

## Heart of the City Award – Guidance Notes

### Heart of the City Award Information

The Heart of the City Award recognises businesses that have recently started to have a social impact in Greater London. Business of all sizes, including SMEs, should apply. We want to reward businesses which have taken a strategic approach to addressing a social issue(s) for the first time within the last three years (since 2020) and we encourage you to apply for this Award. The business may have previously engaged in ad hoc fundraising or one-off volunteering activities, but will now have made a strategic organisational commitment to identify a relevant social issue and set out a plan for tackling it through its influence and resources. This may include staff volunteering, pro bono advice, fundraising, gifts in kind or a shift to more inclusive business practices which address a societal need. As this award is for those new to this area, we are primarily interested in seeing how you have put the foundations in place to deliver social impact into the future. We are looking for some evidence of impact, but this carries a lower scoring weight than other categories as we recognise you are at the start of your journey. Please include details of the totality of your strategic approach, including all individual initiatives, provided they are addressing a social impact (environmental initiatives are not eligible).

For this Award, 'strategic' is characterised as a deliberate and structured plan for social impact, with aims and objectives set at an organisational level.

### Eligibility

- This award is open to applications from private sector businesses and public bodies having an impact in Greater London. Businesses and public bodies may make an application for their own organisation or nominate a third party business or public body. Charities, schools, community groups and social enterprises are not eligible to apply in this category but may nominate a business or public body.
- The Lord Mayor's Dragon Awards recognise and celebrate organisations going beyond their core business product or service to have a social impact. Applications will be disqualified if the initiative described is judged to form part or an extension of the organisation's core commercial and/or delivery activities, e.g. a local authority providing a statutory service to the community or a business whose purpose is to broker employee volunteering.
- Businesses that have previously implemented a strategic approach as defined above are not eligible for this award, even where this may have diminished over time and then been restructured again within the last three years. This is to ensure that this award is reserved for new entrants to the responsible business arena.
- Businesses that have NOT previously won in any of the categories can apply to the Heart of the City Award as many times as they wish within the three year time frame. Businesses that have won a Lord Mayor's Dragon Award in any category previously, may not apply for this award.
- If your initiative was shortlisted in 2022 you can apply with the same initiative, however the judges will be looking for ways in which your programme has developed over the past year.
- Your business **does not need to be a member** of Heart of the City to apply, any eligible (as explained above) business within Greater London is welcome to apply. We warmly welcome applications from SMEs.

- The same initiative cannot be submitted in more than one category. All partners involved in the same initiative must decide which category it best fits into and submit one application to that category only.
- If your initiative was shortlisted in 2022 you can apply again with the same initiative (or another) in any category, however the judges will be looking for ways in which your initiative has developed over the past year.
- If your initiative won an Award in (2022), it should not be entered in any category for three years following receiving the Award. For example, any initiative that won in 2022 should not be entered again until 2026. When submitting in following years the initiative should have had substantial changes made to it since winning the Award. You may apply with a different initiative to this year's Dragon Awards.

If you are unsure whether your organisation is eligible for this award, please get in touch by emailing [DragonAwards@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:DragonAwards@cityoflondon.gov.uk)

## **Your Initiative**

The initiative described in your application must benefit Greater London communities. Wider activity beyond Greater London will not be scored in your application, so should only be referenced to give wider context for your work.

We are interested in how your organisation is addressing a social issue by using your influence and resources to benefit Greater London communities e.g. residents, charities, schools, community organisations, small businesses and social enterprises, etc. This may be through changes to your business practices, pro bono advice, volunteering, fundraising, gifts in kind etc. These lists are not exhaustive.

If your initiative is part of a wider programme with other organisations, you should focus on the impact your business has made specifically rather than the programme as a whole.

Where two or more organisations are working in partnership on the same initiative, only one application should be submitted. Please make it clear if you are making a joint application.

Applications are encouraged from organisations that work with a number of different community partners, and from organisations that have chosen one partner to invest significant time and resources into.

## **What are the Judges Looking for?**

Depending on your initiative, not all of the below may apply but a majority of these indicators should be in place:

- Support from senior management and/or progress reported to senior manager(s)
- The social impact activities have relevance to your core business activities and stakeholders
- A strategy exists to demonstrate your purpose and how you will achieve it
- A policy for volunteering and/or fundraising exists (including, for example, guidance around volunteering time off or matched fundraising).
- Qualitative and/or quantitative measurements to track progress are in place and demonstrate impact

- A strong, long-term commitment to social impact and, if relevant, one or more community organisations
- The activity is linked to staff learning and development
- The impact is communicated internally and externally
- Evidence that the initiative has had a positive impact on your business, e.g. improving company culture or making organisational practices more inclusive

### **Judges' Tips**

- Don't assume knowledge – ask someone who doesn't know the initiative to tell you where the gaps are.
- Inspire us – show how you have responded to a real need, leveraged your capabilities to respond to that need, and made an impact.
- Talk about the future – we want to know what happens next, how will the impact be sustained.

