

# The New Zealand Leadership Awards 2025

Nomination guide

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# Welcome to The New Zealand Leadership Awards 2025

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The New Zealand Leadership Awards returns for its second year, celebrating those leaders who have not only navigated change but have used it to inspire progress. These awards stand as a platform for recognising professionals who exemplify excellence in leadership and impact within their fields.

In an ever-evolving business landscape, effective leadership remains the cornerstone of success. Across all sectors, individuals continue to rise to the challenges, driving innovation, resilience, and growth within their organisations.

We are proud to once again showcase the next generation of leaders who are shaping the future of our nation.



# A message from our CEO

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Kia ora koutou,

It is with great pleasure that we invite you to join us for the second annual New Zealand Leadership Awards. Following the success of our inaugural event last year, we are excited to continue this initiative. The positive feedback we received highlighted the importance of celebrating and acknowledging the outstanding leadership across New Zealand.

In challenging times, recognising the resilience and leadership that shape our nation is more important than ever, while also fostering positivity.

At Robert Walters, we deeply believe in the power of transformative leadership— leadership that inspires, innovates, and drives meaningful change. This is especially vital in today's ever-changing landscape, and we are proud to be part of this celebration.

Thank you for your support in making this possible. Together, let's continue to nurture leadership that drives meaningful progress and enriches our society.

Ngā mihi nui,



## Shay Peters

CEO, Robert Walters Australia  
and New Zealand



# Nominations

## Nomination process

**Nominations open:** 03 March - 02 May

All nominations must be submitted on The New Zealand Leadership Awards nomination page. You can nominate yourself or someone you know who exemplifies exceptional leadership. The process is simple and involves just one question.

If you nominate someone else, they will receive an anonymous email notification and have the opportunity to review and edit the nomination before final submission.

### Submitting a nomination:

1. Register an account on the nomination page.
2. Click 'Start nomination'.
3. Enter the details of yourself or the person you are nominating.
4. Answer the award question to submit your nomination by using the award criteria as a guide.
5. Submit nomination.

### Notes:

- Each person can be nominated only once per category.
- There is no limit to the number of nominations you can submit.
- You can save your nomination and return to it at any time.
- No documents or files can be uploaded during initial nominations.
- Submission must be a minimum of 300 words and a maximum of 1500 words.

## Award categories

- SME Business Leadership Award
- Large Business Leadership Award
- **Steinlager** Entrepreneur/start-up Leadership Award
- **Fonterra** Sustainability Leadership Award
- **Hnry** Innovation Leadership Award
- **SkyCity** ED&I Leadership Award
- **Anthony Harper** Community Leadership Award
- **Meredith Connell** Public Sector Leadership Award
- Pasifika Leadership Award
- **NZ Super Fund** Māori Leadership Award
  
- Emerging Leader of the Year
- **Robert Walters** New Zealand's Leader of the Year

*Note: No direct nominations accepted for the 'Emerging Leader of the Year' and 'New Zealand's Leader of the Year' awards. Finalists are chosen from nominations across all award categories.*



# Judging

## Judging process

Each award category is evaluated by an independent judging panel of industry experts. The judging panel will review each entry, considering both the nomination guidelines and the overall merit of the submission. While judges will assess entries based on category-specific criteria, they are not bound solely by these guidelines - each nomination will be evaluated holistically to ensure fairness and recognition of exceptional leadership.

## Judging phases

- 1. Shortlisting:** Once the nomination period closes, the first round of shortlisting will begin. An initial shortlist of 10–15 nominations per category will be selected. These nominees will be invited to submit up to five supporting documents to strengthen their entry. The judges will then refine this list to a final shortlist of approximately five nominations per category.
- 2. Interviews:** The final shortlisted nominees will participate in a one-hour virtual interview with their category's Judging Panel. This interview provides an opportunity to share further insights into their leadership journey. Judges will ask a set of predetermined questions, which will be provided to nominees in advance.
- 3. Finalists:** Following the interviews, the judging panel will determine the finalists and the category winner. Each category is limited to one winner.

