

BEST CORPORATE CITIZEN SUSTAINABILITY AWARD 2025

PEOPLE. PLANET. PROFIT





Launch Seminar - Best Corporate Citizen Sustainability Awards 2025

24th July 2025, Ground Floor Auditorium The Ceylon Chamber of Commerce



Overall Briefing on The Best Corporate Citizen Sustainability Awards 2025 by Mr. Rathika de Silva, the Chairman of the Panel of Evaluators.

The launch of the 2025/26 cycle of the Best Corporate Citizen Sustainability Awards signals a renewed focus on recognising businesses that lead with responsibility, resilience, and forward thinking. Opening the seminar, organisers reflected on last year's record-breaking participation – (91) entries each for the main and project awards - a clear sign of the corporate sector's growing commitment to sustainability.

This year's cycle brings a few updates to the evaluation process, designed to reflect global trends and new challenges. Companies are encouraged to stay up to date and tailor their submissions accordingly.





Guidelines for Companies Planning to Submit - by Mr. Rathika de Silva, the Chairman of the Panel of Evaluators

- Understand the Criteria: Submissions should reflect transparency, ethical governance, and measurable sustainability outcomes.
- **Be Strategic**: Align your initiatives with global sustainability trends and frameworks.
- Showcase Innovation: Highlight how your company is leveraging technology, especially AI, responsibly.
- Think Holistically: Address all dimensions of corporate citizenship governance, environment, finance, community, employees, and innovation.
- Commit to Impact: Use the awards as a platform to demonstrate your role in uplifting communities, protecting the planet, and driving inclusive growth.

Link to application form & Relevant documents: https://www.chamber.lk/bccs/

Governance - by Ms. Pyumi Sumanasekara

This section of the BCCS application focuses on how companies demonstrate effective governance practices, particularly in relation to ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) accountability.

<u>Key Guidelines for Applicants</u>
<u>Section: Governance Environment - by Ms. Pyumi Sumanasekara</u>

- **Beyond Compliance**: While regulatory compliance and codes of conduct are foundational, companies must show how governance structures actively support ESG outcomes.
- **Accountability Mechanisms**: Clearly outline how accountability is assigned, monitored, and improved within governance bodies such as boards, committees, and leadership teams.
- Target Setting & Achievement: Include measurable KPIs and demonstrate consistent progress. Avoid vague narratives, use data to show impact.
- **Strategic Integration**: ESG should be embedded into business strategy. Explain how risks and opportunities are identified and addressed through governance.
- Alignment with Reporting Standards: Prepare for evolving standards like IFRS sustainability disclosures. Ensure your governance reporting aligns with these expectations.
- Consistency Across Application: Ensure that governance-related data and insights are reflected consistently across other sections (e.g., finance, environment, innovation).

Link to the presentation on <u>Governance Environment Section</u>
https://www.chamber.lk/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Governance.pdf

Financial Performance and Economic Contribution – by Hafsa Banu

This section evaluates how companies generate financial value and distribute it across stakeholders, including employees, capital providers, government, and the community. Accuracy and consistency in financial reporting are critical, as this section relies heavily on audited financial statements.

Key Guidelines for Applicants

Section: Financial Performance and Economic Contribution - by Ms. Hafsa Banu

- Accuracy in Figures: All figures used in the Economic Value Distribution (EVD) must match the company's audited financial statements. Discrepancies, especially in revenue were common in past applications and must be avoided.
- Consolidated vs. Standalone Reporting: If applying as a holding company, use consolidated financials. If applying as a subsidiary or standalone entity, use individual company figures.
- Exclude Non-Cash Items: EVD should reflect cash-based transactions only. Items like exchange gains/losses and unrealized income must be excluded.
- Cross-Referencing: Ensure figures such as asset sales match those reported in the cash flow statement. Avoid referencing accounting notes that do not align with the actual figures.
- Capital Providers: Include dividends for equity holders and interest payments for debt holders. Avoid double counting—do not include interest under both finance costs and capital distribution.
- Government Contributions: Include taxes paid by the company (e.g., corporate tax, ESC, VAT borne by the company). Exclude taxes collected on behalf of third parties (e.g., VAT collected from customers).
- **Community Investments:** Ensure CSR-related expenses are reflected consistently across the application. Avoid contradictions between financial disclosures and narrative sections.
- **Dividend Reporting:** Only include proposed dividends if they have been approved by the board. Avoid duplication between proposed and paid dividends across reporting periods.

Link to the presentation on *Financial Performance and Economic Contribution*

https://www.chamber.lk/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Financial_Performance_and_Economic_Contribution.pdf

Customer Relations - by Dr. Asanga Ranasinghe

This section evaluates how companies engage with their customers and deliver products and services responsibly. It emphasizes the importance of customer-centric strategies as a foundation for sustainable business growth.

