

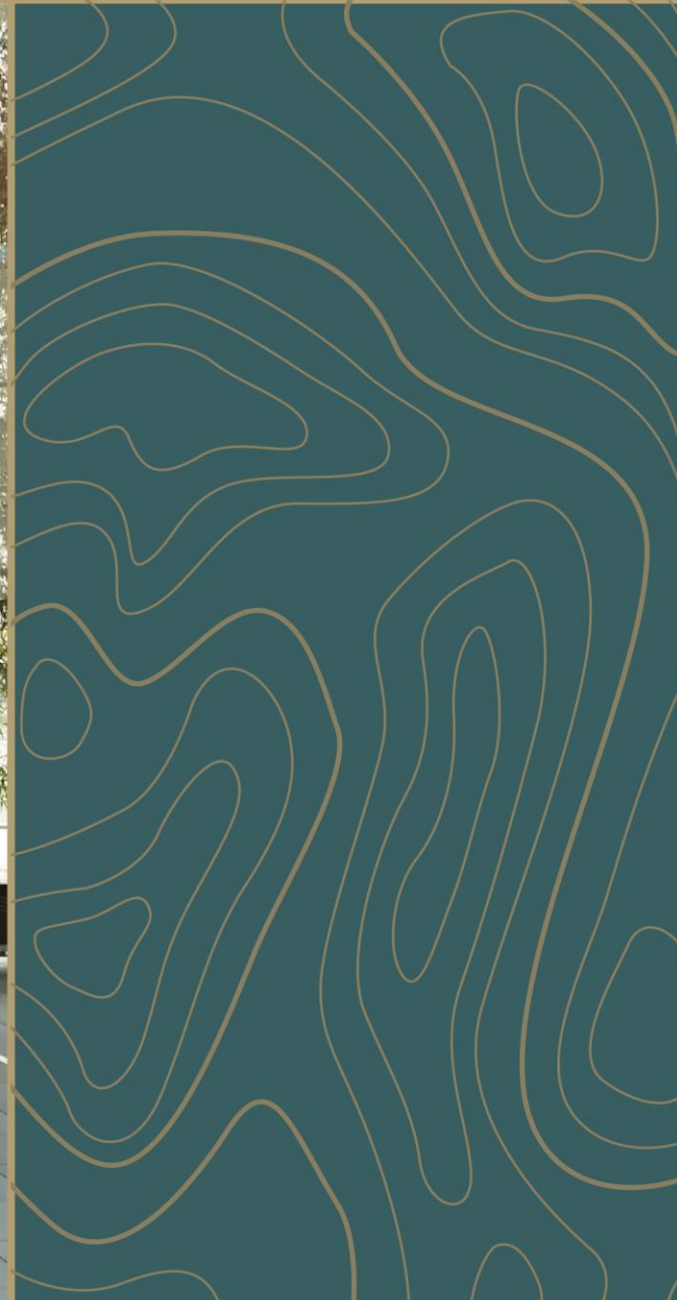


Funded by
the European Union



M **meliora**
Georgia's Responsible
Business Awards

GEORGIA'S RESPONSIBLE
BUSINESS AWARDS 2024



GUIDE FOR THE APPLICANTS

Table of Contents

1. Introduction – About the Contest.....	3
2. Nine reasons why should you participate in <i>Meliora Awards</i>	4
3. Eligibility requirements	5
3.1. Who should enter the awards	5
3.2. What could be submitted	6
3.3. Eligible Number of Entries	6
4. Key Dates.....	6
5. Categories and their description.....	7
5.1. Green Initiative	7
5.2. Responsible Employer.....	8
5.3. Responsibility in the Marketplace.....	8
5.4. Supporting Communities	9
5.5. Cross-Sector Partnership – Shared Responsibility	10
5.6. Transparency and Reporting on CSR and corporate sustainability.....	10
5.7. CSR Manager of the Year (Special Category)	11
5.8. GRAND PRIX: Responsible Large Company of the Year	11
5.9. GRAND PRIX: Responsible SME of the Year	12
6. Application Process: How to Enter.....	12
7. FAQ and additional information for the applicants.....	17
8. Tips and Hints for the Applicants to write a great application	17
9. Jury	18
10. Assessment of Entries	19
Revealing a Long List	19
11. Revealing the winners - Awards Ceremony and Prizes.....	20
12. About the Implementing Organization	20
13. About the Project.....	21

1. Introduction – About the Contest

This year CSR DG for the fifth time conducts the annual Corporate Social Responsibility Excellence Contest - Georgia's Responsible Business Awards "Meliora". The Awards are organized within the frames of the "Civil Society STATR Initiative: CSOs as Sustainable, Transparent, Accountable and Resilient Development Actors in Georgia", with the support of European Union and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS). The Contest is organized in collaboration and with the support of various business associations aiming to promote responsible business conduct in Georgia, international and local experts' organizations and CSOs.

