

# SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS AWARDS 2025 ENTRY GUIDE

CELEBRATING SUCCESS  
IN SUSTAINABILITY

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## **What are the Sustainable Business Awards?**

For 23 years the Sustainable Business Awards have been a beacon, illuminating the path of sustainable progress in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The Awards showcase the shift towards a future where businesses thrive in harmony with nature and society. They traverse different sectors, business sizes and structures. They highlight new business models in pursuit of radical change, while also recognising transformative change within existing business operations.

Sustainability as usual isn't enough. And in the face of unprecedented environmental and social challenges, the Sustainable Business Awards show us what's possible.

The Sustainable Business Network (SBN) is on a mission to forge a fair, low-emissions, regenerative circular economy for Aotearoa New Zealand. This vision is reflected in the Sustainable Business Awards.

This means rewriting the narrative of business as usual to create a future we're proud to leave for generations to come. It means creating an economy that moves away from wasteful practices and puts people and nature first. It means designing products, services and systems that enable both people and nature to prosper.

## Why should I enter?

### Potential for global recognition

From 2025, finalists in the Sustainable Business Awards have the chance to be put forward as a nominee for the Earthshot Prize founded by Prince William. Te Herenga Waka – Victoria University of Wellington, official Aotearoa nominator for the Earthshot Prize, will assess which finalists would make the best candidates for the £1 million prizes on offer each year across five categories – Protect and Restore Nature, Clean Our Air, Revive our Oceans, Build a Waste-Free World, and Fix our Climate.



THE  
**EARTHSHOT  
PRIZE**



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF  
**WELLINGTON**  
TE HERENGA WAKA  
NEW ZEALAND

### Be recognised as what's Next

Get named in our 'Next' list – the group of Awards finalists selected by the judges that are bringing potentially groundbreaking new ideas. Being named in the Next list offers you access to increased profile building and support for your business.\*

### Showcase your commitment

Be seen as a leader in Aotearoa New Zealand, receiving well-deserved recognition for your hard work and dedication.

### Positive publicity

Enjoy widespread media coverage, lots of pats on the back, and inspire others by showcasing your environmental progress and credentials.

### Build valuable connections

Join a vibrant community of sustainability leaders and innovators, creating opportunities for meaningful connections and collaborations.

### Differentiate yourself

Stand out from the rest with an Award from a trusted sustainable business brand with a 23-year legacy.

### Celebrate and reflect

Reward your efforts, celebrate achievements, and use the entry process as a moment to reflect on your sustainability progress, providing clarity for future direction.

### Access expert feedback

As a finalist, you can receive valuable feedback from industry experts, helping to further improve your sustainability initiatives.

### Inclusive and accessible

The Sustainable Business Awards are open to everyone, regardless of where you are on your sustainability journey, and entry is free – making it an accessible opportunity for all.

\*additional services and opportunities are available to those on the Next list who are SBN Impact Investors (members)

## What is the entry process?

### 8 May Entries open

#### **Choose your category(ies)**

Provide a clear and compelling summary of the entry. Explain why you / your team / organisation / partnership / nominee deserves to win in the chosen category.

#### **Address the criteria**

The entry form will prompt you for more detailed information about your entry.

Pages 5-7 of this Entry Guide will provide you with some helpful hints and guiding questions designed to enhance and structure your entry.

That's it!

### 27 June Entries close

Submit your entry via our website by 11.59pm, 27 June 2025.

### July - August Judging

SBN staff compile all the entries, then hand them to our amazing independent judges. Our judges are experts in sustainability and business. They delight in inspirational stories of New Zealanders making a difference and know how to select those who shine a little more than others. If you're one of these, you'll be selected as a finalist and announced in our 'Next' list. The Next list is the list of Awards finalists - innovators, entrepreneurs, projects and organisations leading us towards a better future for Aotearoa New Zealand.

### September Who's 'Next'?

If you are named on the Next list – congratulations! We might ask you to elaborate on your sustainability story with a few probing questions. We'll launch a campaign to start celebrating your inclusion on the list, and we'll have a number of additional profile-building opportunities.

### Late November Awards Evening

Well done! Whether you're announced on the Next list or not, you are making a difference. Book a ticket to our Awards event and celebrate with others making Aotearoa New Zealand a more sustainable nation. We will announce a winner in each category, along with a number of sector-based commendations.



AWARD CATEGORY

**DISRUPTIVE  
INNOVATION**

Celebrating groundbreaking products, services, technologies and business models designed with sustainability and circular economy principles at their core. This award celebrates homegrown creativity, technology and innovations that disrupt existing systems and drive significant positive environmental and social impact. It recognises companies that pioneer new business models or use indigenous frameworks to challenge linear systems and promote a future where nature and people thrive.

Here are some prompts to help you with completing your Disruptive Innovation entry...

**Tell us about the product/ service/technology, its design and innovation...**

Describe the product, service or technology you have developed and its market opportunity. What is the challenge or opportunity it seeks to address? What makes your innovation unique compared to existing solutions or traditional approaches?

How did you approach the design and development process? How does your innovation incorporate sustainability and circular economy principles e.g. material selection, modularity, longevity, reuse, regenerating nature?

