



## PREFACE

This guide has been prepared by the International Trade Centre (ITC) as part of its activities targeted at supporting and expanding SME participation in the EAC Regional Quality Awards competition processes and adoption of standards and best practices. The guide **explains the EAC Regional Quality Awards Criteria** in simple terms and is designed to help SMEs understand what is required by the criteria, why it matters, and how SMEs can meet or comply with each criterion in a simple, practical way.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

**The EAC Regional Quality Awards recognize enterprises that demonstrate excellence in applying standards, quality management practices, and continuous improvement across their operations. The Awards provide a platform for businesses to showcase their achievements, learn from leading performers, and strengthen their competitiveness. Winning an award can enhance a company's reputation, build customer trust, increase visibility, and open new market and business opportunities.**

The EAC Regional Quality Awards competition is an annual event implemented in accordance with the Awards Framework, which was approved by the East African Standards Committee (EASC) during its April 2022 meeting in Arusha, Tanzania. The Quality Awards are dedicated to promoting a culture of quality, and inspiring excellence by recognizing outstanding achievements by EAC enterprises in quality management, across all sectors of the economy within the EAC region. The Awards are open to both Large Enterprises (LEs) and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in both service and manufacturing sectors, for recognition of the winners at the EAC level.

The Awards serve as a vital platform for promoting quality, stimulating the uptake of standards and quality management best practices, fostering collaboration and inspiring business excellence through the recognition of outstanding achievements by EAC enterprises in quality management, as well as product and service excellence. This, in turn, drives competitiveness, facilitates trade, strengthens regional economic growth and integration, and positions East Africa as a leader in quality on the global stage.

The EAC Regional Quality Awards competition follows a two-stage process: National level competition coordinated by National Standards Bodies (NSBs) in collaboration with the private sector, National Quality Associations, and other key stakeholders; Regional level competition coordinated by the EAC Secretariat in collaboration with the East African Business Council (EABC). The winners at the National level in each Partner State are submitted to the EAC Secretariat to compete for the EAC Regional Quality Awards.

The implementation of the EAC Regional Quality Awards competition is coordinated by the East African Community (EAC) Secretariat, in collaboration with Partner States National Standards Bodies and the East African Business Council (EABC).

## 2 PURPOSE & OBJECTIVES OF THE EAC REGIONAL QUALITY AWARDS

The primary objective of the EAC Regional Quality Awards is to foster a culture of quality within the East African Community by encouraging the adoption of standards and quality management practices across EAC enterprises. This, in turn, enhances competitiveness and stimulates trade.

The Awards seek to achieve the following specific objectives:

- 1) Stimulate interest in quality management practices and excellence among EAC enterprises.
- 2) Encourage sustainable competitiveness by recognizing organizations that excel in adopting international standards.
- 3) Inspire SMEs and large enterprises to pursue continuous improvement and innovation.
- 4) Raise public awareness of the benefits of participation in quality-related activities.
- 5) Enhance cross-country experience-sharing on quality promotion, enterprise visibility, competitiveness, regional integration and access to wider markets.
- 6) Complement and align with Quality Award efforts at the national level.

## 3 BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION

Winning a Quality Award at the national or regional level can bring a range of benefits, including:

- 1) Regional and national recognition
- 2) Increased trust and credibility with customers
- 3) Positive media exposure
- 4) A strong sense of pride and morale boost across the organization
- 5) Potential to unlock new business and market opportunities

National-level winners automatically qualify to compete in the EAC Regional Quality Awards.

## 4 AWARDS CATEGORIES TO BE COMPETED FOR DURING THE EAC AWARDS CYCLE

The EAC Regional Quality Awards cycle shall be implemented in seven (7) Partner States, namely: Burundi, Rwanda, South Sudan, Somalia, United Republic of Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda.

The enterprises in each of the Partner States will compete and be recognized for the following four (4) categories of awards during the EAC Regional Quality Awards cycle:

- 1) **EAC Company of the Year**: for both Large Enterprises (LEs) and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)
- 2) **EAC Product of the Year**: for both Large Enterprises (LEs) and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)
- 3) **EAC Service Awards**: Divided into
  - a) Private sector (Applicable to both LEs and SMEs)
  - b) Public Sector (applicable to Government Agencies)
- 4) **EAC Exporter Awards**: focused on enterprises in the Agro-processing sector

Competition for the Awards shall be open to only EAC Enterprises, registered and operating in the EAC Partner States, including Large Enterprises (LEs) and Small & Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in both the manufacturing and services sectors.

## 5 ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for the Awards, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- 1) Be a legally registered enterprise operating in any of the EAC Partner States
- 2) Implementing a management system or have a valid product certification mark
- 3) Comply with all applicable statutory and regulatory requirements
- 4) If applying as a subsidiary or business unit of a larger entity, the unit must operate as a clearly defined, stand-alone business with financial autonomy and independently managed accounts

## 6 CHOOSING THE AWARD CATEGORY TO COMPETE FOR

Which award category should I compete for?

This is likely one of the first questions every enterprise will be asking itself. The best way to choose the award category to compete for is to consider the award that best represents your business. Review the criteria and consider if you have the right evidence to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of the criteria.

Remember that your goal should not be just to apply but to **showcase your excellence** in a way that proves your business deserves recognition. Therefore, choose an awards category where you know that you are doing very well or better than your peers in the same category and that you have all the information to demonstrate it.

## 7 HOW TO APPLY

The competition follows a two-stage process:

- a) **STEP 1:** Submit your application to the National Standards Body (NSB) in your country to participate in the national level competition.
- b) **STEP 2:** Winners at the national level in each Partner State will be nominated by their respective NSBs to compete in the EAC Regional Quality Awards as applicable.

Additional information regarding how to apply for the awards can be obtained from the respective National Standards Body in each of the Partner States. The National Standards Body in your country will answer any questions and provide you with guidance so that you are able to complete and submit the application for the awards recognition.

## 8 IMPORTANT DATES

- **April 2026** – National-Level Competitions start
- By **30th June 2026** – Deadline for Submission of applications at National Level
- By **30th August 2026** – Selection of National Winners
- By **30th August 2026** – National Winners Submitted as Nominees for Regional Competition
- By **30th September 2026** – Selection of Regional Winners
- **October 2026** – Regional Awards Ceremony: Kigali, Rwanda

## 9 DEMONSTRATING COMPLIANCE WITH THE CRITERIA

When companies submit applications to compete in the various categories of awards, a group of experts undertakes the evaluation of the information submitted by the companies against the awards criteria in order to determine the best performing company. The awards criteria seek to assess your business against the most essential features for managing your organization's performance excellence and long-term success. They help you understand how well you are achieving your business goals and objectives.

The evaluation will focus on two critical aspects for assessing organizational performance – both how the organization does its work (PROCESS / METHODS) and the outputs / outcomes (BUSINESS PERFORMANCE RESULTS). This recognizes that, in most cases, the results achieved are a strong indicator of the effectiveness of an organization's processes, especially when demonstrated over a significant period of time. Favourable performance levels and trends compared to competitors may also be a strong indicator for the organization's long-term success.

