

OPERATOR OF THE YEAR & INDIVIDUAL AWARDS 2025 GUIDELINES



About the TECNZ Awards

Each year, the Tourism Export Council of New Zealand (TECNZ) presents its “Operator of the Year” awards to outstanding tourism businesses which recognises excellence in terms of quality, professional development for team, health and safety, sustainability, business systems and outstanding visitor experiences by peers within the industry.

In addition, two individual awards are presented. The ‘Good Sort’ to someone who goes above and beyond and the ‘Unsung Hero’ who is often an overlooked champion.

The awards winners will be announced and presented at the annual Tourism Conference and therefore acknowledged by their industry peers.

For more information on each award and the criteria, please refer to page 2.

TECNZ Award categories

1. Large Inbound Tour Operator of the Year
2. Medium Inbound Tour Operator of the Year
3. Small Inbound Tour Operator of the Year
4. Large Allied Operator of the Year
5. Medium Allied Operator of the Year
6. Small Allied Operator of the Year
7. Good Sort of the Year
8. Unsung Hero of the Year (behind the scenes)

Key dates

Tuesday 13 May 2025	Online nominations open (multiple nominations permitted)
Thursday 22 May 2025	Online nominations close
Monday 26 May 2025	Nominees advised & request for business profile
Thursday 5 June 2025	Submission of nominee supporting information closes Shortlisting process commences to determine finalists. Judging commences
Monday 23 June 2025	Finalists announced & member online voting commences
Friday 4 July 2025	Online voting closes
Wednesday 6 August 2025	Winners announced at TECNZ Tourism Conference 2025

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Criteria and Eligibility

Large, Medium and Small Inbound and Allied Operator Awards

Awarded to outstanding businesses which recognises excellence in terms of quality, professional development for the team, health & safety, sustainability, business systems and outstanding visitor experiences by peers within in the industry.

- The nominating company and nominee company must be financial members of TECNZ.
- If a company has been nominated for a TECNZ Award in the past, whether or not they received an award, new information must be presented for the TECNZ Board to consider this nomination. A list of past winners is available below.
- An individual cannot nominate an operator with which he /she / they are directly associated for (i.e. self-company nominations are not permitted)

Good Sort of the Year (individual person award)

This award recognises a person in the tourism industry who goes above and beyond often with a sales and marketing focus and positive impact. A person supporting others in the industry both professionally and personally and who is a colleague supporting the work of TECNZ.

Those nominating an individual in this category need to provide the following at the time of nomination:

- A brief summary on why you consider this individual should be nominated for this award
- Areas to consider could include:
 - Describe how this person is working to make a real difference in a company, community or industry
 - What is the impact of their work with ideas, initiatives or projects
 - How they've supported you personally and/or helped fellow members

Unsung Hero of the Year (individual person award)

This award honours an individual who quietly contributes behind the scenes, offering steadfast support to colleagues or the broader community. Often unrecognized, this individual is a true champion within their company or industry. The Unsung Hero consistently demonstrates outstanding dedication across various roles, making a meaningful and lasting impact.

Those nominating an individual in this category need to provide the following at the time of nomination:

A summary on why you consider this individual should be nominated for this award. Areas to consider could include:

- Describe their role and how they support your business
- Outline any challenges or obstacles they may have faced
- Highlight the qualities that make the nominee truly stand out

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Process

To be considered for the annual TECNZ Awards, a 'nomination' must be submitted **online** no later than **Thursday 22 May 2025**. This nomination is to be submitted by an individual or organisation in the belief that the nominee has fulfilled the criteria and eligibility requirements outlined in the guidelines.

The nominated company will be contacted to advise they have been nominated (business awards only) and will be requested to provide additional information to support their nomination (see selection considerations).

The Good Sort Award & Unsung Hero Award nominees will not be contacted and therefore it is important that as much information as possible is provided by the person making the nomination when submitting online.

- The TECNZ Inbound Board members plus two independent judges will review Allied nominations (for small, medium & large) and provide a shortlist of three Finalists in each category using a point system.
- The TECNZ Allied Board members plus two independent judges will review Inbound nominations (for small, medium & large) and provide a shortlist of three Finalists in each category.
- All Board members and two independent judges will review nominations for the Good Sort & Unsung Hero of the Year Award.

The top three scoring companies will become the finalists for each Operator of the Year category. Each nomination will be scored on the basis of information contained in the online nomination form and supporting documentation provided by the company who has been nominated. The decision of the TECNZ Board will be final and no correspondence will be entered into.

All nominations for Good Sort and Unsung Hero of the Year Awards will automatically become finalists.

Members will then have an opportunity to vote on the top three finalists in each category to determine an overall winner.