How do you ensure high sustainability standards throughout the lifecycle of your innovation, including the use phase and end-of-life considerations?

**Tell us what makes it a system disruptor...**

How does your innovation disrupt existing systems and redefine traditional business frameworks? What specific systems or frameworks does it challenge? Share how your innovation challenges linear systems and encourages a shift towards sustainability and a circular economy. What are the key elements that enable this disruption? How do these elements contribute to systemic change? Discuss the scalability and replicability of your innovation - can it be adapted to different contexts or industries? What potential does it have for widespread adoption and impact?

**Tell us about its impact...**

Illustrate the positive environmental and social impact your innovation has driven. What measurable outcomes have you achieved? How do these outcomes benefit both nature and people in the long term? How do you ensure these benefits are sustained over time? What strategies are in place to continually enhance impact?

AWARD CATEGORY

# TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Honouring visionary leaders who are championing long-term, transformational changes towards a regenerative, circular economy. This award celebrates individuals or teams that inspire and lead by example, driving systemic change that ensures people and nature thrive for generations to come.

Here are some prompts to help you with completing your Transformational Leadership entry...

## **Tell us about the vision...**

What motivated you to pursue this vision? How do these goals align with the principles of a regenerative, circular economy? Provide examples of strategic decisions or actions you have taken that demonstrate your commitment to this vision. What challenges did you face and how did you overcome them? How do you adapt and evolve your strategies to address emerging challenges and opportunities? How will, or have, these actions contributed to significant, long-term change?

## **Give us some specifics about the initiatives and action taken...**

Share specific initiatives or projects you have led that inspire and mobilise others towards a regenerative, circular economy. What were the objectives and outcomes of these initiatives? How have these initiatives impacted your organisation, industry or community? Explain how you have

engaged and influenced stakeholders (e.g., employees, partners, community members) to support and participate in your initiatives. What strategies did you use to gain their buy-in and collaboration? Can you provide examples of how others have been inspired to take similar actions?

## **Tell us about the achievements to date...**

Recognising that system change takes a long time, what seeds of change have you managed to plant or grow to date? How have your actions improved social and environmental outcomes? In what ways have you ensured these contributions are sustained over time? Describe the measures you have implemented to continuously assess and enhance the impact of your initiatives on people and nature. How do you plan to continue driving transformational change in the future? What are your next steps or future initiatives?

## What are the judges looking for?

**To be named a finalist on the Next list, the judges will be trying to ascertain:**

1. Is the innovation truly disruptive, or the leadership truly transformational, in itself or within its system/sector?
2. Is this entry getting us closer to a circular economy?

**To determine category winners and sector-based commendations, the judges will be looking for:**

1. A demonstration of (or strong potential for) measurable impact; a tangible contribution to the circular economy.
2. A genuine departure from business as usual
3. Illustration of scalability or influence; potential for, or proven, transformation of the current economy.



## Have any niggly questions?

### **Is my business too big or too small?**

Any size organisation, as well as individuals, can enter the Awards. The judges will take the size of the organisation into account when considering the applications.

### **Can collaborations and partnerships enter?**

Yes, the more the merrier! Sometimes collaborations take us to new and exciting places, so please tell us about them.

### **Is it cheeky to nominate myself?**

No! New Zealanders generally don't celebrate their own achievements and we want to change that. You can nominate yourself, someone can nominate you, or you can nominate someone else.

### **Can overseas projects enter?**

Yes, you can enter overseas projects - but only if the technology and ideas were generated here in good old NZ, and you can demonstrate the impact for Aotearoa New Zealand.

### **Should I enter if I wasn't previously selected as a finalist?**

Of course! We want to hear about your progress.

### **Who gets to see my entry? Is it confidential?**

Entries are compiled by the Awards Team at SBN and sent straight to the Judges. Your entry form is confidential, but if you are chosen as a finalist, we'll want to tell everyone about the great work you're doing so make sure your initiative/project/business can be talked about!

### **Do I have to be an SBN Impact Investor (member) to enter?**

No, anyone can enter.

### **Can I submit more than one entry?**

Yes, you can submit as many entries as you like, but get ready to spend a little more time - you need to fill in a separate entry form for every category you enter and provide details specific to that category.

### **Can I enter if I have won before?**

Yes!

### **What is the Next list?**

The Next list is the list of Awards finalists. It was introduced in 2024 and is an annual list that represents what's 'next' in sustainable business. Organisations and people on the Next list enjoy promotion throughout the year.

### **You mention 'circular economy' - what's that?**

In a circular economy, resources are never abandoned to become waste or pollution. Products are designed to be safe and easy to manage in cycles of production and reproduction. By minimising the use of new resources, the circular economy aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and environmental impact. This also creates the economic foundations for the nature regeneration that is urgently needed. [Read more...](#)



## Something else?

Contact us at [awards@sustainable.org.nz](mailto:awards@sustainable.org.nz)  
and we'll be happy to help

On behalf of SBN and our awards sponsors  
and partners:

**Good luck with your Awards entry!**

[sustainable.org.nz/sustainable-business-awards/](https://sustainable.org.nz/sustainable-business-awards/)

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