2026 business AWARDS

Mount Gambier and Districts

MOUNT GAMBIER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

City of Mount Gambier

SOUTHERN LIMESTONE COAST COUNCIL

JUDGING RUBRIC

1. Micro Business Rubric (0–2 FTE)

Award Category	Score 1–2: Developing	Score 3: Competent	Score 4–5: Outstanding
1. Leadership - 10%	Sole owner-operator makes reactive decisions without personal accountability or clear direction for the business.	Owner demonstrates clear personal accountability and hands-on decision-making that keeps daily operations on course.	Exceptional owner leadership; shows clear strategic intent, strong decision-making frameworks, and early foundation-building for growth.
2. Performance - 20%	Cash flow and basic revenue are unpredictable, unmonitored, or showing financial instability.	Demonstrates consistent, sustainable income for scale; uses basic tracking (e.g., accounting software, regular expense tracking).	Strong financial performance with excellent cash flow management, healthy profit margins, and sound basic financial controls.
3. Strategy - 20%	Focuses purely on day-to-day survival with no clear direction or priority setting.	Has a clear, simple sense of direction that effectively guides daily choices and client selection.	Articulates a clear vision with well-defined short-term growth goals and a strong understanding of their market niche.
4. Innovation - 10%	Relies on outdated practices; resists adapting products, services, or workflow to customer needs.	Demonstrates creative, low-cost problem solving or process adaptations to meet customer needs effectively.	Implements highly clever, resource-light innovations or custom adaptations that deliver outstanding value or efficiency.
5. People - 5%	Relies on ad-hoc, unprofessional practices with contractors or casuals; no foundation for future hiring.	Owner (and contractors/casuals) maintains clear professional standards, establishing a solid baseline for future hiring.	Exceptional professional standards, clear operational documentation, and proactive skill development in place for future workforce growth.
6. Customer Outcomes - 25%	High customer churn or unmanaged customer complaints; relies entirely on transactional interactions.	Builds strong direct personal relationships that generate repeat business and a trustworthy local reputation.	Exceptional client retention driven by strong personal rapport, active reputation management, and outstanding customer loyalty.
7. Community - 5%	No visible involvement or connection to the surrounding local community or economy.	Demonstrates visible, informal community support (e.g., local sourcing, volunteering, small event support).	Deeply embedded in the local ecosystem with high visibility through active local sourcing, advocacy, or community support.
8. Sustainability - 5%	Business is completely fragile and entirely reliant on the owner's daily presence to survive.	Shows a credible pathway toward business stability and future growth beyond the owner's immediate daily execution.	Proactively building systems, process maps, and client bases designed to ensure long-term business survival and future transition.

2. Small Business Rubric (3–8 FTE)

Award Category	Score 1–2: Developing	Score 3: Competent	Score 4–5: Outstanding
1. Leadership - 10%	Owner micro-manages; struggles or refuses to delegate key operational responsibilities to team members.	Owner successfully delegates key tasks while maintaining effective direct oversight of daily operations.	Empowers team members through structured delegation, balancing daily management with clear operational leadership.
2. Performance - 20%	Stagnant revenue/customer numbers; financial management tools have not evolved to match business growth.	Demonstrates steady revenue or customer growth backed by sound financial software and basic budgeting controls.	Strong, documented financial trajectory with disciplined cost management, expanding customer bases, and clear budgeting tools.
3. Strategy - 15%	Unplanned growth; short-term focus with no documented plan or growth priorities beyond current demands.	Has a documented growth plan outlining clear priorities for the next 12–24 months.	Well-structured growth strategy with clear, measurable priorities that drive operational decisions and team execution.
4. Innovation - 10%	Slow to adopt new tools or processes; operations remain manual or inefficient despite growth.	Adopts new technology, tools, or workflows that meaningfully improve business efficiency or service quality.	Proactively integrates new technology or tools yielding high efficiency gains, cost reductions, or enhanced service delivery.
5. People - 15%	Undefined team roles; lack of basic onboarding, training, or focus on workplace culture.	Early people-management practices are in place (e.g., clear role descriptions, basic training, positive team culture).	High employee retention driven by structured role clarity, regular skills training, clear safety protocols, and strong team culture.
6. Customer Outcomes - 20%	Service quality drops as customer numbers scale; lack of consistent standards or feedback review.	Maintains consistent customer satisfaction and high repeat business rates as the client base expands.	Excellent customer retention and satisfaction; uses active feedback mechanisms to refine service delivery continually.
7. Community - 5%	Rare or passive community involvement without clear intention or local connection.	Active and intentional community or local economic engagement (e.g., local supply chains, formal local ties).	Strong community champion; actively drives local economic benefits through targeted partnerships, sourcing, or regional initiatives.
8. Sustainability - 5%	No plan for operational scaling; business growth is hitting severe bottlenecks due to single-point dependencies.	Has realistic, structured plans to scale operations, staffing, and offerings in a manageable, sustainable way.	Highly scalable operational model with clear capacity planning, risk management, and sustainable growth roadmaps.

