

SUGGESTED PLAN / TIMELINE

This plan and timeline is based on the main questions which will cover most categories. For categories with specific questions (e.g., Ecotourism, Tourism Marketing & Campaigns, etc.) adjust the content as needed.

PLANNING		
TIMELINE	NOTES	
WEEK 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Download and understand the questions for your chosen category. There are often 2 or more parts to it. Read carefully the 2021 rules and regulations document and highlight any key points Hold a brainstorm session: go through each question and the response guidance and dot point everything that could go in this answer. Some of them might not make it in the final edit, but it is best to get it all out of your head at the start. Involve your team if possible. Hold a brainstorm session: go through each question and the response guidance and dot point or create a mind map with everything that could go in this answer. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2021, you can choose to focus on strategies you implemented to attract or grow, and/or strategies implemented as part of your resilience to COVID-19 and recovery. Some of them might not make it in the final edit, but it is best to get it all out of your head at the start. Involve your team if possible. Remember: your submission should only include activities implemented in the qualifying period (1 July 2019 to 30 June 2021) – excluding the introduction section where you will discuss the history of your business. Create a weekly schedule and lock-in the time in your calendar. Subject: ‘Working on my business’. This time should be non-negotiable. 	
GETTING STARTED		
TIMELINE	QUESTIONS	NOTES
WEEK 2	COVID-19 IMPACTS There are 3 questions in this section. Aim to complete one question every two days.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no score for this question, and this is not included in the 8,000-word count. This section is aimed to set the scene for the judges, so they understand how your business was affected by the bushfires and COVID-19. This will be especially helpful for national judges when comparing a business against others across the country. If you were affected by the bushfires in early 2020, remember to add the details to this section too. Keep your answer concise and succinct.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the financial, human, and operational impact your business suffered. • Include data to explain, e.g., number of days closed, staff lost, \$ or % of sunk cost, revenue lost, etc. • Resource: here is a guide for the Business Standards section.
By 5 July	<p>ACCOMMODATION STANDARDS (AS) If entering one of the accommodation categories and if you are <u>not</u> officially Star Rated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is not a requirement for a business to be officially Star Rated. Businesses can complete the <i>Accommodation Standards (AS)</i> section instead to demonstrate the entrant's pre-assessment rating. • It may take approx. 2 hours to complete the pre-assessment. • If you have completed the AS in 2019, your responses should be pre-filled automatically with what has been supplied in 2019 and you simply need to review your responses and re-submit. • It is important that you complete the AS by the deadline – Mon 5 July – as this will determine your eligibility to enter the chosen category. • Unique Accommodation does not have a Star Rating or pre-assessment rating prerequisite.
By 5 July	<p>BUSINESS STANDARDS (BS) Needs to be completed by all entrants that are <u>not</u> accredited.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This section demonstrates that the entrant meets minimum business standards. • This can be demonstrated via relevant accreditation with the Quality Tourism Framework or as part of the Business Standards (BS) question set. • The BS will be available to all entrants once the nomination has been approved. • It may take approx. 1 hour to complete this section. • If you have completed the BS in 2019, your responses should be pre-filled automatically with what has been supplied in 2019. You simply need to review your responses and re-submit. Certain categories have few additional questions that were not included in 2019, therefore, you will need to complete these before you submit. • If you are not accredited, you will need to complete the BS by Mon 5 July. • The BS is not assessed by the judges, but it will be reviewed by VTIC's Accreditation Officer. • The information entered in this section will also help you build your submission. Create a folder

		<p>and save any documentation used for this section.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource: here is a guide for the Business Standards section.
INTRODUCTION 14 to 27 June		
TIMELINE	PLANNING WEEK	
WEEK 3	<p>In this week, you will just be collating the information needed for this question. Make lists, use bullet points, save documents or information that you may want to refer to later. No need to write your answer nicely, as this will be done in the following week.</p> <p>Here are some steps to help you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carefully read the response guidance for this question. You should be addressing all points – this is what the judges will be looking for. Write them down on your word document to ensure you are addressing them all as you start gathering the points for your answer. • In this section, the judges will want to understand your reasoning for entering the chosen category without ambiguity. If you chose to enter <i>Excellence in Food Tourism</i>, for instance, your focus should be on the ‘food’ element, not on the venue/restaurant as there is another category for that (Tourism Restaurants & Catering Service). • Create an ‘Introduction’ folder to save the information and documents used for in section. <p>Some of the information needed for this question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collate information on your tourism products, experiences and services. You will want to highlight the points of difference – what makes it an award-winning product and different from your competitors. • Write some information about the history of your business demonstrating improvements that have occurred along the way. • List your amenities and facilities that enhance the visitor satisfaction. • Demonstrate your commitment to tourism excellence – refer to the business values and philosophies. • Explain how you have been actively involved with and contributed to the tourism industry (locally, regionally and nationally) – this can be through both business and personal participation. • List any industry programs and activities that you or your staff have attended or being involved in. • List any awards you have won, accreditations you hold, etc. • Start saving images and graphics that could support your answer. You will also need a map of where the business, or your product/service, is located. 	
TIMELINE	WRITING WEEK	
WEEK 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start putting the above information together to form your answer for this question. • Don’t worry too much at this stage in having a perfect written answer or about the word count. It is better to write it all first and then edit at the end. • Try to create a nice flow and tell an engaging story so it is easy for the judges to read and understand all your points. Each judge will be reading 15-20 submissions, so you want to make it easy and exciting for them. • Use headings, subheadings, bullet points, tables, etc. 	