## Key dates

**Nominations open:** 03 Mar - 02 May

**Shortlisting:** 04 May - 30 May

**Judging Phase:** 02 Jun - 21 Jul

**Finalists announced:** 23 Jul

**Tickets on sale:** 24 Jul - 22 Aug

**Event:** 04 Sep



Anthony  
Harper



sky CITY

Steinlager

MC.  
Meredith Connell



# Award categories & guidelines



Taxi

# SME Business Leadership Award

The SME Business Leadership Award recognises and honours outstanding leadership, innovation, and impact within the small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) sector.

**Eligibility:** Businesses with 0 to 50 FTE employees

**Nomination word count:** 300 - 1500

**Nomination question:** Why should your nomination be considered for the SME Business Leadership Award?

## Nomination guidelines

- **Leadership Excellence:** Demonstrates strong leadership, including the ability to inspire and motivate a small team, set clear business goals, and make effective strategic decisions.
- **Innovation:** Showcases a commitment to innovation, whether through developing new products, enhancing business processes, or implementing creative solutions to challenges.
- **Employee Development:** Highlights efforts to nurture and support employees, such as training programs, fostering a positive workplace culture, and recognizing staff achievements.
- **Social Responsibility:** Demonstrates ethical business practices and a commitment to corporate social responsibility, including initiatives that benefit the community, environment, or broader society.
- **Resilience and Adaptability:** Reflects the ability to navigate and succeed in changing market conditions, whether by overcoming challenges or capitalizing on new opportunities.

*Use these themes as a guide when preparing your nomination. Judges will evaluate nominations based on these criteria but are not limited to them. We encourage you to explore beyond these guidelines, as all submissions will be assessed holistically.*

## Files & documents

If your nomination be shortlisted, the nominee will have the opportunity to provide additional information, such as supporting documents, performance reports, and other relevant materials.

The logo for Taxi, featuring the word "taxi" in a lowercase, italicized, sans-serif font.



# Large Business Leadership Award

Recognising exemplary leadership and strategic vision within the realm of large enterprises, this award celebrates achievements that drive success and contribute to the broader business landscape.

**Eligibility:** Businesses with 50+ FTE employees.

**Nomination word count:** 300 - 1500

**Nomination question:** Why should your nomination be considered for the Large Business Leadership Award?

## Nomination guidelines

- **Leadership Excellence:** Displays exceptional leadership skills, including the ability to inspire and motivate a large team, set clear objectives, and make strategic decisions.
- **Innovation:** Demonstrates the ability to drive innovation within the company. This could involve developing new products, improving business processes, or implementing innovative strategies.
- **Employee Development:** Shows a commitment to employee development. This could be demonstrated by implementing effective training programs, fostering a positive work environment, or promoting from within.
- **Social Responsibility:** Displays a commitment to ethical business practices and corporate social responsibility. This could involve championing initiatives that benefit the community, the environment, or the wider society.
- **Resilience and Adaptability:** Shows the ability to adapt and thrive in changing market conditions. This could involve successfully steering the business through a difficult period or capitalising on new market opportunities.

*Use these themes as a guide when preparing your nomination. Judges will evaluate nominations based on these criteria but are not limited to them. We encourage you to explore beyond these guidelines, as all submissions will be assessed holistically.*

## Files & documents

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Steinlager

# Entrepreneur/start up Leadership Award

Honouring the trailblazers and visionaries who demonstrate outstanding leadership in entrepreneurship and startups, this award celebrates innovation, resilience, and transformative impact.

**Nomination word count:** 300 - 1500

**Nomination question:** Why should your nomination be considered for the Entrepreneur/Start-up Leadership Award?

## Nomination guidelines

- **Leadership Excellence:** Displays strong leadership skills, including the ability to inspire and motivate a smaller team, set clear business goals, and make effective strategic decisions.
- **Visionary Leadership:** Exhibits visionary leadership, demonstrating the ability to set and communicate a compelling vision for the start-up, inspire the team and lead them towards that vision.
- **Innovation:** Demonstrates a strong capacity for innovation. This could involve developing unique products or services, disrupting traditional industry practices, or implementing innovative business models.
- **Resilience:** Shows resilience and the ability to overcome challenges. This could be demonstrated by how they have navigated the start-up through difficult times or overcome obstacles in the business journey.
- **Team Building & Development:** Shows a commitment to building and developing a strong team. This could be demonstrated by the quality of the team they've assembled, the culture they've created, or the professional development opportunities they provide.
- **Social Impact:** Shows a commitment to making a positive social impact. This could be demonstrated by the start-up's mission, its corporate social responsibility initiatives, or its contributions to the community.
- **Scalability & Future Potential:** Demonstrates the potential for future growth and scalability of the start-up. This could be evaluated through the start-up's business plan, market size, or the scalability of its products or services.