"Meliora" is a Latin word meaning The Best. Therefore, every year Meliora Awards celebrate companies operating in Georgia for most inspiring and outstanding projects and initiatives in the area of corporate social responsibility, that change Georgia for the better.

With a growing attention to the responsible and ethical behavior of the businesses throughout the world, as well as in Georgia, companies have to come up with innovative approaches to the way they operate.

New challenges and opportunities provided to the Georgian companies by the EU-Georgia Association agreement and the further integration of Georgia into EU internal market, as well as global market, at many instances are strongly linked to development and sophistication of their CSR and adhering to international standards of responsible business conduct.

Therefore, **Georgia's Responsible Business Awards "Meliora" is a nation-wide effort** to promote and strengthen the CSR commitment among businesses; attract attention to excellent examples of CSR projects; encourage and motivate companies to adopt best practices and become role models for others; and finally to demonstrate that a responsible business, aiming to be a force for good, by creating healthy communities and a healthy environment, achieves long-term financial value and commercial success as a result.

The Awards are presented in a **variety of categories covering all major areas of CSR**. Contest is open to the **companies of all sizes from around the country**, that have found responsible ways of making an enduring difference to the wellbeing of their workers, customers and suppliers, to the communities, and to the environment.

By sharing the most prominent examples in in all spheres of sustainable and responsible business, the Contest aims to drive the change ~~encouraging the system of corporate responsibility to go beyond philanthropy and donation,~~ stressing that this is **not just a big business but also a small and medium-sized enterprises, who could equally benefit environment and society through adoption of responsible business approach** and using their relative scale within their appropriate areas of operation.

The independent jury consisting of the leading Georgian and international experts would evaluate nominees based on the consistency and effectiveness of their efforts, sustainability of the results and proper design of the initiatives. **Amount of the invested funds would not be in no way decisive factor in evaluation process.**

For six consecutive years, Meliora Awards have served as a beacon of inspiration, recognizing transformative action, business excellence, and corporate responsibility across the country.

2. Nine reasons why should you participate in *Meliora* Awards

The Meliora Awards are run by CSRDG, one of the most experienced expert organization in the field of CSR and sustainability. Since its launch in 2018, contest had over 30 partners and up to 20 media partners. From 2018 to 2022, a total of 120 companies submitted nearly 300 projects. All this makes this contest one of the leading Sustainability and CSR initiatives in Georgia.

Meliora is much more than just an Awards,

- 1.** This is a unique contest that provides the business community a chance to **promote their efforts in CSR and gain recognition for best practice**
- 2.** Awards offer **inspiration and opportunity to learn and share your knowledge** with a wide range of organizations
- 3.** All of the companies involved in the Awards are **helping raise the bar when it comes to sustainability** and to increase the awareness of the importance of CSR
- 4.** The Awards are presented in a **variety of categories covering all major areas of CSR**, so you can easily find category suitable for your responsibility actions
- 5.** **The independent jury** consists of the leading Georgian and international experts that ensures high credibility of the evaluation process. Each category is independently judged and the bar is set high.
- 6.** Awards are **open to large, medium-sized and small companies, which would have equal chances to win**, as entries will be assessed against the scoring guide and not against each other; in each category SME could be awarded along with the large company winner.
- 7.** **Awards scheme is very flexible** - you can present a single project/initiative, concentrating on one particular issue (such as reducing environmental pollution or promoting community education) and become a winner in the thematic category, or you can report on all major areas of CSR and win Grand Prix; you can also nominate for the award your CSR manager (or equal), who demonstrated inspiring leadership and dedication, and win award for the Best CSR manager of the year.
- 8.** The Awards concept, categories, evaluation criteria and procedures have been elaborated in cooperation with prominent European experts from leading CSR organizations (Pontis Foundation, Slovakia and Business in the Community, the Prince's Responsible Business Network, UK), with many-years' experience of conducting CSR contests, which makes this Award scheme **suited to the best international standards**.
- 9.** And finally, **glittering Awards Ceremony** offer the unique opportunity to bring together, encourage and celebrate the most forward-thinking businesses and ambitious business professionals looking to move beyond mere considerations of business & profit, seeking to deliver transformational change in society and create more value within their organizations.

3. Eligibility requirements

3.1. Who should enter the awards

The Georgia's Responsible Business Awards are free to enter. The awards are open to the private companies of **any size registered in Georgia**. By "private companies" we mean companies that make a profit through the provision of goods or services.

The Awards are not open to civil society organizations, public-sector bodies, or state-owned companies (by "state-owned" we mean company where 50% or more shares are owned directly by State or State established entity or/and where the control over company is otherwise exercised by state, or state-owned entities - for instance through Chief Executive Officer appointed, or through legal stipulations or corporate articles ensuring continued state control over an enterprise or its board of directors in which it holds a minority stake).