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

28 June to 12 July

TIMELINE	PLANNING WEEK
WEEK 5	<p>As previously, you will just be collating the information needed for this question. Make lists, use bullet points, save documents or information that you may want to refer to later. No need to write your answer nicely, as this will be done in the following week.</p> <p>In this section, you will need to outline any one, or all, of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improvements/developments to your existing product/experience/service• Strategies you have put in place to support the business endurance and continuity, and when possible, continue operations• Environmental/social/economic/ethical initiatives or achievements <p>Remember: all strategies and activities will need to be from the qualifying period. Let's get started!</p> <p>Here are some steps to help you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read the question and the response guidance carefully. You should be addressing all points under this question – this is what the judges will be looking for. Write them down on your word document to ensure you are addressing them all as you start gathering the points for your answer.• Create a 'Business Development' folder to save the information and documents used in this section. <p>Some of the information needed for this question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Outline your business goals and strategies to set context. Refer to your vision and/or mission statement.• List all improvements/developments that was made in the qualifying period.• Note down the strategy and activities that were developed and introduced in this period.• Include the reasoning behind the business decisions, demonstrating the planning and implementation of the improvement/development/strategy. List details of:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ the planning process,○ alignment with the business' goals and objectives,○ research undertaken (e.g., have you tested the idea before? How did you know there was a market/need for it? etc.)○ risk management,○ training etc.• If possible, include any environmental/social/economic/ethical initiatives or achievements• Demonstrate the results of the innovation/changed strategies on your business activities. It is important to use quantifiable evidence here. Where outcomes did not achieve the desired result, articulate the reasons why.• If earlier you added points about your strategy to attract/grow, demonstrate how the visitor experience has been enhanced with the innovation/development/changed strategies. This could include testimonials.• Save all images and graphics that could support your answer.

	<p>Note: it is important to demonstrate the results, so if you do not have data or examples and testimonials that you can use, there is still time to implement some strategies to collate these. This is an important process for your business too.</p>
TIMELINE	WRITING WEEK
WEEK 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start putting the above information together to form your answer for this question. • Don't worry too much at this stage in having a perfect written answer or about the word count. It is better to write it all first and then edit at the end. • Create a nice flow and be clear to tell the 'What, Why, Results' • Use headings, subheadings, bullet points, tables, etc. For instance, a table may help you to convey, and for the judges to understand: The strategies → The activities/developments → The outcomes
MARKETING 12 to 25 July	
TIMELINE	PLANNING WEEK
WEEK 7	<p>Collate the information needed for this question. Make lists, use bullet points, save documents or information that you may want to refer to later.</p> <p>In this section, you can choose to talk about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The marketing strategies you implemented to attract or maintain your existing or new target markets to support business growth and/or • The marketing strategies you implemented to support the business resilience and recovery in the wake of the bushfires and COVID-19. <p>Remember: all strategies and activities will need to be from the qualifying period.</p> <p>Here are some steps to help you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the question and the response guidance carefully. You should be addressing all points under this question – this is what the judges will be looking for. Write them down on your word document to ensure you are addressing them all as you start gathering the points for your answer. • Create a 'Marketing' folder to save the information and documents used in this section. <p>Some of the information needed for this question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start by explaining your target market. Consider: who they are, where are they from, the demographics (age, income, gender), how they purchase travel, their attitudes, interests and behaviours. • Demonstrate what research you've undertaken to determine your target market is right for the business. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This could include for instance, online reviews, industry insights, market intelligence, and/or external research of market profiles or forecast, etc. • Outline your marketing strategies and why these were developed/chosen. Include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The scope of each strategy ○ The rationale ○ Research, and ○ Desired outcomes <p><i>Judges will want to see the correlation between your marketing strategies activities and your target market/s, and innovative approaches and creativity in the adaptation of</i></p>