<u>Key Guidelines for Applicants</u> <u>Section: Customer Relations – by Dr. Asanga Ranasinghe</u>

Companies are assessed across five key dimensions:

- Product and Service Responsibility: Demonstrate how products and services are developed and delivered with responsibility and care. Highlight ethical sourcing, safe manufacturing practices, and operational integrity.
- Responsible Marketing and Distribution: Showcase ethical advertising practices and responsible distribution systems. Include evidence of gender-sensitive communication and inclusive outreach.
- **Customer Dialogue:** Provide examples of two-way communication with customers. Show how customer feedback is used to improve products, services, and strategy.
- Customer Strategy and Satisfaction: Explain how customer needs are identified and addressed. Include data or evidence of customer satisfaction and loyalty.
- Long-Term Customer Value Creation: Demonstrate whether the company focuses on short-term profits or long-term customer relationships. Highlight strategies that build sustainable customer value over time.

Link to the presentation on **Customer Relations**

https://www.chamber.lk/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Customer_Relations.pdf

Environment – by Mr. Ravi de Silva

This section focuses on how companies manage their environmental impact and contribute to climate action. It is one of the most critical areas of the BCCS application, requiring clear, evidence-based responses that reflect genuine commitment and measurable performance.

<u>Key Guidelines for Applicants</u> <u>Section: Environment – by Mr. Ravi de Silva</u>

- Answer Precisely: Marks are awarded based on how clearly and directly questions are answered. Avoid vague or repetitive content.
- Use concise, data-backed responses.
- **Avoid Duplication**: Do not repeat the same content across multiple sections (e.g., corporate environment, environmental integration, beyond business). Each section should present unique, relevant information.
- **Environmental Impact Awareness:** Every business activity has an environmental impact. Applicants must demonstrate awareness and action—whether mitigating harm or enhancing positive outcomes.
- Environmental Policy: Must be more than a formal document—it should be actively practiced and understood across all levels of the organization. Include evidence of staff awareness and training initiatives.
- **Partnerships**: Collaborations with social and environmental organizations strengthen your application and reflect broader impact.
- Climate Change Action: Clearly outline steps taken to mitigate or adapt to climate change. Include studies, initiatives, and measurable actions (e.g., energy efficiency, renewable energy use). Demonstrate efforts to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and transition to sustainable practices.

Presentation Tips:

- Use graphics and visuals to enhance clarity and engagement.
- Keep responses concise, focused, and aligned with the question.
- Ensure consistency between narrative and quantitative data.

Link to the presentation on **Environment**

https://www.chamber.lk/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Environmental.pdf

Community & Supplier Relations – by Ms. Zahra Cader

This section evaluates how companies go beyond traditional CSR to create meaningful, purpose-driven impact in communities and across their supply chains. The focus is on strategic engagement, measurable outcomes, and long-term value creation.

<u>Key Guidelines for Applicants</u> <u>Section: Customer & Supplier Relations – by Ms.Zahra Cader</u>

Community Relations

- Beyond CSR: Frame community initiatives as part of your company's broader purpose, not
 just standalone CSR activities.
- Project Clarity: Clearly outline project objectives, targets, and resource allocation (including financial commitment). Provide context and depth to help evaluators understand the scope and impact.
- Impact & Outcomes: Demonstrate tangible results and how they align with your company's purpose. Include lessons learned, especially from long-term projects—highlight both successes and failures, and how they informed future improvements.
- **Cross-Referencing**: Ensure consistency across the application and reference supporting documents (e.g., annual reports) with specific page numbers or sections.

Supplier Engagement

- Supplier Criteria & Evaluation: Clearly define how suppliers are selected and evaluated. Include evidence of supplier codes of conduct and compliance mechanisms.
- Value Chain Development: Show how your company supports and upskills suppliers, especially SMEs and farmers. Highlight knowledge-sharing initiatives and capacity-building efforts.
- Monitoring & Feedback: Explain how supplier practices are monitored and how feedback is collected. Include mechanisms for two-way communication and continuous improvement.
- Partnerships & Incentives: Demonstrate how partnerships with suppliers are built and sustained. Show how responsible suppliers are rewarded or supported through mechanisms like buy-back agreements or preferential terms.
- Progress Tracking: For multi-year programs, clearly indicate the progress made during the year under review. Quantify impact and set clear targets to help evaluators assess effectiveness.

Presentation Tips:

- Use graphics and visuals to enhance clarity and engagement.
- Keep responses concise, focused, and aligned with the question.
- Ensure consistency between narrative and quantitative data.