Therefore, before you submit your application, take time to gather the right evidence by asking yourself and your team the right questions regarding:

- 1) Processes: How do you accomplish your organization's work? What are the methods or approaches you are using to carry out your work as an organization? How systematic and effective are your approaches? This helps you understand whether you are implementing a process approach in your operations and whether your processes are consistently effective.
- 2) Performance / Results: how good are your results? Results achieved demonstrate how effective your processes or approaches are. Consider results under each criterion, whether it is purchase of raw materials, production, sales records, customer categories and feedback, growth trends, or innovation examples.
- 3) Learning & Improvement: is your organization learning from its failures (when things are going wrong or requirements are not being met or non-conformities), its customers (feedback from customers either in the form of complaints, appreciation or new needs / expectations), its environment (new technologies, new products, new trends) or from its success and best practices? Is your organization using what you have learned to innovate and/or improve products / services / performance? How well have you evaluated and improved your key approaches? Have improvements been shared within your organization? Has new knowledge led to innovation? Do you undertake planned systematic monitoring / auditing of processes to determine effectiveness and identify opportunities for improvement – over time and at all levels; and you have evidence that your processes have gone through some cycles of evaluation and improvement.
- 4) Documentation – documentary evidence exists to demonstrate compliance to criteria requirements – especially for results and essential / key processes.

## 10 AWARDS CRITERIA

The Regional Quality Awards are based on the seven Quality Management Principles that promote a systems-based approach to achieving consistent quality and sustained organizational success. These principles form the foundation of the ISO 9001 quality management system standards and can be applied by any organization seeking to integrate quality into its core processes, drive continuous improvement and sustainable business performance. The Seven Quality Management Principles are:

- Customer focus
- Leadership
- Engagement of people
- Process approach
- Improvement
- Evidence-based decision making
- Relationship management

Every organization needs forward-looking leadership, great customer management, smooth operations, and a motivated team to succeed in a competitive marketplace. Improving quality, making data-driven decisions, and encouraging learning are all essential for business success. Integrating and applying these principles will help your business improve performance and be more competitive.

Based on these seven (7) principles, eight (8) criteria have been established for evaluating and selecting the winners of the EAC Regional Quality Awards, namely:

- 1) C1: Leadership, Strategy and Governance
- 2) C2: Customers and Markets
- 3) C3: Operations (Production / Service Provision / Supplier Relationships)
- 4) C4: Engagement of People / Employees
- 5) C5: Evidence-Based Decision Making (Performance Measurement & Analysis)
- 6) C6: Organizational Learning
- 7) C7: Application Of Standards & Quality Best Practices
- 8) C8: Specific Requirements for Different Categories
  - a) C8-1: Company of the Year
  - b) C8-2: Product of the Year
  - c) C8-3: Service of the Year - Private
  - d) C8-4: Service of the Year - Public
  - e) C8-5: Exporter of the Year

Criteria C1 – C7, apply to all enterprises that choose to compete for any of the awards under the EAC Regional Quality awards competitions. Criteria C8 is specific to the award category an enterprise chooses to compete for. For example, if an enterprise A, chooses to apply to compete for the Product of the Year Award, it will have to provide proof to the Awards Evaluation Committee that it meets Criteria C1 – C7 and C8-2.

The applicable criteria to be met while applying for any specific awards category is summarized in Table below.

<b>s/n</b>	<b>AWARD CATEGORY BEING APPLIED FOR</b>	<b>CRITERIA</b>	<b>PLUS CRITERIA</b>
1.	EAC Company of the Year – LE and SME	C1 – C7	C8-1
2.	EAC Product of the year – LE and SME	C1 – C7	C8-2
3.	EAC Service Awards of the year – Private (LE & SME)	C1 – C7	C8-3
4.	EAC Service Awards of the year – Public	C1 – C7	C8-4
5.	EAC Exporters Awards of the year – Argo-processing sector - LE and SME	C1 – C7	C8-5

# 11 UNDERSTANDING & COMPLYING WITH AWARDS CRITERIA

Below you will find an explanation of the awards criteria in simple terms, helping you to understand what is required, why it is important and how to comply with the requirements of the criteria.

## 11.1 C1: Leadership, Strategy & Governance – Running a Business with Purpose

Leadership will determine whether the business or organization will be successful or not. The business will achieve better performance and success when leaders set a clear vision and direction for the organization; create a customer focus; demonstrate clear and visible leadership that models organizational values and ethics; and create the conditions for performance, learning, and ethical behavior. Whether you're a solo entrepreneur or managing a growing team, having a structure and clear direction makes everything run smoothly and can help your business thrive.

A business with clear leadership, strong strategic direction, compliance with regulations, sustainable practices, and effective communication is built for long-term growth.

### 11.1.1 Understanding Leadership & Governance

*Imagine your business as a football team—everyone needs to know their position and role for the team to win or succeed.*

#### **What is required?**

Describe how your business is managed. This includes leadership roles (like the owner, manager, or team leaders) and how decisions are made. Every business needs a structure - that clearly shows who is in charge, who makes decisions, and how the company runs day to day. You can describe this in writing or even use a simple drawing (organization chart) to show the roles within your company.

#### **Why is it important?**

Without clear leadership, things may not get done - tasks are unclear, and everyone may end up doing whatever they want or do nothing at all. Good leadership and governance ensure everyone knows what they are supposed to do to ensure the business succeeds, everyone is accountable for their work and work is done efficiently. If no one knows who handles finances, customer interactions, or daily operations, things will quickly fall apart. A clear structure helps with accountability, coordination, and business success.

#### **How to comply?**

Write down your business structure – it should represent exactly how you do things in your business. Highlight key leadership positions (e.g., owner, manager, accountant) and describe how decisions are made. If you have employees, define their roles clearly so everyone knows their responsibilities.

If your business has a team, consider depicting or drawing a simple organizational chart so everyone knows their role:

- Who makes key decisions?
- Who oversees operations?
- How do employees or partners fit into the bigger picture?

### 11.1.2 Mission, Vision & Values – What Does Your Business Stand For?

*Your mission explains why your business exists (what you do). Your vision describes where you want to go in the future (where you are going). Your values guide how you operate, treating employees, customers, and partners.*

#### **What is required?**

Clearly state your business's mission (your purpose / the value you are creating and delivering to your customers / stakeholders), vision (your future goal / what you are attempting to achieve in the long-term), and values (the principles that guide you).

#### **Why is it important?**

These statements help you make decisions on what to do to improve your business performance, attract customers who align with your values, and keep employees motivated. Having a mission and vision helps everyone - from employees to customers - understand what your business stands for. It also keeps you focused on your goals rather than working aimlessly.

#### **How to comply?**

Think about these questions:

- **Mission** – What problem do you solve for customers? (Example: “We provide affordable, high-quality food products to local communities.”)
- **Vision** – What do you want your business to achieve in the future or where do you see your business in five years? (Example: “We aim to become the leading food supplier in East Africa.”)
- **Values** – What principles guide how you work? (Example: honesty, quality, customer focus.)

Write them down, display them in your office or website and share them with your employees and customers to build trust.

### 11.1.3 Strategic Planning – Setting Goals & Staying on Track

*A business without a plan is like driving without a map - you'll get lost fast.*

#### **What is required?**

Describe how you develop and implement your strategic plans. Identify key challenges, advantages, and goals. Every business faces challenges, but you also have strengths that give you an advantage. This section asks you to list your main challenges, strengths, and business goals.

#### **Why is it important?**

A strong strategy ensures that your business stays competitive and grows over time. Understanding your challenges prepares you to overcome them, while recognizing your advantages helps you grow. Having clear goals gives your business direction.

