

Saline County Visitors Advisory Committee

c/o Saline County Clerk
P.O. Box 865, 215 South Court St.
Wilber, Nebraska 68465

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For immediate release:

Saline County Tourism Grant Applications Now Available

(Crete, Nebr.) Applications for 2021 grant funding from Saline County lodging tax are now available for Saline County organizations involved in tourism. Groups that were awarded 2020 grants, but were not able to use them due to event cancellations and stalled improvement projects will need to reapply for 2021 dollars. Unused 2020 awards cannot be carried over. Be reminded, however, that improvement grants for 2020 are valid until December 31, 2020, and recipients may still have time to complete them.

Two separate grant applications are available, and are due back in the Saline County Clerk's office in Wilber, on November 13. One grant application offers monies to promote 2021 events, and the other grant application is for funds to be used to improve and enhance tourism sites. Applications are available at the County Clerk's Office, Saline County Courthouse, or at *The Crete News* office. Completed applications must be submitted to the committee c/o Saline County Clerk, P.O. Box 865, 215 South Court St., Wilber, Nebraska 68465 by 4 p.m. Friday, November 13, 2020. Recipients will be notified of their awards in December; however monies are not be distributed until final funding specifications are submitted to the committee. Due to travel and other restrictions, revenue from lodging tax is down; however there is money available.

Strict rules apply to the distribution of funds. Successful applicants must present paid receipts and invoices for all approved promotional expenses and site improvements before receiving reimbursement. Promotional grants require that these documents be presented to the committee within 90 days after completion of the event to ensure that funding has not expired. In addition, any printed or media promotional materials must clearly state that the particular advertisements/posters are paid for in part by the Saline County Visitors Advisory Committee. Improvement grant recipients must also submit this documentation along with photos of the completed project; however the deadline is within one year of the award letter.

Tourism promotion funds are awarded for the purpose of attracting out-of-county visitors to Saline County events via marketing using newspaper and radio advertisements, flyers, and signage. Applicants must submit a budget for proposed events, a promotion plan, and provide other details regarding their projects on the completed application. Grants are awarded according to the need and scope of each event, and the potential numbers of visitors each event may attract to the county. The purpose of the funding is to assist in non-local advertising to attract people from outside of the area to events in the county. The awards should not to be used exclusively for local advertising.

Tourism improvement funds are awarded to qualifying groups to support permanent projects that will enhance their Saline County tourism sites. Projects eligible for this fund include long-lasting signage, infrastructure repair, painting, exhibit mounts, etc.

Awards are generally limited to \$1,000 from each fund; however the grants have typically been much smaller due to the growing number of applicants, and the limited number of lodging venues in Saline County that generate the tax dollars.

The Saline County Visitors Advisory Committee is comprised of a group of representatives from area communities, who is charged by the Saline County Commissioners with distributing lodging tax funds collected in the county. Appointed by the commissioners, the committee operates according to the Nebraska Visitors Development Act.

Most of Nebraska's 93 counties collect lodging tax that is then returned to communities to promote tourism and attraction improvement. The amount of money available for annual distribution is in direct relationship to the number of guests in area motels, and therefore fluctuates each year. Counties also vary in the number of their motel, and bed and breakfast establishments, so the visitor committee funds available in counties across Nebraska differ greatly.

For more information about the two funds, and the Saline County grant process, call Sheryl Kastanek at (402) 821-2668 or Eric Stehlik at (402) 946-2099.