



Making Your Application The Best It Can Be:

Tips from TDF's Selection
Committee Members and Staff

Each year, The Dressage Foundation receives hundreds of grant applications. It is always difficult for our Selection Committees to choose the best candidates for each funding opportunity. How can you stand out from the rest?

We've put together some guidelines and tips for you to consider, in order to help you make your application be as competitive as possible. While we can't guarantee that any one individual will receive financial assistance, since the final decision is always in the hands of our independent Selection Committees, we can offer some suggestions.

1. Begin the process early.

With work, school, riding, and family obligations, finding the time to devote to the application process can be difficult. If you feel rushed, you will skim over important details in the application. Incomplete or incorrect applications are not sent to the Selection Committee for review, so be sure to give yourself enough time to gather all required parts of the application and double (or triple!) check to make sure that everything is included before you submit your application.

Allow enough time for your application to reach our office. If the deadline is September 15th, that means that your application MUST reach our office on or before September 15th. There are no exceptions to this rule. The earlier you start the process, the more relaxed you will be, the more your application will follow the format required, provide all necessary information, and allow you time to call with any questions.

2. Read all information before beginning the application process.

Remember to do this every year as requirements may change from year to year. If the instructions say to submit your application online, do so. If the instructions say to mail a certain number of copies to our office, then proceed in that way.

3. Setting your goals.

What are your goals? How do your goals fit with the grant or scholarship that interests you? Sometimes it is easy to "stretch" the interpretation of a program or fund's stated purpose to match what you want to do. Be aware that other applicants will take a more literal approach and those that most closely match the stated purpose of the fund will score better with the Selection Committee.

4. Consider the funding opportunities.

Consider what other assistance is available to you. Does your GMO or dressage club offer scholarships? Do you meet the criteria as stated by TDF? What is the amount of the financial assistance available from the Foundation? Is your application appropriate?

5. Closely review your budget.

Do the numbers add up correctly? Have you included all expenses and income? Double-check your math and explain any areas that may be unclear to the Selection Committee.

6. Review your application.

Proofread for grammar and typos, as these can make even the best application look as if it was thrown together at the last minute. If possible, have someone else read through your application. Consider how it will look to someone on the Selection Committee. If you were on the Committee, how would you score the application? Take a close look at the requirements. Do you meet or exceed all the requirements? Do you "somewhat" meet the requirements? Are there areas where you do not meet the requirements? If so, you may want to work on those areas and wait a year to apply for the grant or scholarship.

7. Keep a copy for yourself.

Before submitting your application, be sure to print or otherwise keep a copy for your records. You will not receive your application back after the selection process.

Now that you've made sure that your application will be a contender, how do you make it rise to the top?

Our Selection Committee members are busy people. They don't have time to read a book about each applicant, so keep your application simple and relevant. Answer the questions completely, but keep the information pertinent to the question (don't go off on a tangent, telling a long story that wanders away from the point of the question). Make sure the information clearly and concisely illustrates WHY you are the best candidate for this grant or scholarship.

Feel free to call the TDF office at 402-434-8585 if you have questions, we are here to help!

Good luck!