

2026

TOP ENERGY
Te Puna Hihiko

Northpower

Northland Business EXCELLENCE AWARDS

NZ CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE
NorthChamber

NBEA

INFORMATION & GUIDELINES



info@northchamber.co.nz



www.northlandbusinessawards.co.nz



09 438 4771

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1. WELCOME

Welcome to the Northpower and Top Energy Northland Business Excellence Awards (NBEA 2026) journey — we're delighted to have you with us.

For nearly 50 years, these awards have celebrated the innovation, resilience and excellence of businesses across Te Tai Tokerau. Entering is more than taking part in an awards programme — it is a chance to celebrate how far you've come, share your story, inspire others, recognise your people, and gain valuable insights that can help strengthen your business for the future.

We hope this journey feels both rewarding and inspiring for you and your team. Please don't do it alone — join us at a Coaching Clinic, connect one-on-one with an Awards coach, submit a draft entry for a coach to review, or give us a call if you need a hand. We're here to support you every step of the way.

These Awards guidelines are here to guide you through the entry process — from checking your eligibility and using the online platform, to understanding what the judges are looking for, where to get support, and what to expect on Awards Night and beyond. Use the Index to find what you are looking for.

Wishing you all the very best with your entry — we can't wait to celebrate your business and learn more about what makes it exceptional.

Warmly, the Awards Team

2. KEY CONTACTS

NorthChamber Awards Entry Support – Brittany Edwards – Awards@northchamber.co.nz or 027 444 1010.

The Entry Coaching Clinics and Awards Business Coaches are here to help you through the entry process. They can provide one-on-one advice and feedback on your draft entry, it's best to submit reviews in sections rather than an entire entry the night before it's due. Please contact the coaches early.

Terry Sage
E | terry@bcnz.net.nz
M | 021 280 8679

Vicki Moselen
E | vicki@bcnz.co.nz
M | 027 352 6321

The NBEA 2026 Website and Facebook page are good sources of information –including dates, events, sponsors, and entrant coaching clinics.

Web:

www.northlandbusinessawards.co.nz<https://www.facebook.com/NorthlandBusinessExcellenceAwards>

Facebook: www.facebook.com/NorthlandBusinessExcellenceAwards

NorthChamber – for any general enquiries.

E | Info@northchamber.co.nz
P | 09 438 4771 or 027 444 1010

The Orchard Business & Event Hub
L1 / 35 Walton Street (Corner of Cameron
and Walton Streets)
Whangārei 0110

3. AWARDS ENTRY

3.1 What is a business and do you qualify to enter?

Please read the information below to ascertain if your business qualifies to enter the Awards. If you are still unsure – speak to the Awards team.

Definitions

For the purposes of these Conditions of Entry, the following terms apply:

- **Legal Entity:** One whole legal entity (e.g., Company, Trust, Sole Trader) and any subsidiaries consolidated by GAAP (Generally Accepted Accounting Principles).
- **Accounts:** Provide one set of accounts (Profit & Loss and Balance Sheet) for the entire entity being judged.
- **Governance:** Northland-based governance structure (e.g., Board, Trustees, Owner) responsible for decisions and risks (e.g., funding, systems, marketing, HR, compliance). Must have ultimate control over inputs (e.g., Franchisees cannot choose alternative services for major inputs).
- **Return on Investment:** Consider return on investment and meet external funders' requirements.
- **Responsibility:** Solely responsible for the budget and strategic plan of the entire entity, demonstrating this within the Northland business.
- **Local Operation:** Locally owned and operated in Northland.

3.2 Conditions of Entry

1. Any sole proprietor, partnership, incorporated society, limited liability company, educational institution organisation, charitable or not-for-profit organisation, with its principal place of business based and trading in the Northland region within the boundaries administered by NorthChamber is eligible to enter the awards (except for those owned by any sponsor of the Northland Business Excellence Awards).
2. A Northland business is one that has a substantial part of its operations based in Northland, has its governance based in Northland and contributes to the Northland economy. The entrant must demonstrate that within their Northland business it is solely responsible for the budget and strategic plan of the whole entity.
3. An organisation that is part of a larger national or international organisation must be able to demonstrate that it operates as a separate business unit.
4. Applicants must disclose any issues that may compromise the integrity of the awards or cause their organisation to discontinue in the next year. These issues may include legal action, law changes, possible loss of funding, or other risks.