*Use these themes as a guide when preparing your nomination. Judges will evaluate nominations based on these criteria but are not limited to them. We encourage you to explore beyond these guidelines, as all submissions will be assessed holistically.*

## Files & documents

If your nomination be shortlisted, the nominee will have the opportunity to provide additional information, such as supporting documents, performance reports, and other relevant materials.

The logo for Steinlager, featuring the brand name in a stylized, gothic-style font with a registered trademark symbol.

Fonterra

# Sustainability Leadership Award

Acknowledging leaders committed to environmental and social responsibility, this award highlights outstanding contributions to sustainable business practices, fostering positive change for a better future.

**Nomination word count:** 300 - 1500

**Nomination question:** Why should your nomination be considered for the Sustainability Leadership Award?

## Nomination guidelines

- **Leadership Excellence:** Displays strong leadership skills, including the ability to inspire and motivate a smaller team, set clear business goals, and make effective strategic decisions.
- **Vision and Strategy:** Demonstrates a clear vision and strategic approach to sustainability. This involves setting sustainability goals, integrating them into business strategy, and promoting a culture of sustainability within the organisation.
- **Implementation and Execution:** Demonstrates effective implementation and execution of sustainability initiatives. This could involve successfully reducing the organisation's carbon footprint, improving resource efficiency, or increasing the use of renewable energy.
- **Resilience and Adaptability:** Demonstrates the ability to adapt sustainability strategies in response to changing circumstances. This could involve adjusting strategies in response to new environmental regulations, changes in market conditions, or emerging sustainability trends.
- **Education and Communication:** Shows a commitment to educating others about sustainability. This could involve internal communication efforts to raise awareness among employees, initiatives to inform customers about the company's sustainability efforts, or public speaking engagements on the topic of sustainability.
- **Long-term Commitment:** Demonstrates a long-term commitment to sustainability. This could be evidenced by a track record of consistent sustainability efforts, plans for future sustainability initiatives, or a personal commitment to sustainable living.

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## Files & documents

If your nomination be shortlisted, the nominee will have the opportunity to provide additional information, such as supporting documents, performance reports, and other relevant materials.



Dairy for life

Henry

# Innovation Leadership Award

Celebrating pioneers who push the boundaries of creativity and progress, this award recognises leaders who drive innovation, spark change, and contribute to the advancement of their industries.

**Nomination word count:** 300 - 1500

**Nomination question:** Why should your nomination be considered for the Innovation Leadership Award?

## Nomination guidelines

- **Leadership Excellence:** Displays strong leadership skills, including the ability to inspire and motivate a smaller team, set clear business goals, and make effective strategic decisions.
- **Vision and Strategy for Innovation:** Demonstrates a clear vision and strategic approach to innovation. They should have a strong ability to anticipate future trends, set a clear innovation direction, and integrate it into the organisation's strategy.
- **Innovative Thinking:** Displays innovative thinking, generating unique ideas and solutions. They should be able to challenge the status quo and think outside the box to solve complex problems.
- **Execution of Innovative Ideas:** Shows a track record of successfully executing innovative ideas. This could involve developing new products or services, implementing innovative technologies, or introducing new business processes.
- **Culture of Innovation:** Fosters a culture of innovation within their team or organisation. They should encourage creativity, risk-taking, and continuous learning among their colleagues.
- **Collaboration and Teamwork:** Shows the ability to collaborate effectively with others to drive innovation. This could involve working with cross-functional teams, partnering with external organisations, or leveraging diverse perspectives to generate innovative ideas.
- **Resilience and Adaptability:** Demonstrates resilience and adaptability in the face of challenges or setbacks. They should be able to pivot and adjust their innovative ideas based on feedback or changing circumstances.