#### **How to comply?**

Write down your business:

- **Challenges** – What difficulties / biggest challenges does your business face? (Examples: high costs, limited market access.)
- **Advantages** – What strengths does your business have? (Examples: loyal customers, unique products.)
- **Goals** – What do you want to achieve? (Example: increase sales, increase revenue by 20%, expand into new markets.)

Having these lists will help you plan better and make smarter business decisions. Set short-term and long-term plans and track progress regularly.

### 11.1.4 Measures for Strategic Goals

#### **What is required?**

You need a way to track progress toward your goals. This means choosing key measures (or performance indicators) to check how well your business is doing.

#### **Why is it important?**

If you don't measure progress, how do you know if you're improving? For example, if you do not count the money you have earned from your sales, how will you know how much you earned and whether you are doing well or need to improve? Tracking goals helps you stay on the right path and make necessary changes when needed.

#### **How to comply?**

Decide on a few important things to measure, such as:

- Sales growth
- Customer satisfaction (positive reviews, repeat customers)
- Efficiency in operations (time taken to produce goods, reduce waste)

Regularly check your numbers and adjust your strategy accordingly.

### 11.1.5 Compliance with Laws & Regulations, Accreditations & Certifications

*Compliance with laws and regulations and following industry standards helps your business stay credible, competitive, and trusted. Businesses that seek to identify and comply with all regulations applicable to their business operations reduce non-compliance risks, build stronger reputations and attract loyal customers.*

#### **What is required?**

Identify and document applicable key legal regulations, accreditations, certifications and standards your organization must comply with and show that the organization has complied with all these regulations.

#### **Why is it important?**

Meeting regulatory and certification requirements boosts trust and credibility, ensures compliance, and may open doors to business partnerships. Complying with relevant laws, regulations and standards helps your business maintain a good reputation / avoid reputational damage, reduce compliance costs and minimize risks of business disruptions and disruptions that results from enforcement actions by regulators, market access disruptions and damaged reputation.

#### **How to comply?**

Consider the following actions:

- Identify industry-specific laws & regulations (e.g., tax laws, business licensing, safety requirements) and ensure you comply with the requirements.
- Look into certifications such as HACCP (food safety), ISO 45001 (workplace health & safety) or others relevant to your industry.
- Stay updated on requirements and ensure renewals are processed on time.
- Ensure that your products comply with all labelling, quality and performance requirements specified in compulsory standards and applicable regulations.
- Ensure a safe working environment and that you comply with minimum regulatory requirements and standards for workplace and workers' safety.
- Address accident prevention, inspection, investigation, root-cause analysis and recovery.
- Ensure you comply with the standards for Good Hygiene Practices (GHP) and Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP).
- Ensure food safety (for food establishments)

### 11.1.6 Sustainability & Social Responsibility – Why It Matters

*The current business environment has changed a lot. Businesses that care about the environment and community build stronger reputations and attract loyal customers.*

#### **What is required?**

Explain how your business saves energy, reduces water use, reduces waste, and supports sustainability or community projects.

#### **Why is it important?**

Using eco-friendly / environment-friendly practices lowers costs and makes your business more attractive to customers who care about the environment.

#### **How to comply?**

Consider small changes like:

- Using recyclable materials
- Reducing energy consumption
- Reducing water use
- Managing waste
- Supporting community projects or ethical sourcing
- Climate change action where applicable

Even small actions make a big impact. Set clear objectives and establish the practice of measuring whatever achievements you make in these areas.

### 11.1.7 Communication with Employees & Stakeholders

*Effective communication keeps everyone informed, engaged, and aligned with the business's goals.*

#### **What is required?**

Describe how management interacts with employees, customers, and stakeholders to share information and maintain relationships.

#### **Why is it important?**

Good communication ensures everyone knows what they are supposed to do, builds trust, prevents misunderstandings, and encourages teamwork - whether inside the company or with external partners.

#### **How to comply?**

A business that communicates openly fosters stronger relationships and better decision-making. There are several ways your business can use to communicate with employees, customers and stakeholders, for example:

- **Employees:** Hold regular meetings, send updates via email or noticeboards, and encourage feedback.
- **Customers:** Use newsletters, social media, surveys, and direct interactions to keep customers engaged.
- **Stakeholders:** Maintain professional reports, presentations, and strategic discussions to keep investors or partners informed.

### 11.1.8 Strategic & Financial Performance Results – Tracking Your Progress

*Your business's financial health and strategic performance are key indicators of success. Tracking your sales revenue, profits, cost savings and cash flow is very important for you to understand whether your business is doing well or not.*

#### **What is required?**

Provide data on revenue, profitability, cost savings, cash flow, and regulatory compliance over the past three years.

#### **Why is it important?**

Tracking financial performance shows whether the business is growing, stable, or facing challenges that need adjustments.

#### **How to comply?**

Record and regularly review the following figures in order to help your businesses adjust strategies, improve financial planning, and ensure long-term success:

- **Revenue & Profitability:** Track income growth trends, cost-cutting efforts, and net profit margins.
- **Cash Flow & Cost Savings:** Keep records of expenses, investments, and operational efficiencies.
- **Asset Utilization:** Monitor how well business assets (equipment, inventory, facilities) are being used for optimal returns.
- **Legal & Regulatory Compliance:** Document any licenses, approvals, and compliance reports to avoid fines or sanctions.
- **Environmental Impact:** Measure energy consumption, conservation efforts, and use of renewable resources for sustainability tracking.

For public sector organizations, they should demonstrate that they are able to meet their financial obligations and comply with all public sector regulations and policies regarding:

- Accountability
- Statutory obligations
- Procurement
- Financial and budgetary policies, recording and reporting.
- Value for money – economy, efficiency, effectiveness.
- Quality of services

## 11.2 C2: Customers & Markets – Understanding Your Customers & Growing Your Market

Customers are central to the success of any business - without customers, there's no success. The key is to know your customers well, understand their needs, and deliver products or services that keep them coming back to buy your products or services.

A business that understands its market, listens to customers to know or anticipate their current and future needs, improves products or services to meet or exceed customer expectations, and builds strong relationships will ALWAYS be successful. Keep tracking trends, refining your customer engagement, and using quality as a competitive advantage.

### 11.2.1 Who Are Your Customers? Defining Your Market Size & Identifying Customer Segments

*Not all businesses serve the same type of customers - you need to know WHO you're serving and HOW big your market is. Different customers have different needs - so it's important to know which groups your business serves best. Knowing your customers helps increase customer satisfaction and loyalty - because you can offer them what they truly need.*

#### **What is required?**

Describe your market size for your main products and services over the last three years. Identify your key customer segments, including the size of each group. key customer segments (groups of customers with similar needs).

#### **Why is it important?**

Defining customer segments helps you tailor your products, marketing, and customer service to the right audience. Specifically, knowing your market and customers helps you:

- Focus your marketing efforts
- Identify trends and opportunities for growth
- Make smarter business decisions

#### **How to comply?**

Start by looking at your business records:

- Who buys from me the most? (Examples: small businesses, large enterprises, individuals)
- What are their needs? (Examples: affordability, premium quality, convenience)
- How many customers have you served in the past three years?
- How big is my market? (Gather data on past sales to estimate growth trends.)
- What is the estimated size of your target market?
- Have sales grown or declined over time?

