

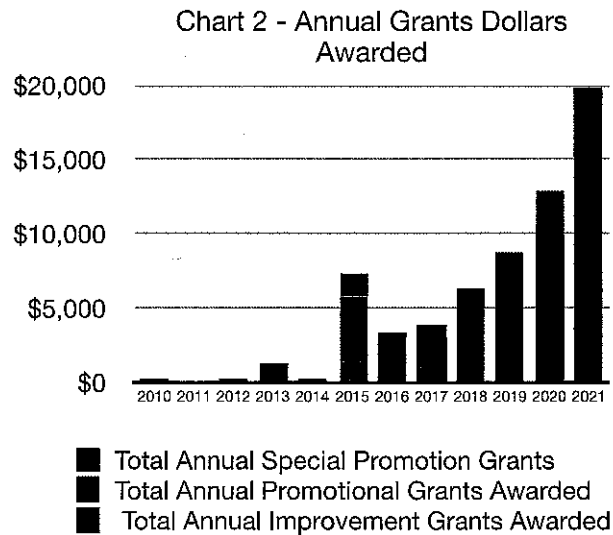
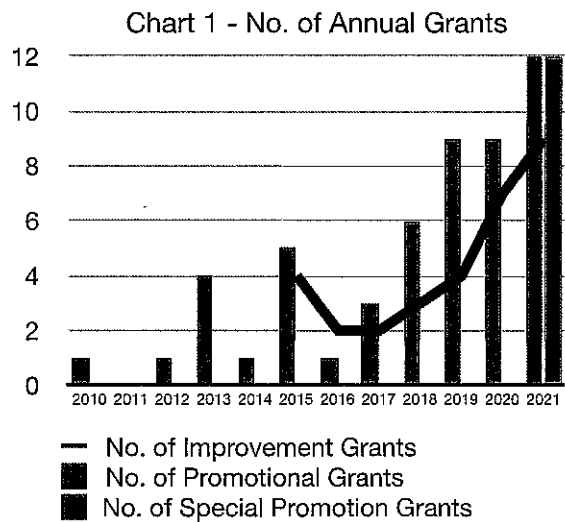
April 12, 2022  
 Rick Schuchardt

Summary and Analysis of Antelope County Visitors Grants 2010-21

Prepared by Rick Schuchardt, Chairman  
 Visitors Committee  
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**Background:** The Antelope County Visitors Committee is a peer review team who volunteer their time, share their knowledge, and provide judgment when reviewing applications for the county's tourism grants. It is a five person committee, all who live in the county, with at least one member representing the lodging industry. The Committee works closely with the County Commissioners in the review and approval process for all grant applications and funding requests. Funding of grants has been made available from the lodging tax revenue collected from rental of sleeping arrangements located in Antelope County at both for-profit and non-profit hotels, motels, campgrounds, B&B's and similar lodging facilities.

The Visitors Committee was established in 2006 with the first promotional grant approved by the Visitors Committee and County Commissioners in 2010 for \$300. There were no applications for grants in 2011. For 2012 through 2017, the number of grants approved annually were few in number. For example, 2012, 2014, and 2016, only a single grant was approved in each of those years, however there were four grants approved in 2013 and five in 2015 along with the first four improvement grants approved in 2015. Since 2018, the number of grants has steadily increased as shown in Chart 1 - No. of Annual Grants below.



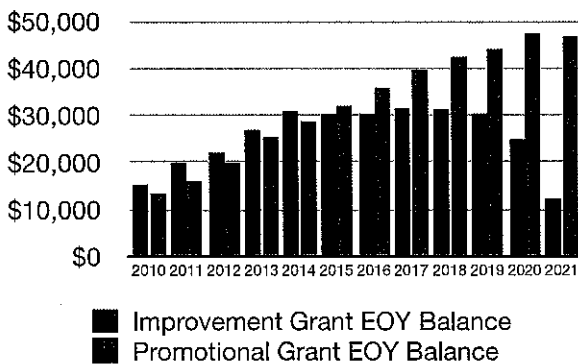
As the number of grants have grown over the past eleven years, so has the total dollars in promoting local tourism and funding to make improvements for facilities associated with county's tourism. As stated previously, the county began in 2010 by awarding a single \$300 promotional grant as this compares to last year where almost \$20,000 in grants were awarded, as shown in Chart 2 above. Additionally, in 2021, this included another twelve special grants of \$100 each awarded to twelve private businesses that participated in The Best of the Backroad Tour of Northeast Nebraska project designed to encourage tourism in northeast Nebraska during the CoVid pandemic. The County Commissioners have approved \$100 grants for the first 100 businesses who participate in this year's 2022 tour.

The county has provided a total of \$64,243.33 for promotional and improvement grants over the past eleven years. Improvement grants make up about 75 percent of this total awarded with the remaining 25 percent awarded for promotional efforts. There have been only four promotion grants and four improvement grants that have been denied during this time.

In 2020, promotional grant amounts were increased to \$350 and \$1,750 for improvement grants. This was an increase of about 17 percent from when they were initially established 2006. The grant guidelines and application available on the Antelope County's website under Services, Miscellaneous at <https://antelopecounty.nebraska.gov/services>.

The 11 year trend of grant account balances are shown below in Chart 3. As of December 31, 2021, there was \$12,128.30 balance in the improvement grant account and \$46,743.07 balance in the promotional grant account. It should be noted that promotional funds cannot be used for any permanent structure, maintaining or repairs of permanent structure, however finances in the improvement grant account can be used for funding the promotional grants, if needed.

