2025   
Business   
Excellence   
Awards

*Please contact Commerce Ballarat on 5333 3233 should you have any queries regarding this application document.*

2025 Application – SME Business Award

ENTRY GUIDELINES *(This page is only for your reference, do not submit this with your application)*

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| How to Enter *Please note: emailed applications will not be accepted*   1. Complete the entry form and attach to the front of both copies of your application (see No.7). 2. Address each of the questions in the general questionnaire. 3. Address each of the category-specific questions – for example, the Trade Business Award. 4. Provide supplementary material. For instance, publicity in the media, customer testimonials, acknowledgement from community groups. Limit this to four pages (in addition to the five pages of your application). 5. Complete your application on A4-sized paper, printed on one side only. Final applications should not exceed 11 pages:  * Entry form (one page) * Business Summary (one page) * General and category-specific questions (five pages) * Supplementary material (four pages)  1. Staple the entry form to the top left-hand corner. (Do not bind your application or place it in a presentation folder). 2. Provide two copies of your application per category with a signed entry form attached to each. 3. Ensure the font in your application is either Calibri or Arial minimum size 11. 4. Post or deliver your entry to:   Commerce Ballarat  “Business Awards Application”  119 Lydiard St Nth  Ballarat VIC 3350  *N.B: Retain a copy of your entry for future reference as all entries will be destroyed after judging.* | Special “Early Bird” Competition!  Submit your application by 5pm 27th May 2025 for your chance to win a $1000 print advertising package donated by the Ballarat Times News Group.  Application Information Sessions  Need help with your application? Attend a free application information session! The sessions will include assistance in addressing the criteria and information on what the judges will be looking for (Please note that these sessions are all the same and you will only need to attend one).  Dates & Times *A MUST for first time entrants*  Tuesday 17 April 2025  Application Information Session (2pm-3pm)  Commerce Ballarat, 119 Lydiard St Nth  Wednesday 30 April 2025  Application Information Session (10am-11am)  Commerce Ballarat, 119 Lydiard St Nth  Thursday 8 May 2025  Application Information Session (5:45pm-6:45pm)  Commerce Ballarat, 119 Lydiard St Nth  Application Mentoring Sessions  Limited numbers of one-hour one-on-one application mentoring sessions will be offered as an opportunity to receive feedback on your completed application prior to its submission.  *To book a place in an application information session or application mentoring session, email admin@commerceballarat.com.au or phone 5333 3233. Registrations for both are essential.*  It is important to note that 83% of the 2024 finalists had either attended an application information session, participated in a one-on-one mentoring session or had entered previously. |

A group of logos of different brands

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

Questions?

For further information or assistance with

your application, phone Commerce Ballarat

on 5333 3233.

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| KEY  DATES | Early bird applications close  5pm Tuesday 27 May 2025  Applications close  5pm Tuesday 3 June 2025  Finalists Event  10am Thursday 17 July 2025  Gala Dinner  Thursday 21 August 2025 |

JUDGING CRITERIA *(This page is only for your reference, do not submit this with your application)*

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| Entries will be judged by an independent panel of business experts from relevant business disciplines.  The initial assessment will be based on the answers given to the prescribed questions which cover issues critical to the success of every business such as planning, human resources and customer service. The most outstanding entrants will be shortlisted for site visits.  While by its very nature the judging for these awards is subjective, in order to provide guidance to both entrants and judges, a set of judging criteria is provided.  The key judging criteria common to all categories are as follows:  1. Business Planning, Adaptability & Resilience  2. Financial Management  3. Marketing  4. Employment  5. Quality  6. Community Engagement  7. Environmental Sustainability  Criteria 1-6 are worth 10 point, with the Environmental Sustainability section worth 5 points.  It is recognised that for micro business or sole traders it will be more difficult to answer Section 4. This is an integral part of every business, so if you are a sole trader, please describe your own personal development. Judges are given flexibility and instruction to assess accordingly in this section.  Judges suggest  Think about your point of difference. Read each question and think about what differentiates your business from others in your category. Focus on what you are passionate about and incorporate that into your answers. It is easy to give a standard answer, but the applications that really stand out are the ones where we feel how passionate the business is about what they do and why. | Feedback  A scoresheet will be forwarded to all applicants to provide constructive feedback on your entry compared with others in your category. On your scoresheet, you will see your score and where it sits against the average and finalists scores for entries within your category. This report will be sent to you after the announcement of finalists.  Feedback is an assessment of the responses in your application and is not a direct judgement on your business.  Please note that the judges’ decision is final and no correspondence or discussion will be entered into. Due to the volunteer nature of the judging panel, individual feedback on applications will not be provided.  Site Visits  Judges will undertake further evaluation of finalists by conducting site visits of each premises. These visits will be at a mutually agreed time and should take no longer than one hour. |

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

*(Please note the mandatory items are marked with an \* below)*

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| * I have read and understand all Entry Guidelines\* * I have registered/attended an Application Information Session (last session Thursday 8 May) * My Business Summary is on a separate page\* * I have answered all questions in the General Questionnaire\* * I have answered all Category Specific Questions\* * I have included Supplementary Material\* | * I have entered two categories (not mandatory but strongly advised) * I have two copies of each application (two judges per category) \* * I have a signed Entry Form attached to the front of each application\* * I have saved a copy of my applications as entries are destroyed after Judging |