The Awards are not open to the companies, representing industries with potential or actual negative impact on the environment and society, such as: gambling (including online gambling, casinos and other types of gambling); tobacco industry; weapons (production and/or trade); as well as companies engaged in activities prohibited by Georgian legislation or international conventions.

Large, medium and small companies can enter and will have equal chances to win, as entries will be assessed against the scoring guide and not against each other. The scale of the activities and results will be assessed in relation to the size of the company.

Small and medium sized company as well as a large company winner may be awarded in each category.

According to National Statistics Office of Georgia GEOSTAT (<http://www.geostat.ge>) a Large company is defined as a company which has more than 250 employees; SME is defined as any business with no parent company having 250 employees or less. National branches of multinational companies, which locally have less than 250 employees will be considered a large company, not SME.

Last year's participants and winners

Last year's participants and winners are eligible and encouraged to enter this year again.

Submissions from the previous year may be resubmitted only if they can clearly demonstrate tangible new results, achievements, and developments since the last submission.

The **Grand Prix Winner** from the previous year is not eligible to submit an entry to the same category in the following year's Meliora Awards. However, they are permitted to enter any other category or categories.

The **Winner in a thematic or special category** from the previous year is not allowed to submit the same project, even if it demonstrates tangible developments and new results. However, the Winner in a thematic category from the previous year is allowed to submit again to the same category only if it involves a completely different program or project.

However, previous winners are strongly encouraged to submit again the new initiatives.

3.2. What could be submitted

The programs/projects/initiatives or strategy which **took place in 2023** could be entered for the Contest. The nominated program/project/initiative or strategy should be already completed, or well in progress, with some results already in place, and others clearly on track.

If the nominated program or project has started earlier than 2023, entrants must make it clear when the activity took place and what stage it has reached, what was done during the eligible period (since January 2023) and demonstrate specific results for the mentioned period.

Activities described in the entry should go **above and beyond any legal/statutory/regulatory requirements** placed upon the company or **regular business activity**. The submitted projects/initiatives should fit into Contest categories and reflect company's responsible actions.

Multinationals operating in Georgia have to demonstrate a visible initiatives and active efforts on local level - not only implementation of global strategy; its assessment would take into account the adjustment of the company's global strategy to Georgian conditions and its quality domestic activities.

3.3. Eligible Number of Entries

Applicants are eligible to submit **any number of entries to any number of categories**.

You may enter specific category with **several projects, only if they are related to different themes** under mentioned category.

For example, two projects could be submitted to the same category – Green initiatives – one related to biodiversity and another - to energy management initiatives. But you cannot submit two different projects, both related to energy management. In such case we recommend to consolidate activities into one entry.

The same entry cannot be submitted twice to two or more different categories, **you may only submit a specific project once**.

4. Key Dates

- **15 January 2024** – Official opening of the call for nominations for Georgia's Responsible Business Awards "Meliora" 2024
- **January-February 2024** – consultations with organizers about contest requirements
- **20 February 2024** – Deadline for submitting the entries
- **20-29 February 2024** – Eligibility assessment of the entries by contest organizers
- **March-April, 2024** – Entries assessed by Jury against the comprehensive scoring guide

- **May 2024** – Finalist companies for the categories Grand Prix and CSR Manager of the Year personally present to the Jury
- **May 2024** - Announcing the Long List
- **June 2024** – Celebratory Gala, announcing the winners.

5. Categories and their description

The Contest comprises:

Six Thematic Categories covering all main areas of CSR. These are:

- Green Initiative
- Responsible Employer
- Responsibility in the Marketplace
- Supporting communities
- Cross-Sector Partnership
- Transparency and Reporting on CSR and corporate sustainability

Special Category:

- CSR manager of the year

Grand Prix:

- Responsible Large company of the Year
- Responsible SME of the Year

Most of the categories encompass several specific themes. Applicants are requested to submit an entry(s) for particular category (e.g. Green Initiatives; Supporting Communities etc.) and tick specific theme (e.g. Resource management or Promoting community education etc.), to which their entry relates.

The award is conferred per category, not per theme. Indication of the relevant theme is obligatory for the evaluation reasons. It helps judges to understand how company positions its nomination within CSR landscape and what was the specific purpose of the nominated program, project or initiative.

5.1. Green Initiative

Award for an extraordinary project focused on environmental protection.

What should the nomination be about: This category recognizes remarkable environmental program/project/initiative, which company implements over and above statutory obligations, aimed at reducing company's environmental impact, transforming a business practices to preserve the health of our planet, protecting and rehabilitating natural environment and also stimulating others to do the same by raising awareness of emerging environmental challenges or helping to change environmental behavior of its target audiences.

Themes:

- Sustainable use of natural resources
- Energy Management
- Reducing environmental pollution
- Environmentally friendly transport solutions
- Protection of biodiversity and ecosystems
- Waste management
- Green product design
- Environmental behaviour change and awareness raising initiatives
- Sustainable Agriculture
- Green Office
- OTER: If the project does not fit into any of the above themes, applicants can add a theme, which suits their nomination best.