3. Medium Business Rubric (9–20 FTE)

Award Category	Score 1–2: Developing	Score 3: Competent	Score 4–5: Outstanding
1. Leadership - 10%	Decision-making is bottlenecked at the top; management layer exists in name only without real authority.	Functional management layer actively shares decision-making, reducing operational reliance on the owner/founder.	High-performing management structure with autonomous decision-making authority, strong middle management, and clear accountability.
2. Performance - 20%	Flat or declining trends; financial reporting is sporadic, reactive, or lacks structured budgeting.	Shows measurable year-on-year performance trends supported by regular budgeting and formal reporting tools.	Impressive multi-year financial growth, robust margin control, sophisticated forecasting, and regular performance benchmarking.
3. Strategy - 15%	Informal strategic planning; goals are rarely reviewed or aligned with current market conditions.	Uses a formal strategic planning process that is reviewed regularly and aligned with current market positioning.	Dynamic strategic framework with clearly tracked KPIs, routine executive reviews, and rapid market responsiveness.
4. Innovation - 10%	Ad-hoc upgrades; no deliberate innovation initiatives or tracked business impact.	Executes deliberate innovation projects (tech, product, or process) that deliver clear, measurable business impact.	High-impact, structured innovation initiative delivering verified ROI (e.g., major cost savings, new revenue streams, operational speed).
5. People - 15%	High turnover or ad-hoc hiring; structured recruitment, formal development, or retention plans are absent.	Structured recruitment, staff development, and retention practices are in place to support the growing workforce.	Outstanding workforce practices; clear career pathways, structured professional development, low turnover, and strong culture metrics.
6. Customer Outcomes - 20%	Inconsistent customer experience across the organization; customer feedback is captured informally or ignored.	Uses a systematic approach to capture feedback, measure satisfaction, and drive customer retention across the base.	Data-informed CX management (e.g., formal NPS/CSAT tracking, CRM workflows) yielding exceptional retention and brand advocacy.
7. Community - 5%	Sporadic community efforts; lacks structured programs or demonstrable local impact.	Maintains structured community or industry involvement with clear, demonstrable local impact.	Leading local impact; drives formal community programs, regional employment, or industry-wide initiatives with measurable outcomes.
8. Sustainability - 5%	High risk of single points of operational failure; lacks contingency, succession, or continuity planning.	Possesses documented business continuity, succession, or growth plans that reduce reliance on key individuals.	Robust continuity, succession, and risk management framework; business operates smoothly without key-person dependencies.

4. Large Business Rubric (21+ FTE)

Award Category	Score 1–2: Developing	Score 3: Competent	Score 4–5: Outstanding
1. Leadership - 10%	Senior leadership is fragmented, operating in silos without clear strategic direction or governance oversight.	Established executive team provides clear strategic direction across multiple functions, sites, or business units.	Exceptional executive governance; cohesive leadership team driving multi-unit growth, culture, and high organizational performance.
2. Performance - 20%	Weak financial controls for scale; missing industry benchmarking, risk assessments, or multi-site visibility.	Strong, sustained financial performance with sophisticated reporting, benchmarking, and financial risk management.	Outstanding financial trajectory; exemplary risk management, advanced benchmarking, and industry-leading performance.
3. Strategy - 15%	Multi-year strategy is static or disconnected from senior management execution and governance oversight.	Multi-year strategic planning is integrated with formal governance oversight and senior leadership execution.	Industry-defining strategy; seamlessly connects board governance, executive KPIs, and agile market adaptation.
4. Innovation - 10%	Low investment in innovation or tech; company relies on legacy models without continuous improvement.	Maintains sustained innovation capability, including investment in technology, R&D, or new market entries with clear results.	Market leader in innovation; continuous investment in cutting-edge tech or new markets yielding transformational results.
5. People - 15%	Workforce strategies lack scale; insufficient focus on workplace safety, diversity, or formal career pathways.	Comprehensive workforce strategy covering career pathways, diversity initiatives, safety, and organizational culture at scale.	Industry-leading employer of choice; best-in-class safety systems, comprehensive ESG/diversity policies, and exceptional culture at scale.
6. Customer Outcomes - 20%	Siloed customer data; inconsistent brand or experience delivery across different sites, units, or teams.	Delivers market-leading customer experiences supported by enterprise data systems, technology, and brand consistency.	Benchmark customer experience; leverages advanced data platforms, real-time analytics, and uniform brand delivery to dominate market NPS.
7. Community - 5%	Minimal regional or industry leadership; community contributions are superficial relative to size.	Makes significant, sustained contributions to regional economic, social, or industry development.	Major regional economic anchor; drives broad-scale social impact, supply-chain development, and sustainable regional growth.
8. Sustainability - 5%	Disregarded long-term risks; lacks formal ESG practices, executive succession planning, or resilience frameworks.	Maintains long-term resilience planning covering formal ESG practices, succession planning, and market risk management.	Exceptional long-term resilience; benchmark ESG framework, robust succession pipelines, and proven market adaptability.