1. Allied Members vote for Inbound Awards (small, medium and large)
2. Inbound Members vote for Allied Awards (small, medium & large)
3. All members can vote for Good Sort & Unsung Hero of the Year Awards

The winners of each award category will be announced at the awards evening held at the annual TECNZ conference on Wednesday 6 August 2025.

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Selection Considerations

Small, Medium & Large Operator of the Year awards (Allied and Inbound)

The nominations will be considered using the following guidelines and any others considered relevant by the TECNZ Board. For ranking, the TECNZ Board will give consideration to the following:

CRITERIA	WEIGHTING	WHAT THE JUDGES WILL BE LOOKING FOR
Overview of Operation (max 200 words)	10 points	Background on your company (start date, no. staff, no. visitors hosted) What makes you stand out from other operators? What is your future vision for the business?
Innovation (Product & Marketing) (max 250 words)	20 points	An example/s of how innovation of your product, service or marketing function has provided a step change for your organisation and where you have achieved a competitive advantage.
Customer Service/Professional Development/Working with your partners (max 300 words)	20 points	Explain how you achieve and maintain quality customer service? <i>Allied:</i> Example how you work with inbound tour operators. <i>Inbound:</i> Example how you work with product suppliers. What professional development do you have in place for your staff? (full and part-time). Do you encourage your younger team members to join YoungTEC or other networking organisations?
Measuring Performance (max 400 words)	30 points	Explain how your company measures performance. e.g. number of visitors, increase in revenue, financial and non-financial indicators, NPS score, positive media coverage etc. Provide examples if possible.
Responsible, Safe and Sustainable Tourism (max 300 words)	20 points	What health and safety practices and monitoring systems do you have in place? What sustainable practices/approach do you have and how do you measure carbon emissions? Outline areas where your business has demonstrated having a positive impact on local communities, contributing to the restoration and protection of our natural environment, and rebuilding the economic sustainability of the sector.

If you wish to submit supporting documents with your entry, please ensure these are in pdf format and a total upload size of 2MB.

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Awards Q&A

When was the TECNZ Awards programme established?

The TECNZ awards programme was introduced in 1982 to acknowledge Inbound Tour Operators for the outstanding work they do. The structure of the awards programme was updated in 2016 to include the Small Operator of the Year Award. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, no awards were presented in 2020. In 2021 we held our 50th celebration and in 2022 five achievement awards were presented in place of operator awards. The traditional Award categories returned in 2023 and updated to expanded categories.

Who is eligible?

Nominees company must be financial members of TECNZ.

Who can make a nomination?

The nominating company must be financial members of TECNZ.

How do I make a nomination?

Submitting an online nomination form. Please note all entries must be nominated by another member not associated with your company.

Can a previous winner be nominated again?

Yes. Each company will be judged only on achievements since the previous award was received. For those who have been nominated in the past (and have not won), previous nomination information can be updated and will be considered for the present nomination.

Do I have to fill out separate forms for each nominee?

Yes. Each Award will require you to complete a separate entry form.

Where can I find the names of previous recipients?

See below.

Are the nominations confidential?

Yes. Unless you indicate at the time of nomination that your information can be shared with the nominee, if requested.

When do nominations close?

Thursday 22 May 2025.

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Previous winners

Year	Large Inbound Operator of the Year	Small Inbound Operator of the Year	Large Allied Operator of the Year	Small Allied Operator of the Year	Good Sort Award
2024	Southern Crossings	New Zealand Educational Tours	RealNZ	Gannet Safaris Overland	Cecil Potatau

Year	Inbound Operator of the Year	Allied Operator of the Year	Small Business Operator of the Year	Good Sort Award
2023	Southern World	Sudima Hotels	Fiordland Jet	Martin Langford of Ngāi Tahu Tourism
2022*	Achievement awards			Ben Thornton of Bush and Beach
2021	50 th Celebrations took place			
2020	No awards held			
2019	Pan Pacific Travel	The Rees Hotel	OGO Rotorua	
2018	General Travel	Scenic Hotel Group	Ecozip	
2017	NZ Journeys	Rotorua Canopy Tours	Fiordland Trips and Tramps	
2016	Southern World	Scenic Hotel Group	Bush & Beach	
2015	Pan Pacific Travel	Real Journeys & Southern Discoveries	N/A	
2014	Pacific Destinations	Hobbiton Movie Set Tours	N/A	
2013	Pacific Destinations	Real Journeys	N/A	
2012	Pacific Destinations	Scenic Hotel Group	N/A	

*Alternative awards took place. The 2022 Achievement Award winners were as follows:

New Community/Charity Initiative - EcoZip Adventures, Waiheke Island

New Sustainability Initiative - Ziptrek Ecotours New Zealand

Innovation in Visitor Experience - Fiordland Trips & Tramps

Good Sort/Unsung Hero - Ben Thornton, Bush and Beach

Emerging Tourism Leader - Zac Watson, Maverick Digital Tourism Marketing