



Full Category Descriptions

1.Age Friendly Business Award

This category recognizes businesses that demonstrate a strong commitment to creating an inclusive and supportive environment for older adults. Applicants should provide evidence of their efforts and impact in these areas which may include policies, programmes, testimonials, and measurable outcomes that demonstrate their commitment to being age-friendly.

2.Cafe, Bar or Restaurant of the year Award

This category is open to all Cafes (including coffee shops, tea rooms, and other casual dining spots), Bars and Restaurants. The award recognises establishments that excel in all aspects of their operation, from the quality of their offerings to their impact on the community and environment.

3.Culture Heritage Tourism Award

This award celebrates a Kilkenny-based business or organisation that actively promotes and preserves the region's rich culture, heritage, and tourism. It recognizes those who create meaningful experiences, support local traditions, and contribute to Kilkenny's identity and visitor appeal. Entrants should demonstrate innovation, community impact, and sustainable practices in cultural or tourism-related initiatives.

4.Customer Service Excellence Award

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 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.Design & Craft Award

This category celebrates outstanding achievements across a broad spectrum of design and craft. It recognizes exceptional talent and innovation in various design fields and applications are invited from indigenous Craft Industries, Architects, Website Designers, Graphic Designers, Product Designers, Interior Designers, Fashion Designers and more. This award aims to highlight the diverse and dynamic nature of the Kilkenny Design and Craft Industry, fostering a vibrant and innovative future for creative professionals.

6.eCommerce and Digital Business Excellence Award (new definition)

This award recognises a Kilkenny-based business that demonstrates outstanding innovation, performance, and customer engagement in the digital space. It celebrates excellence in online commerce, digital marketing, user experience, and the strategic use of technology to grow and serve customers effectively. Entrants should show measurable success, creativity, and impact in their digital operations.

7.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.**

8.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.*

9. ESG Excellence Award

This award recognizes a business or organisation that demonstrates outstanding commitment to Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles (see below). It celebrates those who integrate sustainability, ethical practices, and responsible governance into their core strategy, operations, and culture.

Open to businesses of all sizes and sectors that can demonstrate measurable impact and leadership in one or more ESG areas.

- **Environmental Impact:** Initiatives that reduce carbon footprint, promote circular economy practices, or enhance biodiversity.
- **Social Responsibility:** Programs that support employee wellbeing, community engagement, diversity and inclusion, or human rights.
- **Governance:** Transparent leadership, ethical decision-making, compliance, and stakeholder accountability.

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. Hotel & Accommodation Providers of the year Award

This category is open to a wide range of establishments within the hospitality industry including Hotels, B&Bs, Guest Houses, Inns, Serviced Apartments, Holiday Parks & Resorts, Eco-Friendly Accommodation and Speciality Lodgings (e.g. Treehouses, Yurts, Houseboats, etc.). This award aims to recognize and celebrate the best in the hospitality industry, highlighting those who go above and beyond to provide exceptional guest experiences.

12. Innovation in Business Award

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).

13. 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.

14. Investment in Skills, Training and Development of Staff

This award recognises a Kilkenny-based business that prioritizes the growth and development of its workforce. It celebrates organizations that invest in upskilling, continuous learning, and career progression, fostering a culture of empowerment and excellence. Entrants should demonstrate a strategic approach to training and measurable impact on staff performance, engagement, and retention.

15. Night Time Experience Award

This category is designed to recognize and celebrate outstanding contributions to the night-time economy and culture. Aimed at Businesses & Venues, Event Organisers, Artists & Performers, Community & Cultural Organisations, Innovators & Entrepreneurs, Safety & Support Services, this award honours those who make the night-time vibrant, safe, and enjoyable for all.

16. 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.

17. Salon of the Year Award

Aimed at all types of Salons including Hair Salons, Beauty Salons, Barber Shops, Nail Bars, Makeup Salons, Spa Salons and Speciality Salons, this seeks to identify those that are not only leaders in their industry but also contribute positively to the local economy and community in Kilkenny.

18.Small Business of the Year Award

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.

19.Taste of Kilkenny Award

This category celebrates the vibrant culinary scene in Kilkenny, recognizing excellence across a variety of categories including Local Food Producers, Restaurants, Cafes, Retailers, Breweries & Distilleries, Community Initiatives and Sustainability Champions. The award honours those who contribute to Kilkenny's reputation as a top food destination, celebrating their dedication to quality, innovation and community spirit.

20.Volunteer Engagement Award

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.

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.