5. The organisation/business must have been trading for a minimum of 12 months, at the entry closing date. Emerging Business Category entrants must have been trading in their current form for less than two years at the entry closing date.
6. All entrants must agree to take part in reasonable publicity that has been organised by NorthChamber and as requested by the category sponsor.
7. Entrants are only permitted to enter one business category, i.e. emerging, micro, small, medium etc, PLUS any of the appropriate specialist categories - NRC Excellence in Sustainability and Climate Action, WRMK Lawyers Employer of the Year, Northland Inc Jeroen Jongejans Innovate Northland, Creative Northland Excellence in Creative Industries, One NZ Best Digital Adaptation, WorkSafe – Work Health and Safety and More FM Customer Choice Awards.
8. Entrants may use consultants or other outside assistance to help them prepare their entries. However, the providers of any such external assistance may not be present during any part of the judging process.
9. To be considered for the Northpower and Top Energy Supreme Northland Business of the Year Award you must enter a Business Category i.e. Emerging, Micro, Small, Medium or Large, and win that category.
10. All entries will be reviewed by the judging panel and must allow a site visit if required as part of entry.
11. Business Category entrants must provide evidence of current financial performance in their entry, such as graphs, tables or other data showing revenue, profit and loss, or year-on-year growth. Specific figures are not required. Judges will request financial information at the site visit to verify your entry. Any additional detail will be requested by the Chief Judge, who will be the only person to review it. Please have three years of reports, such as profit and loss and balance sheets, available for the onsite visit. Emerging Business entrants should provide information for the period they have been operating.
12. All entries are treated in confidence. Judges are required to sign a confidentiality agreement that prevents them from sharing any information in relation to entrants.
13. Judges will not judge any organisations where a conflict of interest arises. Entrants or judges can declare a conflict of interest and an alternative judge can be made available.
14. Once judging has been completed entry submissions will be returned to NorthChamber and kept in a secured system.
15. The Judges' decision is final, and no correspondence will be entered into.
16. The Chief Judge in consultation with the Chamber may, where appropriate, suggest that an entrant change the category entered.
17. Entrants consent, as part of the entry process, to allow the NorthChamber to share their contact information with Top Energy and Northpower for the purposes of sending them promotional material as the principal sponsors of the Awards. Their contact details will also be given to the Sponsor of the Category they enter.

4. AWARDS CATEGORIES

4.1 Business Categories

Enter one of these categories, based on business **size**.

- NorthChamber Best Emerging (operating more than 12 months but less than 2 years at entry close date)
- tlc4u2 Ltd Excellence in Business Micro Awards (1-3FTE)
- EMA Small Excellence in Business (4-9FTE)
- Marsden Maritime Holdings Excellence in Business Medium (10-20FTE)
- Visual Tech Northland Excellence in Business Large (>20+FTE)
- Northpower and Top Energy Northland Business Excellence Supreme Award (Business Category winners are eligible for the Supreme Award).

4.2 Specialist Categories

Enter any of these categories as appropriate to your business. They all have their own entry forms, **except** for the Creative Industries Award which utilises the main Business Category Entry form.

- Northland Regional Council Excellence in Sustainability and Climate Action Award
- One NZ Best Digital Adaptation Award
- Creative Northland Excellence in Creative Industries Award
- Northland NZ. Jeroen Jongejans Innovate Award
- WRMK Lawyers Employer of the Year Award
- WorkSafe- Work Health and Safety Award

4.3 Nomination Categories

- Ministry of Social Development He Poutama Taitamariki (Youth Employee/Employer of the Year) Award
- More FM Customer Choice Award
- The Northern Advocate Business Hall of Fame Inductee

5. JUDGING

Judges are selected from the Northland business community for their professional expertise and knowledge of doing business in Te Tai Tokerau. All judges sign a confidentiality agreement and are required to declare any conflicts of interest.

Business Categories

Business Category judges are appointed by Judge Convenor Greg Atkins of BDO, with support from Principal Judge Advisor Pauline Rose, who between them bring more than 35 years judging and Awards experience. Judges work to set guidelines and under their direction. Business category entrants can expect a visit from the judges as well as the tabletop review of their business. Entrants will be contacted to book a time for a visit.

Specialist Categories

Specialist Categories have their own judging panels, they typically include a sponsor representative, subject matter expert relevant to the category and in some instances an independent representative. These categories usually involve a tabletop review of their entry. **Innovate entries** will be contacted to attend a panel interview.

Nomination Categories

Nomination Categories have separate judging processes and panels appropriate to each award. Once confirmed, a full list of judges will be published on the website. Entrants may raise any potential conflict by emailing Awards@northchamber.co.nz.