Group your customers based on factors like:

- Age, income level, or industry (for business clients)
- Buying behavior (e.g., frequent customers, new customers)
- Location (local, regional, international customers)

Use simple tools like sales reports or customer surveys to track your market size trends.

### 11.2.2 How to Understand Customer Needs & Expectations

*Your business should actively LISTEN to its customers. Listening carefully helps build stronger customer relationships and avoid losing business due to unmet expectations.*

#### **What is required?**

Describe how you gather customer feedback and learn about their expectations.

#### **Why is it important?**

Successful businesses understand that customers, and future customers' needs may change over time. Therefore, they use processes to collect and analyze information or feedback to find out what their customers and markets want now and, in the future, and then use this information to design, improve or change their products and services or solutions as well as the processes that underpin the lifecycle of experiences desired by customers and markets. When you understand what customers really need and expect, you can:

- Improve your products/services
- Offer better support
- Increase customer retention

#### **How to comply?**

Use simple methods to gather insights:

- Surveys or questionnaires
- Social media interactions
- Observing buying behaviors
- Direct conversations with customers

### 11.2.3 How to Build a Customer-Focused Business – keeping Customers Happy & Loyal

*Happy and engaged customers come back, recommend your business, increase sales and drive growth.*

#### **What is required?**

Describe how you build a customer-first culture (everyone in your organization is focused on making sure your products and services meet and exceed customer expectations) and ensure

customer satisfaction. Explain how your business listens to customers, builds relationships, shares information within the organization and improves customer satisfaction.

### **Why is it important?**

A business that listens to customers builds trust and keeps them coming back to buy your products and services - which leads to higher sales and customer loyalty. The more engaged your customers feel, the more loyal they become.

### **How to comply?**

If you are not yet doing it, take simple steps to:

- Train employees to prioritize customer experience
- Respond quickly to customer inquiries
- Offer loyalty rewards or personalized service
- Regularly ask for feedback from your customers and employees - and act on it.

These small improvements can make a big difference in customer loyalty. Keep records of all these actions and regularly review them.

## **11.2.4 Building & Managing Strong Customer Relationships**

*Loyal customers don't just buy from you once - they keep coming back to buy your products and services.*

### **What is required?**

Describe how you engage with customers and strengthen relationships over time.

### **Why is it important?**

Satisfied customers trust your brand and help promote your business by recommending you to others.

### **How to comply?**

If you are not already doing it, start with these small actions:

- Use personalized communication (emails, SMS updates)
- Offer great after-sales service
- Build a community around your brand (social media, events)

A well-managed customer relationship leads to long-term business success. Keep records of these actions and keep reviewing how you are performing and make any improvements.

### 11.2.5 How Do You Handle Customer Support?

*Great customer support can turn complaints into loyalty.*

#### **What is required?**

Explain how you support customers when they need help or have issues.

#### **Why is it important?**

Excellent customer support keeps customers happy even when things go wrong - leading to better reputation and repeat sales.

#### **How to comply?**

If you are not already doing it, start with small action such as:

- Having clear channels for support (phone, email, website, social media)
- Responding quickly and professionally
- Offering helpful solutions instead of excuses

If customers feel valued and supported, they're more likely to stay loyal to your business. Keep records of these actions and review regularly to see how you are performing and improve where necessary.

### 11.2.6 How to Measure & Improve Customer Satisfaction

*If you don't measure customer satisfaction, you can't improve it. If you don't count money from your sales, you wouldn't know how much you sold, whether you made loss or profit or whether you should work hard to improve sales revenue. It's the same concept or principle.*

#### **What is required?**

Describe how you track and improve customer satisfaction, expectations, and dissatisfaction.

#### **Why is it important?**

Measuring satisfaction helps:

- Identify what customers love about your business
- Fix problems before they hurt your reputation
- Make better business decisions

#### **How to comply?**

If you are not already doing it, start by taking simple actions:

- Use customer satisfaction surveys
- Keep a record and track complaints and concerns
- Monitor repeat customers vs. lost customers

If satisfaction is going down, take action before it affects your business performance.

### 11.2.7 How to Use Quality to Manage Your Brand

*Quality isn't just about products - it's about how customers SEE your brand.*

#### **What is required?**

Explain how you use quality to position or as a marketing tool to show that your products/services are better than others or comply with regulatory safety requirements in the market.

#### **Why is it important?**

Customers trust brands that focus on quality, consistency, and reliability - helping you stand out from competitors.

#### **How to comply?**

If you are not already doing it, start by taking small actions:

- Highlight quality in your marketing (ads, website, social media)
- Make sure products/services exceed expectations
- Showcase customer testimonials or quality certifications

A strong quality-based brand attracts loyal customers and better business opportunities.

### 11.2.8 Tracking Customer & Market Performance Over Time

*Your market and customers change - so tracking trends over three years helps you plan better.*

#### **What is required?**

Provide data on:

- Market share for your main products/services
- Customer satisfaction based on key segments
- Customer complaints and dissatisfaction trends
- Customer loyalty metrics (repeat customers, referrals)

#### **Why is it important?**

If you see growth, it means you're doing something right. If satisfaction is dropping, you need to act fast to fix it.

#### **How to comply?**

- Review sales trends over the last three years
- Track customer retention rates
- Compare customer feedback changes to spot improvements needed

Regular performance tracking gives you a roadmap for business success.

## 11.3 C3: Operations – Delivering High-Quality Products & Services

Your operations - how you produce goods, manage suppliers, and minimize risks - are key to keeping costs low, maintaining quality, and ensuring business success.

Strong operations, supply chain management, quality control, and risk planning create a stable, scalable, and competitive business. Keep refining these processes, build great supplier relationships, and track results.

### 11.3.1 Who Are Your Key Business Partners?

*Your suppliers, collaborators, and customers help drive your success.*

#### **What is required?**

Identify your key:

- **Suppliers** – Who provides you with raw materials or essential services?
- **Partners & Collaborators** – Who do you work with to improve your business (e.g., distributors, logistics companies)?
- **Competitors** – Who else operates in your industry?
- **Customers** – Who buys from you the most?

#### **Why is it important?**

Knowing your business network helps streamline operations, reduce risks, and create strong partnerships.

#### **How to comply?**

Make a list of key suppliers, partners, and customers - document their roles, reliability, and impact on your operations.

### 11.3.2 Understanding Your Key Markets

*Where are you selling your products or services, and where can you expand?*

#### **What is required?**

Describe the markets where you operate - local, regional, or global.

#### **Why is it important?**

Understanding your market helps you identify new opportunities, strengthen your presence, and adjust business strategies.

#### **How to comply?**

Ask yourself:

- Where do most of my customers come from?

- Do I serve only local markets, or do I export?
- Are there new markets I could enter?

Knowing your market helps you plan for growth and improve competitiveness.

### 11.3.3 How Do You Produce Your Products or Services?

*Organizations that demonstrate sustainable performance understand their core business processes and manage them in a way that ensures consistent performance, quality, and customer satisfaction. They adopt data-driven, standardized, and flexible approaches to designing and managing these processes. They identify, document and manage their value-creating, support and leadership processes in order to achieve their objectives. They map and understand the interdependencies in their end-to-end sets of organizational processes that deliver their products or services. They manage and optimize their system of processes as a whole and regularly review processes for relevance and suitability in assisting the organization to achieve its objectives.*

#### **What is required?**

Describe your process for producing products or providing services.

#### **Why is it important?**

Having clear, well-managed processes leads to better quality, reduced costs, and consistent customer satisfaction.

