



How to write a good award entry

We know you deliver great support to jobseekers. We also know that some of the best organisations do not always produce the best award entries.

To help all organisations maximise their chances of conveying to judges how well they are doing and the impact they have made, feedback has been collated from the judging panels of 2015 and 2016 as to what they feel makes a good award entry, plus traps to avoid.

Do take the time to look through the hints and tips below and good luck!

ERSA Awards Team

General Feedback

- Provide a strong summary that highlights your key selling points. This alone should explain to the judges why you should be in the running for the award. The full entry is where you 'seal the deal'.
- Ensure that your award entry clearly addresses each of the criteria in the award. The criteria can be structured using sub headers which clearly signpost to the judges how you are addressing each criteria.
- Provide appropriate evidence that can be easily comparable and understood even by someone without technical sector experience. This is likely to include clear information on the profile of jobseekers supported; plus clear information on outcomes, such as the number starting work and those sustaining in work in a given period.
- Make sure you are entering your award for the right category by carefully reading each award criteria - sometimes judges have felt that entries would have been better received in a different category. Examples include entries which relate to solid delivery being entered to the innovation category when there is little evidence of innovation.

Small or Medium Employer of the Year

- The judges particularly like organisations that demonstrated commitment to employability at a number of levels, including support for jobseekers outside the labour market to boost employability skills; plus hiring practices which supported a wide range of jobseekers to take up a variety of roles.
- Judges wanted to see that responsible hiring practices were embedded across the business, however small.
- Judges also liked it when there was evidence that people could progress on to a higher role with more responsibility within that company.

Large Employer of the Year

- Entries should show that work with jobseekers was entirely embedded across different elements of the business rather than linked to a small element of a corporate responsibility strategy or to a specific part of the business.

- Judges liked seeing evidence that employers were supporting employment programmes for more than purely business reasons (ie the commitment went beyond seeing programmes as a cost effective hiring route).
- Judges liked to see a strong element of sustainability with people moving into long term jobs with progression.
- Judges wanted to see evidence of non-traditional hiring methods which recognised the range of jobseeker needs. This might include guaranteed interviews for particular groups of jobseekers, such as those who might struggle with written forms.
- In addition, judges were attracted to efforts by businesses to overcome systemic barriers to employment for some groups, such as ex-offenders.

Innovation

- The key point of this category is to show that what you offer is truly innovative within the sector rather than simply new to your organisation.
- Entries also need to be able to show that your process is effective and scalable/transferable.
- In addition, entries should demonstrate that the innovation is effective. As such, very new ideas which have only just been implemented may not have sufficient evidence to warrant an award entry. Several award entries have not been prioritised by judges in the past, not because they were not innovative, but because the positive impact of that innovation was as yet unproved.

Disability and Health Employment

- Of primary importance to the judges was that the entries demonstrated that organisations delivered exceptionally high performance for jobseekers with disabilities. As such, providing information on the profile of the jobseekers supported, easily understood performance metrics and, ideally, comparative information was felt to be very helpful.
- Judges wanted to see a clear, bespoke model for working with disabled people that ideally could be scalable.
- Judges liked organisations that reflected their support for disabled people in their own hiring practices.

Partner of the Year

- All entries needed to show solid levels of performance, including clearly understandable metrics and comparable information if possible.
- Judges also wanted to see a little something extra from the winners, a unique selling point that made them stand out from the other entries.
- Innovation was also important in this category in showing the creativity and problem solving ability of the partner organisation.

Adviser

- The most important element was felt to be strong evidence that this was an exceptional adviser who was delivering strong performance. Being clear about who was being supported and why this support was exceptional was felt to be essential.
- Judges often liked stories where the adviser had overcome their own personal difficulties which had informed their support for jobseekers. However, this was not thought to be essential.
- They also liked entries where there was evidence that the adviser had created or developed their own programme of support, innovating whilst on the job to improve performance.
- Evidence of endorsement from colleagues and/or jobseekers/employers was also important in this category.

Youth Employment

- Judges liked seeing information on the profile of young people being supported. In addition, entrants needed to demonstrate clear high performance with this client group.
- Judges likes it when the entry showed how the organisation was doing something special with this particular client group, creating a bespoke method of delivery.
- It was felt to be important that entries showed the distance travelled of the young people they worked with. Did they have particularly complex needs and were there opportunities for them to progress beyond low pay roles?

Significant Achievement

This is a particularly difficult category to judge and there is often a very personal element to the judging in that certain stories tended to resonate with different people. However entries that stood out tended to:

- Clearly demonstrated that the former jobseeker is now working to support other jobseekers, using their story to inspire.
- The judges were particularly moved by those who had overcome a variety of difficulties and barriers to employment and had shown their commitment to moving into work.
- Judges also liked a story where there was evidence that the individual had progressed from their initial role after moving into employment.

Lifetime Achievement

This award is judged independently of the other categories by an expert panel. Judges felt that the best entries clearly met the criteria and that, in particular, they wanted to see evidence of the individual's commitment to the wider sector as well as their achievement within their own careers. Successful candidates were likely to have spent a considerable time in the employment support sector and to have achieved a great deal in their own organisations. The best applications often had supporting letters or documentation, although this was not always found to have been necessary.

If you have any questions regarding the awards, contact Jack Thurston Jack.Thurston@ersa.org.uk.