Note: all winners and finalists are announced at the Awards Night. The only finalists announced prior are those for More FM Customer Choice.

TOP TIPS from the judges

- Attend a Coaching Clinic to understand the entry process and criteria. (Bring past entries with you.)
- Use the Awards Coaches for guidance and feedback on your entry.
- Judging advice: tell your business story clearly. In each answer, cover your intent — what you are aiming to achieve; your actions — what you are doing; and the impact — what difference it has made. Don't feel you need to use the maximum word count. Include supporting documents, graphs and charts as evidence.
- Business Category entrants can also share more detail during the judges' visit.

6. ENTRY FORMAT AND SUBMISSION

6.1 Getting Started

All entrants must initially complete an Expression of Interest form [here](#), this registers you in the system.

You will then be contacted by our Awards team for a discovery chat and sent a link to the Awards Entry forms, which are in electronic format using the JotForm platform.

Sample PDF copies of the entry forms are available for planning purposes, but please note they are not for final submission, **entry is only via the JotForm online platform.**

For help with online JotForm entry, email office@northchamber.co.nz or call 0277755578.

Submit your completed entry by 9.00am, Monday, 3rd August 2026.

6.2 Using the Online Platform (JotForm)

1. Receiving the Entry Form

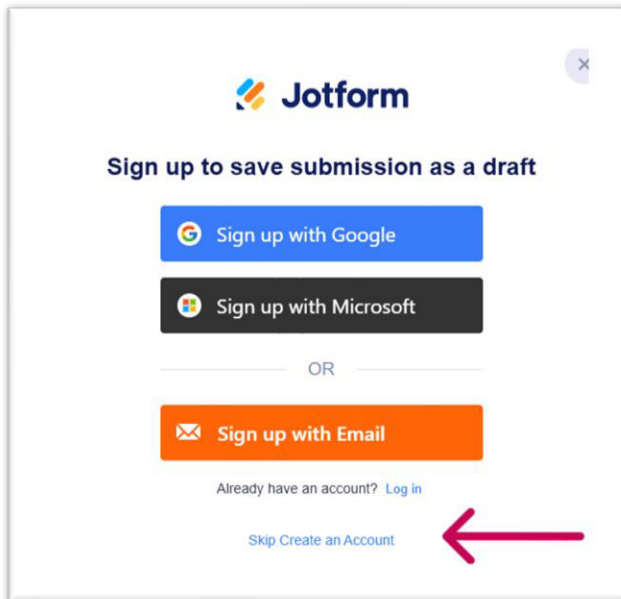
- You will receive an email with a link to your Entry Form(s).
- Keep this email handy for future reference.
- Bookmark the Entry Form(s) in your browser once you start working on them.

2. Starting Your Submission

- Click the JotForm link in the email to start your submission.
- You will see a window prompting you to create an account. This is optional.
- To proceed without an account, click 'Skip Create an Account'.

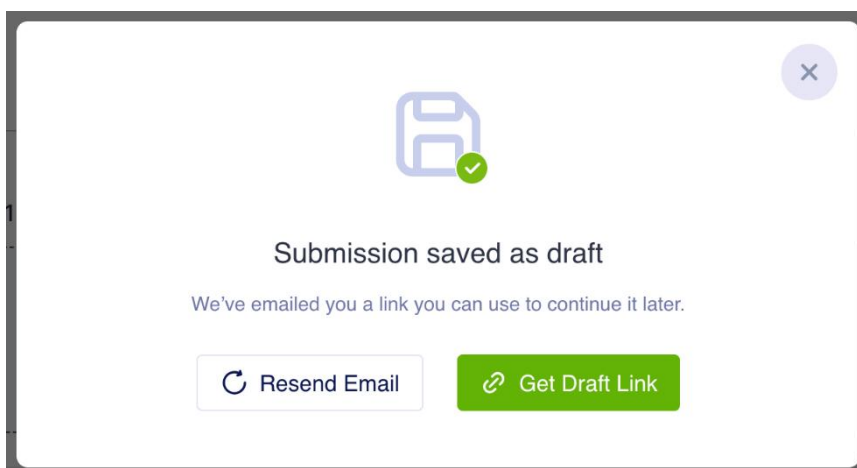
3. JotForm Account

When you click the JotForm link to start your submission, you will see this window. Creating an account is optional. Simply click 'Skip Create an Account' and you will be taken to the entry form.



4. Saving Your Work

To save your work (do this immediately) and to continue later, scroll to the bottom of the form and click 'Save'. The image below shows what you will see on screen. You will also receive an email with a link to your draft entry form.