*Use these themes as a guide when preparing your nomination. Judges will evaluate nomination based on these criteria but are not limited to them. We encourage you to explore beyond these guidelines, as all submissions will be assessed holistically.*

## Files & documents

If your nomination be shortlisted, the nominee will have the opportunity to provide additional information, such as supporting documents, performance reports, and other relevant materials.



SkyCity

ED&amp;I

# Leadership Award

Recognising champions of diversity and inclusion, this award honours leaders dedicated to fostering equality, creating inclusive workplaces, and driving positive societal change.

**Nomination word count:** 300 - 1500

**Nomination question:** Why should your nomination be considered for the ED&I Leadership Award?

## Nomination guidelines

- **Leadership Excellence:** The individual should display strong leadership skills, including the ability to inspire and motivate a team, educate those within their organisation about the importance of diversity, and drive the uptake and operationalisation of ED&I policies and strategies across their company.
- **Policies and Practices:** The individual should show a track record of championing (or developing and implementing) ED&I policies and building a genuinely inclusive culture.
- **Vision and Commitment:** The individual should demonstrate a clear commitment to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion (ED&I) within the organisation. They should set clear ED&I goals and show how they have integrated them into the organisation's overall strategy.
- **Promotion of Diversity:** The individual should actively promote diversity within the organisation. This could involve advocating for diverse representation at all levels of the organisation, promoting diverse role models, or celebrating diversity through events and initiatives.
- **Training and Development:** The individual should champion ED&I initiatives that promote diversity across the organisation. This could involve implementing diversity training programs, promoting continuous learning on ED&I issues, or providing resources for self-directed learning.
- **Measurement and Accountability:** The individual should understand what success looks like in terms of the successful implementation of ED&I policies.

*Use these themes as a guide when preparing your nomination. Judges will evaluate nomination based on these criteria but are not limited to them. We encourage you to explore beyond these guidelines, as all submissions will be assessed holistically.*

## Files & documents

If your nomination be shortlisted, the nominee will have the opportunity to provide additional information, such as supporting documents, performance reports, and other relevant materials.

skyCITY

# Anthony Harper

## Community Leadership Award

Embracing those who make a meaningful impact on local communities, this award celebrates leaders dedicated to social responsibility, community engagement, and making a positive difference.

**Nomination word count:** 300 - 1500

**Nomination question:** Why should your nomination be considered for the Community Leadership Award?

### Nomination guidelines

- **Leadership:** Displays exceptional leadership skills, including the ability to inspire and motivate others, set clear objectives, and make strategic decisions that benefit the community they serve.
- **Commitment and Dedication:** Demonstrates a strong commitment and dedication to their community. This could be shown through regular involvement in community activities, initiatives, or organisations.
- **Positive Impact:** Should have made – and continue to make – a positive impact on the community. This could be shown through specific projects they have led, changes they have advocated for, or the influence they've had on community policies or practices.
- **Collaboration and Engagement:** Shows strong collaboration and engagement with the various key stakeholders impacting upon success. They should be able to build relationships, foster cooperation, and work effectively with diverse groups within the community.
- **Innovation:** Demonstrates the ability to drive innovation within the organisation they represent.
- **Advocacy:** Acts as an advocate for the community. This could involve representing the community's interests in broader conversations, influencing decision-makers, or campaigning on issues that matter to the community.
- **Sustainability:** Shows a commitment to the long-term sustainability of the community. This could involve working to ensure the community's resources are used responsibly.

*Use these themes as a guide when preparing your nomination. Judges will evaluate nominations based on these criteria but are not limited to them. We encourage you to explore beyond these guidelines, as all submissions will be assessed holistically.*

### Files & documents

If your nomination be shortlisted, the nominee will have the opportunity to provide additional information, such as supporting documents, performance reports, and other relevant materials.

# Anthony Harper

# Meredith Connell

## Public Sector Leadership Award

Highlighting exemplary leadership within the public sector, this award recognises individuals driving positive change, innovation, and effective governance for the betterment of society.