5.2. Responsible Employer

Award for companies that champion their employees' wellbeing, development and engagement.

What should the nomination be about: This category recognizes remarkable program/project/initiative, which company implements over and above statutory obligations, aimed at physical, mental and social well-being of the employees, providing equal opportunities and creating good and fair working conditions, promotion of employee's education and satisfaction.

To be recognized as a winner in this category means that a company has policies, programs, and management system in place that shows that it values its employees and respects them.

Themes:

- Employees' development and education
- Health and safety at work
- Diversity and inclusion initiatives
- Gender equality at the workplace
- Family friendly workplace
- Social protection
- Work climate and employee participation
- OTER: If the project does not fit into any of the above themes, applicants can add a theme, which suits their nomination best.

5.3. Responsibility in the Marketplace

Award for ethical and fair business-practices, honest and responsible attitude toward customers, suppliers, and other partners.

What should the nomination be about: This category recognizes remarkable program/project/initiative, which company implements *over and above statutory obligations*, designed to make its impact on the marketplace more transparent, fair, and inclusive. This may be any project/initiative aimed at better communication with consumers, protection and promotion of their rights; introduction of quality systems

or codes of practice; innovative sustainable products and services; improvement of relations with suppliers and clients; collaboration with partners and/or competitors; and measures aimed at greater transparency.

Themes:

- Promoting ethical behavior within and outside the company
- Responsible customer-related initiatives
- Initiatives aimed at protection of personal data
- Innovative products /services for customers with special needs
- Promoting gender equality at the marketplace (among suppliers, customers etc.)
- Empowering local suppliers
- OTER: If the project does not fit into any of the above themes, applicants can add a theme, which suits their nomination best.

5.4. Supporting Communities

Award for supporting and developing society and the local communities.

What should the nomination be about: This category recognizes remarkable program/project/initiative, aimed at improving the life of the communities, in which the company operates, specific groups of population and society at large; helping communities or target groups to tackle specific problems they are facing, including issues, such as: education, sports, culture, health, poverty alleviation, equal opportunities and social inclusion, sustainable livelihood, development opportunities etc.

To be recognized as a winner in this category means that company exerts a positive influence on the society and/or separate communities, strategically addresses specific issues they are facing and achieves long-term sustainable results.

Themes:

- Promoting equal opportunities in the community
- Promoting gender equality
- Supporting disadvantaged groups or people with special needs for social integration and decent living conditions
- Challenging stereotypes and social change initiatives
- Business against poverty
- Economic empowerment of the local communities
- Contributing to the resolution of acute societal problems
- Educating and empowering the community (providing education opportunities, promoting educational activities)
- Promoting culture and cultural heritage preservation
- Promoting healthy lifestyle, sports and health protection
- Pro bono support and employee volunteering initiatives
- OTER: If the project does not fit into any of the above themes, applicants can add a theme, which suits their nomination best.

5.5. Cross-Sector Partnership – Shared Responsibility

Award for the for the successful partnership initiatives between a company and civil-society organization, aimed at public good.

What should the nomination be about: This category is designed to identify and acknowledge successful partnerships between a company and at least one (or more) local civil society organization. The award is conferred for strategically set and socially beneficial program/project/initiative implemented by the company through active cooperation with local civil society organization(s) focused on addressing current social or environmental issues, improving quality of life, supporting and developing local communities and/or specific the target groups.

To be recognised as a winner in this category means that partnership scheme involves mutually complementary and unique expertise of partners thus creating value to all stakeholders and a lasting positive impact on some of the key issues facing the communities and environment.

Themes:

- **Partnership with local civil-society organization for social change**
Initiatives for the public good implemented jointly with civil society organization aimed at solving social or environmental issue or addressing needs of particular community groups.
- **Strengthening local civil society organization through systemic support**
Systemic long-term support of the local civil society organization through various means (including financial and in-kind contribution, donation of employee time and pro bono support) aimed at strengthening target organization for the benefit of the society.

5.6. Transparency and Reporting on CSR and corporate sustainability

Award for a company that measures, and communicates, its sustainability impacts, activities and progress in a responsible and sustainable business area in a comprehensive, transparent, and effective way.

What should the nomination be about: Transparency and honest communication with stakeholders about positive or negative impacts of the company activities on environment and society is one of the main components of responsible business behavior. This category is designed to identify and acknowledge the transparency efforts and best communication about company's overall CSR policy and practices as well as about specific CSR projects/initiatives, presented as a sustainability/CSR report or web-based communication. Awarded will be the company that measures, and communicates, its sustainability impacts and activities in a responsible and sustainable business area in a comprehensive, transparent, and effective way.