5. Accessing Drafts

You can access and edit your drafts at any time without creating an account.

To receive a PDF of your Draft or Final Submission

To receive a PDF of your draft or final submission, you can Submit your entry form at any time. You will receive a confirmation email with a copy of your submission and a link that will take you to a PDF copy of your submission. This is useful for reviewing your work with an Awards Coach at a Coaching Clinic.

Please note:

- All required (*) questions must have some text entered before you can submit.
- You can enter 'TBC' or similar in incomplete fields to allow a draft submission to be made.



This is an example of the email you will receive when you submit your draft or final entry. Note there will be a link to Edit and a link to download a PDF copy.

Editing After Submission

If you accidentally submit or need to make changes. Once you hit submit you will receive a **confirmation email** with a copy of your submission and an 'Edit your Submission' link. Simply click through to start editing again. You can edit your entry until the deadline of 9am, Monday, 3rd August 2026.

TOP TIP – *JotForm is a simple platform, so keep your entry content simple, with no fancy layouts, fonts, bullet points or ornate graphics. Any attachments you include as evidence, i.e. graphs, photos etc., should be clearly labelled with the question they relate to so that the judges can easily identify them.*

Need Help?

If you encounter any issues with JotForm, contact us at office@northchamber.co.nz.

7. BUSINESS CATEGORY GUIDELINES

7.1 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Framework

The NBEA Business Category entry and judging process is based on the principles of the Malcolm Baldrige international business excellence framework, using adapted criteria aligned with standards developed by the New Zealand Business Excellence Foundation. This enables judges to benchmark your business against recognised best practice, provide feedback to support capability growth, and recognise your achievements and excellent business practice.

7.2 Entrant Guidelines

These guidelines sit alongside the final entry form and are designed to help you prepare a clear, relevant and well-structured submission. They explain what judges are looking for, how to respond confidently, and how to avoid unnecessary effort or documentation. There is no perfect entry — judges assess how well your approach fits your business, context and size.

How the Entry Will Be Assessed

Judges look for evidence of:

- **Intent** — what you are trying to achieve and why
- **Action** — how you put this into practice
- **Impact** — what difference it has made

Strong entries link all three with equal importance placed on clarity, relevance and evidence.

Completing the Entry Form

Write for a time-poor reader

- Judges are business leaders volunteering their time.
- Clear, structured responses are valued more than long ones.
- Use headings, examples and short explanations.
- Avoid repeating information, reference earlier sections, ensure you understood the question.

Focus on relevance

- Answer questions proportionately, ie use the % weighting as a guide.
- Small and emerging businesses are not expected to operate like large corporates.
- Sustainability, AI, digitisation and similar topics should be addressed where relevant.

Word limits

- Word counts are maximums, not targets.
- Concise answers that clearly demonstrate impact score well.

Evidence and Attachments

- The entry form itself is the primary assessment document.

- Attachments should illustrate results, such as charts, and support your explanation.
- Do not rely on attachments to tell the story.

Ask yourself: Could a judge understand this without opening the attachment?

Key Guidance by Section

Business Summary and Business Story

Be clear and authentic. Avoid marketing language. Judges want to understand who you are and how you operate.

Leadership and Governance

Show clear direction and purpose, leadership adaptability, and how leadership decisions support long-term success.

Strategy and Business Planning

Explain where you are going, how you will get there, and how plans are reviewed and updated.

Customers and Markets

Focus on how well you understand your customers, how that insight shapes what you do, and how you create value.

Measurement and Knowledge Management

Focus on the information that matters most to your decisions, how performance is reviewed, and how insights lead to improvement.

Workforce and Workplace

Respond proportionately. Contractors and flexible arrangements count. Explain how you organise work, build capability, and maintain wellbeing.

Operations and Processes

Judges want to understand your core processes, how they deliver value, and how you improve them over time.

Sustainability

This section is relevance-based. Address only what is material to your business. Financial sustainability and resilience are valid responses.

Results

Show trends where possible. Use percentages or indexed measures if preferred. Judges value improvement and learning over raw numbers.

Site Visits

Site visits may form part of the judging process. Your written entry should stand alone. Site visits deepen understanding — they do not fix gaps.

8. SPECIALIST CATEGORY GUIDELINES

Enter any specialist categories relevant to your business. Key information, such as your business name and descriptor, can be reused across multiple entries. These categories are an opportunity to highlight a distinctive strength, point of difference, or area of focus within your organisation.

