



# UNITED STATES *Dressage* FEDERATION

## Event Budget and Planning Guide

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*Helpful hints for planning and budgeting a USDF National Education Initiative Program*

A well thought out budget is an essential tool when organizing an event. Often, the simple process of writing expenses down will help you think of things that might otherwise be overlooked and cause last-minute problems. A detailed budget will help keep your expenses in line and can serve as an organizational chart helping you proceed in an organized fashion and check off tasks as they are accomplished. Many experienced event planners agree, “itemize and prioritize” is a reliable strategy. Organizers are encouraged to itemize all anticipated expenses prioritized from highest priority “must haves” to lowest priority “wish list” items. This guide and the included sample budget are intended only as an aid to facilitate your planning and budgeting process. We’ve included many of the most common considerations, expenses and revenue sources but your event may have unique aspects and expenses not included here.

Submission of a budget is a requirement of the NEI Program and NEI Grant applications.

If you have any questions please email [education@usdf.org](mailto:education@usdf.org) or call the USDF education department at 859-971-2277.

### Expenses

**Instructor Fee:** The Instructor you engage may charge per lesson, per day or per event. The Instructor’s total fee for the duration of the event is your target number. If the fee is higher than anticipated, you may want to work with your Instructor to explore ways to lower this cost. Could your GMO/Chapter trade out ad space in their newsletter? Are there certain times of the year when the Instructor is less busy and may therefore be less expensive? Does the Instructor have a sponsor who might be interested in participating in your event?

**Additional Instructor Fees:** Some programs may benefit from the use of multiple Instructors. This naturally increases your cost but may also enhance the educational experience and make your event more appealing.

**Instructor Travel:** Travel expenses vary widely. Is the Instructor within driving distance or will you need to purchase airfare? Airfare purchased well in advance is sometimes less expensive but may require available funds prior to sufficient revenue collection. Remember to include cost of transportation to and from the airport and possibly airport parking. If driving, ask the Instructor if he/she would like to be reimbursed for miles or if there is a fee for travel days. If you will be reimbursing for mileage be sure to ask what per mile rate they charge as this may not necessarily be the same as the IRS mileage rate. Be

sure to calculate the door to door round trip mileage plus any additional mileage during the event between venues or between lodging and venue.

**Lodging Costs:** Housing the Instructor in a guest room in your house obviously reduces event costs but you will want to be certain this is a comfortable arrangement for the Instructor. Be considerate of the possibility that after a long day of teaching, the Instructor may look forward to some quiet “down time” and private space. Not all Instructor’s will be ok with sharing a bathroom or spending their evenings with children. Pet allergies are another potential issue. Be sure you are clear on the available housing options and discuss them with the Instructor as part of your preliminary discussions, **prior** to contracting with him/her.

**Facility Rental:** The facility you need is dictated by the event type and time of year. Is an outdoor arena reasonable for a full day or a few days of lessons or will you need a covered or indoor arena? Will riders need or want stabling? Do you need enclosed or climate controlled meeting space? Securing the right facility at a manageable fee can be one of the greatest challenges. If possible, be creative when negotiating for your venue. You may know a rider with an appropriate arena that finds it difficult to get away for lessons that could be motivated to donate or discount the arena in exchange for the opportunity of lessons at home. Or, you might trade rides for arena fees. Private facilities may be willing to take a donation document in lieu of arena fees. County fairgrounds facilities can sometimes be rented at reasonable rates. Non-profit status might help you keep this cost down.

**Stabling:** Include this only if the GMO will be paying the facility for this expense. For smaller events and if the facility allows, it may be easier for organizers if the riders pay for stabling individually.

**Equipment Rental:** Consider whether you will need a sound system, audio visual system, tents, seating, tables and restrooms. If you need a sound system, should it include a wireless and hands free microphone or will a standard wired mic suffice? While a public facility will most likely have restrooms, you may need to rent portables if you will be using a private arena. Be sure you discuss your needs well in advance so you can plan and budget appropriately.

**Instructor Food:** You will probably need to supply and/or reimburse the Instructor for meals during the event and possibly while traveling. Discuss special dietary needs and preferences early on to avoid last minute changes or unexpected expense. Will breakfast be available at the venue or at the hotel? Is lunch being catered, supplied by a food truck or concession stand or brought individually? Will you be treating the Instructor to dinner out or host a group potluck or back yard barbeque? This amount may seem insignificant but can add up over a few days so plan appropriately. Be sure to keep water and snacks available for the Instructor throughout the day.

**USDF Fees:** \$65.00 This fee includes University accreditation, USDF event promotion and staff support.

**Insurance:** All USDF events are required to carry a special event policy for a minimum of \$1 million of liability insurance naming USDF as an additional insured. The GMOs liability policy does not fulfill this

requirement. This policy must be secured a minimum of 60 days in advance. Your GMO insurance agent should be able to help you with this policy once you can supply the program dates and location.

**Office Supplies:** This may be a minimal or sizeable expense depending on your planned efforts for local promotion and the materials you plan to provide to participants. Include the expense of copies of waivers, flyers and other promotional materials, copies of educational materials you will distribute, name tags, pens, tablets, etc.