Themes:

- **Sustainability/CSR report**
A sustainability/CSR report for the period of 2022 and/or 2023, which provides a comprehensive, balanced and reliable information on company's most significant economic, social and

environmental impacts, as well as the CSR policies, practices, performance and outcomes, published in Georgia (as a hard copy or digital version) could be nominated. The stand-alone sustainability/CSR report as well as the relevant chapter/section of the annual /integrated report could be nominated.

- **CSR webpage /web-based communication on overall CSR/sustainability policy and performance of a company**
Separate web page or the section of the company webpage dedicated to the CSR/sustainability strategy and performance of the company in 2022 and/or 2023 could be nominated.
- **Report presenting company's policy and performance on one of the main themes of CSR -**
Report which provides a coherent account of company's policies, management systems, initiatives implemented and results achieved in one of the main CSR areas (environmental protection, community development, protecting human rights, workplace practices, responsibility at the marketplace) for the period of 2022 and/or 2023 and published in Georgia (as a hard copy or digital version) could be nominated.

5.7. CSR Manager of the Year (Special Category)

Award for personal contribution to development of a responsible approach to business and CSR.

The category is open for companies wishing to enter CSR managers and equivalent position, responsible for development of CSR in the company. The nominee could be nominated by the CEO or equivalent; immediate supervisor – head of department etc.

What should the nomination be about: In this category we recognize an individual that has greatly contributed to the development and promotion of socially responsible and ethical practices within their company and beyond and can serve as a model for others. Judges would be looking for the personality that is demonstrably influential, due to being passionate and focused; confident, assertive and decisive; empowering and communicative.

5.8. GRAND PRIX: Responsible Large Company of the Year

Award for pioneering large companies that have embedded responsibility across their business strategies and operations and engage in all major areas of CSR.

What should the nomination be about: This is not an award for a specific initiative or a single area. This category is designed to acknowledge Large Companies that have made CSR an integral part of the way they do business, that systematically, comprehensively, strategically and innovatively develop their responsibility and can demonstrate examples of policies or projects, which positively impact upon the society and environment in all appropriate areas of operations.

The award would be conferred to the large company who decided to report on all four main areas of responsibility: responsibility towards employees, community, environment and responsibility on the marketplace, and shows best performance overall.

According to National Statistics office of Georgia a Large company is defined for Georgia's Responsible Business Awards as a company which has more than 250 employees.

Multinationals operating in Georgia have to demonstrate a visible initiatives and active efforts on local level - not only implementation of global strategy; its assessment would take into account the adjustment of the company's global strategy to Georgian conditions and its quality domestic activities.

5.9. GRAND PRIX: Responsible SME of the Year

Award for pioneering small and medium-sized companies that have embedded responsibility across their businesses and engage in several major areas of CSR.

What should nomination be about: This is not an award for a specific initiative or a single area. This category is designed to acknowledge small and medium-sized companies that can best demonstrate a company-wide commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility and have implemented CSR projects or programs with sustainable results in several appropriate areas of operations.

The award would be conferred to Georgian SME for outstanding CSR approach and most efficient **activities performed in at least three out of the following four areas:**

- Responsibility towards **the environment**
- Responsibility towards **employees**
- Responsibility on **the marketplace**
- Responsibility towards **the community**

If a company decides to report on all four listed areas, this will be considered as an advantage.

According to National Statistics office of Georgia a SME is defined for Georgia's Responsible Business Awards as a company whose number of employees does not exceed 250.

6. Application Process: How to Enter

1

Decide upon your nomination and **select appropriate category**

2

Optional: **Register for the group or individual consultation** to learn more about contest requirements, application and evaluation process

3

Download the Entry Form of the appropriate category and **fill it in**; upload **Supportive Documents** on Google Drive and insert the link into your application.

4

Submit your application.

Send your completed application and requested attachments to the following email:
csrawards@meliora.ge

5

You will receive a **confirmation of your entry** via e-mail once successfully submitted

Language: Applicants can submit their applications in Georgian or English.

We have many international experts sitting on Jury. That is why all applications submitted in Georgian will be translated into English to be evaluated by international assessors.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF FIVE STEPS TO ENTER

6.1 Selecting appropriate category

Think of the great CSR program/project/initiative your company has implemented in 2023. Select appropriate **category**. From the list of themes, covered by this particular category, select the **specific theme** which suits your project best. For example, if you decided to submit an entry to the category: Green Initiatives, you should select the specific theme under this category, such as: energy management, or reducing pollution, or protecting biodiversity etc., which is most relevant for your project.

- It is recommended to tick only one theme, which is most appropriate for your project. However, if you consider your nomination equally responds to more than one theme, you can tick two, maximum three themes.
- If the project does not fit into any of the listed themes, you can add a new theme, which suits your nomination best.

Indication of the relevant theme is required for the evaluation reasons - it helps Jury to understand how company positions its nomination within CSR landscape and what was the specific purpose of the nominated program, project or initiative. However, remember: **award will be conferred per category, not per theme.**

If you have a program, project or initiative that you think may fall under more than one category, it is up to you to decide which is the most relevant.