8.1 Northland Regional Council Excellence in Sustainability and Climate Action

Please complete the online [Specialist Entry Form](#). This Specialist Category is sponsored by Northland Regional Council.

About the Award

This award recognises businesses that demonstrate a strong commitment to sustainability, climate action and resilience. It celebrates practical steps to lower greenhouse gas emissions, reduce environmental impact, and help create a healthy environment for current and future generations.

Businesses of all sizes and across all sectors have a role to play in reducing their carbon footprint and building long-term sustainability and climate resilience.

Who can enter?

All business category entrants are eligible to be considered for this award.

What judges are looking for

Judges are looking for tangible evidence of the initiatives your business has taken — or supported others to take — to embed sustainability, climate action and resilience into everyday operations.

Please provide information relevant to your business. This may include:

- Developing or trialling innovative solutions, such as new products, services, equipment or machinery, that have a positive climate impact.
- Making smarter and more sustainable energy choices, such as green building design, LED lighting, or high energy star appliances.
- Ongoing involvement in community sustainability or climate initiatives, such as planting days or rubbish clean-ups.
- Current or planned greenhouse gas emissions reduction initiatives, including waste minimisation, renewable energy generation such as solar panels, or low-emissions transport options such as EVs, hybrids, ridesharing, active transport, or electrified off-road vehicles.
- Encouraging more sustainable or climate-friendly practices across your supply chain, including supporting local suppliers and considering environmental and social factors in procurement.
- Demonstrating sustainable water management, such as collecting and reusing rainwater.

Evidence and additional information

You are welcome to include supporting material such as a sustainability strategy, waste minimisation strategy, emissions reduction plan, or any relevant monitoring, evaluation or reporting.

Site visits

Shortlisted businesses may receive a site visit as part of the judging process.

Further support and resources

If you have questions or would like to learn more about council's own climate mahi, please contact the Northland Regional Council climate action team or explore NRC's climate change strategy.

E. climateaction@nrc.govt.nz

P. 0800 002 004

W. [Ngā Taumata o Te Moana](#)

The Sustainable Business Network also has useful resources to help businesses take action on sustainability and climate change.

8.2 Creative Northland Excellence in Creative Industries

There is no Specialist Category entry form. Please use the Business Category entry form that matches the size of your business, such as Emerging, Micro, Small, Medium or Large. To be considered for this specialist category, include relevant aspects of your business throughout your entry through a creative lens, including any creative, cultural or heritage elements where relevant.

About the Award

This award recognises initiative, talent, creativity and entrepreneurship across the creative industries. It celebrates individuals, businesses and organisations whose work contributes to an innovative, competitive and sustainable creative economy.

Who can enter?

Individuals, businesses and organisations operating in the creative industries are encouraged to apply.

What are creative industries?

Creative industries are sectors or activities focused on producing, promoting, distributing or commercialising goods, services and experiences with cultural or artistic origins. They are grounded in human creativity and include the creation, development and distribution of creative products and services.

Examples of creative industries

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- **Audio visual and interactive multimedia:** radio, television, internet live-streaming, podcasting, video games, digital storytelling, moving image, animation and computer graphics.
- **Books and press:** books, newspapers, magazines, libraries and other printed or digital publishing activities.
- **Design and creative services:** fashion design, including cosplay, set and lighting design, graphic design, interior design, landscape design, architectural services, advertising services, hairdressing and costume design.
- **Performance and presentation arts:** curation, choreography, performing arts, festivals, fairs and feasts.
- **Visual arts and crafts:** food, fine arts, photography, crafts and floral design.

What judges are looking for

Judges want to see how creativity sits at the heart of your business — shaping the way you work, the experiences you create, and the impact you have on your audience, customers, community or sector.

8.3 Northland NZ Jeroen Jongejans Innovate Northland

Please complete the online [Specialist Entry Form](#). This award recognises innovation and the vital role it plays in business and is sponsored by Northland NZ.

About the Award

The Innovate Category may include businesses that have not been trading for the minimum period required to enter the main Business Awards. For that reason, this entry form is more detailed, so it can capture information that would otherwise be covered in a Business Category entry.

This category may also be entered with an idea, proof of concept, prototype, or product or service already in market. However, to be eligible for the Supreme Award, you must also enter a Business Category.

Why Innovate?

- Northland NZ and NorthChamber, with the support of local industry, encourage the next generation of Northland businesses to develop well-constructed ideas that can grow into valued and sustainable enterprises.
- It helps create links and networks for emerging businesses and encourages local businesses to think creatively.
- It provides an opportunity to test new ideas in a supportive local business environment.
- It helps keep talent in Northland and supports local people to take their ideas to the world.

