



## Award Category Descriptions

### OUTSTANDING INDIVIDUAL AWARDS

**1. Industry Educator of the Year**

This award recognizes an educator teaching hospitality, or tourism or culinary arts curriculum who demonstrates commitment to their students and a passion for their subject. Any educator in the hospitality & tourism field is eligible for this award: high school, community college, university, technical institute, certification, or training program.

**2. Women in Hospitality & Tourism Award**

This award is given to a female hospitality professional who serves as a leader and role model within the hospitality community. Candidates should describe noteworthy accomplishments, leadership roles, volunteer positions, and personal initiative.

**3. Rising Star Award**

This award honors an exemplary hospitality employee with 2 years or less of service who has demonstrated superior professional dedication, leadership, and a fresh perspective to their job. The recipient should also exemplify the characteristics that lead to success in the hospitality industry-enthusiasm, “out of the box” thinking in their professional and personal life, and a dedication to the industry by active participation in association, community, and industry programs.

### SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARDS

**4. Community Service Award**

This award recognizes a business or employee that has worked hard to give back to their local community through any number of ways: food drives, litter clean up, service projects, partnerships with community groups, etc. Nominees can submit for a particular project or campaign or an ongoing partnership.

**5. Greener Tennessee Award**

This award recognizes businesses that have developed environmental management practices into their everyday operations while maintaining quality service. Nominees should describe improvements to operations as well as the process for continuing their sustainability efforts. Nominees can submit for a particular project or campaign or ongoing efforts.

**6. Event of the Year**

This award recognizes any hospitality or tourism business that held a successful public event with the intent to increase visitation, revenue, and public awareness of Tennessee’s

tourism industry. Nominees can submit new or annual events and should demonstrate creativity, economic impact, and media coverage of the event.

#### **EMPLOYEE EXCELLENCE AWARDS Change in order**

- 7. Destination Marketing Organization Employee of the Year- Small Budget (Budget under \$500,000)**
- 8. Destination Marketing Organization Employee of the Year – Large Budget (Budget over \$500,000)**
- 9. Tourism Employee of the Year – Budget under \$500,000  
(Attractions, Museums, Convention Centers, Sports Complex)**
- 10. Tourism Employee of the Year – Budget over \$500,000  
(Attractions, Museums, Convention Centers, Sports Complex)**
- 11. Restaurant Employee of the Year – Independent (2 locations or less with same name)**
- 12. Restaurant Employee of the Year – Chain/Franchisee (3 or more locations with the same name)**
- 13. Lodging Employee of the Year – Small (175 rooms or less)**
- 14. Lodging Employee of the Year – Large (176+ rooms)**

Description: Any employees outside of managerial roles are eligible for these awards including frontline staff, janitorial, servers, etc. Nominees should demonstrate exceptional customer service, passion for the industry, strong work ethic, and other criteria that would qualify them as the best employee in the state in their occupation.

#### **INDUSTRY LEADERSHIP AWARDS**

- 15. Destination Marketing Organization Manager of the Year- Small Budget**
- 16. Destination Marketing Organization Manager of the Year – Large Budget**
- 17. Tourism Manager of the Year – Budget under \$500,000  
(Attractions, Museums, Convention Centers, Sports Complex)**
- 18. Tourism Manager of the Year – Budget over \$500,000  
(Attractions, Museums, Convention Centers, Sports Complex)**
- 19. Restaurant Manager of the Year – Independent (2 locations or less with same name)**
- 20. Restaurant Manager of the Year – Chain/Franchisee (3 or more locations with same name)**
- 21. Lodging Manager of the Year – Small (175 rooms or less)**
- 22. Lodging Manager of the Year – Large (176+ rooms)**
- 23. Destination Marketing Organization Director of the Year – Small (Budget under \$500,000)**
- 24. Destination Marketing Organization Director of the Year – Large (Budget over \$500,000)**
- 25. Tourism General Manager of the Year Budget under \$500,000  
(Attractions, Museums, Convention Centers, Sports Complex)**
- 26. Tourism General Manager of the Year – Budget over \$500,000  
(Attractions, Museums, Convention Centers, Sports Complex)**
- 27. Restaurant General Manager of the Year - Independent**
- 28. Restaurant General Manager of the Year - Chain**
- 29. Chef of the Year**
- 30. Lodging General Manager of the Year – Small (175 rooms or less)**
- 31. Lodging General Manager of the Year – Large (176+ rooms)**

Description: Any employee in a managerial position can be nominated for a manager award including sales, marketing, catering, assistant manager, etc. Only general managers and executive directors can be nominated for the general manager or director of the year awards. These awards recognize individuals for their leadership, commitment, drive for excellence, and other criteria that would qualify them as the best leader in the state in their occupation.

## **BEST IN THE INDUSTRY AWARDS**

### **32. Allied Partner of the Year**

This award recognizes the contributions of our partner companies who provide valuable services and products which allow hotels, restaurants, and tourism entities in Tennessee to grow and thrive. Any member company who provides products and services (such as cleaning, marketing, legal resources, equipment, landscaping, etc.) is eligible.

### **33. Best in Glass Award**

This award recognizes a winery, brewery, or distillery that has shown excellence in their products, guests experience, and responsibility measures. Not only are they known for their excellent spirits, wine, or beer, but they also make a concerted effort to attract visitors to Tennessee and drink responsibly. Nominees must have a visitor center or tasting room that is open to the public.

### **34. Tourism Property of the Year Budget under \$500,000 (Attractions, Museums, Convention Centers, Sports Complex)**

### **35. Tourism Property of the Year Budget over \$500,000 (Attractions, Museums, Convention Centers, Sports Complex)**

This award recognizes a tourism property that has shown excellence in customer service and unique experiences. The tourism property regularly attracts visitors to Tennessee and positively contributes to their local community. Eligible companies include attractions, event venues, sports complexes, theme parks, zoos, theaters, museums, and convention centers.

### **36. Destination Marketing Organization of the Year – Small (Budget under \$500,000)**

This awards honors companies with a budget under \$500,000 who have shown excellence in tourist development, helping attract new visitors to Tennessee and promoting Tennessee cities as a tourist destination. Nominees should demonstrate not only excellent marketing and public relations strategies but also have close ties with their hospitality industry that supports their destination. Eligible companies include Convention & Visitors Bureaus, Chambers of Commerce, Economic & Community Development offices, and other public or private entities that promote tourism.

### **37. Destination Marketing Organization of the Year – Large (Budget over \$500,000)**

This awards honors companies with a budget over \$500,000 who have shown excellence in tourist development, helping attract new visitors to Tennessee and promoting Tennessee cities as a tourist destination. Nominees should demonstrate not only excellent marketing and public relations strategies but also have close ties with their hospitality industry that supports their destination. Eligible companies include Convention & Visitors Bureaus, Chambers of Commerce, Economic & Community Development offices, and other public or private entities that promote tourism.

### **38. Hospitality Achievement Award – 30+ consecutive years of service**

This award is given to recognize an employee (not owner) that has 30+ consecutive years of service with the same company. Nominees should demonstrate exceptional customer service, passion for the industry, strong work ethic, and other criteria that would qualify them as the best employee in the state in their occupation.