How many Entries can you submit?

You may submit **any number of entries** to **any number of categories**; You can enter different categories with different projects, and, you may enter **one category with several projects**, but only if they are **related to different themes** under mentioned category

For example, you can submit different entries to categories: Green Initiative and Responsible Employer; you can also submit two different entries to one and the same category - Responsible Employer, if your entries relate to two different themes under this category, e.g.: Health and Safety at Work; and Employees' Development and Education.

One entry could not be submitted twice to two or more different categories, **you may only submit a specific project once.**

You can also nominate your company for **Grand Prix – Responsible Large Company/SME of the Year** – if the company is active in all spheres of corporate responsibility and its overall performance is underpinned by responsible approach to employees, customers, suppliers, environment and society at large.

If company applies to the Grand Prix, it may additionally apply to any of the other categories that appreciate the special approach in the individual areas of CSR.

Contest organizers may recommend the applicants to move nomination into another category or to indicate another specific theme at the stage of eligibility assessment (before the nomination goes to the Jury). However final decision will be made by applicant.

If you require guidance on selecting appropriate category (or theme), please feel free to contact us by mail or telephone.

6.2 Registering for the consultation (Optional)

Before submitting applications, applicants are encouraged to register for the group or individual consultation to learn more about contest requirements, application and evaluation process.

Project organizers will conduct the consultations for all interested parties concerning application procedures and evaluation criteria. You will have an opportunity to discuss your project with CSR DG consultants and get answers to all your questions.

You can register either for individual or for group consultation. Consultations will take place during January and February 2024. The exact date and place of the consultation and registration link **will be announced on the Contest webpage.**

Please Remember: Attending the consultation is not obligatory – project organizers provide this opportunity to potential applicants to learn more about contest and submit a stronger application.

This is up to you to decide, whether you use this opportunity or not. **You can still submit your Entry without attending the consultation.**

6.3 Completing the Entry Form

Please, download the appropriate Entry Form from the webpage: www.meliora.ge There are many different categories to choose from. Entry forms for different categories are different.

Applicants should **select the entry form of the appropriate category and indicate specific theme** to which their entry relates, by using the tick boxes.

If you decide to enter several nominations to different categories, **a separate entry form should be completed for each nomination.**

Entry forms consist of **introductory section**, requesting company details and **main sections**, requesting information about the nominated program/project/initiative and about overall CSR approach in the selected area.

The introductory section – Company Details, is not scored but provides assessors with a good understanding of the overall business of the company in a wider context and its impact on the society, which helps them to evaluate the nomination. Application forms missing this information will not be accepted.

While completing the scored section, please be sure to **follow the instructions** laid out in the category descriptions and entry forms, also refer to the evaluation scoring guides, as the Jury will look for those elements when they select the winners.

Entry forms for most of the categories require to submit a **brief Summary** (max. 200 words) of the project. Be sure to reflect all important aspects of your entry in the Summary. The Summary should be written with the expectation that **it will be published on the Contest's website and other award materials**.

Entry forms also require to provide a **brief quotation** (max. 60 words) **from the CEO** (or equivalent) of the nominating company why responsible business is important for the company and for him/her personally. This point is not obligatory, but very much appreciated to help assessors understand the support provided from the top of the organization. If submitted, quotation could be published in various communication materials related to the Contest (such as web-page, information brochures etc.)

Make sure you get in your request for this early on in the process to accommodate your CEO's (or equivalent) diary/ sign off process.

Please be sure to complete all sections. Incomplete applications would not be considered.

Please limit your entry to the **word limits** set out on the entry forms.

If your contact information changes after submitting an application, it is your responsibility to amend your details with Contest Organizers.

Submitting additional documents, links and evidence

Our Jury will seek evidence to substantiate any claims made. Further materials would be helpful and would add to your entry, so you are encouraged to submit supporting evidence (such as photos, brochures, reports, newsletters and media coverage, videos, testimonials, URLs and anything else you feel will give the assessors a better sense of your project).

Please select **most relevant illustrative materials**.

- When providing the **extensive documents**, please indicate exact pages that you would like the Jury to pay attention to;
- Please provide good quality, **high resolution photos** (in jpg, tif or png format) to illustrate the content of your nomination.
- When providing **web-links/URLs**, please insert them into the main text of the Entry, next to the point the evidence supports.

Please be as specific about page number or video timeframe as possible, particularly if you are linking to a substantial report or document. Jury will not read a full report so it is important to signpost the most relevant aspects of any links to best support your submission.

Supporting materials should be uploaded on a Google Drive, bound in a package/folder; the link should be inserted into your Entry form, in the relevant field.

By sending the illustrative materials, you agree with their possible publication in connection with the Georgia's Responsible Business Awards (if you do not state otherwise in the confidentiality field of the Entry form).

Confidentiality

Some of the nomination material may be internal or proprietary in nature. Any part of your submission which is confidential or commercially sensitive should be clearly marked as such in the relevant field of the Entry Form.