	<p><i>marketing practices. E.g., what have you done <u>differently</u> to attract your customers within this period, or to keep connected and engaged while you are closed due to COVID-19?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain how you considered the local/regional/state tourism strategies when developing and adapting your own marketing strategies. For instance, how does it align to your Regional Tourism Board marketing strategy, Visit Victoria campaigns and activities, etc. • Outline the results of your marketing strategies and activities, using data to provide evidence. Where outcomes did not achieve the desired result, articulate the reasons why. • Save all images and graphics that could support your answer. <p>Note: it is important to demonstrate the results. if you do not have data to back-up, there is still time to implement some strategies and metrics to collate the outcomes of your strategies/activities.</p>
TIMELINE	WRITING WEEK
WEEK 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start putting the above information together to form your answer for this question. • Do not worry too much at this stage in having a perfect written answer or about the word count. It is better to write it all first and then edit at the end. • Create a nice flow and be clear to tell the: Strategies → Why of these strategies → The results
CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE 26 July – 8 August	
TIMELINE	PLANNING WEEK
WEEK 9	<p>Collate the information needed for this question. Make lists, use bullet points, save documents or information that you may want to refer to later. In this section, it is important to consider the entire visitor journey – pre, during, post visit, and all points of customer engagement – email, phone, face-to-face interaction, etc.</p> <p>Remember: all strategies and activities will need to be from the qualifying period.</p> <p>Here are some steps to help you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the question and the response guidance carefully. You should be addressing all points under this question – this is what the judges will be looking for. Write them down on your word document to ensure you are addressing them all as you start gathering the points for your answer. • Create a ‘Customer Experience’ folder to save the information and documents used in this section. <p>Some of the information needed for this question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start by describing the business customer service philosophy and values and how these are adopted across the business activities. • Outline the practices the business has put in place to ensure the delivery of high-quality customer service. This may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Customer service plan and policies ○ Staff training ○ Reward systems

	<p>During restrictions and closures, consider how you provided quality customer experiences in alternative ways in which the business operated and communicated with customers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain how you monitor the delivery of your customer service principles to ensure a high-quality experience for visitors at all times. E.g., feedback forms, monitor reviews and social media, etc. • Detail your approach to customer feedback – how do you actively encourage it and implement changes based on it? Include a case study from when a change has been implemented, and/or testimonials from recent customer feedback. • Demonstrate how visitors with specific needs are accommodated. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consider visitors with cultural, language, physical, intellectual, special interest, LGBTQ, dietary requirements etc. needs. ○ How do you identify their needs? E.g., do you ask before their visit? ○ How do you then cater for these needs? This could be through systems, policies, staff training, etc. A table may be helpful here – Specific Needs → How the business caters for them. ○ Include case studies as example. Case studies should explain the customer’s need, how the need was identified, how you catered for it or implemented practices to cater, and the outcome. • Save all images and graphics that could support your answer.
TIMELINE	WRITING WEEK
WEEK 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start putting the above information together to form your answer for this question. • Do not worry too much at this stage in having a perfect written answer or about the word count. It is better to write it all first and then edit at the end. • Create a nice flow and be clear to tell the: Strategies → Why of these strategies → The results • Use headings, subheadings, bullet points, tables, etc.
FINAL STEPS	
TIMELINE	YOU ARE ALMOST THERE!
WEEK 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and edit your answers. You may want to check your word count before you start so you know if and how much you will need to cut down. • Check for spelling mistakes and grammar – Grammarly may be helpful. • Add the supporting images and graphics to each answer. Canva may help you create collages, infographics, etc. • Refer to the rules and regulations document to ensure you have ticked all the boxes.
WEEK 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask a colleague or someone you know in the industry to review your submission – choose someone that does not work in the business if possible. They may provide you a different perspective. • It will take one couple of hours to review your submission. Ensure you ask him/her in advance so they can schedule the appropriate time. • Ask him/her to track change edits and add comments to the document but ensure you have saved another copy for yourself before.
WEEK 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review their comments and suggestions and make any necessary edits to your submission. • Start uploading your answers to the online portal. You can break-this up and do one question at a time: Review → Edit/Finalise → Upload
SUBMISSION DEADLINE - TUESDAY 31 AUGUST, 5PM	