AWARD CRITERIA

Innovation, Science & Technology Award

Awarded to a business that has successfully utilised digital technologies, innovation, science or technology over the past three years to enhance business performance. The judges will be looking for a new or significantly improved idea, product, service, system or process that is new to the business and, where possible, the wider sector. The benefits should be clearly evident, for example through improved commercial performance, operational efficiency, customer experience, market development or competitiveness.

Customer Service Excellence Award

Awarded to a business that has demonstrated outstanding customer service over the past three years. The judges will be looking for organisations that consistently deliver high-quality customer experiences and place customer satisfaction at the heart of their operations. Applicants should demonstrate clear evidence of how customer service has been embedded within the business, for example through staff training and empowerment, effective customer engagement, service innovation, or the use of feedback to drive continuous improvement. The benefits should be clearly evident and may include high levels of customer satisfaction or retention, positive feedback or reviews, repeat business, or enhanced reputation and loyalty.

Hospitality, Leisure & Tourism Award

This award celebrates businesses that embody excellence in diverse aspects of the Hospitality, Leisure and Tourism sector. It recognises businesses that excel in quality of service, customer experience and satisfaction, service innovation and creativity and setting industry standards. Moreover, this award honours businesses that seek to implement positive initiatives that benefit the local area and beyond. Judges are looking for businesses that seek to minimise the environmental impact of their business operation and contribute positively to the local community.

Manufacturer of the Year

Staffordshire has long been recognised for its manufacturing history, and this award will go to a business or company that has excelled in this sector over the past three years. The judges will be looking at all aspects of the manufacturing process including product design, testing, development, production, marketing, sales and overall business performance. This may relate to a new product or product range, or an existing product that continues to lead the way within its field.

AWARD CRITERIA

Start-Up & Step-Up Business Award

The Start-Up & Step-Up Award acknowledges outstanding achievements in business growth and market entry, specifically tailored for companies with less than 5 years of operation. This category aims to recognise businesses that have exhibited exceptional resilience, effective leadership, innovation, and overall advancement in the competitive marketplace. Eligible businesses in this category should demonstrate a robust market entry, evidence of innovative practices, technologies, or approaches that distinguish the business from competitors, measurable growth with a strong and consistent trajectory, and successful market share expansion. Additionally, the award considers factors such as adaptability, overcoming challenges, and making positive contributions to their industry or community. This category is designed to celebrate the collective success and growth of emerging businesses in the marketplace.

Responsible Business of the Year

This award celebrates both companies and charities making a significant impact in Staffordshire. The Responsible Business Award honours organisations dedicated to social responsibility. Judges will assess employee engagement in community activities, such as volunteering, the support extended to community events and organisations, and the partnerships forged with local nonprofits or service groups. This award is open to businesses and charities actively involved in giving back to the community, whether through charitable initiatives or direct support to individuals in Staffordshire. Highlighting ethical practices like transparency, social value, responsible supply chain management, and adherence to regulations, this award aims to showcase organisations that embody social responsibility and contribute positively to the community.

The Learning, Skills, & Development Award

The Learning, Skills and Development Award celebrates outstanding achievements by individuals of all ages, recognising learners, including students, apprentices, or professionals who have shown a dedication to their skills, knowledge, and professional capability. This award honours individuals who have made a meaningful impact within a business or learning environment by applying newly developed skills to real-world challenges, projects, or organisational goals. Judges will look for clear evidence of continuous learning, practical skill development, and measurable progress, whether gained through formal education, training programmes, apprenticeships, or on-the-job experience. Additionally, judges look for demonstrable evidence of innovative thinking, initiative, and the ability to contribute fresh ideas or solutions that positively influence outcomes.

AWARD CRITERIA

Employer of the Year

Awarded to the business or company that has demonstrated excellence in creating a positive, inclusive and high performing workplace. The judges are looking how employees go above and beyond to support, develop and engage employers including recruitment, training, development, communication, employee working practices (including work-life balance), environmental impact, community outreach and corporate social responsibility. Success should be evident in staff feedback, retention, community recognition and overall business performance.

Medium/Large Business of the Year

Recognising excellence within a business or company of more than 50 employees (including FTE contractors). The judges will be looking at all aspects of the business including financial performance, leadership and management, staff development and training, environmental performance and energy efficiency, innovation, social responsibility, long-term business sustainability, and future growth plans.

Small Business of the Year

Recognising excellence within a business or company of fewer than 50 employees (including FTE contractors). The judges will be looking at all aspects of the business including financial performance, leadership and management, staff development and training, environmental performance and energy efficiency, innovation, social responsibility, long term business sustainability, and future growth plans.

Entrepreneur of the Year

This award recognises the achievement of an individual who has been instrumental to the success of a business. Entrants for this award may have exploited an opportunity to develop a successful business from scratch or radically improved the performance of an existing business.

Professional Services of the Year Award

This award will recognise excellence within a professional services company, business or organisation. The entry can relate to a specific product or service, or to overall business performance. The judges will be looking at all aspects including leadership, management, staff development/training, social responsibility, future growth plans and business sustainability. Focus will also be given to performance above and beyond that expected for the service and sector.

AWARD CRITERIA

Sustainability & Environment Award

This award recognises organisations that can demonstrate a proactive approach to protecting the environment and reducing their carbon footprint. Judges will be looking for innovative solutions that have had a dramatic impact in terms of energy efficiency, resource management and environmental impact.

International Trade Award

This award recognises companies who excel in international trade, whether through exporting one product or service to a single overseas customer, supplying a range of products or services to global markets, or operating successful import-led trade models. The judges will pay particular attention to the whole international trade process. For exporting businesses, this includes identification of overseas opportunities, product, or service development to meet market requirements, strategic international partnerships, overseas sales and marketing, and the overall benefit the international activity brings to Staffordshire. For import-led businesses, this includes excellence in sourcing and negotiation, logistics and supply chain management, customs compliance, financial management, and the ability to build resilient supply chains and adapt to evolving trade policies and regulations.

Employee of the Year

Awarded to an outstanding employee who has delivered exceptional and sustained business performance over a prolonged period (minimum 12 months). The judges will be looking for somebody who has shown exceptional dedication, advancement and contribution within their role and the business as a whole. This includes personal development and a contribution to the development of other colleagues or staff too.