#### **How to comply?**

- Document your production or service workflows
- Identify areas where efficiency can improve
- Implement quality checks to reduce errors

A strong operations system keeps your business competitive and customer-ready.

### 11.3.4 Managing Suppliers & Supply Chain Effectively

*A reliable supply chain keeps your business running smoothly. Successful organizations build and manage strategic partnerships and supply chains that add value, ensure quality, and support sustainability. They recognize suppliers and partners as critical contributors to performance and innovation.*

#### **What is required?**

Describe how you select, evaluate, and manage suppliers to ensure quality and reliability.

#### **Why is it important?**

Good supplier management prevents delivery delays, poor-quality materials, and unexpected shortages.

### **How to comply?**

Document how your business organization:

- Chooses suppliers who meet quality standards
- Sets clear expectations for delivery times and costs
- Monitors supplier performance—track on-time deliveries, pricing, and reliability

Strong supply chain management keeps your business efficient and profitable.

### **11.3.5 Ensuring High Supplier Performance**

*Your suppliers directly impact your product quality - so keeping them accountable is key.*

#### **What is required?**

Explain how you measure and improve supplier performance.

#### **Why is it important?**

Weak supplier performance affects your business - leading to low-quality products and unhappy customers. Helping suppliers succeed helps your business succeed.

#### **How to comply?**

If you are not already doing it, start by:

- Setting KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) for supplier reliability
- Conducting regular supplier evaluations
- Giving performance feedback and suggesting improvements

### **11.3.6 Monitoring Quality of Materials & Supplies**

*The quality of your raw materials will have an impact on the quality of your finished products.*

#### **What is required?**

Describe how you approve and inspect supplier materials before use.

#### **Why is it important?**

Using poor-quality supplies lowers customer satisfaction and damages your reputation.

#### **How to comply?**

- Test materials before accepting bulk deliveries
- Work with suppliers to improve quality over time
- Keep records of quality control checks

Maintaining high standards ensures your products meet customer expectations. Keep and maintain records of all these actions and regularly review for improvement.

### 11.3.7 Managing Business Risks Before They Become Problems

*Every business faces risks, but smart businesses prepare for them.*

#### **What is required?**

Explain how you identify and reduce business risks - whether financial, operational, or supply-chain related.

#### **Why is it important?**

Risk planning prevents unexpected losses, financial setbacks, and operational disruptions. A proactive risk management approach keeps your business stable and adaptable.

#### **How to comply?**

If you are not already doing it, start by:

- Identifying common risks (supply delays, market changes, financial instability)
- Setting up backup plans for critical business areas
- Monitoring risks regularly—adjust strategies to prevent major losses

### 11.3.8 Tracking Business Performance Over Time

*Your operations should improve each year - tracking results helps you see progress.*

#### **What is required?**

Provide data on:

- Market share trends for your main products/services
- Production/service efficiency improvements over the last three years
- Supply chain performance (on-time deliveries, material availability, quality)
- Risk management success (number of risks mitigated, financial losses prevented)

#### **Why is it important?**

Tracking key performance indicators (KPIs) helps you adjust strategies, fix weaknesses, and scale your business effectively. Regular tracking ensures continuous improvement and long-term success.

#### **How to comply?**

- Keep records of supply chain data, production efficiency, and risk incidents
- Compare annual results to identify areas for improvement
- Set goals based on historical performance trends

## 11.4 C4: People – Building a Strong, Motivated Team

Your employees (or even just YOU if you're running the business alone) are the core of your success. Consider how you attract, develop, and motivate the right people to help your business thrive. SMEs need to understand how to attract, develop, and retain great employees while fostering a positive work environment.

A business with the right employees, strong engagement strategies, and a safe work environment will always thrive. Keep refining your hiring process, rewarding great performance, and investing in training and your SME will build a loyal, skilled, and productive team.

### 11.4.1 How Do You Attract & Hire the Right People?

*A strong team starts with finding the right talent.*

#### **What is required?**

Describe your process for recruiting employees with the right skills and experience.

#### **Why is it important?**

Hiring the right people improves service quality, efficiency, and long-term success. A well-chosen team makes daily operations smoother and more effective.

#### **How to comply?**

- Write clear job descriptions—set expectations upfront
- Hire based on skills, potential, and attitude (not just experience)
- Use referrals, online job postings, or training programs to find great candidates

### 11.4.2 How Do You Keep Employees Engaged?

*An engaged workforce is productive, motivated, and loyal.*

#### **What is required?**

Describe how you keep employees involved, motivated, and committed to the business.

#### **Why is it important?**

Engaged employees work harder, stay longer, and contribute to business success. Employees who feel valued and respected give their best effort every day.

#### **How to comply?**

If you are not already doing it, start to take small actions:

- Hold regular meetings so employees feel heard
- Offer training and growth opportunities

- Create an inclusive, supportive work environment
- Recognize achievements—small wins keep morale high

Keep and maintain records for all these actions for regular review and improvement.

### 11.4.3 How Do You Train & Develop Employees?

*Ongoing learning keeps your workforce skilled and competitive.*

#### **What is required?**

Describe your training programs and professional development strategies.

#### **Why is it important?**

Investing in employee skills leads to better work performance and business growth. A business that supports learning and development stays competitive and innovative.

#### **How to comply?**

- Provide on-the-job training
- Offer skills workshops or mentorship programs
- Encourage employees to learn new technologies, customer service skills, or industry trends

Keep and maintain records of all these actions for regular review and improvement.

### 11.4.4 How Do You Reward & Recognize Employee Contributions?

*Employees perform better when their efforts are appreciated.*

#### **What is required?**

Describe how you acknowledge and reward employees for good performance.

#### **Why is it important?**

Recognition boosts morale, encourages hard work, and reduces turnover. Small gestures make a huge difference in keeping employees motivated.

#### **How to comply?**

- Offer incentives (bonuses, promotions, awards)
- Celebrate milestones (work anniversaries, achievements)
- Give public recognition (team meetings, social media shout-outs)

### 11.4.5 Ensuring Workplace Health & Safety

*A safe workplace protects employees and prevents disruptions.*

#### **What is required?**

Describe your workplace health and safety policies.

#### **Why is it important?**

A safe work environment reduces accidents and improves employee confidence. Prioritizing safety shows you care about employee well-being.

#### **How to comply?**

- Follow industry safety regulations
- Conduct regular safety training
- Provide protective equipment when needed

### 11.4.6 Tracking Employee Performance Over Time

*Your workforce should improve each year—tracking results helps you see progress.*

#### **What is required?**

Provide data on:

- Employee satisfaction levels
- Work engagement trends
- Turnover rate (how often employees leave)
- Absenteeism rates (missed workdays)
- Leadership development programs
- Training effectiveness (skills learned vs. business impact)
- Safety incidents and improvements

#### **Why is it important?**

Tracking employee satisfaction, training impact, and workplace health trends helps identify strengths and areas for improvement. Keeping workforce data updated helps businesses retain top talent and improve workplace culture.

#### **How to comply?**

- Use employee surveys
- Monitor attendance and turnover trends
- Compare performance levels year over year

## 11.5 C5: Evidence-Based Decision Making (Making Smart Decisions with Data)

Every great business decision starts with good data. Whether you're checking sales figures, tracking customer feedback, or analyzing your costs, knowing the numbers helps you make smarter choices, avoid risks and improve operations. SMEs need to clearly understand how to track performance, analyze data, and make smart business decisions.

