



Feedback on ERSA Awards Entries 2017

Following last year's awards, a list of tips have been compiled to help you write this year's award entries. This brings together feedback from the judges in 2016 and 2017 based on their views of what makes a good award entry, plus traps to avoid.

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.
- When making a submission, try not to enter it into multiple categories as this tends to dilute the effect it has on the judges.
- Some submissions strayed away from employability and whilst they were good stories, they were not particularly suited to the ERSA Employability Awards.
- There were several submissions which were clearly exceptional but due to the fact the delivery was in its infancy, outcomes were difficult to gauge. The judges suggested in this instance that a re-entry next year might be the best approach, as there will be a greater set of data available to share.
- Ensure the evidence submitted is relevant to the award category and not excessive.

Small or Medium Employer of the Year

- The judges particularly liked 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 wanted to see evidence that employers were working with the sector for more than purely business reasons (ie the commitment went beyond seeing employment support 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 the process is effective and scalable.
- 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 were not prioritised, 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 is 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 of the Year

- 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 essential.
- Judges often liked stories where the advisor had overcome their own personal difficulties which had informed their support for jobseekers. However, this was not essential.
- They also liked entries where there was evidence that the advisor 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.

Team of the Year

- Judges were looking for an emphasis on a team working together to achieve delivery.
- Focus was often simply on results and not how the team worked together to achieve them.

Youth Employment

- Entrants needed to demonstrate clear high performance with this client group.
- Judges liked 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 Achiever

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

- 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.
- Judges also felt it wasn't imperative that the nominee's new role was within the sector.

We are also very happy to provide individual feedback as we appreciate the time and effort which goes into every entry. Do get in touch with Jack Thurston Jack.Thurston@ersa.org.uk if this is the case.