

2024 Market Van Buren Business Recognition Awards Rules and Restrictions

Overview

To celebrate the hard-won successes of Cass and Van Buren County residents, Market Van Buren is excited to announce the fourth annual Market Van Buren Awards Program!

Through this program, there are two awards for which community members can submit nominations: Best New Business in Cass County, Best New Business in Van Buren County.

Nominees for these two awards will be nominated by the public and subsequently vetted by a specialized committee comprised of Market Van Buren board members and community leaders.

Rules & Guidelines:

To be eligible for this award, businesses must:

1. Must be in operation for **two years or less** beginning on **January 1, 2024**.
2. Must have a **local presence**, which means that they produce a product or provide a service in Cass or Van Buren County.
3. Must employ a **minimum of two people**.
 - Business owners do not count as the minimum of two people.
 - Vendors, consignment, investors, or sponsors are not included.
4. Home-based businesses are not eligible for nomination; the business must have a **physical presence** within Cass or Van Buren County that exists outside of a residential home.
 - Business expansions do not qualify.
 - Opening a secondary location does not qualify.

A strong candidate for the “Best New Business” award will exhibit excellence in the following:

1. **Strategic Planning:** Practice of identifying strategies to achieve goals, including adapting to unforeseen challenges.
2. **Employee Development:** Intentional provision of support to foster employee’s personal or professional growth.
3. **Community Involvement:** Investment or support provided by business that adds value to or supports wellbeing within the community.
4. **Customer Service:** Providing quality service before, during, and after a purchase or transaction.

Self-nominations for the Best New Business Award are both accepted and encouraged. Community members are welcome to nominate more than one business for the Best New Business Award. Nominations will be accepted through **March 1, 2024 at 11:59 p.m. ET**.

Winners will be selected based on the quality of the public nominations which they receive, their completion of the follow-up questionnaire, and their alignment with the description of an ideal candidate for the award. The total number of unique, high-quality nominations originating from community members will be considered in selecting the winner (i.e., nominating your own businesses or having a community member nominate your business 10 times will not increase your likelihood of winning, but having 10 community members submit nominations each with unique responses to open-ended questions can increase your likelihood of winning.)

Do not solicit community members to complete the nomination form with answers that you have provided ahead of time; nominations with identical responses will not be accepted.

Community members nominating a business will be required to provide their name and email address to verify their identity and prevent ballot stuffing. Community members nominating a business should also be prepared to describe why they think their nominee should be named “Best New Business.”

Nominee businesses will be contacted by the staff of Market Van Buren and asked to complete a brief questionnaire by **March 29, 2024 at 11:59 p.m. ET** to be considered for the “Best New Business” award. Questionnaires not completed by this deadline will not be considered. To increase the likelihood of winning, nominees should be sure to provide complete and thoughtful responses on the questionnaire. Responses to the questionnaire should be written in full and complete sentences unless another type of response is requested. It is a candidate’s responsibility to ensure that each question has been fully and appropriately answered. In addition to completeness, questionnaires will also be vetted for honesty.

Judging and Celebrations:

Winners will be selected by the board of Market Van Buren after being vetted by a specialized committee. Winners of the awards will be notified by early May and will be expected to attend the **Business Recognition Awards Ceremony in June 2024.**

Award winners will receive a physical award, which can be displayed to commemorate their organization’s achievements over the past year. In addition, the winners will be featured in Market Van Buren’s annual report, press releases, and social media accounts.