

9. VISITOR INFORMATION SERVICES

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

Business Impact Summary (0 marks)

Please provide the judges with an understanding of any impact to the business's situation resulting from natural, national and/or world events during the qualifying period. E.g., natural disasters (fire/flood), pandemic.

NOTE: This response does not contribute to the overall score but provide a clearer picture for judges to understand what the business has been able to achieve. This is factual information only, allowing you to tell the business story in the subsequent questions.

NOTE: If no impact to the business has occurred in the qualifying period, this question does not need to be answered.

Bullet points are recommended. The response should be short and sharp. (Max 250 words overall)

List any issues that have had a significant impact on the business during the qualifying period (1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024).

Include the following information:

- *What the event/situation was (fire, flood, business restrictions).*
- *How it impacted the business (e.g., closure of business, staff shortages, stock levels, cash flow).*
- *The severity of the impact.*
- *For what period (e.g., how many months within the qualifying period).*

1. Introduction (15 marks)

A. Provide an overview of the visitor Information service including a history of the business. 7 marks

Provide the judges with an insight into the visitor Information service; outlining how and when it commenced, where it is located, which area the visitor services cover, who works in the business, how it is funded etc. This is where you provide some background into the business' history and structure.

Provide an overview of the products/experience/services are on offer to visitors, e.g. how you service visitors, booking facilities, shop, etc. (whatever is applicable). In this question, you are only setting the scene for the judges – Q2. (Visitor Information Servicing) is where you will go in more detail.

How has the visitor Information service developed over time? For example, what new additions to the infrastructure were made (and when), how has staffing levels changed and what significant improvements have been made to visitor servicing?

Highlight the Visitor Information services' points of difference and what makes the business stand out from others (your unique selling points). Consider your amenities, products, services, or facilities that enhance visitor satisfaction.

This is where the judges (and auditors) will gain an understanding of how the visitor Information service fits into the category; therefore, it is important to clearly demonstrate eligibility by aligning with the category criteria to ensure that there is no misunderstanding as to why you have entered this category.

The judges may not be familiar with the visitor information service, or the region/area that you provide visitor information services to – this may be judged nationally and could have judges that are not from your state/territory. Therefore, explain from the ground up.

B. Outline the key features of the business plan. 4 marks

Provide an overview of the key features of the business plan. This should include the overall vision of the business and its main goals and strategies.

This will assist the judge to understand how business development (Q2) and marketing efforts (Q3) align with the business's overall strategies.

C. How does the Visitor Information service demonstrate tourism excellence? 4 marks

Demonstrate the Visitor Information services-commitment to tourism excellence by explaining the values and philosophy of the business. How does the Visitor Information services-go above and beyond to provide an exceptional visitor experience?

This should be reflected in policies and procedures, how staff members are inducted, incentivised and/or trained – so include details of these to show the Visitor Information service's-commitment to excellence.

How has the business been actively involved with and contributed to the tourism industry (locally, regionally and nationally) through both business and personal participation?

Tourism excellence can also be demonstrated by listing any awards won and accreditations held.

IMAGES

Attach a minimum of two graphics throughout Question 1. (accurately named) to support and enhance the response. For example, a map of where you are located, images of the product/service and any specific facilities/amenities/services you have highlighted in your response, a collage of the accreditation programs you participate in and/or any award achievements.

2. Visitor Information Servicing (15 marks)

A. How is visitor information provided throughout the visitor journey? 8 marks

The judges are looking for the measures the business has made to provide easy access to information across the various phases of the visitor journey.

Consider what information is needed during the dreaming, planning, booking, experiencing and post experience stages of the visitor journey and how the business provides this information.

Demonstrate how visitors find this information, how it is made accessible, and how the information is delivered.

B. How does the business engage with the local community to support visitor Information services? 7 marks

Demonstrate how the business engages and collaborates with local businesses in order to provide relevant, accurate and up-to-date visitor information.

Consider how the visitor information service both engages businesses to ensure the information provided to visitors is up to date and relevant, as well as how the Visitor Information service uses local businesses/community to support its own visitor servicing e.g., ambassador programs.

3. Business Development (15 marks)

A. During the qualifying period, what innovations/enhancements has the business implemented to improve its visitor Information services and why? 10 marks

This question seeks to understand how the visitor information services have been developed within the qualifying period and what the rationale was. Consider what the visitor information service has done to remain relevant to changing visitors, market, and digital trends and any innovations and/or enhancements that were implemented to develop the visitor experience/service over this period. If many, include the most significant ones.

