

2026 Business Award Nominations



Celebrating Excellence, Innovation, and Community Spirit

The Whitecourt & District Chamber of Commerce Business Awards recognize and celebrate the businesses, organizations, and individuals who make our region a vibrant, innovative, and welcoming place to live, work, and do business. These awards highlight outstanding achievements across a wide range of categories, showcasing the dedication, creativity, and community involvement that drive success in our region.

Feel free to complete all categories or skip to the ones you want to nominate.

THE DEADLINE TO NOMINATE IS NOVEMBER 30, 2026, AT 5PM.

Your nomination will be kept anonymous. Your contact information is collected in the event we need more information from you.

Business Award Rules & Regulations

1. Nominations

- a) Each nomination will be specific to its category and explain how it meets the criteria.
- b) All nominees must operate within the Whitecourt & District Chamber of Commerce boundaries, this includes: Town of Whitecourt, Woodlands County, Town of Mayerthorpe, Lac Ste. Anne County, Greenview County, and Town of Fox Creek.
- c) All businesses must be open for at least one year, except for Emerging Business of the Year.
- d) The Business Awards Committee will review the nominations to ensure businesses are in the correct category.
- e) Businesses nominated must have one person in attendance in order to win. One ticket will be offered at a discounted rate.
- f) Business will be contacted to provide further information (customer reviews, staff retention rates, etc.)

2. Voting

- a) The business awards will not go out for public voting this year. Instead, we will be sending the nominations to another Chamber outside of our region to choose the winners.
- b) What are the judges looking for?
 - a. Why does this nominee deserve this award?
 - b. What specific accomplishments or examples demonstrate the criteria?
 - c. How has the nominee impacted customers, employees, or the community?
 - d. What makes this nominee stand out from others in this category?
 - e. Provide measurable results or specific examples where possible.

3. Winners

- a) Businesses may win in one category. If a winner wins in more than one category, the Business Award Committee will take the following into consideration:
 - I. Award based on widest margin of victory by votes
 - II. Award based on highest number of votes in a category
 - III. Award based on highest percentage of votes in a category
- b) Winners will be awarded at the President's Gala on Saturday, January 23rd, 2027.
- c) **Members that win will receive \$150 off their membership the following year.**
Non-members will have a two-week grace period to join the Chamber of Commerce to use their \$150 credit.

Categories & Criteria

1. Lonestar Business of the Year

Celebrating the dedication, resilience, and entrepreneurial spirit of a business owner who does it all.

The Lonestar Business of the Year Award recognizes a sole proprietor who has demonstrated outstanding commitment to their business, customers, and community. This award celebrates the unique contributions of entrepreneurs who build and operate their businesses independently while making a positive impact in our region.

Criteria:

- Must be a sole proprietor and independently owned and operated
 - Demonstrates business success, dedication, and entrepreneurial spirit
 - Provides exceptional customer service
 - Demonstrates community involvement or contribution
 - Shows commitment to the growth and sustainability of their business
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2. Rising Star Business of the Year (Small Business)

Honouring the backbone of our economy — small businesses that lead with service, innovation, and community.

Presented to a small, locally owned business that has shown excellence in customer service, community involvement, and workplace culture while contributing positively to the local economy.

Criteria:

- Must have between 2-20 employees
 - Must be privately owned, locally owned, and operated
 - Demonstrates outstanding customer service and strong staff retention
 - Demonstrates community involvement or contribution
 - Shows commitment to the growth and sustainability of their business
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3. Major Employer of the Year

Recognizing organizations that make a significant contribution to our local economy and workforce.

The Major Employer of the Year Award recognizes a larger employer that demonstrates excellence in business operations, employee development, workplace culture, and community involvement. This award celebrates organizations that provide meaningful employment opportunities, invest in their people, and play a significant role in strengthening our local economy.

Criteria:

- Must have 21 or more employees
- Demonstrates strong employee retention and development
- Provides a positive and supportive workplace culture
- Demonstrates exceptional customer service and business practices

- Provides meaningful employment and career opportunities within the region
 - Demonstrates active involvement and investment in the community
 - Contributes positively to the local economy and overall business community
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4. Non-Profit of the Year

Honouring organizations that make a meaningful difference in our communities.

Presented to a non-profit organization whose members, staff, and volunteers have made a significant and lasting impact through programs, advocacy, or services.

