

Common Mistakes on Grant Applications

These are some common mistakes the committee sees in Grant applications. While such mistakes will not usually disqualify your application, they do work against you when compared to other applications.

Not saying how much money you are asking for. We can guess, but it is better if you give a specific amount.

Lots of background material, but little on this project. For example, pages and pages of info on club history, bylaws, etc., but only two sentences describing the \$6,000 project you are proposing. We are much more interested in details about the specific project than in club history.

Asking for permanent improvements to private property. We cannot pay for permanent improvements to someone's privately-owned property. We will sometimes stretch this if there is a long-term lease arrangement. We can pay for improvements that are movable if you relocate to another property. For instance, we can pay for a PA system, but not for running underground electric wiring to the ring to power that. We can pay for arena fence panels (which can be moved), but not for the in-ground posts to which they are attached. We want to know whether the project we pay for will be available to horse people for some years to come.

Only a vague description of the people served. Something like "all exhibitors at the county fair". We want to know (approximate) numbers. How many horse exhibitors are at the county fair? How many riders are in this therapeutic riding program? How many volunteers? How many horse shows use this facility each summer, with about how many horses per show? But do not exaggerate your numbers -- we know horse people all over the state who know other horse people, so you will likely get caught. And anyway, we do not decide just on the biggest numbers; often the need is greatest in the smaller areas. But we do want an idea of how many people will be served by this project.

Asking for normal operating expenses. Our Grants are for funding new projects, or expansions of existing ones. We might help buy another horse for a disabled riding program, but feed, vet and farrier costs are normal upkeep costs and should be covered in your own budget. We can pay for developing a website, but the annual fee and monthly charges are normal operating expenses you must pay. In the end, we want to see that our Grants have provided new or additional things for Minnesota horse people.

Projects benefiting only (or mainly) your own members. We want to provide for all Minnesota horse people, so projects that benefit only or mostly your own members are low priority. For example, if it is an improvement to your own club grounds, but they are used mostly for your own club shows, and seldom used for an open horse show or 4-H horse clinics or other public events, then this might get less consideration than a project making improvements at the county fairgrounds.

Not talking about the rest of the money needed. Our maximum grant is \$7,000; many projects take way more than that. If you ask us for \$7,000 toward a \$20,000 project, give some indication where the remaining \$13,000 will come from. If you have plans to raise the money elsewhere,

mention them. If you must split the project into phases and do only part of it this year, explain that. If you have pledges from local people to contribute once the starting funds are raised, state that (and how much). If you plan to start a local fundraising drive once you get our Grant to start the project, explain that. But do not just leave off any mention of the remaining money needed. We want to invest in projects that will actually get built, not mentioning the rest of the money needed makes us nervous.

Asking again too soon. Once an organization gets a Grant, we will not give them one again until 3 years later. That means if you applied in Oct 2006 for a grant, and received one, you cannot apply again until Oct 2009. If you apply earlier than that, we will not even consider your application.

Finally, do not count too much on our money. Each year, we get several dozen grant applications, asking for 3-4 times as much money as the total we have to give. We must choose between all these proposals. So, each year we must leave out several worthwhile projects or give projects only part of the money they asked for, or only match the amount of money they can raise locally. So, think about that, and make some plans for this situation. What would you do if we could only fund part of the project? -- can you do that part alone, or can you raise the rest of the money needed for the whole project? Or what if we could match up to half the money needed, provided you raised the other half -- could your club do that?