Any matters that are highlighted will be treated as strictly confidential and will not be disclosed outside the Awards evaluation process.

6.4 Submitting your application

Please send your completed entry form in Word doc. format and attachments to the following email: csawards@meliora.ge

Do not forget, that you are requested to submit along with your Entry form:

- Documents and evidence supporting your application
- Declaration of the Company, signed by CEO (or equivalent) or person responsible for the application and scanned (stating that information provided in the application is true)
- Declaration of a Partner (signed and scanned), if you mention a significant partnership with a different organization in the nomination, confirming that information provided in the application is true
- High resolution logo of your company (png or vector image)
- High resolution project-related photo for the contest catalogue (png or vector image).

Make sure to complete the form ahead of the February 20, 2024 deadline.

6.5 Receiving the Notification

When you submit your application via e-mail, we would respond you in a three-days' time confirming the receipt.

If you do not receive a notification email within 3 business days confirming that we receive your application, please contact us on the following number: 551 906090 or via e-mail: csawards@meliora.ge

7. FAQ and additional information for the applicants

All potential applicants will have an opportunity to address Contest Organizational Committee with a written question till the deadline for submitting the entries on the following email:

csrawards@meliora.ge (please indicate in the subject line – Question). Frequently asked questions and relevant answers will be published on the Contest webpage (www.meliora.ge), in the category FAQ.

Project organizers will conduct the **consultations** for all interested parties concerning application procedures and evaluation criteria. The dates and place of the consultation will be announced on the Contest webpage.

8. Tips and Hints for the Applicants to write a great application

- **Start early and give yourself enough time.** Putting together a good entry takes effort and time! And you will have a lot of other things to do at work apart from this application. So, start early, and give yourself at least three weeks to gather all the data you'll need.
- **Read through the Guide for the Applicants** and guidance, provided in the Entry Forms very carefully. Refer to the evaluation criteria to know, how your application would be assessed and make an effort to address them in your answers.
- **We recommend to register for the consultation.** It is not binding in any way, but opens you an opportunity to get valuable recommendations from contest organizers and answers to your questions.
- **Get the boss on board.** Make sure your CEO (or equivalent) is aware of the Awards - you would need his/her sign off for entering the Awards; request the CEO's quote for the Entry form in good time to fit into his/her diary – if your nomination wins, your colleagues and CEO would be happy to see this quote published in contest-related communications.
- **Ensure support of your colleagues.** Responsible business is all about teamwork... Inform your colleagues about Awards and ensure their support; they'll be able to give you valuable information and feedback to make your entry compelling.
- **Create a strong summary.** The Jury has numerous entries to look through and you may have included lots of impressive facts and figures further into your entry, but burying your best bits is not a good idea – talk about them up front. A summary should be just that – summarize your entry with key facts and results in a brief paragraph to grab the Jury's attention from the first line. Write the summary with the expectation that it would be published on the Contest website and other communication materials if your company wins.
- **Provide all necessary information.** If you are submitting an entry from a large and well-known company, do not assume the assessors already know your operations, business or products. Smaller or lesser known organizations will sometimes submit far more detailed entries giving background information and statistics to help put their entry into perspective.

- **Answer what is asked.** Make sure to answer the questions that are asked without deviating from the point or providing unnecessary information. But remember, you do not have to provide equally detailed answers to all questions to submit an entry. Provide as much information as available, as much as you consider enough to convince the Jury and present strong points of your project.
- **Use facts and Figures.** You may have the perfect project, but the Jury can't just take your word for it. You should back up your statements with testimonials, facts and figures. Images will help bring your story to life and, where complex processes and structures are concerned, a table or diagram is definitely worth a thousand words. But make sure they support your description of the project, rather than substituting for it.
- **Include impact and results.** It's important to demonstrate in your entry not only what has been done in frames of the project, but what were the results and impact. You'll have to give them hard evidence (facts, statistics and testimonials) of the benefits you've achieved for society and environment and also for the business. Assessors like before and after data, and quotes from third parties, especially those who've benefited from what you've done.
- **Wider CSR strategy and approach.** This question, asked in most but not all categories, is about giving an insight into the general CSR ethos and strategy of your company. It is important to make a clear connection between the project you are entering and the company's overall CSR strategy.
- **If at first you don't succeed...** We are all on a journey. Use this years' experience and the feedback provided to make your submission next year even more outstanding.

We hope you find the new information useful and look forward to receiving your entry.

9. Jury

Nominations are evaluated by independent Jury (panel of the external assessors) consisting of the leading Georgian and international experts in the field of corporate social responsibility and separate areas of CSR, such as: environmental protection, community development; labour issues, consumers' rights etc.).

The judging process is completely independent and no representative from CSRDG (Contest organizer) sits on Jury. The Jury members, representing international organizations, civil society organizations, and Academia, have been invited to join the panels due to their impartiality, vast experience and knowledge.