- It celebrates a strong idea as much as a rigorous business model. The focus may be more on the product than the company, but judges will still consider technical stretch, path to market, investment and returns, and ability to deliver.
- It sits within the Northland Business Excellence Awards to reinforce that innovation is essential to business success.

Criteria- what the judges are looking for

Please consider the following before completing your entry form.

1. Originality of the innovation
 - Is it a new concept or a variation of an existing idea?
 - Was it developed independently or in cooperation with others?
2. Impact of the innovation
 - Will it make a fundamental change in processes or simply a minor adjustment?
 - Will it impact multiple operational areas or just one specific area?
 - Will it lead to more potential uses / applications within other functions of the organisation?
3. Practicality of its application
 - Will it be readily integrated into existing systems?
 - Will it be cost-effective to implement?
 - Does its implementation present any risk / uncertainty to ongoing operations?
4. Measurability of the benefits
 - Is there a measurable cost saving?
 - Does it result in measurable revenue increases?
 - Does it create measurable efficiencies in operations / marketing?
5. The development process
 - Did the development of the innovation lead to better internal processes (i.e., team building, problem solving?)
 - Can the development approach be applied to similar problems / opportunities?
 - Will staff learn / benefit from the experience?
6. Applicability
 - Is this an innovation that can be applied to other facilities?
 - Is it specific to one region or country, or could it be applied internationally?
 - Could it lead to changes in how industry processes are carried out?
7. Sustainability of the business
 - Environmental
 - Economic - Long term financial viability and opportunities for job creation
 - Social

8.4 One NZ Best Digital Adaptation

Please complete the online [Specialist Entry Form](#). This Specialist Category recognises businesses that are using digital technology to adapt, improve experiences, and create better outcomes for staff, customers and clients.

About the Award

This award recognises how a business has accelerated its use of digital technology to better support its people, customers and clients. It celebrates practical digital adaptation that improves experiences, responds to changing markets, and creates new opportunities.

In business, standing still means falling behind. Today, people expect a smooth and connected experience across every touchpoint and interaction.

What judges are looking for

Judges want to understand how your business has embraced digital technology to meet changing needs, improve experiences, and create value. This may include how you have adapted your operations, explored new channels, improved service delivery, or responded to market change through digital tools and systems.

Examples of digital adaptation

Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- Cloud-based platforms enabling seamless remote office functionality.
- Sales and distribution platforms transforming commerce.
- Advances in machine-to-machine communication.
- Using social media platforms to strengthen engagement.
- Virtual event hosting and other digitally enabled customer or audience experiences.
- Integration software that streamlines processes and workflows.
- Expansion of network infrastructure to support evolving digital ecosystems.
- Satellite services that improve connectivity and accessibility.

8.5 WRMK Lawyers Employer of the Year Award

Please complete the online [Specialist Entry Form](#).

About the Award

The WRMK Lawyers Employer of the Year Award recognises businesses that show a strong commitment to their people and the value they place on open, effective communication and employee contribution. It celebrates innovative leadership and thoughtful approaches to wellbeing and support that help create outstanding workplace cultures.

This award highlights employers who are intentional about building a positive workplace and can inspire other Tai Tokerau businesses to do the same.

What judges are looking for

When completing your entry, please share how you engage with your team and the notable initiatives you have implemented over the last 12 months to strengthen your workplace culture. There is no single model employer — judges expect practices to reflect the nature, size and context of your business.

Guidance for your entry

The following points may help when considering your responses:

- Identify the most important factors that motivate various categories and types of employees.
- Design reward systems and jobs to encourage high performance and engagement from all members of the workforce.
- Invest up to 5% of payroll costs on workforce training/development each year.
- Conduct systematic needs analysis to identify knowledge and skill gaps and link these analyses to strategic plans.
- Design and implement efficient and objective systems for frequent workforce feedback and performance management that go way beyond a typical annual appraisal.
- Design jobs and organisational structures to promote communication, co-operation, innovation, and behaviour consistent with the values and culture of the organisation.
- Thoroughly screen potential new hires and candidates for promotion for appropriate knowledge/skill and values.
- Tailor HR systems and practices to the culture and mission of the organisation rather than implementing each new management fad that comes along.
- Implement a prevention-based approach to workforce health, safety, and security.
- Monitor leading/preventive and lagging measures of workforce health, safety and security on a regular basis and have a systematic approach to implementing action plans when data shows a decline in performance.
- Provide an innovative array of benefits and services for employees designed to foster their loyalty and reduce stress.
- Focus on making your organisation a great place to work.
- Establish goals for safety and employee satisfaction.
- Offer pay, benefits and special services that are better than others in the industry and geographical area.
- Frequently collect data on a wide variety of measures of employee satisfaction.
- Communicate that personal/family lives are more important or just as important as work.
- Establish systems for building and maintaining a loyal and diverse workforce.

