

Kilkenny Business Awards 2023

Full Category Descriptions

1. Agri-business / Food & Drink Producer 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. 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 Hospitality Excellence category.*

2. Craft & Design Award

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 the 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.

3. 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.

4. Customer Service Excellence

This category is open to all Kilkenny product or service businesses, commercial businesses, professionals, and sole traders that can demonstrate excellence in understanding their customers' 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.

5. 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.

6. 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 only sections 1, 2, and 6 of the application form.**

7. 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.*

8. Environmental Excellence 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.

9. Exporter of the Year and Excellence in International Trade Award

This category is open to all commercial businesses 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.

10. 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.

11. Health & Wellness in the Workplace Award

This category acknowledges the positive culture and health & wellness practices being encouraged in the workplace. Applicants must demonstrate their commitment to the health and wellbeing of their people through the application of a range of health and wellbeing programmes, which meet the needs of all staff.

12. Hospitality Excellence

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.

13. 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 a minimum of 3 people (no maximum).

14. 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.

15. 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.

16. 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.

17.Social Media & Digital Marketing Excellence Award

This category is open to Kilkenny based businesses which excel in online sales and marketing through engagement with the latest business thinking, creativity, and technology in the social media and Digital Marketing space. Applicants should be able to demonstrate a robust and integrated digital marketing strategy in support of their core business products or services and how it achieves improved business performance, presence, awareness, sales leads, conversions, engagement, and growth.

18.Sustainability Initiative Award NEW in 2023

This category seeks to highlight businesses operating with sustainable best practices, i.e. doing business without negatively impacting the environment, community or society as a whole. Applicants must demonstrate a strategy to reduce negative environmental impact resulting from their operations in a particular market. The applicant's sustainability practices will be analysed against environmental, social and governance (ESG) metrics and a demonstration of alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

19.Technology and e-Commerce Excellence Award

This category is open to all commercial businesses in Kilkenny which can demonstrate excellence in the use and application of technology and e-commerce solutions in their business processes resulting in measurable improvements for their business and for the wider community, locally, regionally, or nationally.

20.Volunteer Engagement Award NEW in 2023

This category is open to businesses and organisations that can demonstrate having a successful strategy that encourages collaboration between staff and volunteers to develop meaningful volunteer opportunities that positively impact the organization and the community. It is also open to Groups and Committees of people who have come together and made a significant positive impact on the community they serve through the delivery of their mission and initiatives.

Special Recognition Award NEW in 2023

This award is in the gift of the Kilkenny Chamber Board of Directors.

Lifetime Achievement Award

This award is in the gift of the Kilkenny Chamber Board of Directors.

President's Award

This award is in the gift of the President of Kilkenny Chamber.

Overall Business of the Year Award

The winner of this award will be selected from overall category winners, as decided by the Independent Judging Panel based on scoring awarded from assessment of application and Shortlisted Interview Process.