

The Hardin County Community Endowment Foundation is submitting the following entry for the \$1,000 "best practices" achievement award. Kristi Harris at kjmharris@msn.com may be contacted for further information.

HCCEF GRANT WORKSHOP

Fairly early in the 2005 grant application process, it became clear to the Hardin County Community Endowment Foundation Board that many citizens working for non-profit organizations in Hardin County could use extra help in submitting their grant applications to the HCCEF Board -- especially since everything was brand new.

Board members were receiving many personal calls from applicants, asking questions about their specific projects and expressing confusion about parts of the grant application itself. We soon realized that for some of our non-profit organizations this was the first grant proposal they had ever submitted.

In response, the board decided to advertise in every county newspaper and invite all non-profit groups to a grant-writing workshop, using a come-and-go format, from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. We were generously aided by the Hardin County Extension Director who offered his conference room and his own talents and expertise at writing grants. In addition, we partnered with the Iowa Falls Economic Development Director -- also extremely knowledgeable in submitting grant proposals. These 2 professionals joined 5 members of the board for this workshop.

Our board feels this was a successful, useful strategy. Representatives from over half of the 38 applications we ultimately received attended this workshop. Each representative met one-on-one with a board member for at least 20 minutes. We handed out and discussed basic information on effective grant writing, and shared the foundation's evaluation guidelines. By the end of the night, everyone -- applicants and board members alike -- had a clearer idea of the application process and the requirements for a concise, persuasive grant proposal.

In doing this workshop, the HCCEF learned a great deal, too. We are already refining and reworking the 2006 grant application form and the scoring matrix that goes with it. We certainly plan to sponsor a similar grant workshop again next year.