8.6 WorkSafe – Work Health and Safety Award

Please complete the online [Specialist Entry Form](#). This award recognises organisations and individuals demonstrating excellence in health and safety through practical, effective and innovative initiatives.

About the Award

The WorkSafe – Work Health and Safety Award celebrates initiatives that make work safer in real and meaningful ways. It recognises practical action, strong leadership, worker involvement and measurable improvement in health and safety outcomes.

This award is about real impact rather than polished writing. Judges want to understand what changed, why it mattered, and what difference it made for people in the workplace.

What judges are looking for

Judges are looking for clear, credible examples of how a health and safety initiative has reduced risk, improved workplace practices, involved workers, and gone beyond minimum compliance requirements.

Strong entries will show:

- Concrete and believable detail, not general statements.
- A clear explanation of the risk before and after the initiative.
- Evidence of practical action, implementation and measurable results.
- Innovation, leadership and a willingness to go beyond compliance.
- Worker engagement and a positive shift in safety culture, behaviours or attitudes.
- Potential for the approach to be used by other organisations, sectors or across the wider region.

Guidance for your entry

When preparing your responses, keep your writing simple, direct and evidence based. Judges are more interested in substance than presentation.

The following prompts may help:

- **Overview of the initiative** – Briefly explain the problem or risk, the context, where and when this took place, and who was involved.
- **What you did** – Describe the specific actions taken, how the initiative was implemented, and any supporting detail such as timelines, feedback or data.
- **Risk reduction achieved** – Show how risk was reduced or eliminated. Where possible, quantify the change and explain how exposure, likelihood or harm has been lowered.
- **Innovation and leadership** – Explain what made the approach effective, different or forward-thinking, and how leadership helped make it successful.
- **Beyond compliance** – Describe how the initiative exceeds legal or policy requirements and whether it sets a higher standard or benchmark.
- **Wider application** – Share whether the approach could be adopted by other businesses, sectors or workplaces, and why it would be valuable.
- **Worker engagement and culture** – Describe how workers were involved in shaping or implementing the initiative and what impact this has had on safety culture or behaviour.

Supporting evidence

You are encouraged to include supporting material such as data, reports, timelines, photos, testimonials, feedback, or other evidence that helps demonstrate impact. Use attachments to support your story, not replace it.

9. NOMINATION CATEGORIES

The nomination categories celebrate outstanding people and businesses making a real difference in Northland. Unlike the Business and Specialist categories, these awards are nominated by the wider business community. To nominate, simply complete the relevant form on the website by the closing date.

- **More FM Northland Customer Choice Award** – recognises a business that delivers an outstanding customer experience and is nominated by its customers. Please note that nominations must not be incentivised.
- **Northern Advocate Business Hall of Fame Award** – honours an exceptional business leader whose entrepreneurship, leadership and community contribution have made a lasting impact in Te Tai Tokerau.
- **He Poutama Taitamariki Award** – celebrates a young person’s outstanding achievement in the workplace, recognising the excellence and resilience they have shown in overcoming life’s challenges, as well as the support of their employer.

10. VALUE PROPOSITION OF ENTRY

10.1 For NBEA Entrants

1. Opportunity to receive an industry-approved Business Health Check clarifying your current position and future opportunities.
2. A ‘Business of Excellence’ entrant endorsement to display on your digital media.
3. Attend presentation events, meet key industry figures, and network with like-minded businesspeople.
4. Entrants have the opportunity to benchmark your business against others, both within and outside your industry.
5. A dedicated capability build session with an Awards coach to review your entry and judges’ feedback.
6. Have the chance to promote your business with national exposure to new customers and potential partners.
7. Celebrate the journey of your business to date with your staff and customers.
8. Name and logo in relevant pre & post award media advertising.

10.2 For NBEA Category Winners

1. Your business featured on the Business Awards and NorthChamber websites for 12 months.
2. Opportunity to profile your business through a NorthChamber event.
3. Opportunity to speak as a panellist or guest speaker at a NorthChamber function.
4. Two free event tickets to one NorthChamber function. (Excluding the Business Awards.)

