

MCKINNEY CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU
Grant Application
Fiscal Year 2018-2019

IMPORTANT

- Please read the McKinney Convention & Visitors Bureau (including state-mandated uses for local hotel occupancy tax refunds) thoroughly prior to completing this application.
- The Grant Guidelines and Application are available at www.visitmckinney.com ,by calling 972.547.2059 or by emailing dguerra@visitmckinney.com
- **Interested application should call to discuss plans for submitting an application in advance of completing the form.** A completed application and all supporting documents are required to be submitted via email or on a thumb drive for consideration by the MCVB board. Please submit the application to:

McKinney Convention & Visitors Bureau
200 W. Virginia
McKinney, TX 75069

If emailing or using Dropbox please send document to, share Dropbox link with:
dguerra@visitmckinney.com

- *If you are interested in preliminary review by the MCVB Board of Directors of your project , proposal or idea, please complete and submit the **Letter of Inquiry** form, available at www.visitmckinney.com , by calling 972.547.2059 or emailing dguerra@visitmckinney.com*

Applications must be completed in full, using this form, and received by MCVB, via email or on a thumb drive, by 5:00 p.m. on the date indicated in schedule below.

Please indicate the type of funding you are requesting:

MCVB Promotional Grants for Events or Project

Initiatives, activities or events that promote the City of McKinney for developing tourism for the City of McKinney must meet both criteria as governed by Texas Tax Code 351.101. (See accompanying document, "Texas Hotel Tax Expenditure Requirements, "for qualifying uses for hotel tax).

Advertising/Promotional Grants for Events/Projects

Application Deadline	Presentation to MCVB Board	Board Vote and Award Notification
October 1, 2018	October 22, 2018	November 27, 2018
February 1, 2019	February 26, 2019	March 26, 2019

GRANT APPLICATION

INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR ORGANIZATION

Name: Heard Museum
Federal Tax I.D.: 75-1317961
Incorporation Date: 1967
Mailing Address: One Nature Place
City: McKinney ST: TX Zip: 75069
Phone: 972-562-5566 Fax: 972-548-9119 Email: sshahid@heardmuseum.org
Website: www.heardmuseum.org

Check One:

- Nonprofit – 501(c) Attach a copy of IRS Determination Letter
 Governmental entity
 For profit corporation
 Other

Professional affiliations and organizations to which your organization belongs:

American Association of Museums
American Science and Technology Centers
Texas Association of Museums

REPRESENTATIVE COMPLETING APPLICATION:

Name: Sy Shahid
Title: Executive Director
Mailing Address: 1 Nature Place
City: McKinney ST: TX Zip: 75069
Phone: 972.562.5566 Ext 226 Fax: 972.548.9119 Email: sshahid@heardmuseum.org

CONTACT FOR COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN MCDC AND ORGANIZATION:

Name: Sy Shahid

Title: Executive Director

Mailing Address: One Nature Place

City: McKinney ST: TX Zip: 75069

Phone: 972-562-5566 Fax: 972-548-9119 Email: sshahid@heardmuseum.org

FUNDING

Total amount requested: \$5,000.00

Matching Funds Available (Y/N and amount): Y \$20,000

Will funding be requested from any other City of McKinney entity (e.g. McKinney Convention and Visitors Bureau, Arts Commission, City of McKinney Community Support Grant)?

Yes No

Please provide details and funding requested:

PROJECT/PROMOTIONAL/COMMUNITY EVENT

Start Date: 01/19

Completion Date: 06/19

BOARD OF DIRECTORS (*may be included as an attachment*)

Jennifer Dexter

Margaret Latham

Mike Whitehead

Steve Gray

Cheryl Miller

Jim Landers

Mike Imhoff

Larry Offerdahl

Bill Woodfin

Sim Israeloff

John Valencia

LEADERSHIP STAFF (*may be included as an attachment*)

Sy Shahid

Using the outline below, provide a written narrative no longer than 7 pages in length:

I. Applying Organization

Describe the mission, strategic goals and objectives, scope of services, day to day operations and number of paid staff and volunteers.

Heard Natural Science Museum & Wildlife Sanctuary's mission is to bring nature and people together to discover, enjoy, experience, restore, and preserve our priceless environment. The Heard accomplishes this objective through providing a variety of exceptional educational programs, exhibits and other attractions for the local McKinney community and tourists from around the world.

The Heard's goal is to continually seek opportunities to serve a more extensive segment of the local community as well as foster broader tourism in McKinney. The Heard staff continually works to both engage visitors in our existing offerings as well as offer new programs that accentuate and augment our primary assets—the museum and the 289-acre nature preserve.