Using data to make informed business decisions leads to greater efficiency, fewer risks, and better customer satisfaction. Keep tracking key performance indicators, analyzing trends, and making strategic improvements.

How do you use data effectively?

### 11.5.1 Tracking Business Performance – What Kind of Data Do You Use to Measure Performance?

*Think of data as the GPS for your business - it tells you whether you're heading in the right direction or need to adjust course.*

#### **What is required?**

Describe the data you collect to monitor business performance - including financial, customer, and operational data.

#### **Why is it important?**

Making decisions based on actual data, rather than guesses, helps:

- Increase efficiency
- Reduce costs
- Improve customer satisfaction
- Spot potential risks early

Once you have the data, review it regularly to spot trends and areas for improvement.

#### **How to comply?**

Start tracking key business data such as:

- Sales figures – Are sales growing or declining?
- Customer feedback – What do customers like or dislike?
- Costs & expenses – Where is your money going?
- Operational efficiency – How fast do you produce goods or deliver services?

### 11.5.2 How Do You Choose the Right Performance Indicators?

*Not all numbers matter equally—you need to focus on the ones that tell you the most about your business success.*

#### **What is required?**

Describe how you select the key indicators that show whether your business is achieving its goals.

#### **Why is it important?**

Tracking the right indicators helps you measure success, spot problems early, and adjust strategies accordingly.

#### **How to comply?**

Ask yourself:

- What are my biggest business goals? (*Example: Increase sales by 20%*)
- What numbers show progress toward these goals? (*Example: Monthly revenue, customer retention rates*)
- Are these indicators easy to measure and track?

Picking a few core indicators and monitoring them consistently helps you make better business decisions.

### 11.5.3 How Do You Collect & Analyze Business Data?

*Collecting data is only half the process - analyzing it tells you what needs to change.*

#### **What is required?**

Explain how your business gathers, stores, and reviews performance data.

#### **Why is it important?**

Analyzing data helps you see patterns, strengths, and weaknesses in your operations.

#### **How to comply?**

- Gather data from customer surveys, financial records, and sales reports
- Store data securely (*spreadsheets, software, or notebooks*)
- Compare past results with current trends (*Are numbers improving or declining?*)

Once you understand your data, you can adjust business strategies to maximize success.

### 11.5.4 Using Data for Continual Improvement - How Do You Review & Improve Your Business Systems?

*Good businesses don't just collect data; they USE it to improve operations, fix problems, and grow.*

#### **What is required?**

Your business should analyze past performance and use insights to make strategic improvements. Explain how your management reviews business performance and identifies areas for improvement.

#### **Why is it important?**

If you don't review your data regularly to identify trends, you might miss opportunities for cost savings or customer satisfaction improvements.

#### **How to comply?**

- Schedule weekly or monthly business reviews where you look at your key numbers. If sales are dropping, investigate why. If customer complaints are increasing, fix the root cause. Adjust your strategies based on real data—not guesses.
- Discuss what's working and what isn't
- Set up action plans based on data insights (*Example: Improve delivery times if customers complain about delays*)

Regular performance reviews help you stay ahead of challenges and continuously improve.

### 11.5.5 Tracking Business Performance Over the Last Three Years

*Looking at past trends helps you plan for future success.*

#### **What is required?**

Provide data on:

- Customer perception & satisfaction – Are customers happy?
- Employee engagement – Are employees motivated and productive?
- Product & service quality – Have you improved product reliability?
- Process efficiency – Has production or service delivery become faster?
- Financial performance – Have sales, profits, and market share grown?
- Strategic achievements – Have you met business goals over the past three years?

#### **Why is it important?**

Tracking three-year trends helps you identify growth areas, weaknesses, and future strategies. A business that reviews past performance and adapts is better positioned for long-term success.

#### **How to comply?**

- Collect annual business data
- Compare year-over-year results
- Adjust strategies based on historical insights

## 11.6 C6: Organizational Learning (Learning and Improving)

Every business learns over time - whether it's from successes, mistakes, or customer feedback. The key is to make sure you're actively learning and improving, rather than just reacting to situations as they happen. SMEs need to understand how to collect insights, improve processes, and encourage innovation to stay competitive.

A business that learns from experience, improves processes, embraces innovation, and tracks performance will always stay ahead in the market. Encourage continuous learning, test new strategies, and refine operations.

### 11.6.1 Sharing Information & Knowledge Across Your Business

*The more your team understands what's happening in the business, the better they can contribute to growth. A well-informed team makes smarter decisions.*

#### **What is required?**

Your business should have a process for collecting and sharing useful information with employees and stakeholders. Describe how your business collects and shares knowledge with employees, partners, and stakeholders.

#### **Why is it important?**

When employees understand company goals, strategies, and performance, they feel more invested in success. Sharing information ensures everyone is on the same page, leading to better teamwork and strategic decision-making, including strengthening collaboration and efficiency.

#### **How to comply?**

Make it a habit to share with your team any updates and information on a regular basis, for example:

- Recent sales trends
- Customer feedback
- Business challenges and opportunities

You can share information or knowledge using any of the approaches, for example:

- Hold regular meetings to share updates
- Use email, online platforms, or printed reports to keep everyone informed
- Encourage employees to exchange insights and ideas

Encouraging open communication builds a stronger, more collaborative team.

## 11.6.2 Reviewing Business Performance & Learning from Experience

*Businesses that innovate and improve stay ahead of competitors. Every success (and mistake) is a chance to learn.*

### **What is required?**

Your business should actively review its processes and create an environment where new ideas are encouraged. Describe how your business analyzes performance trends and learns from past results.

### **Why is it important?**

Understanding what works and what doesn't help businesses adjust strategies and improve operations. Making small improvements regularly leads to big success over time.

### **How to comply?**

Ask employees, partners, and customers:

- What are we doing well?
- What could be better?
- Any ideas for improving products or services?

Besides, review past performance trends and past results:

- Review financial performance to identify profit trends
- Examine customer feedback to see where improvements are needed
- Monitor process efficiency to reduce delays and costs

Regular performance reviews lead to smarter decision-making and better results.

## 11.6.3 Continuously Improving Business Processes

*A business that improves its processes stays competitive. Continuous improvement ensures higher quality, lower costs, and a stronger market position.*

### **What is required?**

Describe how your organization identifies and implements process improvements.

### **Why is it important?**

Fine-tuning operations helps:

- Reduce errors and inefficiencies
- Improve customer satisfaction
- Lower costs and increase productivity

### **How to comply?**

- Identify bottlenecks slowing down production or service delivery

- Test new ways to increase efficiency
- Collect feedback from employees and customers for better solutions

#### 11.6.4 Encouraging Innovation in Your Business

*Innovative businesses grow faster and adapt better. A business that embraces change and new ideas remains relevant and competitive.*

##### **What is required?**

Describe how you create a work environment that encourages innovation.

##### **Why is it important?**

Encouraging new ideas leads to:

- More efficient business processes
- Unique products or services
- Competitive advantages

##### **How to comply?**

- Give employees space to share ideas
- Test small improvements before making major changes
- Stay updated on market trends and technology advancements

#### 11.6.5 How to Decide Which Innovations to Pursue

*Not every idea will work—but knowing which ones to invest in is key. Smart businesses prioritize the best ideas and avoid wasting resources.*

##### **What is required?**

Explain how your business assesses innovation opportunities before investing in them.