### **Previous Winners**

Please follow the link to see videos of previous organisations who have won in this category:

[Winners videos](#)

## **Completing the Application**

### **Company Details - Section 1 (Not scored)**

Guidance for this section can be found within the online application form itself. If you have any further questions, please get in touch with us at [DragonAwards@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:DragonAwards@cityoflondon.gov.uk).

### **Your Initiative - Section 2 (Scored)**

The Awards judges will only be able to take into account the information you supply in your application in the scored questions. With a tight word count, it is important to make every word count.

- Each question will be scored on a scale from 0 – 10.
- If a question is left unanswered, zero points will be awarded.
- Please be aware of the weighting for each question.

### **Question 1. How and why was this initiative chosen and how has it been implemented?**

This question will count for 70% of your total score. [1000 words maximum]

Judges will want to understand the thinking behind your initiative and how you have or will ensure successful implementation.

To score highly in this question, please try to include information regarding as many of the below points as possible:

- How the initiative was selected and why (i.e. how you identified the need). The judges will look for evidence that your initiative is based on, and trying to address, community need(s)
- The aims and objectives of your initiative
- Why you chose to work with any partners involved
- Who has been involved in decision making
- How are you measuring success? e.g. monitoring and evaluation processes
- Any KPIs or targets that have been set
- Any processes that have been put in place to make the initiative successful e.g. how you will communicate with employees or partners, processes for collecting feedback
- What resources (employee time, money, in-kind donations) have been dedicated to the initiative
- Whether any training will be provided
- How the programme has been/will be co-ordinated/managed
- How the initiative feeds into your core business objectives

### **Question 2. What difference has this initiative made to your business, your beneficiaries and wider society (qualitative and quantitative)?**

This question will count for 20% of your total score. [300 words maximum]

We know that you are at the early stages of your initiative but we need to understand the impact you have made so far. This information may have been gathered, for example, through surveys completed by your participants both within the company and from beneficiaries.

The judges will be looking for the impact of your initiative and the benefits to your community partners, beneficiaries, your business, staff and any others relevant e.g. other businesses impacted as a result. Where possible, this should include how much progress has been made since the initiative started ie. Where you started and where you have got to so far. Please focus your answer on the impact made. Inputs and outputs will also be given consideration but organisations who are able to provide more information on impact, e.g. the difference made, will receive a higher score. If you do not have quantitative or qualitative data to illustrate an important impact point please explain what you are measuring now in order to measure impact in the future and supply anecdotal evidence instead.

Judges will always evaluate overall impact relative to inputs (i.e. how much resource is dedicated to the project), so smaller companies will not be disadvantaged.

To score highly in this question, try to include quantitative and qualitative evidence of impact on as many of the following as possible:

- Impact on people and society (e.g. change in people's behaviour, skills, wellbeing, life circumstances, increased opportunities, increased employment opportunities)
- Impact on community organisations (e.g. change in services or reach, change in systems and processes, change in public profile, change in staff, culture or volunteers)
- Business impact on employees (e.g. change in staff skills, well-being, behaviours)
- Business impact on the organisation (e.g. change in staff loyalty, retention or productivity, recruitment practices or diversity, change in reputation, brand awareness, commercial outcomes, change in operations, culture)
- Impact on relevant others (e.g. change in behaviour of other businesses, piloting a new approach for the sector, encouraging other businesses to get involved)

#### **Qualitative evidence of impact**

- Short case studies from community beneficiaries.
- Quotes from employee volunteers.
- Quotes from business or community leadership, such as CEOs.

#### **Quantitative evidence of impact**

- Statistics that demonstrate improvements for the community, such as the percentage of people in the project who reported improved skills or the percentage increase in procurement spend going to social enterprises who in turn have a social impact
- Statistics that demonstrate improvements for the community partner, e.g. money saved from a new IT system brought in on the advice of employee volunteers or increased visibility through a business campaigning on an issue to audiences not normally reached by the community organisation
- Statistics that demonstrate improvements for the business, e.g. the percentage of employee volunteers who reported an increase in their communication skills as a result of volunteering or a shift in company policy to become London Living Wage accredited with details of increased staff engagement and improved external reputation as a result

### **Question 3. What plans do you have for the future?**

This question will count for 10% of your total score. [200 words maximum]:

The judges will be looking for evidence of a sustainable initiative. Please consider the following when answering this question:

- How you are using monitoring and evaluation
- How you have resolved any challenges so far and any improvements you plan to make
- Any plans to scale the initiative
- If the initiative will be used to inform future decision making