The scope of our services covers a broad array of activities. The Heard offers educational programming such as guided trails, summer camps, preschool and homeschool natural science programs, natural science talks and workshops, field trips, outreach programs and more. We also offer facility rentals, which facilitates opportunities for customers to host large groups such as wedding parties (with out of town guests who require lodging) and business conventions.

The Heard currently employs 11 fulltime staff and 19 part-time staff.

Additionally, as a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, the Heard also utilizes the services of up to 150 volunteers each year.

Significant Organizational Changes

The Heard plans to completely update its website from scratch to design a new site that will not only be visually stunning but also get strategic results for the museum.

II. Tourism-Related Events or project

- Outline details of the Project/Promotional/Community Event for which funds are requested. Include information regarding scope, goals, objectives, target audience.

How Initiative Promotes City of McKinney Tourism

Heard Natural Science Museum & Wildlife Sanctuary is one of the premier tourist attractions in McKinney. As a primary source of advertising and promotional efforts used to attract tourists and convention delegates to the Heard, our website and its improvement is crucial to driving further conversions.

How Project fulfills Heard Strategic Goals and Objectives

The Heard Natural Science Museum & Wildlife Sanctuary exists to bring nature and people together. Because of this mission and the Heard's status as one of McKinney's premier tourism destinations, the collaboration between our mission and with bringing visitors and tourists to McKinney to spend more time in the community go hand and hand.

In today's environment of information sources available to potential visitors, it becomes increasingly important to make sure that our website aligns with the heuristics and algorithms that the search engines establish to designate which websites the search engine deems to be a relevant resource (or not). Following the rules they establish helps to ensure that our page will be among the first options to make it to the eyes of the person searching the internet for information when they are making tourism choices.

Search engines (particularly Google, which holds a major market share) place emphasis on pages with faster load times. New website coding and architecture is continually being developed to enhance load times. The current version of the Heard website was designed at a time when load times had less bearing on our status within search results.

To stay relevant, not only in the perception of the search engines but also to site visitors, and continue to draw more tourists to McKinney, we must enhance our coding to meet these best-practices from a technical and strategic content perspective. Google estimates that, on average, half of site visits (to any website) are abandoned if a mobile site takes longer than three seconds to load. Currently, Google estimates that, on average, our website takes 5 seconds to load and that, as a result, we are experiencing a 19% visitor loss.

As a result, the Heard is in the process of redesigning the website from a mobile-first perspective to align with the needs of today's on-the-go tourist. New research on consumer behavior and phone usage will be applied to increase the intuitive nature of the navigation, making it easier for tourists to quickly find the information they need to make a purchase decision. The new design will also focus on gaining conversions. Our goal is to convert website users into on-site visitors (by encouraging them to purchase admission to exhibits, educational programming and events as well as allowing them to obtain critical information such as directions to McKinney and our hours of operation). The new site will also be all the more visually stunning, more fully emphasizing the asset that the Heard is to the community and how it reflects upon our area. The overall project will allow us to continue to market and highlight McKinney as a unique destination for residents and visitors alike.

Planned Activities

We will continue to assess the areas where our current website has strengths and can use improvement (beyond the underlying coding). We will then establish the nature of the functional requirements, information architecture and deliverables. We will then map a plan of the Heard's key content and conversion points. A new content management system will be tailored to fit these developing needs. Content will then be loaded into the new management system. Where needed, new content will be developed. Once the site has been developed, we will go through a phase of quality assurance to verify performance. Once the website is in a completed state, it will be launched.

Project Time Frame/Schedule

The website update project will begin upon the successful completion of funding of this project. Currently funding has been provided by \$20,000 budgeted funds and \$20,000 anticipated grants and only \$5,000 remains to be funded. Once the project begins, based on previous website development projects, it should take approximately two to four months from the start date to the launch date to complete all of the planned activities listed above.

Estimated Attendance

The Heard annually welcomes over 90,000 visitors each year. Given Google's current estimate that that the Heard loses approximately 19% of its website visitors due to slow site load (and the corresponding conversions), we expect to experience at least a 10% increase in visitorship across the board (with regards to general admissions, participation in educational programs and more). This translates to an increase of approximately 9,000 visitors per year.

