

# Help Grow a \$177 Billion Industry Your Ideas Can Shape the Future of Horses

## AHC Marketing Alliance Team Challenge Request for Proposals (RFP)

### Overview

The American Horse Council Marketing Alliance invites teams of college and university students across the United States to participate in the **AHC Marketing Alliance Team Challenge**.

Selected teams of 5–10 students will be eligible to receive **grant funding of up to \$15,000** to develop and implement innovative initiatives that expand engagement in the equine industry.

According to the American Horse Council's most recent Economic Impact Study, the U.S. equine industry contributes **\$177 billion annually to the economy and supports 2.2 million jobs nationwide**. With approximately **6.6 million horses**, the industry spans recreation, sport, agriculture, tourism, and healthcare—yet there remains significant opportunity to bring more people into hands-on participation.

**This is your opportunity to make a real impact—your ideas, creativity, and perspective as emerging leaders can help shape the future of the equine industry.**

This challenge is intentionally designed with **limited guidelines** to encourage creativity, innovation, and bold thinking—participants are encouraged to “think outside the barn.”

### Challenge Goal

The primary goal of this RFP is to support initiatives that:

- Introduce **new audiences** to horses and the equine industry
- Encourage individuals with **observational interest** (fans, spectators, casual followers) to become active participants
- Increase **hands-on engagement**, including:
  - Riding or equine activities
  - Horse ownership or leasing
  - Participation in equine sport, recreation, or care
- Achieve **wide reach and meaningful impact**, engaging as many people as possible to enjoy time with horses

Proposals should demonstrate clear strategies for **growing participation, expanding audience reach, and deepening engagement** with horses.

### Eligibility

This opportunity is open to teams of **5–10 students currently enrolled at U.S. colleges or universities**.

Team members **do not need to be from the same institution** and interdisciplinary teams are strongly encouraged (e.g., marketing, business, communications, animal science, design, technology).

## **Funding & Allowable Expenses**

Selected teams may receive **up to \$15,000** in grant funding.

Funds are intentionally flexible and may support (but are not limited to):

- Student stipends
- Contractor or consultant support
- Marketing and social media campaigns
- Graphic design and creative assets
- Software and technology tools
- Event activation or pilot programming costs
- Travel expenses related to project implementation or presentation
- Presentation development and delivery costs (e.g., materials, printing, production)

All proposals must include a **detailed, itemized budget** outlining planned use of funds.

## **Funding Requirements & Administration**

Funds may not be disbursed directly to individuals and must instead be administered through an appropriate organization, such as:

- A horseman's club
- A state horse council
- A college or university department
- A nonprofit or association account

Teams must confirm their institution's ability to accept funds. If **indirect costs (IDC)** apply, teams should contact the American Horse Council in advance to discuss.

## **Proposal Requirements**

Proposals should present a clear, compelling concept and execution plan.

Submissions should include:

1. **Project Overview**
  - Concept description and target audience
  - Key objectives and intended impact
2. **Strategy & Execution Plan**
  - Tactics and channels (digital, in-person, partnerships, etc.)
  - Timeline for implementation
3. **Innovation & Creativity**
  - What makes this idea unique or "outside the barn"
  - Why it will resonate with new or under-engaged audiences
4. **Budget**
  - Detailed, itemized budget (required)
  - Explanation of how funds will be allocated
5. **Team Information**
  - Team members, roles, and academic affiliations
  - Relevant experience or coursework
6. **Impact Measurement**

- How success will be measured (engagement, participation, reach, etc.)
- 7. **Hashtag Integration**
  - Proposals must include a plan for incorporating the **#hereforhorses** hashtag into campaign messaging, content, and outreach efforts

### **Timeline**

**Proposal Deadline:** November 1, 2026

**Notification:** By January 1, 2027

**Project Completion:** June 1, 2027

Selected teams will present at the American Horse Council Conference in Washington, DC in June 2027.

### **Evaluation Criteria**

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

#### **Reach & Scale of Impact**

Potential to engage a broad audience and introduce as many new people as possible to horses and equine activities

#### **Quality of Engagement**

Likelihood of converting awareness into meaningful participation (hands-on involvement, continued engagement, or ownership/leasing interest)

#### **Creativity & Originality**

Strength of the concept and how effectively it “thinks outside the barn”

#### **Feasibility & Execution Plan**

Clarity, realism, and organization of the proposed approach and timeline

#### **Budget Strength & Alignment**

Clear, realistic, and well-justified use of funds aligned with project goals

#### **Measurable Outcomes**

Defined metrics for success, including audience reach, engagement levels, and participation outcomes

### **Additional Notes**

This challenge is designed to bring fresh thinking into the equine industry. There is no single “right” approach—teams are encouraged to experiment, take risks, and develop bold ideas that can inspire the next generation of horse enthusiasts.

### **Contact Information**

For questions or additional information, please contact:

Julie Broadway, President, American Horse Council

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