Employee Relations – by Mr. Prasad de Silva

This section focuses on how companies manage, support, and empower their workforce recognized as the most valuable asset of any organization. It evaluates both compliance with statutory requirements and proactive efforts to foster inclusive, safe, and resilient workplaces.

<u>Key Guidelines for Applicants</u> <u>Section: Employee Relations – by Mr. Prasad de Silva</u>

- Workplace Practices: Share success stories and initiatives that promote a positive work environment. Highlight employee engagement programs, workplace champions, and internal culture-building efforts.
- Compliance & Welfare: Ensure statutory compliance with labor laws, employee benefits, and social security. Occupational safety and health (OSH) practices are increasingly critical—violations anywhere in the supply chain can have serious consequences.
- Training & Development: Showcase Human Resource Development (HRD) initiatives, including training, upskilling, and career development. Reflect how your company supported employees through recent crises (e.g., pandemic, economic downturns, power cuts).

- Equal Opportunity & Inclusion: Demonstrate mechanisms for ensuring equal employment opportunities, especially for persons with disabilities. Sri Lanka has a significant disabled population (approx. 8.7%), yet only 21% are economically active addressing this gap is vital.
- Female Workforce Participation: Highlight efforts to attract, retain, and empower
 women in the workforce, especially in leadership roles. Female labor force
 participation has declined in recent years—initiatives to reverse this trend are highly
 valued.
- Retention & Resilience: Address how your company is managing employee retention, especially in the face of migration and workforce challenges. Share strategies for maintaining morale and continuity during difficult periods.

Presentation Tips

- Provide clear, evidence-backed responses.
- Use data and examples to demonstrate impact.
- Avoid generalizations, focus on specific actions and measurable outcomes.

Briefing on Best Projects Sustainability Awards - by Ms. Harshini de Silva Pandithasekera

This section focuses on recognizing outstanding sustainability projects undertaken by companies. Unlike the main awards, this category evaluates **specific initiatives** rather than overall business processes or systems.

<u>Key Guidelines for Applicants</u> <u>Section: Best Project Sustainability Awards – by Ms. Harshani de Silva Pandithasekara</u>

- Award Objective: The Project Awards aim to identify and celebrate the country's finest sustainability initiatives. Submissions should focus on projects, not general business operations or strategies.
- **Project Scope & Documentation**: Provide a clear overview of the project, including its objectives, targets, and resource allocation. Include visual evidence (e.g., images) to enhance visibility and understanding. Ensure the project is included in your sustainability reporting—this reflects transparency and helps inspire others.
- Exit Strategy & Lessons Learned: A well-defined exit strategy is essential to demonstrate long-term sustainability. Share lessons learned from implementation—both successes and challenges—to help others replicate or improve similar initiatives.
- **Evaluation Process**: Submissions are first reviewed by the evaluation panel based on the published criteria. A presentation and interview may be requested only if necessary—not all applicants will be invited for this step.

Link to the presentation on **Best Project Sustainability Awards**

https://www.chamber.lk/wp-

content/uploads/2025/07/Best_Sustainability_Projects_Awards_2025_Application_v1.pd

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Q&A Session - Clarifications on Application Process & Submissions

Q1: Are annexures allowed in the application?

A: Yes, annexures are permitted in **both the Main and Project applications**. They can be used to provide supporting documentation, visuals, and additional data to strengthen your submission.

Q2: What qualifies as a valid project for the Project Awards?

A: Projects must be **distinct initiatives** that go beyond regulatory compliance.

Valid: Community engagement, environmental restoration, or one-off business process improvements that lead to broader adoption.

Not valid: Routine operational systems or minor enhancements to existing processes.

Q3: Can ongoing projects be submitted?

A: Yes, ongoing projects are acceptable **provided they show at least one year of monitored progress.** The submission must include measurable outcomes and evidence of impact during the review period.

Q4: What if the project has no clear end date (e.g., environmental restoration)?

A: Long-term projects are welcome, especially in areas like environmental sustainability. However, the application must clearly show **what was achieved during the current year**, supported by **quantitative data** from monitoring systems.

Q5: What kind of impact data is expected?

A: Impact must be **quantifiable and specific**. For example, instead of stating "forest cover increased," provide metrics such as "X hectares restored" or "Y% increase in canopy density." This helps evaluators compare and assess projects effectively.

Q6: Should business leases from the government be included under Economic Value Distribution?

A: No, leases obtained from the government for operational purposes are **not considered a contribution to the government.** Only **taxes paid by the company** (e.g., corporate tax, ESC, VAT borne by the company) should be included under **Economic Value Distribution**.