ENTRY FORM

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Category entered | | |  | Declaration  I certify that I am authorised by the business named on this entry form to provide the information in this application. I understand that the judges’ decision is final and that no correspondence or discussion will be entered into and that due to the voluntary nature of the judging panel, no individual feedback on my application will be provided.  I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure adequate time is allowed for the application to reach Commerce Ballarat.    Privacy  The information collected will be used for administrative and contact purposes only and will be provided to the 2024 Federation University Commerce Ballarat Business Excellence Awards judging panel for the purpose of assessing this entry.  The contact details of nominees for the 2024 University Commerce Ballarat Business Excellence Awards may be provided to sponsors. Personal information will not be used or disclosed for any other purpose. |
| Business name | | |  |
| ABN | | |  |
| Name *(all award correspondence will be sent to this person)* | | |  |
| Position | | |  |
| Postal Address | | |  |
| City | State | Post Code |  | Confidentiality  All judges acting on behalf of the 2024 Federation University Commerce Ballarat Business Excellence Awards will sign confidentiality agreements to protect the commercial and personal information submitted by entrants.  I certify that the information in this application is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief and fairly represents the affairs of my business. I also understand that if my business is |
| Business Address *(If different to postal)* | | |  |
| City | State | Post Code |  |
| Business Phone | | |  | chosen as a finalist, my signature below authorises the use and public release of my business name and address. |
| Mobile | | |  | Signature |
| Email | | |  | Name |

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| The 2025 Federation University Commerce Ballarat Business Excellence Awards shine a light on the outstanding achievements of Ballarat businesses. We encourage you to turn your nomination into an application. Good luck! | Early bird application close  5pm Tuesday 27th May 2025 | Applications close  5pm Thursday 3rd June 2025 |

GENERAL QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Business Summary

Please provide a 75-word summary of your business, highlighting the relevance to the category entered. This will be used for editorial/advertising purposes for the 2024 Federation University Commerce Ballarat Business Excellence Awards.

Please note that the business summary needs to be on a separate page as it will be supplied to media partners should your business become a finalist.

1. Background  
   1. What is your business name?
   2. What does your business do?
   3. Where is your business located?
   4. When was your business established?
   5. How many people does your business currently employ?
   6. What region does your business cover?
2. Business Planning, Adaptability & Resilience (10 points)
   1. Do you have a current business plan and vision for your business? Explain its main objectives.
   2. How do you monitor performance against your business plan?
   3. How do you revise and adapt your business plan?
   4. What processes do you implement to ensure your business meets its legal, regulatory and/or risk management responsibilities? How do you monitor your current external environment?
   5. In 2024, what strategic changes were made in your business to adapt to your external environment? How did these changes make your business more resilient?  
      How do you keep abreast of changes in the external environment?
   6. Is your business continuing to implement and/or further adapt these changes? If so, how and why?
3. Financial Management (10 points)
   1. Do you adopt a detailed income and expense budget prior to the commencement of each financial year? In 2024 was this revised and how?
   2. What procedures do you have in place to control your work in-progress and/or stock?
   3. What procedures do you have in place to monitor and control your debtors?
   4. What procedures do you have in place to manage cashflow and liquidity? How did you navigate this in 2024?
   5. What benchmarks do you use to manage your business finances - for example, ratio analysis, turnover and margins?
4. Marketing (10 points)
   1. Do you have marketing plan including brand guidelines in place? Did this need to be adapted in 2024 and if so, how was it changed?
   2. How do you seek to differentiate your business from your competitors?
   3. How do you ensure that your products and services are compatible with your chosen position in the market and are consistent with your brand.
   4. Explain the various methods of promoting your business you currently or have previously used?
   5. Explain your strategies for managing your online presence, including website, blog, social media accounts and other online systems.
5. Employment (10 points)
   1. Do you have a workforce plan, either formal or informal,to ensure you have the appropriate workforce?
   2. How do you recruit new staff? Describe your professional development and training processes for new and existing staff.
   3. What procedures do you have, either formal or informal, to listen to and learn from your staff? How do you feel this enhances team spirit?
   4. In what ways do you support a healthy workplace culture in your business and demonstrate a commitment to employee health and wellbeing? Please provide examples from 2024.
6. Quality (10 points)
   1. Do you have a quality standard of work or product you seek to meet, either formal or informal, and how do you ensure this standard is achieved?
   2. How have you established that the quality standard you seek to meet is that required by your target market?
   3. How do you ensure consistency between the quality standards you seek to meet and the pricing of your product?
   4. How do you ensure efficiency in your business and have you implemented any automated systems or processes to improve productivity?
   5. What processes do you have in place to gather feedback from your stakeholders on your products/ services and how action this feedback?
7. Community Engagement (10 points)
   1. How does your business involve itself and or support the broader Ballarat community?
   2. What policies do you have in place to ensure you support local suppliers whenever appropriate?
   3. Do you monitor your business spend to ensure that any policies you might have with respect to local suppliers are complied with?
   4. During 2024, how did you engage with other local businesses/organisations and/or find opportunities to collaborate?
   5. Detail the ways in which your business demonstrates a commitment to diversity and inclusion for your staff and customers?
   6. What is your understanding of what it means to be an inclusive organisation?
8. Environmental Sustainability (5 points)
   1. In what ways do your business activities impact on the natural environment? What initiatives do you have to reduce these impacts?

CATEGORY SPECIFIC QUESTIONS  
All category-specific questions are worth 10 points each.

Power FM

SME Business Award

Open to all small businesses that employ three to twenty full-time employees (FTE)\*. \*If the number of casual/part-time hours worked per week totals 38 hours, this is considered to be one full-time employee.

1. Does your business have a point of difference or a competitive edge to other businesses? If so, explain.
2. What use do you make of the support organisations available to you?
3. What procedures and policies do you have in place to retain and attract staff?
4. Do you have formal customer/client service policies? If so, how do you monitor compliance with these policies?
5. How do you measure the success or the impact of your customer/client service policies on your business or your stakeholders?

SUPPLEMENTRY MATERIAL

Provide supplementary material. For instance, publicity in the media, customer testimonials, acknowledgement from community groups. Limit this to four pages