Each category would be independently assessed by specific evaluation committee, consisting of the CSR experts and thematic experts of the relevant sphere (e.g. entries to the category *Green Initiative* will be assessed by CSR experts and experts on environmental protection etc.).

The information about Jury members from Georgia would be kept confidential (all jury members sign confidentiality agreement), to avoid conflict of interests and lobbying; they would be revealed at the Awards Ceremony.

The list and brief biographies of the international judges are available at: www.meliora.ge

10. Assessment of Entries

The evaluation process has two stages: eligibility check and assessment of entries by the Jury. For certain categories (Grand Prix, CSR Manager of the Year) assessment also involves oral presentations by short-listed nominees to the Jury.

Eligibility Check

After the deadline, all submitted entries will go through the eligibility check. Applications failing to meet the eligibility criteria will not advance to the next evaluation stage. Applicants with minor technical deficiencies in their entries will be contacted to be informed about these issues. They will be granted a few days to rectify their applications and/or submit the required documentation.

Assessment of the Entries by Jury

All eligible entries will go forward to the independent Jury (group of the external assessors) and will be assessed against the comprehensive evaluation criteria scoring guidance (published at: www.meliora.ge) Jury will also take account of the evidence provided along with the application (documents, links, etc.) to select the winners.

After reviewing the materials, Jury members may have questions and reserve the right to request additional information/documents from the nominees. However, Jury members do not address directly the nominees, but send their questions/requests via Contest organizers.

Revealing a Long List

Companies whose applications attain a cumulative average score of 60 points or higher will be placed on the 'long list.'

A concise overview of entries from these long-listed companies will be featured in the Contest Catalogue. Additionally, the 'long list' companies will be publicly announced across the Contest's communication channels prior to the Awards Ceremony.

Oral Presentations for the Categories: Grand Prix and CSR Manager of the Year

For the Categories *Grand Prix* and *CSR Manager of the Year* assessment by the Jury will be two-round. In the first round, the Jury will review the entries and select the short-listed candidates (finalists) of the given category. In the second round selected finalists would be invited to personally present their submitted projects/initiatives to the Jury.

The short-listed candidates would be notified in advance, in a written form, which topics/issues they are expected to concentrate in their presentations.

Based on the presentations, the Jury will select winners for the mentioned categories.

- A minimum of three entries is required in a category for a winner to be announced. If the number of entries in a category is fewer than three, outstanding applicants will receive a certificate of recognition; however, a winner will not be determined.
- Jury can choose not to give an award in the certain category if the entries are not deemed to be of a suitable standard.
- Jury reserves the right to confer two prizes in each thematic category for large company and the SME.

Please refer also to the *Terms and Conditions*.

11. Revealing the winners - Awards Ceremony and Prizes

Following completion of the assessment process, the awards' winners will be announced at a black-tie Awarding Ceremony to be held in June 2024.

- Each category winner will be awarded the special prize - an elegant trophy
- All winners are free to use "Meliora 2024 Winner" logo in their communication materials
- All applicants, whether they are winners or not, will be invited to the prestigious Awards Ceremony.

Whether you win or not, you can be sure that the Awards Ceremony will be a memorable day for you.

For further details about the Awarding Ceremony go the: www.meliora.ge

12. About the Implementing Organization

The Centre for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia (CSRDG) is a civil society organization with 27 years' experience of successful work in the civil sector. Founded in 1995, CSRDG is one of the oldest non-governmental organizations in Georgia. Having head office in Tbilisi and branch office in Telavi, organization carries out its activities throughout Georgia at national, as well as at the regional and local levels.

The *mission of CSRDG* is to promote good governance, sustainable inclusive economic growth and active citizenship for improved quality of life. To fulfill its mission, CSRDG actively works: *with public, with CSOs, with local and national level Government, and with private sector.*

In 2004, CSRDG was the first among local organizations to start talking about the importance of social responsibility (CSR) of business. Since then, in order to raise awareness and accessibility of expertise in this field, CSRDG has been actively working with both government agencies and directly with large and small business companies, media and higher education institutions.

13. About the Project

The Contest is organized within the framework of European Union (EU) and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) funded project 'Civil Society STAR Initiative: CSOs as Sustainable, Transparent, Accountable and Resilient Development Actors in Georgia'. Project aims to strengthen civil society as an independent, sustainable, transparent, and accountable development actor across Georgia.

The project is implemented by the Consortium led by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) and composed of the following CSOs: Center for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia (CSRDG), Civil Society Institute (CSI), Center for Training and Consultancy (CTC), Education Development and Employment Center (EDEC), and Institute for European Politics (IEP).

'The Civil Society STAR Initiative' builds on the experience and lessons learned of the EU-supported action 'Georgian Civil Society Sustainability Initiative (CSSIGE 2017-2020).

The project is fully supported by the European Union and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.