

## 2005 INNOVATIONS AWARDS PROGRAM

### APPLICATION

**Deadline: April 4, 2005**

**Be advised that CSG reserves the right to use or publish in other CSG products and services the information that you provide in this Innovations Awards Program Application. If you object to CSG potentially using or publishing the information contained in this application in other CSG products and services, please advise us in a separate attachment to your program's application.**

1. Program Name    Blue Ribbon Passport
2. Administering Agency    Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture
3. Contact Person (Name and Title)            Brant Bickel, Division Chief
4. Address    2301 N. Cameron Street, Harrisburg, PA 17110
5. Telephone Number            717-787-5342
6. FAX Number            717-787-5643
7. E-mail Address            brbickel@state.pa.us
8. Web site Address            <http://www.agriculture.state.pa.us/>
9. Please provide a two-sentence description of the program.            The Blue Ribbon Passport Program is the keystone to the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's agritourism initiative. Its aim is to partner various agricultural related assets and promote agricultural awareness through increased tourism. The program also helps drive agricultural economic development, by assisting farms and farm based ventures with an additional source of income, thus preserving small farm operations and increasing tourism revenue in rural communities.
10. How long has this program been operational (month and year)? **Note: the program must be between 9 months and 5 years old on May 1, 2005 to be considered.** The program was launched in March 2004.
11. Why was the program created? What problem[s] or issue[s] was it designed to address? **Indicate how the program applies to the "change driver" that you listed above.** The program serves as a vehicle to link the commonwealth's top 2 industries – agriculture and tourism. It drives tourism dollars to venues that support rural communities and are typically not included in statewide or regional tourism marketing initiatives. Additionally assisting the small agricultural based operations with added income that in turn keeps more farm related businesses profitable,

preserves precious farmland, and helps educate the non – agriculture public about the importance of agriculture to the economy of Pennsylvania.

12. Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order.

Launched in 3 Eastern Pennsylvania Counties as a pilot in 2004, the program partnered 7 agricultural fairs, 3 farmers markets, 2 wineries, Choice Hotels and major outdoor retailer, Cabelas. Using a passport coupon booklet that was available at each of these venues it asked visitors to fill out a coupon at each venue to be entered in cash drawing. While encouraging visits at the various venues it captured marketing data to be used in future years. The program also redeveloped the Pennsylvania State Association of County Fairs website to feature the program. Traditional advertising on billboards and print media promoted the program as well.

In 2005 the program expanded to encompass 9 Western PA counties running from the border of West Virginia to the shores of Lake Erie. This expansion adds 13 fairs, 5 farm markets, 6 wineries, 4 farm stay bed and breakfasts, a rural life museum and a Harness Horse racing track. Combined the 2005 initiative will serve to increase visitors from the current 10.3 million visitors annually.

13. Why is the program a new and creative approach or method?

The program tapped into a new Heritage Tourism Grant program offered by the Commonwealth's Tourism Office by partnering with a non-profit association. Not only was this approach to public/private partnership unique in this sector, it introduced the heritage of agriculture to a program that was designed to promote historical venues.

The program also took various segments of agribusiness that are supported in various ways by the Commonwealth, and linked them together in one effort. Not only had each of them not considered how they could help grow each other's business, but also the traveling public was now introduced to a packaged program perhaps never considered.

14. What were the program's start-up costs? (Provide details about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other financial expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.)

No existing funds were available within the Department of Agriculture at the programs conception. The Department of Community and Economic Development was launching a Heritage Tourism Grant that was not directly available to government agencies. Therefore, The Department of Agriculture in partnership with the Pennsylvania State Association of County Fairs applied for and was awarded \$20,000 for the pilot program in 2004. Existing staff and interns were used to run the program.

In 2005, the program was awarded \$90,000 and will utilize existing staff and will hire temporary staff with the grant funds.

15. What are the program's annual operational costs?       \$90,000 plus

16. How is the program funded? Through a grant awarded to the Pennsylvania State Association of County Fairs from the Department of Community and Economic Developments Tourism Office.
17. Did this program require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations? If YES, please indicate the citation number. No
18. What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program?  
Access Database, Website development software.
19. To the best of your knowledge, did this program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate the innovator's name, present address, telephone number and e-mail address. Yes, Under the direction of the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Fair Division.  
Brant E. Bickel, Division Chief  
Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture  
2301 N. Cameron Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17110  
  
BrBickel@state.pa.us
20. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, which ones and how does this program differ?  
No
21. Has the program been fully implemented? If NO, what actions remain to be taken?  
No. The program is being designed to eventually encompass the entire state
22. Briefly evaluate (pro and con) the program's effectiveness in addressing the defined problem[s] or issue[s]. Provide tangible examples.  
  
