plans & Sustainability** – Provide credible plans for continued growth, including strategies for expansion, market traction, and long-term sustainability.
- Include any other work their organisation undertakes to realise its ambitions.

Category Criteria

Professional Service Business of the Year

Open to Accountants, Auditors, Banks, Solicitors, Surveyors, Financial Institutions and Brokers, Wealth Management, Insurance Brokers and Architects.

This award recognises a company that has demonstrated exceptional performance and impact in delivering value to its customers, bringing quantifiable improvement in client performance. They will have testimonials, long-term repeat business, a record in innovation and can show the development of a team achieving sustainable and profitable growth.

Entrants must:

- **Customer Value & Impact** – Demonstrate how their company has delivered exceptional value to clients, leading to measurable improvements in their performance.
- **Innovation & Long-Term Success** – Showcase a track record of innovation, long-term client relationships, repeat business, and a commitment to continuous improvement.
- **Sustainable Growth & Team Development** – Highlight how their team has contributed to achieving profitable, sustainable growth while maintaining high customer satisfaction.
- Include any other work their organisation undertakes to realise its ambitions.

Category Criteria

International Trade

For businesses that export goods across international borders.

For businesses of all sizes and in all sectors, with sound financial management they will excel as an exporter or in assisting others to export goods or services across international borders. Working to a strategic vision, they have developed their markets and overcome issues such as Brexit changes and CBAM to build on our region's exporting heritage.

Entrants must:

- **Export Excellence & Market Development** – Demonstrate success in exporting goods or services or supporting others in international trade, showcasing market growth and global impact.
- **Strategic Vision & Adaptability** – Think about their strategic vision and highlight how their business has navigated challenges, to build on our region's heritage of strong relationships with international partners and customers.
- **Financial Stability & Regional Contribution** – Show sound financial management and how their export success contributes to the region's economic growth and global reputation.
- Include any other work their organisation undertakes to realise its ambitions.

Category Criteria

Manufacturing Champion

For businesses who manufacture products.

For businesses of all sizes within the manufacturing sector. As an entrant they must show their contribution and advancement in their field, including efforts to diversify their offering or engage with new markets. They must also demonstrate how they have met the challenges of inflation, energy costs, increases in raw material prices, and the impact of investments in the business as we enter the next chapter of the region's industrial history.

Entrants must:

- **Industry Contribution & Innovation** – Demonstrate how their business has advanced within the manufacturing sector, including innovations, improvements, or leadership in their field.
- **Market Expansion & Adaptability** – Showcase efforts to diversify offerings, enter new markets, and successfully navigate challenges to build on our region's industrial history.
- **Investment & Future Growth** – Highlight strategic investments made in the business and their impact on long-term growth, efficiency, productivity and sustainability in the evolving industrial landscape.
- Include any other work their organisation undertakes to realise its ambitions.

Category Criteria

Sustainability, Technology & Innovation

For businesses who have embraced new working methods and initiatives and have used them to transform their products or services.

This award celebrates businesses demonstrating exceptional advancements in sustainability, technology, and innovation, who contribute to positive societal impact. They must be able to demonstrate a new approach to problem-solving, with potential for scalability and future impact, as well as evidence of market adoption and customer satisfaction.

Entrants must:

- **Innovation & Problem-Solving** – Showcase a ground-breaking approach to addressing a challenge, demonstrating creativity, effectiveness, and real-world application.
- **Scalability & Future Impact** – Provide evidence of how their innovation has the potential to grow, influence wider industries, and create long-term positive change.
- **Market Adoption & Societal Benefit** – Highlight customer satisfaction, market traction, and the broader positive impact their innovation has on society and the environment.
- Include any other work their organisation undertakes to realise its ambitions.

Category Criteria

Not for Profit Organisation

For a non-profit organisation that has made an exceptional impact in delivering their mission.

This award recognises an outstanding non-profit organisation that can demonstrate exceptional impact, innovation and commitment to their mission. Demonstrating a clear and measurable mission aligned with a specific social cause, they will show success stories and quantitative data to support claims of impact, plus sound financial management and innovation.

Entrants must:

- **Mission & Measurable Impact** – Demonstrate a clear mission aligned with a specific social cause, supported by success stories and quantitative data showcasing real-world impact.
- **Innovation & Effectiveness** – Highlight innovative approaches in achieving their goals, overcoming challenges, and driving meaningful change within the community.
- **Financial Sustainability & Growth** – Show strong financial management, ensuring long-term stability and the ability to expand and enhance their organisation's impact.
- Include any other work their organisation undertakes to realise its ambitions.