Location for the Project

Heard Natural Science Museum & Wildlife Sanctuary and www.heardmuseum.org

Goals for Growth/Expansion Future and Informed Financial Planning

As mentioned previously, technologies to enhance visitor conversion will more than likely continue to develop and change. We will use this as a learning opportunity for future procedural operations. We will now set aside funding in future and actively seek funding to regularly make appropriate and relevant changes to our website to continue its relevance as a promotional and advertising tool for the Heard and McKinney tourism at large. Additionally, we will continue to set aside funding and seek funding to address long-term known costs such as hosting and scheduled maintenance. While these funds will ultimately come from general revenue as well as grants and sponsorships, the budget consequences will overall continue to have a positive net effect. As having a website is crucial for almost any successful organization in today's business climate, the sustainability of this project will be driven by its prime importance for our organizational success.

Internal Efficiencies

Because of our marketing and communications director's basic knowledge of website content management systems, maintenance and graphic design skills, much of the ongoing maintenance and development of the website can be conducted in-house. This will mean less of the work will need to be

outsourced to private contractors. Moreover, as she has an academic background in both experiential marketing strategy and business development, she will be able to analyze the results of our efforts to see where our strengths lie and where improvements can be made based on data collected by analytics platforms.

Project Grants – please complete the section below:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • An expansion/improvement? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| • A replacement/repair? | X Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| • A multi-phase project? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| • A new project? | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

Has a feasibility study or market analysis been completed for this proposed project? If so, please attach a copy of the Executive Summary.

Provide specific information to illustrate how this Event/Project aligns with one or more of the goals and strategies adopted by McKinney City Council and McKinney Convention & Visitors Bureau:

- Ensure application eligibility for MCVB consideration under the Texas Hotel Tax Expenditure Requirements (Texas Tax Code 351.101). (Refer to accompanying document). To be considered for MCVB grant eligibility, your request must satisfy both Category 1 and at least one of the eight state-approved usages in Category #2 as outlined in the Texas Hotel Tax Expenditure Requirements, which are included in this packet.)
- Demonstrate informed financial planning – addressing long-term costs, budget consequences and sustainability of projects for which funding is requested
- Identify the opportunities for internal efficiencies through recurring analyses and continuous improvement.
- Balance resources generated by the local Hotel Occupancy Tax.
- Continue to market and highlight McKinney as a unique destination for residents and visitors alike.

Indicate which goal(s) listed above will be supported by the proposed Project/Promotional/Event:

Has a request for funding, for this Event or Project been submitted to MCVB in the past?

- Yes X No

Date(s):

III. Financial

- Provide an overview of the organization’s financial status including the impact of this grant request on organization mission and goals.
- Please attach your organization’s budget for the current year and audited financial statements for the preceding two years. If audited financials are not available, please indicate why.

What is the total estimated cost for this Event or Project?

be included in an executed performance agreement. (We recommend using this verbiage: "This event is funded in part by VisitMcKinney" or "Funded in part by VisitMcKinney".)

- Organization's officials who have signed the application are authorized by the organization to submit the application;
- Applicant will comply with the MCVB Grant Guidelines in executing the Event or Project for which funds were received.
- A final report detailing the success of the Event or Project, as measured against identified metrics, will be provided to MCVB no later than 30 days following the completion of the Event or Project.
- Funds awarded for approved applications are provided on a **reimbursement** basis, after the event takes place and after all verified receipts and a final report on the Event or Project. The required performance agreement will contain a provision certifying that the applicant does not and will not knowingly employ an undocumented worker, in accordance with Chapter 2264 of the Texas Government Code, as amended. Further, should the applicant be convicted of a violation under 8 U.S.C 1324a(f), the applicant will be required to repay the amount of the public subsidy provided under the agreement plus interest, at an agreed upon interest rate, no later than the 120th day after the date the MCVB requests repayment.

We certify that all figures, facts and representations made in this application, including attachments, are true and correct to the best of our knowledge.

Chief Executive Officer

Representative Completing Application



Signature

Signature

Sy Shahid
Printed Name

Printed Name

September 26, 2018
Date

Date

INCOMPLETE APPLICATIONS, OR THOSE RECEIVED AFTER THE DEADLINE, WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED.

CHECKLIST:

Completed Application:

- Use the form/format provided
- Organization Description
- Outline of Event or Project; description, budget, goals and objectives
- Indicate the MCVB goal(s) that will be supported by this Event or Project
- Event or Project timeline and venue
- Plans for marketing and outreach
- Evaluation metrics
- List of board of directors and staff

Attachments:

- A One-page summary of the goals/activities involved in the Event or Project for which you are seeking MCVB grant funding.
- Financials: organization's budget for current fiscal year;
- Event or Project budget audited financial statements
 - explanations for any variance
 - Samples of printed marketing and outreach materials
 - Screen shots of online Promotions
 - Photographs, slides, videotapes, etc.
 - Performance against metrics outlined in application