##### **Why is it important?**

Businesses must focus on high-impact innovations - not every idea is worth the time or money.

##### **How to comply?**

- Evaluate whether the idea solves a real business problem
- Test innovations in small-scale trials before full implementation
- Analyze the cost vs. potential benefit

### 11.6.6 Monitoring & Measuring the Success of Your Improvements

*Change is good - but only if it actually improves your business. Data-driven learning helps businesses make informed decisions and refine strategies.*

#### **What is required?**

Describe how you track, review, and evaluate improvements in your business.

#### **Why is it important?**

Measuring the impact of changes ensures:

- Improvements deliver real results
- Resources aren't wasted on ineffective solutions
- Businesses keep learning and refining their strategies

#### **How to comply?**

- Use customer satisfaction surveys to track improvements
- Monitor process efficiency before and after changes
- Compare financial data to see cost savings from improvements

### 11.6.7 How Has Your Business Improved Over the Last Three Years?

*Tracking growth helps businesses see their progress and plan future strategies.*

#### **What is required?**

Provide data on:

- Product/service improvements – Have you enhanced quality or efficiency?
- Innovation – How many new ideas have been tested or implemented?
- Cost savings – Have efficiency improvements reduced expenses?
- Productivity – Are employees working more effectively?
- Environmental impact – Have you reduced waste or energy use?
- Customer satisfaction – Have satisfaction scores improved?
- Defect rates – Have errors and rework decreased?
- New markets – Have you expanded into new customer segments or regions?

#### **Why is it important?**

Understanding three-year trends shows where improvements are working - and where more changes may be needed.

#### **How to comply?**

- Collect annual business data
- Compare performance trends over time
- Identify key growth areas and future focus points

Tracking learning progress helps businesses grow consistently and remain competitive.

## 11.7 C7: Applying Standards & Quality Best Practices for Business Success

Quality isn't just about following guidelines - it's about building a reputation for excellence, ensuring customer trust, and improving business efficiency. If your business focuses on quality, it will naturally attract loyal customers, strong partnerships, and new market opportunities.

Quality isn't just about certificates - it's about consistently delivering great products or services that customers trust. If your business applies standards in its processes, it builds a strong reputation, attracts loyal customers, and opens doors to new opportunities. SMEs need to understand how to leverage quality to improve their operations, reputation, and market opportunities

A business that focuses on quality improvement, market expansion, brand reputation, and recognized standards will always be stronger, more trusted, and more competitive. Make quality a core business strategy, promote certifications, and consistently refine operations.

### 11.7.1 Why Quality Improvements Matter – How Does Quality Improvement Benefit Your Business?

*Quality isn't just about compliance - it's what sets your business apart from competitors. Higher quality leads to happier customers, better efficiency, and stronger business results.*

#### **What is required?**

Your business should recognize how improving quality leads to better customer satisfaction, efficiency, and overall success. Explain how improving product, service, and operational quality has positively impacted your business.

#### **Why is it important?**

Customers want products and services they can rely on to fulfil their needs and expectations. If your business is known for high quality, people will keep coming back. When quality is a priority, your business becomes more competitive.

Businesses that prioritize quality enjoy:

- Fewer complaints and returns
- Stronger customer loyalty
- Better brand reputation
- Increased efficiency and cost savings

#### **How to comply?**

Look for areas where you can improve:

- Are your products consistent and reliable?
- Are your services professional and customer-friendly?

- Are you reducing errors and improving efficiency?
- Implement quality control checks to ensure consistency
- Monitor customer feedback to spot areas for improvement
- Train employees on quality standards and best practices

Focusing on small quality improvements each month can lead to big results over time.

### 11.7.2 How Does Quality Create Business Opportunities?

*Quality isn't just a requirement - it's a strategy for growth. A business that prioritizes quality has higher opportunities for gaining new market opportunities.*

#### **What is required?**

Describe how your commitment to quality has opened new doors for your business.

#### **Why is it important?**

Quality-driven businesses attract:

- Bigger contracts and partnerships
- Access to regional and international markets
- Higher customer referrals and repeat business

#### **How to comply?**

- Promote your commitment to quality certifications (*like ISO, HACCP*)
- Highlight high-quality production standards in marketing
- Ensure customer expectations are consistently exceeded

### 11.7.3 How Do You Use Quality to Strengthen Your Brand?

*Your business's reputation depends on how customers perceive your quality. A quality-driven brand builds long-term customer trust and credibility.*

#### **What is required?**

Explain how you showcase quality in your branding and marketing efforts.

#### **Why is it important?**

Customers trust businesses that emphasize quality, leading to:

- Stronger customer loyalty
- Better word-of-mouth referrals
- A competitive edge in the market

#### **How to comply?**

- Display certifications and quality guarantees on your packaging and website
- Use customer testimonials and case studies to showcase reliability
- Ensure consistent branding that reflects your quality focus

#### 11.7.4 Are You Implementing Industry Standards?

*Following recognized standards proves your commitment to quality and excellence. Certifications can open doors to new business partnerships and strengthen your reputation.*

##### **What is required?**

Describe whether your organization applies ISO or other recognized quality standards in your business operations. Your company should implement recognized quality standards and certifications where applicable.

##### **Why is it important?**

Having certifications shows customers and partners that you follow best practices. Quality certifications help businesses:

- Gain credibility in the industry
- Meet customer and regulatory expectations
- Improve operational efficiency

##### **How to comply?**

- Research industry standards like ISO 9001 (Quality Management), HACCP (Food Safety), ISO 14001 (Environmental Management), or other relevant standards and assess whether they make sense for your business.
- Consider implementing and getting certified to strengthen credibility.
- Ensure employees are trained in quality compliance
- Regularly review and update quality processes to align with standards

#### 11.7.5 Are Your Business Systems, Processes or Products Certified?

*Certifications provide proof that your business meets recognized quality standards. Quality certifications help your business stand out in competitive markets.*

##### **What is required?**

State whether your business is certified against ISO or other industry standards.

##### **Why is it important?**

Being certified boosts:

- Customer confidence in your products and services
- Opportunities for business partnerships
- Compliance with international trade requirements

## How to comply?

- Apply for certifications that match your industry needs
- Maintain compliance by following best practices and regular audits
- Promote certifications in marketing to build trust and credibility

## 11.8 C8: Understanding the Specific Award Categories

The EAC Regional Quality Awards will be recognizing companies that demonstrate excellence in quality across four (4) different categories; namely (1) EAC Company of the Year, (2) EAC Product of the Year, (3) EAC Service of the Year – Private Organizations both SMEs and Large Enterprises, (4) EAC Service of the Year – Public organizations, and (5) EAC Exporter of the Year – focusing on Agro-processing. You'll want to choose the category that best fits your business based on the unique criteria requirements applicable to each specific category of award. The different categories are highlighted below so you understand where your company stands and how you can meet the requirements.

### 11.8.1 C8-1: Company of the Year

*Think of this as the big one - the award for businesses that truly stand out in their industry and across the board.*

#### What is required?

To compete in this category, your company needs to show that it has strong market presence, innovative solutions, social impact, and a solid growth plan.

#### Why is it important?

Winning "Company of the Year" boosts your credibility and positions you as an industry leader. It tells customers, investors, and partners that your business is thriving and making a difference.