Industry Awards

Judging Criteria	Score: 1–2 (Developing / Unsatisfactory)	Score: 3 (Competent / Standard)	Score: 4–5 (Exemplary / Outstanding)
1. Leadership- 10% *(Accountability, delegation, management structures)*	Vague or highly reactive leadership structure. Decision-making is entirely dependent on one individual without clear delegation or defined responsibilities.	Defined leadership style with basic delegation mechanisms in place. Clear operational roles appropriate to the size of the team.	Highly strategic leadership structure with clear accountability and empowered delegation. Demonstrates vision, active management layer/processes, and measurable organizational impact.
2. Financial Performance - 20% *(Growth, controls, budgeting, risk management)*	Financial statements or metrics are missing, generic, or show unaddressed instability. No formal financial tracking tools mentioned.	Demonstrates consistent income or growth appropriate to scale. Basic reporting mechanisms (e.g., accounting software, regular P&L reviews) are utilized.	Strong, sustained financial trajectory backed by specific metrics (e.g., % growth, margins). Uses sophisticated budgeting, benchmarking, and risk management practices.
3. Business Strategy - 20% *(Strategic direction, formal planning, vision)*	Informal or short-term view focused solely on daily survival. Lacks defined priorities or methods to measure strategic progress.	Clear growth plan with defined short-to-medium-term priorities. Strategy is reviewed periodically and aligns with current market demand.	Comprehensive, multi-year strategic plan integrated with formal governance or leadership oversight. Clear KPIs tracked continuously with high market responsiveness.
4. Innovation & Process Improvement - 10% *(Problem-solving, tech adoption, ROI)*	No clear innovation or improvement cited, or the example represents standard, baseline operational maintenance without measurable benefit.	Successful adoption of a new tool, technology, or adapted process that generated a noticeable efficiency gain or customer improvement.	Deliberate, high-impact innovation (tech, product, or process) with strong, quantifiable ROI (e.g., significant time/cost savings, new revenue streams).
5. People & Culture - 10% *(Workforce management, culture, retention)*	Ad-hoc or absent staff management practices. Little to no investment in training, culture, role definition, or employee retention.	Structured basic practices in place: clear job descriptions, regular onboarding/training, and baseline workplace safety and culture initiatives.	Comprehensive workforce strategy. Proactive focus on career pathways, continuous professional development, diversity, retention metrics, and strong workplace culture.
6. Customer Outcomes & Experience - 20% *(Satisfaction, retention, feedback systems)*	Relies entirely on informal or anecdotal feedback. No systematic approach to tracking satisfaction or resolving customer issues.	Active measurement of customer satisfaction (e.g., reviews, repeat business tracking, basic surveys) with consistent service delivery.	Market-leading customer experience backed by data systems (e.g., NPS, formal feedback loops, CRM tracking). Demonstrates exceptionally high retention and brand loyalty.

7. Community Contribution - 5% *(Local sourcing, engagement, regional impact)*	Minimal or ad-hoc engagement without clear intention or local connection.	Active and intentional community involvement (e.g., local sourcing policies, sponsorships, regular local partnerships, or industry participation).	Significant, structured, and sustained contribution generating measurable social, environmental, or economic impact in the region/industry.
8. Future Sustainability & Growth - 5% *(Resilience, succession, ESG, scalability)*	Business relies entirely on key individuals/owners with no contingency, succession, or long-term growth plans. High operational risk.	Credible scaling or risk-mitigation plans in place. Steps have been taken to document processes and reduce sole-person reliance.	Robust long-term resilience framework covering succession planning, business continuity, ESG considerations, and strategic risk management.