The program has successfully engaged not only the participating partners, but also various departments of state government and associations. It has raised awareness of agritourism with the tourism industry, the agriculture community as well as the public. In doing so, it has helped bring needed revenue to rural businesses.
23. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception? 30 plus venues were added to the initial 7 in 2004.

24. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program?

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture has participated in several seminars held in several states to discuss the effectiveness of the promotion through partnership concept and would continue to assist others in the development of such a program. Some of the limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter might be:

- Funding
- Staffing
- Limiting the program in the initial stages to maximize your effectiveness.  
Once other similar venues learned of the program they wanted to be included

ATTACHED:

Grant application with narrative on the program

## Statement of Interest Pennsylvania State Association of County Fairs

### ***Blue Ribbon Passport***

### **Celebrating Pennsylvania's First Industry**

#### Section 1: Proposal Summary and Rationale

Introduced last year, the Blue Ribbon Passport served as a pilot program offered by The Pennsylvania State Association of County Fairs in partnership with The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's agritourism initiative. With agritourism a growing segment of tourist interest around the world, Pennsylvania's fairs and agricultural related assets offer an experience rooted in heritage unsurpassed by no other state.

Therefore, in celebration of that heritage, the Pennsylvania State Association of County Fairs is proposing to repeat the Blue Ribbon Passport program in a cluster of heritage assets in Eastern Pennsylvania and to expand the passport program to Western Pennsylvania. Whether measured in chronological terms or by its impact on Pennsylvania's economy, agriculture is truly Pennsylvania's first industry.

In Eastern Pennsylvania, the Berks, Lehigh and Schuylkill cluster would consist of seven agricultural fairs operating between June and August, 2004, two farmers markets, two wineries, and one of Pennsylvania's newest and biggest tourist attractions, Cabela's. Together, these partners will promote one another, and through additional partnership with Choice Hotels, encourage visitors to stay in the region overnight in order to visit more than one attraction during their stay in the region. As a result of the 2004 pilot program, nearly 2000 names and addresses from thirteen different states were added to a marketing database. The program was successful in attracting 130 visitors to more than one of the assets promoted.

With the measured success in 2004 and interest in the Blue Ribbon Passport across the state, the program in 2005 would expand to Western Pennsylvania in a much larger cluster running from the West Virginia border in Greene County to the shores of Lake Erie. This cluster would consist of thirteen agricultural fairs, six farm markets and five wineries. Overnight stays would be packaged with Choice Hotels and four farm stay vacation bed and breakfasts, providing a unique and educational family experience. This cluster would not be complete without including Pennsylvania's expanding equine industry at the Meadows Race Track and an agricultural heritage museum at Meadowcroft.

Fairs have been the centerpieces of rural life in Pennsylvania for over 150 years. Pennsylvania boasts 116 local fairs every year, more than nearly any other state. For the four million rural residents of Pennsylvania, and for thousands more visitors from neighboring states, going to the fair is a chance to be a kid again. There are rides and good food to enjoy as well as competitions on everything from farm animals to apple pie. As importantly, though, the fairs offer a glimpse of production agriculture. The 2000 U.S. Census estimates that 1% of Pennsylvania's population lives on a farm, and the percentage is even lower in neighboring states. Attending a fair helps non-farmers learn of the state's agricultural heritage, but also builds appreciation for what farmers are doing today and an understanding for the future. Nearly 7 million people visit Pennsylvania's fairs each year, with 1,331,651 people attending the 20 fairs targeted in the Blue Ribbon Passport Program in 2004

Pennsylvania is second only to California in gross sales of agricultural products from farmers directly to consumers. In Berks and Lehigh Counties alone, there are 93 farmers markets. Statewide, 1000 farmers markets serve as a bridge between farmers and consumers, and reinforce the economic importance of buying food locally, as well as offer fresh nutritious products at reasonable prices. In Western Pennsylvania, the markets included in the program offer tourist attractions from farm tours to pumpkin patches and hayrides as well as farm restaurants. These markets promote the agricultural experience year round and are a destination for students and tourists.