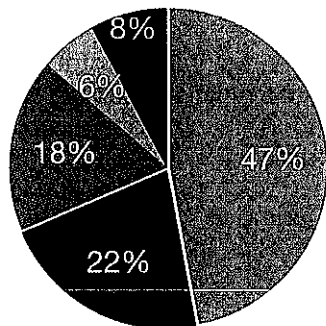
Chart 3 - End-of-Year (EOY) Grant Balances for 2010-21



In summary, grants are provided to organizations, businesses, and towns located in Antelope County to encourage economic and tourism activities. Elgin, Clearwater, Neligh, Orchard, and Royal have been the main benefactors. Neligh, Elgin, and Orchard are the top three communities where over 85 percent of the grants originate. The Neligh community is very active with their applications and constitutes almost 50 percent of the applications received.

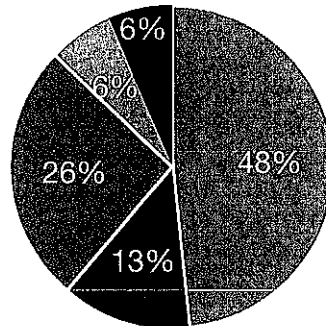
Greater community awareness of the grants application process with the continued support of the County Commissioners over the past 5 years possibly explains the increased number of applications along with increased funding.

Chart 4 - Percent of Total Number of Promotion Grants by Community



● Neligh ● Elgin ● Orchard  
● Clearwater ● Royal

Chart 5 - Percent of Total Number of Improvement Grants by Community



● Neligh ● Elgin ● Orchard  
● Clearwater ● Royal

# Antelope County Promotion and Improvement Grants Guidelines

## Overview of Categories and Criteria

Grants are made available in two different funding categories.

- *Promotion grants* provide funding for the use of promotions and marketing that encourages and draws tourists and visitors to tourism and travel facilities, events, and attractions in Antelope County. Any non-profit, for-profit, or public use organizations actively involved with tourism events and attractions (including co-sponsored tourism events) are eligible. This grant is not for construction of attractions or other tourism facilities.
- *Capital Improvement grants* differ from promotional grants. It provides funding to existing tourist attractions and recreational facilities in Antelope County that are owned by the public and any nonprofit organization (except parimutuel wagering). This includes planning, constructing, expanding, improving, and preserving these attractions. Funds must be for attractions that are open to the public and are of educational, cultural, historical, artistic, or recreational significance. *Significance implies quality and importance. It is a value judgment by the committee and/or Commissioners of its worth or importance to the community and/or county.* Funds can also be used for acquiring or expanding exhibits for an existing attraction.

Revenues from both the promotion and improvement funds can be used for printing brochures and rack cards, erecting signs, mass media advertising, and other tourism promotion and marketing. Revenues in the improvement fund can only be used for capital construction and improvements that are owned by the public and any non-profits.

Funding has been made available from the monthly lodging tax revenue collected from rental of sleeping accommodations in Antelope County at both for-profit and non-profit hotels, motels, campgrounds, B&B's, and similar lodging facilities.

## Additional Criteria for Grant Assistance

Non-profit, for-profit businesses and services, and other public organizations located within Antelope County may apply for either direct marketing and/or promotional grants or capital improvement grants.

- *Promotion grants* are limited to \$350 per grant. The funding request must be 25 percent or less of the advertising budget or no more than 50 percent of the total budgeted expenditures, whichever is the larger amount. Organizations may apply for multiple promotion grants when sponsoring multiple events during the calendar year. Promotional funds cannot be used for any permanent structure, maintaining or repair of a permanent structure.
- *Capital Improvement grants* are limited to \$1,750 per grant once a year. Funds must be used to construct, expand, improve, or preserve existing attractions that are open to the public and are of educational, cultural, historical, artistic, or recreational significance and that promote tourism and/or generate positive visibility for Antelope County. Organizations may apply for the same improvement over multiple years, but no more than once per calendar year.
- *Complete the application form.* Applications are due 30-90 days prior to the event.

## Antelope County Promotion and Improvement Grants Guidelines

- *Funding* is based on a calendar year from January 1 to December 31 and is discretionary, based upon availability of funds, other anticipated uses, appropriateness, and effectiveness of the proposed use. Multiple year funding for the same improvement will be closely monitored, tracked, and reviewed by the committee and will use its discretion for funding future years.
- *Bids and/or budgets* for promotional grants or improvement grants must be included in the grant's application package. Excluded are operating, maintenance, additional personnel expenses, and any other items that does not conform with the intent of the grant.
- *Grant acknowledgement* "Funded in part by the Antelope County Visitors Promotion Fund" must appear in the event's promotion materials.
- Receipts are required to be submitted to the County Clerk upon receipt of grant funds.

### The Review Process

The Antelope County Visitors Committee are volunteers who live in the county and volunteer their time, share their knowledge, and provide judgment. It is a five-person committee with at least one member representing the lodging industry who all serve a four-year term. The Committee elects a chairperson, vice-chairperson, and a secretary.

Upon receipt of the application package, the Antelope County Visitors Committee will review the grant application and attachments for completeness of the package and understanding of the grant criteria used in its request for funding. Any previous grants that were approved or denied will also be reviewed at this time.

Generally, the Chairperson of the Visitors Committee will contact the grant's designated contact person notifying them that the committee has received the application who will also clarify or gather any additional information at that time. The grant package is distributed to the committee by email, with voting and discussions to approve or disapprove is expected to be completed by all committee members within several weeks. If a committee member has a conflict of interest, they need to disqualify themselves from voting.

After the committee votes to approve or disapprove, the grant package is forwarded to the Office of the County Clerk, who adds it to the Commissioners monthly meeting agenda. They will review and finalize the approval or disapproval of the grant. The Commissioners meetings are scheduled for the first and second Tuesdays of each month. Applicants may attend the meeting to provide additional input, as needed. The Office of the County Clerk will notify the grants contact person and funds will be distributed using the information obtained from the application form.