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).

An enhancement could include, for example, a new experience or facility, updating point of sale processes to changing to ethically sourced supplies, and providing tours.

If the Visitor Information service has been significantly impacted within the qualifying period, describe what the business implemented to support its recovery/resilience. Outline the strategies implemented for business endurance through the challenging local, national or world events.

Actions that supported the ongoing survival of the business could include, for example, diversifying your product/service and seeking alternative ways for the delivery of the experience/product/service.

Explain the decision-making process that drove the business to implement the innovations/enhancements. Consider how these enhance the visitor experience and/or supported business endurance.

The judges will be looking for an understanding of what prompted the innovations/enhancements e.g., was it a result of guest feedback, change in market demand, etc., or how it was anticipated to support business endurance in the current climate.

The response should include the research and planning undertaken by the business to reach the decisions taken. Examples include external research that was considered and results from customers surveys.

Include how the innovations/enhancement align with the business' main goals and strategies that were outlined in Q1.B. Ensure the goals are specific so you can link it to the outcomes in the next question.

B. What were the outcome/s of the innovation/enhancement? 5 marks

Judges are looking for qualitative and quantifiable data that demonstrates what the expected outcomes of the innovations/enhancements were, and whether these were achieved.

Outline what measures were in place to track the success of these innovations/enhancements.

The response is looking for more than the innovation enhancement being successfully created e.g. 'new infrastructure was successfully built', rather, it is looking for insight as to how it supported the business to reach its goals/strategies e.g. visitation increased by an average of 10 visitors per day, visitor satisfaction improved by 13%, or engagement with the website increased from an average of 3 mins to 11 mins etc.

If able to, provide data from previous years to demonstrate improvements.

If the anticipated outcomes were not reached, acknowledge this, and provide the judge with insight as to why. How did the business respond?

If the outcomes are still pending, provide what data is available and what the forecasted results may be.

IMAGES

Attach a minimum of two graphics throughout Question 2. to support and enhance your response. For example, an image of any new products or facilities, posters promoting changes that have been implemented.

4. Marketing (10 marks)

A. What innovative marketing strategies did the Visitor Information service implement to encourage its target market to use its services, and why? 5 marks

This question is looking for a clear understanding of how the Visitor Information service is marketing to its target market/s and why these strategies were chosen.

The response should outline the target market and describe what the marketing strategies were to attract or maintain them.

Begin by outlining who the business has aimed the marketing towards and demonstrate a clear understanding of this market. 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 the product meets their expectations.

Identify how the target market/s are right for the Visitor Information service. E.g., what research has been conducted or used to determine the target customer?

Next, outline the marketing strategies identified for the business. Demonstrate how these marketing strategies were formulated by outlining the research undertaken and how the strategies align with the target markets attributes as well as, where able, with local, regional or state marketing plans.

How do the marketing strategies align with the Business Plan as outlined in Question 1.B?

Then, describe the tactics used to achieve these strategies.

What has been done differently to attract or maintain customers within the qualifying period? Consider, for example, social media, digital or interactive advertising, apps, product packaging, tactical or paid advertising campaigns, or relationship marketing. Outline what channels were chosen and why they would be the best fit for the targeted audience?

If the business has been impacted by natural or world events it is important that the judges understand whether the strategies were developed for business growth, business endurance, or whether the strategies were adopted to keep connected to the businesses target market whilst normal business operations were unable to take place.

B. What were the outcomes of these strategies? 3 marks

Detail how the marketing activities mentioned in Q4.A have been successful.

Outline what measures are in place to track the success of these marketing strategies.

Use metrics to measure the outcomes and consider media coverage, social media engagement, increased web traffic, increased bookings etc.

If providing a snapshot of data within your image allocation, ensure you provide an analysis and/or interpretation of this, rather than leaving it to the judges to decipher.

If the anticipated outcomes were not reached, acknowledge this, and provide the judges with insight as to why. How did the business respond?

If the outcomes are still pending, provide what data is available and what the forecasted results may be.

C. How does the visitor information service support the promotion of the destination's key marketing themes? 2 marks

This question is looking to understand how the Visitor Information services curates and shares the key themes of the destination's marketing activities.

This could be its Indigenous, history, heritage, flora/fauna, food, wine, craft and/or art themes, as some examples.

Therefore, provide the judge with an overview of the destination's key marketing pillars, and then outline what the visitor information services does to support the promotion of these pillars. This could be demonstrated by; interpretive displays, videos/imagery on digital assets, food tasting, art displays, etc.