**Food/Catering:** Depending upon your program, the venue, and the event schedule, you will probably want to plan for at least some type of refreshments for participants. Let participants know in advance if food and beverage is included in the event fee, will be available for purchase or, if they should bring their own. Are concession stands, food trucks or caterers an option in your area? Would a potluck be a good option? Having a good estimate of the number of participants you expect will be helpful if you try to entice vendors to set up during your event. You may find a local youth horse group interested in providing concessions if their members can audit the event.

**Volunteer Expenses:** It's always smart to take good care of your volunteers. Budget for thank you gifts, t-shirts, reimbursement or other items you'll need for your volunteers. The smaller the event the fewer volunteers you may need but make sure you have all your pre-event, during event and post-event needs covered.

**Other:** Itemize all other expenses you anticipate.

## Revenue Sources

This is how you will offset your expenses. While revenue is listed first on the sample budget it may be more helpful to complete this section after you have itemized your expenses and know your revenue target. An event with a "break even" goal will probably be able to have lower fees than one with a goal of generating a profit.

**Rider/Participant Fees:** The budgeted amount for this line item will be the number of available rider/participant slots multiplied by the per rider/participant fee. For an 8 rider clinic with a rider fee of \$100, your budgeted revenue would be \$800. Similarly, if you have 20 available rider slots, and a per ride fee of \$50, your budgeted revenue is \$1000. Often the budgeted and actual amounts for this line item will be the same as it is one of the easiest to predict. It is not uncommon for rider fees to be paid in advance. This practice helps prevent last minute rider cancellations and helps protect against a revenue deficit on clinic day.

**Stabling:** Include this line item only if the GMO will be collecting stabling fees from participants and then paying the facility. Similar to the rider fees you will multiply the number of stalls you expect to fill by the amount you will charge for each stall. If riders will pay the facility individually, this amount will be \$0.

**Auditor Fees:** The USDF National Education Initiative Program requires auditors (spectators) be allowed and encouraged. You are not required to charge an auditing fee but this is a possible source of additional revenue. If auditors will be free, leave this line at \$0. If you will have expenses for auditors such as refreshments, lunch, chairs or restrooms, you might consider charging a small fee to help offset these costs.

Auditor numbers will vary based upon the instructor, cost, conflicting events, date, weather, or a myriad of other factors which may be outside of your control. If you have history from previous events, you might have a good idea of how many auditors you can expect. If not, try to canvas members in advance to ascertain the interest level in auditing. Advance registration of auditors is advised but it can still be difficult to predict actual auditor turnout and revenue so, you might want to be conservative about relying on auditor fees to help offset hard expenses like the Instructor's fee and travel expenses. For budgeted revenue, use your best estimate. Be sure your promotion efforts target auditors and as the event date approaches, you should have a better idea of auditor attendance. It should be fairly easy to adjust your expenses accordingly.

**USDF NEI Grant:** As part of the USDF National Education Initiative, the NEI Grant Program was developed to help create more affordable riding/education opportunities. These grants are available in amounts up to \$1,000 with up to \$500 available prior to the event. If you are applying for a grant, budget for \$1,000 in revenue. Note that programs must demonstrate a financial need in order to be eligible for a grant. If your budget shows an anticipated profit, a grant will not be awarded.

**Additional Grants:** USDF highly recommends organizers seek additional grants such as those available from The Dressage Foundation. Applications for additional grants will not decrease your eligibility for an NEI grant provided total revenues do not exceed expenses.

**Sponsors:** Record sponsors with the corresponding donations. While sometimes difficult to obtain, sponsorships are a great way to generate additional revenue. Your itemized budget can be helpful when approaching potential sponsors who may be more interested in sponsoring a specific portion of the event rather than giving a non-specific donation. For instance, a sponsorship from an area feed store may cover your arena fee or, your local tack store might sponsor lunch. GMO chapters might consider sponsoring stalls to help keep rider fees down thus demonstrating a commitment to the NEI objective of affordable riding opportunities. Do not include dollar amounts for items such as giveaways in auditor bags.

**Donations:** Report all monetary donations but not items to be given away.

**Other:** Itemize additional anticipated revenue. This accounts for things like food and beverage sales if the GMO/Chapter is providing the food and beverage itemized under food/catering in the expense section of the budget.

## Net Profit/Loss

Expenses - Revenue = Net profit/loss. The goal of the program; break-even vs. generate profit, determines whether this profit/loss is acceptable. If the program goal is to generate GMO revenue, you'll need revenues greater than your expenses. But often, a goal of programs supported by grants and sponsors is to reduce participant costs. In that case, an event that breaks even or shows a small loss may be considered a successful event.

In the event a grant is awarded but the program is so successful that it generates a profit without the full amount of the awarded grant, the GMO/Chapter will be awarded only the actual amount needed to bring the event to the break-even point. If an early dispersal of grant funds was made and the program demonstrates a profit, the GMO/Chapter must reimburse USDF any grant funds that raise revenues above the break-even point.

For example, if an early grant dispersal of \$500 was made and the event attracted more auditors than anticipated resulting in a net profit of \$250, the GMO would need to reimburse USDF \$250 but would keep the remaining \$250 to maintain the break-even status.

***Please note: This guide is intended only to facilitate your planning and budgeting process and may not account for all expenses, revenue or situations you might encounter. It is always best to also keep accurate records and all receipts and proof of income in the event of questions or the need for clarification.***