5. A Business of Excellence Finalist Endorsement to display on your digital media and permission to display the NorthChamber Awards Winner logo on company stationery and advertising material.
6. NZME media package in the Northern Advocate consisting of a full business diagnostic to review current marketing, plus a media package including creative and production to the value of \$2000.00 +GST. (Excludes More FM Customer Choice winners and Northern Advocate Hall of Fame inductee).
7. MediaWorks (radio) media package valued at \$1150+GST includes \$500 airtime and \$650 Creative and production.
8. A bespoke local artist created trophy, winner certificate and feature in post Awards Media including Northern Advocate Feature, NorthChamber e-news and social media.
9. Innovate category winner also receives a feature in the Business Growth and Innovation – Northland NZ e-newsletter and a social media post.

10.3 For the NBEA Supreme Winner

1. Premium NorthChamber membership package for the following year.
2. Opportunity to guest speak or take part as a panellist at a NorthChamber function.
3. Two complimentary event tickets to one NorthChamber function.
4. Two discounted (50%) event tickets to one NorthChamber function.
5. Two complimentary tickets to the Business Awards Presentation for the following year.
6. A Business of Excellence Supreme Winner Endorsement to display on your digital media and permission to display the NorthChamber Awards Winner logo on company stationery and advertising material
7. A special Business After 5 hosting opportunity. Offer includes Venue - at The Orchard, NorthChamber event and marketing support. Catering and drinks to be covered by the winner
8. NZME media package in the Northern Advocate consisting of a full business diagnostic to review current marketing, plus a media package inclusive of creative and production to the value of \$3500+gst
9. MediaWorks (radio) media package valued at \$2150+GST including \$1500 airtime and \$650 creative and production (Consisting of the category winner prize and supreme award prize).
10. Opportunity to feature your business through a NorthChamber event.
11. Your business featured on the Business Awards and NorthChamber websites for 12 months.
12. The bespoke local artist created Supreme winner trophy, winner certificate and feature in the post Awards Media including Northern Advocate Feature, NorthChamber e-news and social media.

11. AWARDS NIGHT 2026

All our entrants are invited to attend this black-tie event and encouraged to join us for an inspiring evening of celebration, connection and community. With around 400 business professionals in the room, it is a chance to showcase your brand, build relationships, and celebrate the work you've done in and on your business.

Finalists and winners in the Business and Specialist Categories are announced on the night, along with the winners of the nomination categories. Customer Choice finalists are announced ahead of the Awards Night.

Together, we celebrate the excellence, courage and commitment that makes our regional business community so strong.

12. KEY INFORMATION SUMMARY

Date & Venue

- **Date:** Friday, 2 October 2026
- **Time:** 5.30pm – 10.00pm
- **Location:** McKay Stadium, 97 Western Hills Drive, Kensington, Whangārei

Tickets

- **Limited availability**, first issue is to entrants and stakeholders, and then opened up to the public. We usually run a waiting list.
- Please indicate the number of tickets you may require on your 2026 NBEA Entry Form
- Confirmation of availability and pricing will follow
- **Price Guide:** Early Bird \$205 + GST for NorthChamber members, sponsors, and entrants; \$220 + GST for non-members.

Not a member yet? Please enquire about our Awards entry special offer and the benefits to being a Chamber member.

Entry Open and Close Dates

Business Awards Categories

Emerging Business

Micro Business

Small Business

Medium Business

Large Business, and

Creative Northland Creative Industries Category (this category uses the Business Entry Form, so these dates apply).

Open – 1 May 2026.

Close – 9am, Monday, 3rd August 2026.

Specialist Categories

NRC Excellence in Sustainability and Climate Action.

WRMK Employer of the Year.

Northland NZ Jeroen Jongejans Innovate Northland.

WorkSafe – Work Health and Safety, and One NZ Best Digital Adaptation.

Open – 1 May 2026.

Close – 9am Monday, 3rd August 2026.

Nomination Categories

The Northern Advocate Business Hall of Fame Inductee and More FM Customer Choice Award.

Open – Now.

Close – Monday, 7th September 2026

Ministry of Social Development, He Poutama Tai Tamariki - Youth Employee/Employer of the Year Award.

Open – Now.

Close – Monday, 3rd August 2026

Judging

7th August 2026 – 9th September 2026. Judges site visits will take place throughout August.

Awards Presentation Evening Event

Friday, 2 October 2026, 5.30-10.00pm.

**We are excited to have you on this journey of excellence.
Please reach out if you need any support.
All the very best with your entry.**