

9. VISITOR INFORMATION SERVICES

This category recognises the consistent delivery of high quality and face to face information services to the visitor. It is open to Visitor Information Centres/Tourist Offices, Local Tourist Associations and Regional Tourism Organisations.

1. TOURISM EXCELLENCE (20 marks)

- a) Demonstrate your eligibility for this category as related to the descriptor above and provide a brief overview on the nature and history of the business. (6)
- b) What tourism products, experiences and services do you offer visitors? (5)
- c) Describe your commitment to tourism excellence. (4)
- d) Demonstrate your involvement in the tourism industry and describe the services you offer tourism industry stakeholders/partners. (5)

Tips:

- a) *Take care to ensure you have entered the right category and that your response aligns to the category descriptor. Failure to demonstrate your eligibility will be reflected in your score. Refer to the ABOUT US section of your website as this may assist with this response. Judges will want to know how and when the business started, who works in the business, where it is located and how it has developed over the years. A map will be helpful here.*
- b) *The focus of this question is tourism products/experiences/services that you offer visitors*
- c) *Explain your values, philosophy and commitment to excellence and what makes you stand out from other Visitor Information Service providers.*
- d) *Explain the services you offer tourism industry partners (for example membership services etc.) and how you have been actively involved with the tourism industry locally, regionally and nationally.*

2. BUSINESS PLANNING (20 marks)

- a) Provide an overview of the key features of your business plan including goals, strategies and outcomes with a specific focus on your Visitor Information Services. (6)
- b) Describe any innovations that have taken place during the qualifying period to improve your experience/product/service and demonstrate how these innovations enhance the experience for visitors to your destination. (6)

- c) What investment has been made in staff training and development and how has this improved the services provided to your guests/visitors? (4)
- d) Describe the main risks for your visitor information service and the risk mitigation measures you have implemented. (4)

Tips:

- a) *Introduce this section with your mission and/or vision statement. A 3-column table would be useful here to display the information. Make sure you use measurable goals and outcomes.*
- b) *This is a 2-part question. An innovation can be defined as “The process of introducing new or significantly improved goods or services and/or implementing new or significantly improved processes.” (Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics). Be sure to include the impact the innovation had on your business and the destination overall.*
- c) *Describe your commitment to training? How do you ensure you and/or your staff gain the correct knowledge and skills to carry out their job? Investment does not need to be financial.*
- d) *Consider all aspects of business risk not just workplace health and safety.*

3. MARKETING (25 marks)

- a) Who are the target markets for your Visitor Information Service? (5)
- b) How do you know your Visitor Information Service meets the needs of your target markets? (5)
- c) What are your unique selling points and demonstrate how you communicate these through marketing conducted by your Visitor Information Service? (5)
- d) Describe the innovative marketing strategies you have implemented to encourage new and/or repeat business. (5)
- e) Demonstrate the success of the initiatives outlined in (d). (5)

Tips:

- a) *This question seeks to understand who you have aimed your marketing towards. Consider for example; who they are, where they are from, how old they are, how they purchase travel, what motivates and inspires them and how your product meets their expectations.*
- b) *What research have you conducted or used to determine your target markets? How do you know the target markets you identified in Q 3 a) are right for you?*
- c) *What makes you different from your competitors? Consider for example; size, location, exclusivity, services, facilities. What methods do you use to communicate these to the target markets you have mentioned in Q 3 a)?*
- d) *What have you done differently to attract your customers? Consider for example; social media, digital advertising, apps. The response needs to focus on innovative approaches to marketing.*
- e) *Outline how the new/different/unique activities you outlined in (d) have been successful.*

4. CUSTOMER SERVICE (20 marks)

- a) Describe your customer service philosophy/values. (5)
- b) Explain how your Visitor Information Service provides for guests/visitors with specific needs. (5)
- c) Describe how you measure customer satisfaction and identify areas for improvement. (5)
- d) What processes do you have in place to respond to customers' complaints both online and offline, and manage your online reputation? (5)

Tips:

- a) *Consider the systems and procedures you have in place to deliver outstanding service. How do you make an effort to understand visitor needs, welcome them, respect them, thank them and do business with them?*
- b) *Demonstrate how you consider visitors' special and specific needs. Think about who your customers are and their specific requirements. Do you offer any accessible tourism products, experiences and services to visitors? How do you identify your customers' requirements and provide for them appropriately? Specific needs could include cultural, language, physical, intellectual, dietary and other specific needs e.g. groups, special interest etc. Provide examples of how you catered for customers with specific needs, explain the outcome or successes.*
- c) *What processes do you have in place to understand how your customer feels about your product/service? For example; feedback forms, monitoring social media, blogs, mystery shoppers etc. Consider providing a case study/example where you have implemented a change based on customer feedback.*
- d) *This is a three-part answer. It is crucial to know what your clients are saying about your business and take measures to protect your business. A sound Reputation Management strategy will outline the processes you have in place to understand how your clients see you, think of you and talk about you and how you take action when feedback is received (negative or positive). In this response you need to outline your reputation management strategy and (1) what processes you have in place to respond to positive and negative feedback (online and offline), (2) how you measure customer satisfaction and (3) what processes you have in place to monitor your online reputation.*

5. SUSTAINABILITY (15 marks)

- a) Demonstrate how your business contributes to the local economy. (5)
- b) Demonstrate how your business engages with and brings benefits to the local community. (5)
- c) Describe how your business cares for the local environment. (5)

Tips:

- a) *Explain how your business financially contributes to the local economy in your region, for example; local purchasing, employing local people etc.*

The focus should be the economic contribution (money) in dollars. What have you spent. Include calculations to show how you know the economic impacts. This may include in-kind and contra spend.

This is ALWAYS best presented in a table, and always include some words before and/or after the table with an explanation.

It is recommended for businesses that spend a significant portion of their money in the region, to determine the percentage of total contribution. Eg. '75% of all our expenses were spent in X region'.

- b) *Consider the social benefits you provide to your local community, for example, supporting local businesses, product packaging, charitable donations, sponsorship, engagement with community groups, working with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people etc.*

Outline how your financial contribution/spending in the local economy has benefited the community.

Select some interesting examples and tell several stories such as:

- *Employing locals and the impact their employment has had on the person*
- *Operators who stock and sell a local artisan's products, or stock local produce in minibars/hampers/outlets and how the business has boomed because of it for the manufacturer/producer (or something similar)*
- *Mentoring other businesses*
- *Speaking at schools*
- *Work experience opportunities that are offered*
- *Offering gifts for the school raffle that allowed the school to raise money for an item they wouldn't have otherwise been able to afford*
- *Waiving conference room fees for local not-for-profit groups to give them somewhere to meet which allows the group to keep going*

- c) *Explain your commitment to environmental sustainability and detail the activities you conduct in relation to water conservation, waste management and recycling, fuel and energy reduction, carbon reduction/offset.*

Outline the activities you conduct on an ongoing basis as well as any new initiatives implemented during the qualifying period.

Demonstrate how the initiative benefited the environment and where possible include a measurement/evidence of how the activity has reduced your environmental footprint. The inclusion of actual measurement data including the amounts saved/reduced in comparison to the previous year may enhance response.

This is always best presented with a table and include some words before the table with an explanation of the table and your overall commitment to environmental sustainability.

TOTAL SCORE: ____/100