The King's Award for Enterprise

Simplified Guide & Top 10 Application Tips

2027 Round | Source: King's Awards Office Aide Memoire, April 2026

The King's Awards for Enterprise are the UK's most prestigious business awards, administered by the Department for Business and Trade with Buckingham Palace and No.10. They are not competitive – applications are judged on their own merit, not against other companies, with the assessors taking account an applicant's size, sector and markets.

What's New for 2027

- New Young Founder category for entrepreneurs aged 18–30.
- Sustainable Development category renamed Sustainability (recognising whole-organisation approaches, not a single product).
- Simpler application forms for Sustainability, Innovation and Promoting Opportunity – fewer questions, more guidance and examples.
- Lighter-touch figures: board-approved figures now accepted, with external verification kept only as a risk-based backstop.

Who Can Apply

You can be a business, non-profit or public-sector organisation. The five categories are: International Trade, Innovation, Sustainability, Promoting Opportunity (social mobility), and Young Founder.

Core eligibility across all categories:

- Based in the UK (including Channel Islands and Isle of Man).
- Good HMRC compliance record – right tax, paid on time.
- A self-contained enterprise under its own management, filing its own accounts.
- At least 2 full-time UK employees (or part-time equivalents).
- Strong environmental, social and governance (ESG) practices.

Each category then has its own additional criteria (below).

The Five Categories at a Glance

Category	Key requirement in plain terms
International Trade	Submit 3 or 6 years of figures. £100k+ overseas sales in year one, then continuous growth (6 yrs) or steep growth (3 yrs) – no dips allowed across the period.
Innovation	A product or service on the market 2+ years, not sold before. Must show commercial success and a return on investment (achieved or imminent).
Sustainability	Outstanding, whole-organisation commitment for 2+ years, embedded and evidenced. Must also show financial viability and modern sustainability standards.

Category	Key requirement in plain terms
Promoting Opportunity	A social-mobility programme running 2+ years that helps disadvantaged people into and through work. Must have KPIs and demonstrable impact.
Young Founder	Founder aged 18–30 at the grant date (6 May 2027), actively leading. £250k turnover or £500k external funding. Assessed on 5 themes incl. a short founder video.

Category Detail

International Trade

Choose either continuous growth over 6 years or steep growth over 3 years. You need £100,000+ of overseas sales in the first year, rising thereafter with no dips. Tell your company's story so non-specialist assessors understand why trade matters to you: why you chose your markets, how you entered them, how trade has driven growth, and where you go next.

Innovation

The innovation must have been on the market 2+ years (to prove commercial success over 2–5 years) and cover invention/design/production, service delivery, marketing/distribution, or after-sales support. Describe what it is, how it was developed, the challenges, who you worked with (predominantly UK-based), and why things are better. Use plain language with enough technical detail, and evidence every claim – sales growth, market penetration, new customers, ROI.

Sustainability

Show outstanding, embedded, whole-organisation sustainability for 2+ years, plus financial viability. Use terminology correctly – distinguish carbon neutral, net zero, zero carbon and carbon credits; report Scope 1 and 2 (and Scope 3 if large); benchmark against competitors; and explain circular-economy and plastics-reduction steps. Reduce emissions first and use only high-quality offsets. B Corp status helps but isn't essential. Avoid empty claims like “sustainability is in our DNA” – evidence everything.

Promoting Opportunity (Social Mobility)

Open to businesses, charities, social enterprises, non-profits, subsidiaries and training/education providers with a programme running 2+ years (work experience, mentoring/coaching, interview and job training, or opening up recruitment). Be specific about who you help and why, what the programme delivers, your KPIs, and the measured impact on both individuals and the organisation – hard numbers and soft indicators.

Young Founder

For founders aged 18–30 at the grant date (6 May 2027), actively leading a business with £250k turnover or £500k external funding. Assessed across five themes: Fresh Ideas & Creative Thinking (a short founder-journey video), Driving Growth & Industry Influence, Leading & Inspiring, Strategic Resilience, and Customer Value.

Top 10 Tips to Complete a Winning Application

1. **Confirm eligibility before you invest time –** Check the core criteria (UK-based, HMRC-compliant, 2+ staff, ESG) and the category-specific bar – e.g. the 2-year market test, £100k overseas sales, or founder age – so you don't fall at the first hurdle.
2. **Read the whole form first, then plan –** Understand what's asked end-to-end before writing. Decide which part of your business journey answers each question so you don't repeat yourself.
3. **Tell a clear story –** Assessors are experts in the field but not in your business. Explain in plain English why what you do matters and what makes you distinctive. No jargon, no acronyms, no marketing fluff.
4. **Evidence every claim –** Back assertions with quantifiable data – sales, growth, market share, KPIs, ROI. Where hard numbers are thin, use credible testimonials, but never leave a claim unsupported.
5. **Make the numbers stack up –** Sense-check financials for internal logic (innovation sales can't exceed total sales). With board-approved figures now accepted, ensure your board signs off clean, consistent data; verification can still be requested.
6. **Lead with impact, not activity –** Show the measurable difference made – to customers, the business, individuals or the environment – not just what you did. Pair hard metrics with softer outcomes.
7. **Use the form flexibly –** Complete sections in any order and save your progress. Cross-reference earlier answers rather than repeating content to keep it tight.
8. **Get the technical language right –** Especially in Sustainability – use carbon terms precisely, report the right emission scopes, benchmark against peers, and show emissions reduction before offsetting.
9. **Demonstrate commercial viability and ROI –** Even in non-financial categories, show the business is sound. Where there have been big investments or losses, explain how you remain viable.
10. **Show leadership and forward momentum –** Set out how you lead your sector, influence others (suppliers, peers, community), and where you're heading next – new markets, future growth, long-term vision.

Further information and support

West Midlands Lieutenancy:
0121 222 5040 or Email: office@wmlieutenancy.org
https://wmlieutenancy.org/honours-and-kings-awards/the-kings-award-for-enterprise/

Official Helpline:
020 4551 0081 or Email: kingsawards@businessandtrade.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/kings-awards-for-enterprise

Solihull:
The Solihull Investment Team at Solihull MBC and Solihull Chamber of Commerce are keen to encourage nominations from Solihull-based enterprises and will provide guidance and introductions to those with hands-on experience of entering.
Solihull Investment Team: business@solihull.gov.uk
Solihull Chamber of Commerce: info@solihull-chamber.com