Criteria:

- Must be a non-profit organization
 - Demonstrates impactful contributions to the community
 - Demonstrates meaningful community impact
 - Provides valuable programs, services or advocacy
 - Demonstrates effective volunteer and community engagement
 - Demonstrates a commitment to its mission
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5. Legacy Business of the Year

Honouring long-standing businesses that have shaped our community.

This award recognizes a business that has demonstrated sustained success, innovation, and community involvement over many years.

Criteria:

- Must have been operating for 15 or more years
 - Must be a Chamber Member in good standing
 - Demonstrates long-term success and sustainability
 - Has contributed to local employment and economic development
 - Demonstrates meaningful community involvement and impact
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6. Emerging Business of the Year

Spotlighting rising stars in our business community.

Presented to a business that has been operating for less than three years and is already showing strong signs of growth, innovation, and community connection.

Criteria:

- Must have been operating for 3 years or less
 - Demonstrates significant early success and growth
 - Shows strong future potential
 - Demonstrates innovation, adaptability, or creativity
 - Demonstrates community engagement or contribution
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7. Community Champion Award

Honouring businesses that lead through community involvement.

This award celebrates a business that consistently supports and contributes to the community through sponsorships, volunteerism, and leadership roles.

Criteria:

- Must be a Chamber Member in good standing
 - Demonstrates significant community involvement and impact
 - Supports local organizations, initiatives, and events
 - Demonstrates volunteerism and/or community leadership
 - Shows a sustained commitment to giving back to the community
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8. Business Innovation Award

Celebrating forward-thinking and transformative ideas.

Awarded to a business that has demonstrated exceptional innovation through its products, services, technology, processes, business model, or approach to solving challenges.

Criteria:

- Demonstrates exceptional innovation or creativity
- Has introduced a new or significantly improved product, service, process, technology, or business practice
- Demonstrates how innovation has positively impacted the business, customers, industry, or community
- Demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement and forward thinking

9. Business Employing Youth Award

Supporting the next generation of the workforce.

This award recognizes a business that actively provides meaningful employment opportunities for youth and supports their development.

Criteria:

- Employs two or more youth under 18
- Employs youth year-round or seasonally, where applicable
- Provides meaningful training, mentorship, or skill development
- Demonstrates a commitment to creating positive employment experiences for youth

10. Youth Entrepreneur of the Year

Honouring the next generation of business leaders.

This award recognizes a young entrepreneur who demonstrates exceptional vision, leadership, and innovation in building and growing their business.

Criteria:

- Entrepreneur must be between 14–30 years of age as of December 31, 2026
- Must have an active ownership or leadership role in the business
- Demonstrates entrepreneurial spirit and initiative
- Demonstrates innovation, leadership, and growth potential
- Demonstrates commitment to their customers and community

11. Personal and Professional Services Award

Recognizing service-based businesses that go above and beyond for their clients and community.

The Personal & Professional Services Award celebrates a business that provides exceptional service, expertise, and value to its clients. This award recognizes businesses that have built a strong reputation through professionalism, customer care, quality of service, and a commitment to their clients and community.

Criteria:

- Must primarily provide personal or professional services, including but not limited to legal, accounting/bookkeeping, real estate, insurance, consulting, financial planning, coaching/training, hair/beauty/personal care, wellness/fitness, counselling/therapy, etc.
 - Demonstrates exceptional customer service and client care
 - Demonstrates professionalism, expertise, and quality of service
 - Has built a strong reputation within the community
 - Demonstrates commitment to business growth and continuous improvement
 - Demonstrates community involvement or contribution
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12. Chamber Member of the Year (chosen by the W&DCC)

Recognizing a Chamber member that demonstrates exceptional commitment to the Chamber and local business community.

The Chamber Member of the Year is selected by the Whitecourt & District Chamber of Commerce and recognizes a long-standing member that consistently supports and engages with the Chamber's programs, initiatives, events, and activities.

Criteria:

- Must be a Chamber Member in good standing
- Must have maintained membership for 5 or more consecutive years
- Demonstrates consistent support and engagement with Chamber initiatives, events, and programs
- Regularly participates in member meetings, mixers, and activities
- Demonstrates support through sponsorship of Chamber events or promotions
- Demonstrates a commitment to the success of the Chamber and local business community