

# Judges Tip Sheet



## 2017 Queensland Tourism Awards

To assist you with either completing your site visit or writing your award winning submission, QTIC have asked the current 2017 judging panel and mentors what their best advice to pass on 2017 entrants would be.

### Site Visits

A site visit typically includes a 1-2 hour visit from a member of the judging panel. The visit usually involves a tour of the site/facilities and a conversation about your product, business plans, marketing, customer service and sustainability practices.

- **Be professional.** Ensure you present yourself and your product well from the first point of contact with QTIC and your judge. Your judge will usually be from outside the destination and will have a number of sites to visit. All judges are volunteers - be respectful of their time. If you think more than two hours will be required for your site visit please make the judge aware of this well before the visit. Provide clear directions to your site and keep in touch in the lead up to the visit.
- **Be prepared.** Make sure any accreditations, awards and certifications are proudly displayed. Have documents such as business plans, policies and procedures, marketing materials, accreditation reports, social media metrics, guest testimonials, guest books customer surveys, media clippings, photos and video ready. Sourcing the requested material at the last minute in a disorganised environment reflects very poorly on the whole operation.
- **Ask questions.** If you are unsure about any aspects of the QTA process please ask QTIC or your judge.
- **Build capacity.** Consider asking a young mentee within the company to sit in on the judges meeting and site visit, this is a great way of building capacity within your organisation.

### Written Submissions

The written submission carries a higher points value than the site visit. If your submission progresses to the Australian Tourism Awards your business will be judged solely on this written submission. You should be aiming to go for gold at the national level!

1. **Answer the question.** Questions change regularly and vary from one category to another. If you enter multiple categories make sure you use the correct questions for each category. Don't reuse last year's answer or provide an answer to a question you wish had been asked. Each question is only scored on the answer provided below the question so make sure your answer is in the most appropriate section of the submission. If you do not understand the question, ask for advice.
2. **Answer all parts of the question.** Most questions have more than one part and it is important to answer each part of the question. Use a highlighter and mark the key words. For example: "Describe any innovations that have taken place during the qualifying period to improve your tourism business and demonstrate how these innovations enhance your tourism experiences/services." Entrants who answer only the first part of this question would only receive 50% of the points allocated to the question.

# Judges Tip Sheet



3. **Keep score.** The points value of each question is indicated in the entrant information. Questions worth more points generally require more effort, evidence and detail than questions worth less. Make sure the length and quality of your answer reflects this!
4. **Pay attention to the tips.** Questions and guidelines are available for each category and each question is accompanied by tips ... pay attention to these when you first start the submission and check again when you have finished writing each response.
5. **Assume nothing.** Write as if the judge knows nothing about your business, your region or anything you do. Sometimes really obvious points can be overlooked ... particularly routine tasks or activities that you take for granted.
6. **Appoint a leader.** If different people within your organisation answer different questions or provide input, make sure one person pulls the whole submission together with a consistent voice.
7. **Support answers with evidence.** It is easy to make claims about the business, but more difficult to substantiate these claims with evidence. Collect evidence of performance throughout the qualifying period. Examples of evidence include key performance metrics used in business planning and marketing; environmental metrics used in the sustainability question; photos and pictures; testimonials from customers, suppliers, partners and other stakeholders; external accreditations; external awards; economic impact indicators (contribution to local economy, employment); examples and mini case studies.
8. **Allow plenty of time.** Collecting the evidence, thinking about the most creative ways to present your answers, and crafting your message takes time. Many entrants run out of time and the quality of answers to the last few questions often suffer. Don't make this mistake.
9. **Pay attention to the qualifying period.** The awards are based on a one-year time window. Most of your responses should focus on activities, events, evidence and examples that fall within the qualifying period.
10. **Make it interesting and innovative.** The best submissions tell an interesting story. They are well written and the passion of the writers is often obvious. The 'plan-do-check-act' cycle can help you tell an interesting story. For example, tell us what you planned, explain how you implemented it, describe the outcomes, explain what you will do next to build on your success/learn from the experience. To win at the national level a submission should also present something innovative. What makes your business innovative? Is it a clever business idea? Innovative planning? Use of technology? Marketing? Customer service/experience? Sustainable practices?
11. **Make it presentable.** The best submissions make good use of tables, graphs, photos and text styles (i.e. bold or italics), bullet points and layout to get their point across. Tables are particularly important for answering some of the questions because they allow entrants to make a link between different elements in a question. For example: "Provide an overview of the key features of your business plan, including goals, strategies and outcomes" could be presented as a table with columns showing alignment between goals (with KPIs), strategies and outcomes.
12. **Reread your submission.** Once you have finished writing your submission read the entry requirements again. Then read your submission to check that you have provided a full and complete answer. Check for typos, spelling, grammar and punctuation. If you have time, give the submission to someone else to check. This is a great way of building capacity by involving more junior employees in your organisation.