

Full Category Descriptions

Agri-business of the Year

This category is open to all commercial businesses involved in agricultural production, including animal, poultry, fish, plant, fruit, vegetable and crop production through farming/ contract farming as well as production and supply of seed, bulbs, feed, chemical and soil nutrition products as well as the design, build and/or supply of farm machinery & equipment. This category also applies to businesses engaged with high volume food production and food processing for sale as well as the provision of support services to the Agri-business sector. Applicants should be able to demonstrate excellence in business practices, performance and success.

Food and Drink Producer of the Year

This category is open to all commercial enterprises in Kilkenny engaged as a primary food/drink producer or working with a primary food producer to develop and bring a food or food products to the market for retail sale. Applicants should be able to demonstrate excellence in business practices, performance and success. *Please note for catering businesses interested in applying please see Excellence in Hospitality category.*

Exporter of the Year

This category is open to all commercial business in Kilkenny involved in the creation and exportation of products, knowledge management and services outside of Ireland who can demonstrate excellence in business practices, business/market development, financial performance and success.

Excellence in Communications

This category is open to all Kilkenny businesses, companies, partnerships, sole traders, consultancy services, agencies, co-operatives and not for profit organisations with a remit for developing communications strategies, managing/implementing communication plans, business/event marketing, PR as well as those or individuals within organisations and freelance involved in specific communication channel roles including bloggers, social media broadcasters, web designers, radio/TV & online broadcasters, producers, directors as well as radio/TV/online & print journalists, writers, researchers, editors. Applicants should be able to demonstrate excellence in all aspects of their chosen field of communications.

Innovation in Business

This category is open to any Kilkenny enterprise from any field of business that can demonstrate how an innovation or change has been applied to its strategic business model/business operations/development plans and implemented in the last two years, which has delivered tangible success for the business. This award is open to any registered business employing minimum of 3 people (no maximum).

Excellence in Hospitality

This category is open to all Kilkenny businesses that can demonstrate excellence in quality, customer satisfaction and business performance improvement in their hospitality business across any of the following disciplines: food and/or beverage, accommodation, entertainment.

Excellence in Providing Customer Service

This category is open to all Kilkenny product or service businesses, commercial businesses, professionals and sole traders that can demonstrate excellence in understanding their customer's needs in order to deliver superior service. They should also demonstrate a high level of customer engagement and delivery of a quality of service that not only meets but anticipates and exceeds customer expectations and ensures customer satisfaction, loyalty, repeat business, personal recommendations and a reputation of excellence that supports their own business growth and development as well as Kilkenny's reputation in business excellence.

Service Provider of the Year

This category is open to all Kilkenny commercial businesses, professionals and sole traders who are engaged with the provision of services and expertise to Industry that can demonstrate a good business model that ensures depth of engagement and delivery. They should also be able to demonstrate excellence in business practices, market development, financial performance and success.

Retailer of the Year

This category is open to all Kilkenny businesses involved in retailing – both on and/or offline, which can demonstrate excellence in their business operations and performance that supports Kilkenny's growing reputation for excellence in retailing.

Information & Communications Technology

This category is open to all Kilkenny businesses, companies, partnerships, sole traders, consultancy services, agencies, co-operatives and not for profit organisations who have implemented a clear Information & Communications Technology strategy (ICT). Businesses should demonstrate how a diverse set of technological tools and resources are used in communication, through the creation, storage, and management of information and how it has contributed to the success of the business. Applicants should be able to demonstrate excellence in implementing and executing appropriate digital/ICT strategies to their business sector. Social Media, Email Marketing and Web Content/Blogging should be included.

Employer of the Year

This category is open to Kilkenny employees and employers to nominate their Kilkenny employer/employer organisation for best practice in people management, staff development and/or staff relations that positively impacts on business performance and employment. *Please note that this category is open to employers for self-nomination.*

Employee of the Year

This category is open to Kilkenny employers and colleagues to nominate their fellow Kilkenny employee/team member who can demonstrate the significant contribution /added value the employee has made in the past 12 months to the development/growth of the business and/or quality of customer experience and where they can demonstrate how they brought a unique skills set/work ethic, commitment and/or contribution to the business in their role, or in supporting others in their role, that has made a positive, unique difference to the business performance and success. Those entering under the Employee of the Year category, please complete sections 1, 2 and 6.