#### How to comply?

Start by gathering key details:

- **Market Position:** Show your company's market position and competitive strength based on sales performance, customer base, and customer trust.
- **Innovation:** Highlight innovations in products / services, processes, or technologies / adoption of digital tools (e.g., automation, AI, e-commerce) to improve efficiency and competitiveness.
- **Regional/Global Presence:** Demonstrate expansion beyond your domestic market through new partnerships, regional growth, or international operations.
- **Sustainability practices:** Provide examples of corporate social and environmental responsibility, including ethical practices and sustainability efforts.
- **Growth Potential:** Present financial growth trends and strategic plans for scaling your business.

- **International Best Practices:** Document the adoption of international best practices and certifications such as ISO standards or industry regulations.
- **Local Content:** Explain how your company supports local employment and sourcing of materials.
- **Diversity & Inclusiveness:** Show commitment to diversity and inclusiveness in leadership and workplace culture.

If you can confidently answer these questions, with clear and specific objective evidence, you're on the right path.

### 11.8.2 C8-2: Product of the Year

*This category is for businesses that have created a product that stands out - something innovative, useful, and impactful.*

#### **What is required?**

Your product should be high-quality, original, and preferably make use of local ingredients or resources. It also needs to be accessible, easy to use, and have a positive impact on the market and community.

#### **Why is it important?**

Customers love great products that solve problems, improve their lives, or represent local creativity. Winning this award can help your product stand out and gain recognition.

#### **How to comply?**

Ask yourself:

- **Innovation:** Showcase unique product features, technology, or advancements that set it apart in the market.
- **Local content:** Demonstrate the use of local raw materials and resources in production, employment of local labor.
- **Regional/Global Presence:** Provide evidence of the product's availability in regional and international markets.
- **Diversity & Inclusiveness:** Highlight how the product serves diverse customer needs and ensures inclusiveness.
- **Community Impact:** Show how the product contributes to sustainability, community development, or industry growth.
- **Ease of Use:** Ensure the product is designed for ease of use, offering an intuitive customer experience.
- **Accessibility:** Illustrate accessibility features that support people with different needs, including disabilities.
- **Certification:** Document product certifications that guarantee quality, safety, and compliance with industry standards.

Showcase these strengths with evidence—customer reviews, sales data, and any industry recognition you've received.

### 11.8.3 C8-3: Service of the Year – Private Sector

*If you run a business that provides services instead of products, this category is for you.*

#### **What is required?**

Your service should offer high customer satisfaction, demonstrate business growth or potential, and bring new innovations to the industry.

#### **Why is it important?**

Customers appreciate excellent service, and this award helps prove that your company delivers quality and cares about its clients.

#### **How to comply?**

- **Customer Focus:** Demonstrate a strong commitment to customer satisfaction through responsiveness, engagement, and service excellence.
- **Customer Satisfaction:** Provide customer feedback, reviews, and retention data that reflect overall satisfaction.
- **Growth Potential:** Show evidence of service growth and expansion into new markets or customer segments.
- **Innovation:** Highlight the use of digital tools, automation, or service innovations that improve efficiency.
- **Professionalism:** Uphold professionalism through ethical business practices, expertise, and adherence to industry standards.
- **Certification / Accreditations:** Document certifications and accreditations that enhance credibility and trust in your service.
- **Regional/Global Presence:** Illustrate how your service operates across multiple regions or international markets while maintaining quality.
- **Technological Adoption:** Demonstrate how emerging technologies and industry trends are leveraged to improve service delivery.

If your service leaves a lasting impression, you're in a strong position for this category!

### 11.8.4 C8-4: Service of the Year – Public Sector

*For businesses or institutions providing services in the public sector.*

#### **What is required?**

You should demonstrate a strong reputation, innovation in service delivery, and a positive workplace culture that encourages good governance.

#### **Why is it important?**

This award highlights excellence in serving the public. It recognizes organizations that improve people's lives through efficient, innovative, and ethical services.

### How to comply?

- **Reputation:** Show how your institution maintains a strong reputation and public trust through transparency and consistent quality service delivery.
- **Customer Focus:** Demonstrate a commitment to efficient, accessible, and customer-focused services.
- **Innovation:** Highlight innovations that improve service delivery, including digital solutions, automation, or streamlined processes.
- **Workplace Culture:** Illustrate a positive workplace culture focused on continuous improvement and service excellence.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Provide examples of stakeholder engagement, including collaborations with communities, industries, or policymakers.
- **Technological Adoption:** Show how technological advancements are integrated to enhance service efficiency.
- **Professionalism:** Document adherence to ethical standards, governance principles, and regulatory compliance.
- **Certification / Accreditations:** Document certifications and accreditations that enhance credibility and trust in your service.
- **Diversity & Inclusiveness:** Demonstrate how diversity and inclusiveness are embedded in public service delivery and workplace culture.

If your organization is committed to serving the public better each year, this category is for you.

### 11.8.5 C8-5: Exporter of the Year

*Are you successfully selling your products or services beyond the EAC region's borders?*

#### What is required?

You need to demonstrate consistent export growth, use of local raw materials, and successful entry into multiple international markets.

#### Why is it important?

Winning "Exporter of the Year" positions your business as a strong player in global trade, opening doors to new markets and customers.

#### How to comply?

- **Export Markets:** Provide data on the number of markets your company exports to.
- **Export Volume:** Highlight current export volumes and demonstrate sustained growth.
- **Revenue Growth:** Show how your company generates significant revenue from exports with consistent upward trends.
- **Export Growth Trends:** Present export growth trends over the past three years with supporting data.
- **Local Sourcing:** Demonstrate a commitment to sourcing local agricultural raw materials for production.

- **Value Addition:** Explain how your business adds value to raw materials through processing, branding, or packaging.
- **Sustainability:** Highlight sustainability practices in international trade, including ethical sourcing and environmental responsibility.
- **Quality & Standards Compliance:** Document certifications and compliance with international trade regulations and quality standards.
- **Diversity & Inclusiveness:** Show how diversity and inclusiveness are prioritized in hiring and business operations.
- **Future Growth Plans:** Outline clear strategies for future export growth, market expansion, and supply chain improvements.

If exporting is a big part of your business, this category could be a perfect fit.

## 12 CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

Interested companies, organizations or individuals can obtain the Application Guidelines for the EAC Regional Quality Awards from the websites of their respective National Standards Bodies (NSBs) or by contacting the designated national focal points listed below:

### Uganda

Ms. Sylvia Kirabo:

[sylvia.kirabo@unbs.go.ug](mailto:sylvia.kirabo@unbs.go.ug)

### Kenya

Mr. George Mungai:

[mungaig@kebs.org](mailto:mungaig@kebs.org)

[kqa@kebs.org](mailto:kqa@kebs.org)

### Rwanda

Mr. Francois Nsengiyumva:

[francois.nsengiyumva@rsb.gov.rw](mailto:francois.nsengiyumva@rsb.gov.rw)

### Burundi

Mr. Eric Ruracenyeka:

[ruraeric@yahoo.fr](mailto:ruraeric@yahoo.fr)

### United Republic of Tanzania

Mr. Amani Martin Mollel:

[amani.mollel@tbs.go.tz](mailto:amani.mollel@tbs.go.tz)

### South Sudan

Ms. Estella Joan Angelo:

[stellajada5@gmail.com](mailto:stellajada5@gmail.com)

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