

Testimony on My Experience with the North Dakota Development Grant

I would like to share my experience with the North Dakota development grant in the hopes of improving communication and transparency for future applicants. When the grant was initially announced, its focus was clearly stated: to bring in tourism from outside the state of North Dakota and encourage overnight stays within the state. With this understanding, I dedicated significant time and resources to developing my application to align with those stated goals.

However, when the grant was ultimately awarded, I was informed that the committee had shifted its focus to prioritizing winter experiences that attract out-of-state visitors and promote overnight stays. This change in focus, which was not effectively communicated during the application process, was both unexpected and discouraging.

The lack of clarity in the committee's priorities and the misalignment between the initial grant objectives and the final selection criteria left me feeling frustrated and disheartened. As an applicant, I relied on the original guidelines to guide my proposal, and the sudden shift undermined the effort and resources I had invested.

I believe this experience highlights the need for improved communication and consistency in grant processes. Clear and timely updates about shifts in focus or criteria are essential to ensuring applicants can confidently prepare proposals that align with the committee's expectations. Doing so will not only support a fairer process but also encourage broader participation from businesses and individuals who are eager to contribute to North Dakota's tourism development.

How would ND Country Fest use the funds? They would be used for a year round multi use destination.

ND Country Fest aims to use the development grant funds to create a state-of-the-art, multi-use destination that serves as a hub for year-round tourism, community engagement, and economic growth. The project would focus on building permanent infrastructure designed to attract visitors from both within and outside of North Dakota. The centerpiece of this development would include:

1. Permanent Outdoor Amphitheater and Stage

- A world-class amphitheater with a capacity of 20,000 people. (Placed in the Great Lawn on the map rendering attached)
- Ten permanent luxury suites for premium event experiences.
- A facility designed to host large-scale events, concerts, and festivals.

2. Multi-Use Facility

- A versatile building with a full commercial kitchen and a seating capacity for 500 people.
- A year-round venue for conventions, weddings, reunions, sporting events, and community gatherings.

3. Expanded Camping and Lodging Options

- 200 full-service campsites to accommodate RVs and campers.

- 300 primitive campsites for more rustic experiences.
- 20 all-season cabins with an outdoor communal center, ideal for snowmobilers, hunters, and families in the winter months.

4. Equine Accommodations

- Ten overnight campsites for equine visitors, complete with equine stalls for horse owners.

5. Outdoor Recreation Amenities

- An urban fishery to support local fishing and outdoor activities.
- A dog park for year-round use by families and their pets.
- Multiple picnic shelters for day-use visitors.

This comprehensive infrastructure would transform the ND Country Fest Venue into a year-round destination, providing a venue for diverse activities such as music festivals, sporting events, conventions, weddings, and outdoor recreation. The project not only addresses the need for tourism growth but also serves the local community by creating a multifunctional space that enhances North Dakota's appeal as a travel destination.

With this grant, we would create a long-lasting impact, driving economic development, fostering community engagement, and showcasing the best of what North Dakota has to offer.

Please see the attachments for an early visual of the layout and a sample of the permanent outdoor stage structure.

Sincerely,

Luke Shafer

Founder / Owner

ND Country Fest

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