Culture / Heritage Tourism Award

This category is open to all heritage and cultural attractions, activities, festivals and events which can demonstrate excellence in their business practices, business performance and success. In addition to demonstrating customer satisfaction, applicants will also be able to demonstrate how the work to develop a greater understanding of the needs of tourists and visitors and how this knowledge influences the delivery of their visitor experience. They should also demonstrate how their business marketing plan is resulting in growth in visitor footfall and helping expand their tourist markets and how they work with others to contribute to the development of Kilkenny as a destination. Where relevant, they should be able to demonstrate ways in which they are 'adding' additional revenue streams/potential to grow the business to ensure greater sustainability into the future.

Craft Producer of the Year

This category is open to all indigenous Irish craft industries - which involves design & production for sale. In addition to demonstrating customer satisfaction, applicants in this category will also be able to demonstrate how they/their business works to develop a greater understanding of the needs and wants of their customer markets they serve and wish to access and how they marry this with their creative skills along with their personal Irish and international design influences to continually innovate their creations/products to grow their business. Where relevant they should also be able to demonstrate how their business practices and processes are creating greater efficiencies in production costs and/or quality improvements in response to market needs and how their marketing plan is demonstrating the new routes to market to grow their business and where appropriate how they are engaging with online sales platforms to increase their business potential, performance and sustainability for long term success.

Family Business of the Year

This category is open to all family owned and run businesses in County Kilkenny, employing two or more people (maximum 10 employees only with at least one employee to be a family member) that can demonstrate excellence in business practices - from product /service innovation in response to market needs and trends, in peoples skills development as well as in marketing and sales development for overall business performance and success.

Emerging New Business

This category is open to all businesses owned and run in County Kilkenny, employing two or more people that have been established and **are trading for between 12 and 48 months**. Applicants should have a clear vision and goal for the business, have a clear understanding of the business unique selling point (USP) and market potential, be able to demonstrate how they have created a solid business model and plan to establish themselves firmly in the market. Even within their early development they should be able to evidence excellence in business practices as well as capturing and using an understanding of customer needs to grow sales and develop the business.

Small Business of the Year

This business award category is open to all commercial businesses who employ no more than 10 people with a turnover of less than €500,000 p.a. that can demonstrate excellence in business practices - from product /service innovation in response to market needs and trends, to skills development as well as in marketing and sales development for overall business performance and success.

Investment in Skills, Training and Development of Staff

This business award category is open to all commercial businesses and private training/education service providers who can demonstrate significant investment in their staff or client in research and/or skills development, using a shared model of responsibility - for professional and personal self-development aligned with business development/growth needs/goals. Applicants should be able to demonstrate the use of innovative learning models and techniques that balance the demands of working and studying/learning/research that clearly demonstrate the application of that learning back into the business, as well as ensuring it is shared with others. It should also be able to demonstrate how the impact of the knowledge and skills gained are measured and rewarded.

Environmental Award

This business award category is open to any commercial businesses across all sectors who can demonstrate consistent application of good environmental practices aligned to recognised Irish /EU environmental standards. Applicants should be able to evidence in their business /environmental plan ongoing and ambitious goals for further environmental improvement and sustainable development in terms of some or all of the following: contribution to climate change in terms of water and energy usage and conservation, as well as practices to optimise air quality and minimise/remove noise pollution, application of good or best practice in the treatment of waste water and waste recycling and application of policies and practices that support nature biodiversity and engagement in opportunities for eco-innovation.

Social Enterprise of the Year

This category is open to Social Enterprises in Kilkenny. A social enterprise is a not for profit business developed to deliver benefits and opportunities into particular communities or individuals. Applicants must demonstrate that they trade to provide essential services in their communities, to tackle some of the biggest problems in society or to address environmental issues. They must outline how the profits generated from their trading are reinvested back in to the business or local community and thus continue to provide jobs and other benefits to the community.