IMAGES

Attach a minimum of two graphics throughout Question 3. to support and enhance your response. For example, images of marketing placement (e.g. social media screen shots, website, advertisements).

5. Customer Experience (20 marks)

A. How does the visitor information service provide quality customer service pre, post and during the visitor experience? 10 marks

This question requires you to outline the practices put in place to ensure the delivery of high-quality customer service throughout the visitor experience journey.

Outline how the Visitor Information services is committed to quality customer service throughout all areas of the business. This could include areas such as staff training, service principles and policies and staff reward systems.

Consider all points of customer engagement e.g., email, phone, guest greetings/welcome and interaction before, during and after the experience.

Ensure you consider all touch points of the visitor journey pre, post and during the visitor experience.

For those Visitor Information services that had significant disruption during the qualifying period, consider how you provide quality customer experiences in the alternatives ways in which it operated, such as changed opening times, restricted access to business, and kept customers informed during closures etc.

B. How does the visitor information service monitor and assess customer satisfaction to improve the visitor experience? 5 marks

Describe how the Visitor Information services monitors and assesses customer service to ensure continued quality delivery. For example, feedback forms, monitoring social media, blogs and mystery shoppers.

Consider how feedback is actively encouraged and how feedback is used to improve the visitor experience.

Provide a case study/example where a change has been implemented based on customer feedback and/or testimonials that further demonstrate outcomes of quality customer experiences.

C. Describe the inclusive practices integrated across the Visitor Information services. 5 marks

As a part of the delivery of quality customer experiences, demonstrate how the business considers the specific needs of a diverse community.

Provide examples of how the business has made the product/service inclusive or accessible to specific individuals/groups that may have faced barriers to participation previously.

Barriers to participation could include, but are not limited to, cultural reasons, language, physical constraints, intellectual capability, cognitive constraints, dietary requirements, or other specific needs groups.

Explain the outcomes achieved from making the product/service inclusive or accessible to specific individuals/groups. Include a case study to support your answer.

Refer back to the business' target markets – consider each market and what specific products/services are offered to those guests to accommodate their needs.

IMAGES

Attach a minimum of two graphics throughout Question 4. to support and enhance your response. For example, staff communications posters, flow charts of customer service processes, reception cards encouraging feedback.

6. Responsible Tourism (10 marks)

A. Demonstrate how the Visitor Information service has made a positive impact through being environmentally, socially, economically and ethically responsible. 10 marks

This question requires you to consider how the business has made a positive impact on the local and/or broader community.

For example;

- *Environmental*
 - *How has the business been developed to minimise its impact on the environment e.g., water conservation, waste management/reduction/recycling, fuel and energy reduction, carbon reduction/offset, refuse initiatives in place, noise cancellation, wildlife destruction/interruption measures in place.*
 - *The inclusion of actual measurement data including the amounts saved/reduced in comparison to the previous year (or multiple years if you have good records) will enhance the response.*
- *Social*
 - *What strategies are in place for the business to support the local community e.g., supporting local businesses, product packaging, charitable donations, sponsorship, engagement with community groups, supporting local talent, school education and involvement, work experience, support of community fundraising.*
- *Economic*
 - *What strategies are in place for the business to support the local economy e.g., local purchasing, creating job opportunities, promotion of local businesses, support of community funding initiatives, understanding of spend by the business' customers to the region/community.*
 - *Where able, use metric examples to demonstrate the contribution made. For example, "75% of all our expenses were spent in X region."*
- *Ethical*
 - *How has the business considered its ethical responsibilities throughout its development e.g., through its engagement and representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, cultural or historical representation, animal welfare, restoration.*

For all examples, ensure that you outline how a positive impact has been made.

IMAGES

Attach a minimum of two graphics throughout Question 5. to support and enhance your response. For example, certificates of appreciation from community groups, signage demonstrating environmental sustainability measures, participation in community activities.

Submission Score /85

Online review /10

Consumer rating /5

Onsite score /20

Prerequisite to enter:

The business must be able to demonstrate that they meet base business operating standards. This can be done by holding current Sustainable Tourism accreditation through the Quality Tourism Framework (QTF). This may be achieved by completing the Business Standards section (within the awards submission online) prior to June 30th, 2024. Additionally, if Visitor Information Centre accreditation is not held, the business must also complete the specific VIC Business Standards section (within the awards portal) to a satisfactory level, also prior to the 30th June 2024.