**Nomination word count:** 300 - 1500

**Nomination question:** Why should your nomination be considered for the Public Sector Leadership Award?

### Nomination guidelines

- **Leadership and Vision:** Demonstrates strong leadership skills and a clear vision for public service improvement. They should be able to inspire and motivate their team, set clear goals and make strategic decisions that benefit their key stakeholders.
- **Public Service Delivery:** Has a record of excellence in public service delivery. This could be measured by the effectiveness of the services they manage, the satisfaction of those who use these services, or their ability to meet or exceed service delivery targets.
- **Innovation in Public Sector:** Shows a capacity for innovation in the public sector. This could involve developing new methods of service delivery, implementing innovative technologies, or introducing new policies that improve public services.
- **Collaboration and Partnerships:** Demonstrates the ability to collaborate effectively with other public sector organisations, private sector companies, and community groups to improve public services.
- **Public Trust and Transparency:** Upholds and promotes public trust and transparency. This could involve maintaining high ethical standards, promoting open communication, and ensuring accountability in their organisation.
- **Employee Development:** Shows a commitment to developing their staff. This could be demonstrated by the training opportunities they provide, the professional development of their team members, or the culture of continuous learning they foster.
- **Social Impact:** Demonstrates a commitment to making a positive social impact. This could be shown by the public policies they champion, the social outcomes they achieve, or their efforts to address social issues in their community.

*Use these themes as a guide when preparing your nomination. Judges will evaluate nominations based on these criteria but are not limited to them. We encourage you to explore beyond these guidelines, as all submissions will be assessed holistically.*

### Files & documents

If your nomination be shortlisted, the nominee will have the opportunity to provide additional information, such as supporting documents, performance reports, and other relevant materials.

# Pasifika Leadership Award

Celebrating leaders of Pasifika heritage who demonstrate exceptional contributions and positive influence within their communities and fields of expertise.

**Nomination word count:** 300 - 1500

**Nomination question:** Why should your nomination be considered for the Pasifika Leadership Award?

## Nomination guidelines

- **Leadership:** Displays exceptional leadership skills, including the ability to inspire and motivate others in their field of expertise.
- **Commitment to Pasifika Values:** Demonstrates a commitment to upholding and promoting Pasifika values whilst carving out a leadership position within their area of expertise.
- **Positive Impact:** Made significant positive impact in their field of expertise. This could be through specific projects they have led, changes they have advocated for, or the influence they've had on policies or practices.
- **Education and Mentorship:** Play a role in mentoring others, with perhaps a focus on fostering the next generation of Pasifika leaders.
- **Innovation:** Demonstrates the ability to drive innovation within their organisation. This could involve creating new products, improving business processes, or finding unique solutions to business challenges.
- **Resilience and Adaptability:** Shows the ability to adapt and thrive in changing market conditions. This could involve successfully steering the business through a difficult period or capitalising on new market opportunities.

*Use these themes as a guide when preparing your nomination. Judges will evaluate nominations based on these criteria but are not limited to them. We encourage you to explore beyond these guidelines, as all submissions will be assessed holistically.*

## Files & documents

If your nomination be shortlisted, the nominee will have the opportunity to provide additional information, such as supporting documents, performance reports, and other relevant materials.



# NZ Super Fund

## Māori

# Leadership Award

Recognising leaders of Māori descent who exemplify outstanding leadership, cultural preservation, and positive impact within their communities and beyond.

**Nomination word count:** 300 - 1500

**Nomination question:** Why should your nomination be considered for the Māori Leadership Award?

### Nomination guidelines

- **Leadership:** Displays exceptional leadership skills, including the ability to inspire and motivate others in their field of expertise.
- **Commitment to Māori Values:** Demonstrates a strong commitment to upholding and promoting Māori values whilst carving out a leadership position within their area of expertise.
- **Positive Impact:** Made a significant positive impact in their field of expertise. This could be through specific projects they have led, changes they have advocated for, or the influence they've had on policies or practices.
- **Education and Mentorship:** Plays a significant role in educating and mentoring others with a particular emphasis on fostering the next generation of Māori leaders.
- **Innovation:** Demonstrates the ability to drive innovation within their organisation. This could involve creating new products, improving business processes, or finding unique solutions to business challenges.
- **Resilience and Adaptability:** Shows the ability to adapt and thrive in changing market conditions. This could involve successfully steering the business through a difficult period or capitalising on new market opportunities.

