



World Class Grooming Career Development Grant

Overview

The World Class Grooming Career Development Grant has been established to recognize, support, and elevate the vital role of professional grooms within the equestrian industry. Grooms are the backbone of elite performance—responsible for the daily care, soundness, preparation, and overall well-being of the world's top competition horses. Despite the essential nature of their work, opportunities for professional development at the highest level are often limited by financial and logistical barriers. This grant exists to remove those barriers and to invest in the next generation of dedicated, skilled, and passionate equine professionals.

Mentorship Details and Options

Applicants can propose their own mentorship opportunity for consideration by the grant committee or work with Emma Ford to determine which mentor from the list of designated mentors would be an appropriate match. Applicants should be specific about what they deem important factors in their development and what they aim to learn via this opportunity.

Purpose

Grant funds to be used exclusively in the following categories:

- Travel Expenses
- Housing Expenses
- Educational Expenses: clinics, horsemanship lessons, mentor/mentee programs

Eligibility

All applicants must:

- Not have previously groomed on team competitions at the Olympic or World Championships
- Aged 23 - 35 at the time of application.
- Have 3 years' experience within the equine grooming industry
- Currently employed or interning in an equine-related role (e.g., groom, barn manager)
- US citizen or legal resident
- Demonstrate a clear commitment to pursuing a professional career in one of the 3 Olympic Disciplines

Supporting Materials

Applicants for the World Class Grooming Career Development Grant are required to provide up to three letters of recommendation.

- One of the recommendations must be from either a current employer or an employer who has detailed knowledge of the applicant's experience and capabilities.
- The remaining two recommendations can be from adults within the equestrian industry (i.e., trainers, veterinarians, farriers, etc.) who have working knowledge of the applicant's horsemanship abilities.

- Please note: recommendations may not be submitted from a family member or a member of the World Class Grooming Career Development Grant Committee. If the applicant's employer falls into either of these categories, please ask another employer to submit the recommendation.

Submission

Completed applications and all supporting materials should be submitted via

Email: kate@aikenhorsepark.org

Mail: P.O. Box 1951 Aiken, SC 29802 Attn: WCGCD

by: **July 1st, 2026**

All applications for the World Class Grooming Career Development Grant are evaluated by the World Class Grooming Career Development Grant Committee after the closing date of applications. No member of the immediate family or a relative of any of the Foundation's officers, directors, substantial contributors or selection committee members shall be eligible for a World Class Grooming Career Development Grant

After all applications have been reviewed by the committee, applicants will be notified via email of the status of their application, and some may be invited to participate in a Zoom meeting with select committee members to further discuss their candidacy.

If you have any questions about the World Class Grooming Career Development Grant application process, please contact Kate Boggan at kate@aikenhorsepark.org or (803) 830-7077

Contact Info

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____ DOB: _____

Personal Info

Should you need more room to answer the following questions, PLEASE attach up to two additional pages.

How much time have you spent working in the equestrian industry?

How did your interest in the equestrian industry begin? _____

What are your short-term professional goals? _____

The Aiken Horse Park Foundation will supervise the use of grant funds to determine whether grantees have fulfilled the grant terms. All grant recipients must utilize all awarded grant funds within one calendar year from the time of receipt. **All grant recipients will be required to submit to the Aiken Horse Park Foundation no more than ninety (90) days following the one-year time period, a full accounting of how the grant was used, including receipts.**

'I verify that the information contained in this application is true and correct, and I acknowledge and understand that any misstatements or omissions of material facts may result in disapproval of this application. I acknowledge and understand that the acceptance of an applicant for the World Class Grooming Career Development Grant remains at the sole discretion of the World Class Grooming Career Development Grant Committee.'

____ Agree ____ Disagree

Please be advised: The typing of your name below shall be considered to be an electronic signature and shall be considered to have the same legal effect and validity as your handwritten signature. Therefore, in so typing your name in the fields below, you are confirming this verification statement and the truth of the contents of the application.

Applicant Signature: _____

Candidates shall be selected on an objective and nondiscriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, religion, gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation. No member of the immediate family or a relative of any of the Foundation's officers, directors, substantial contributors or selection committee members shall be eligible for an World Class Grooming Career Development Grant.