

## **Helpful Hints When Applying for Grants**

*Written by Paula Schafer for Ag News December 2005 Agents column*

One of the most popular questions I receive from agricultural producers is "are there any grants available for my farm?" The short answer is yes, but there are some things to think about before you venture in to trying to secure a grant for your farm business.

The first thing you need to determine is what do you want to do on the farm or what is your need for the farm business. Many want to build a building for start up or expansion. Some are looking for marketing help or develop a new technology. The key is finding a grant that will fit your needs and of course, help pay for the project you want to achieve on the farm. Grant funders want to fund projects that will have a positive impact on your farm but also on the industry as well.

It is important to identify a grant as soon as you can. Many grants are announced and due for submission within a month's time. Sometimes, by the time you find out there is a grant available, you don't have much time to write it. So knowing when they are available means you need to get in the loop. If you are a Saratoga or Washington County producer, you can join the Agricultural Economic Development (AED) listserv. The AED listserv is managed by myself and when a grant announcement comes to my attention, I immediately send an email message to the group. Another way is to visit [www.aedpws.org](http://www.aedpws.org) and click on grants. There you will find the most popular agricultural grants and links to their information. I also recommend visiting and contacting agencies on a regular basis, either by going to their website or by calling them.

When contemplating on writing a grant, there are some downsides one should consider. First, grants are not free money. Anyone who has written a grant can tell you it takes a lot of time and effort to write a grant. Paperwork, reports and vouchers need to be completed in order to receive the grant funding. Some people are intimidated by this or may feel the time and effort are not worth pursuing a grant.

Another issue is it may be months before you hear if you received the grant. Usually, if not always, you cannot be reimbursed for work already done before you are awarded the grant. You will need to have money up front to do the work and then the grant reimburses you. So if you are on a tight time line to get a project done, don't count on a grant. You probably should be looking at getting a loan instead.

There are positives to receiving a grant for your farm. Grants can enhance the farm, expand the farm business, accomplish research that will help you and other farms, and help with expenses of a project.

When writing a grant, it should include: a cover letter addressed to the agency, explanation of your project and completely answer their questions, a budget - grant dollars you are asking for and what amount of cash and in-kind match you will be

contributing, and letters of support - from those participating in the project such as other farmers, agencies, veterinarians, etc.

When writing your grant you should look at other successful grants proposals to see how they were written. Have someone help you write the grant and always have a second or third pair of eyes proof read your proposal. Be sure to thoroughly explain your project and meet their deadlines and application requirements. Your grant proposal will be competing against many others and you don't want to be rejected because you didn't follow directions.

Keep these things in mind to help be successful in your grant pursuits.