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Refreshed Business Awards now open

The Waikato Chamber of Commerce Business Awards, supported by Fosters, are now open and this year sees a few changes.

Entries for the prestigious awards, which celebrate the success of Waikato businesses, opened today. Aspiring businesses and individuals have until June 30 to submit their online entries highlighting the strengths and achievements of their business. Entry is open to all businesses and individuals within the Waikato region and you do not have to be a Chamber member to enter.

Chamber marketing and events manager Rebecca Aston said this year some of the questions in select categories have been refined.

“These updates are designed to ensure that the awards process continues to celebrate excellence and innovation while aligning more closely with the specific focus of each category. We believe these changes will provide entrants with an even better opportunity to showcase their achievements.”

There is a host of new judges this year, each of whom brings a wealth of expertise, diverse perspectives, and a shared passion for recognising excellence in business across the region.

“Our judges have been carefully selected for their professional achievements and industry knowledge,” Rebecca said.

And the International Trade category has a new sponsor in Hamilton-based Pasifika business Oyonnx, which specialises in building business capabilities and leadership.

“We’ve also renamed and rescoped a category,” Rebecca said. “Small Business of the Year is now Emerging Business of the Year, which recognises excellence in emerging businesses within their first 2-5 years of operation, with an annual turnover of at least \$500,000.

“The trend we’ve seen is that year on year, we receive more entries than the last so we’re optimistic this year will again be bigger than the last.”

Last year’s gala dinner moved into Globox Arena at Claudelands Events Centre for the first time to accommodate a record number of guests.

The Chamber will host online drop-in sessions for those who would like help with the entry process. Those will be held on May 14, June 5 and June 19. People can register for those under the Business Awards section of the Chamber website.

Chamber CEO Don Good said he is always impressed by the Waikato's high-performance, innovative business spirit that shines through in the awards.

"Waikato businesses tend to be quiet, humble achievers. The awards are an opportunity for businesses to increase their exposure, and receive professional insights and recommendations on their strategy," said Good. "In doing so they inspire others to aspire to greater things."

Entrants receive detailed feedback from the judge's assessment, which can then be used to grow, develop and improve their business.

The judging team of more than 30 Waikato business leaders, headed by Dr Heather Connolly, reviews each application before selecting who will progress to stage two. Stage two involves a site visit with judges asking questions about the application and the business. Finalists will then be selected, with the winners of each category announced at the gala dinner.

Metal fabrication company Longveld won the People and Culture award last year and co-founder Pam Roa was named CEO of the Year. On what winning the awards has meant, Pam said: "it has generated an even greater sense of team pride and confidence and added to our reputation as an excellent organisation to work for and do business with."

Waitomo took out three awards last year, including the Supreme Award. Group manager customer experience Greta Shirley has advice for other businesses contemplating entering this year.

"Don't hesitate; the whole process is rewarding from start to finish. Everything from the opportunity to stop and reflect, through to the judging process, learning from others, to the networking opportunities, publicity and the actual Awards night – there is gold in there for all Waikato businesses and organisations. There is nothing to lose, and so much to gain."

For more information about entering the awards, to register to attend the drop-in sessions, or to purchase tickets to the gala dinner visit <https://www.waikatochamber.co.nz/waikato-business-awards/>.

The Waikato Business Awards are supported by Fosters. Additional category sponsors are Company-X, Deloitte, Hamilton Airport, Kiwibank, Montana Food & Events, Sleepyhead, Trust Waikato, the University of Waikato, Wintec, 2degrees, Fairview, Oyonnx, Air New Zealand and Union Square.

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