

The King's Awards for Enterprise: Eligibility Criteria

The King's Awards for Enterprise are the UK's most prestigious business awards. They are administered by the Department for Business and Trade (DBT), working closely with Buckingham Palace and No.10.

There are currently **five categories** for which businesses can apply:

- International Trade
- Innovation
- Sustainability
- Social Mobility (through social mobility)
- Young Founder

The overarching eligibility criteria across all five categories are:

- be based in the UK (including the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man)
- have a good compliance record with HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) - for example, showing the business pay the right amount of tax on time
- be a self-contained enterprise under its own management and complete its own accounts
- have at least 2 full-time UK employees or part-time equivalents
- demonstrate strong environmental, social and governance practices
Their organisation can be a business, non-profit or in the public sector.

Each of the award categories has additional entry criteria.

International Trade

To apply for the International Trade award, the business must also:

- have made a minimum of £100,000 in overseas sales in the first year of their entry and show year-on-year growth
- prove that their organisation has achieved outstanding growth in overseas earnings relative to their business size and sector
- prove steep year-on-year growth (without dips) in overseas sales over 3 years - or substantial year-on-year growth (without dips) over 6 years

Innovation

To apply for the Innovation award, the business must also:

- have an innovation that has not been sold before
- have had their innovation available on the market for at least 2 years

- have recovered all the investments made in their innovation or show that the innovation will recover its full costs in future
- show outstanding commercial success as a result of innovation between 2 to 5 years

The innovation should be in one of the following categories:

- invention, design or production of goods
- performance of services
- marketing and distribution
- after-sale support of goods or services

Sustainability

To apply for the Sustainability award, the business must also:

- show how they have achieved outstanding commitment to sustainability for more than 2 years
- show how their organisation has built sustainability into its vision and strategy
- show the impact or positive outcomes of their actions or interventions

The business can include examples, such as showing how they have:

- developed an innovative product, service or process that has environmental benefits
- made sustainability an essential part of their organisation, supply chain or community

Promoting Opportunity (through social mobility)

To apply for this award, their organisation must have a programme that supports people from disadvantaged backgrounds in improving their job skills and their chances of finding work.

This includes doing one or more of the following, for at least 2 years:

- providing work experience or careers advice
- mentoring
- offering interview and job-related training
- making sure their recruitment process is open to everyone

They will need to prove the benefits for:

- the people they've supported
- their organisation
- their employees
- the wider community

The business cannot apply if social mobility is the main focus of their organisation.

If they're a training provider or educational organisation, the business can only apply if the business does one of the following:

- apply with a business
- have a social mobility initiative for their employees

Young Founder

To apply for the Young Founder award, the business must also:

- Evidence of commercial success or growth potential, such as a turnover of £250K, or external funding (i.e. investments, loans, grants) totalling £500K.
- The founder must be aged 18–30 at the time the Award is granted (6 May 2027) and must be actively leading the business during the application period.
- Applicants must also meet the overarching eligibility requirements for all King's Awards for Enterprise categories, including being UK-based, employing at least two full-time (or equivalent part-time) staff, having a good compliance record with HMRC and demonstrating strong ESG practices.

Applications will be assessed across five themes:

- **Fresh Ideas & Creative Thinking:** A short video outlining the founder's journey, from idea to impact.
- **Driving Growth & Industry Influence:** Business performance over the past 1–2 years and any recognition as a thought leader.
- **Leading & Inspiring:** The company's long-term vision and how it's implemented; mentoring or ecosystem contributions.
- **Strategic Resilience:** Examples of challenges faced and how the business adapted.
- **Customer Value:** How customer satisfaction is measured and used to improve products or services.

King's Awards for Enterprise

March 2026