*Use these themes as a guide when preparing your nomination. Judges will evaluate nominations based on these criteria but are not limited to them. We encourage you to explore beyond these guidelines, as all submissions will be assessed holistically.*

### Files & documents

If your nomination be shortlisted, the nominee will have the opportunity to provide additional information, such as supporting documents, performance reports, and other relevant materials.



# Emerging Leader of the Year

This award recognises an exceptional individual in the early to mid-stages of their leadership journey who has demonstrated outstanding potential, influence, and impact.

## No direct nominations accepted

The Emerging Leader of the Year is identified by the judging panel from nominations across all award categories and represents the future of leadership in New Zealand.

## Judging guidelines

- **Demonstrated Leadership Potential:** Exhibits strong leadership qualities, including initiative, resilience, and the ability to inspire and motivate others. They show a clear ability to lead with vision and navigate challenges with confidence.
- **Significant Organisational and Industry Impact:** Has made a measurable contribution to their organisation, sector, or community. Their work reflects strategic thinking, problem-solving, and the ability to drive meaningful change.
- **Innovation and Forward-Thinking:** Brings fresh ideas, embraces new approaches, and challenges conventional thinking to create positive outcomes. They are open to innovation, whether through technology, strategy, or operational improvements.
- **Commitment to People and Culture:** Plays an active role in fostering a positive and inclusive culture. They support the development of those around them, encourage collaboration, and contribute to a workplace where people can thrive.
- **Dedication to Ethical and Sustainable Leadership:** Demonstrates a strong sense of responsibility and integrity, considering the long-term impact of their decisions. They contribute to sustainability, diversity, or ethical business practices within their organisation or industry.
- **Future Influence and Legacy:** Has already begun shaping the future of leadership through their actions. Their work, vision, and leadership style signal lasting influence, whether through mentorship, policy changes, or industry advancements.

# New Zealand's Leader of the Year

This award recognises an outstanding individual who has demonstrated exceptional leadership, influence, and impact across their organisation, industry, or the wider community. As the highest honour in the New Zealand Leadership Awards, this recipient embodies the qualities of visionary leadership, innovation, and long-term positive change.

## No direct nominations accepted

New Zealand's Leader of the Year is identified by the judging panel from nominations across all award categories and represents the future of leadership in New Zealand.

## Judging guidelines

- **Visionary and Transformational Leadership:** Has set a clear and inspiring vision for their organisation or sector, leading transformative change that delivers long-term success. They demonstrate strategic foresight, resilience, and the ability to navigate complex challenges.
- **Enduring National and Industry Impact:** Has made a profound and lasting contribution to their organisation, industry, or New Zealand as a whole. Their leadership has driven measurable progress, strengthened institutions, or created meaningful opportunities for others.
- **Commitment to People and Inclusive Leadership:** Leads with integrity, empathy, and a deep commitment to fostering diverse and inclusive workplaces. They uplift those around them, mentor emerging leaders, and create environments where people can thrive.
- **Innovation and Future-Focused Leadership:** Champions new ideas, embraces emerging technologies, and pioneers strategies that push the boundaries of what is possible. Their leadership drives innovation and positions their organisation or sector for future success.
- **Sustainability and Ethical Leadership:** Leads with a strong ethical foundation, making decisions that balance business, social, and environmental responsibilities. They actively contribute to sustainability, corporate responsibility, and the long-term wellbeing of New Zealand.
- **Legacy and Influence on Future Generations:** Has built a legacy that extends beyond their current role. Their work will continue to shape industries, communities, or leadership standards in New Zealand for years to come.

# Nominate today!

Nominate yourself or a leader you know today and let's recognise the incredible leaders of Aotearoa!

[Nominate here.](#)

## Contact details

Need to get in touch? Feel free to reach out to [nzleadershipawards@robertwalters.co.nz](mailto:nzleadershipawards@robertwalters.co.nz)