Pennsylvania is second only to New York in the number of licensed wineries east of the Mississippi River – 89, with four applications pending – recently surpassing Virginia. Thanks to the work of the wineries and the Pennsylvania Wine Association, Pennsylvania wineries annually produce \$140 million in tourism related impact, with \$21 million in sales and growing. The industry has more than doubled in the last six years; a tremendous rate of growth that proves William Penn knew what he was doing when he planted the first grape seeds in North America in 1683. There are two wineries in Berks County, and 13 in what the Pennsylvania Wine Association considers the Lehigh Valley/Berks region. Along the shores of Lake Erie are rolling hills of vineyards resembling the south of France. Here, the wineries produce some of Pennsylvania's award winning-wines.

Cabela's is more than a retail store. It is a celebration of the outdoor lifestyle – hunting, fishing, hiking, and camping – activities enjoyed for centuries in Penn's Woods. Pennsylvania is world renowned for its fine hardwood forests and forestry is one of the largest sectors of Pennsylvania agriculture. Open less than a two years; Cabela's Hamburg location already has become a leading destination for visitors from all of our surrounding states. This makes Cabela's a natural jumping off venue for those interested in outdoor activities, agriculture and the heritage of our rural lifestyle.

Meadowcroft Museum of Rural Life is one of Western Pennsylvania's wonderful, off-the-beaten path destinations. Meadowcroft Village sits on 275 acres of Washington County's pristine forest. This 19<sup>th</sup> century village is comprised of historic structures that have been relocated to the site to demonstrate rural life in Western Pennsylvania. A schoolhouse used for educational programs serves more than 10,000 school children from around the region annually. It's close proximity to Weatherbury Farms, Meadows Race Track and The Washington County Fair make it ideal for packaging within this part of the Western cluster.

The farm stay vacation experience is a growing segment within Pennsylvania lodging industry. These unique on-the-farm bed and breakfasts offer cozy accommodations. This Pennsylvania farm life experience gives guests the opportunity to participate in the daily chores or simply enjoy the tranquility and fresh air of the countryside. Weary business travelers are discovering these gems as a respite from the daily grind of urban life. Fifty-eight of these farms belong to either the Pennsylvania Farm Vacation Association or the Lancaster County Farm Stay Association. These Farm-Stay families have found an interesting way to generate income while maintaining their way of life and preserving precious farmland.

Choice Hotels offer a range of accommodations to suit all tastes and budgets. They will offer a year round special rate that will be available to Blue Ribbon Passport Travelers. They also serve to introduce the passport to guests who are looking to experience the flavor of the region they are visiting.

The Pennsylvania State Association of County Fairs proposes a continuation of the Blue Ribbon Passport Program and expanding the program to nine counties in Western Pennsylvania. The initial proposal in 2004 envisioned expanding the cluster concept into a complete statewide multi-venue tourism campaign celebrating our State's first industry. Grant funds, along with matching funds and in-kind contributions from the partners, would be used for several purposes, among them:

- Improving and maintaining the PSACF web site to enable it to offer interactive route mapping among heritage assets, and e-commerce capabilities (e.g., allowing bus tours to buy quantities of tickets to fairs or enabling fairs to redeem coupons supplied at other partners' locations) and making the Blue Ribbon Passport available in downloadable form;

- Linking the PSACF web site to the Visitors Bureaus, web sites, particularly highlighting group tour planners, historic and cultural getaway packages, “what to see and do” pages;
- Promoting the Blue Ribbon Passport on VisitPA.com as part of the overall agritourism marketing campaign;
- Driving maps beginning from participating hotel properties and at each partner’s location;
- Newspaper, radio advertising and at least one billboard in each direction on I-78 and up to 6 billboards along the I-79 corridor driving traffic to the website.
- Tourism promotion and wine-tasting displays and materials for use at the fairs; and
- A temporary staff position to coordinate and oversee the project, enter and maintain names and addresses in the marketing database and write a report on results and lessons learned in order to successfully replicate the project across the state.

If selected to submit a full proposal, the Association will develop a detailed budget for each activity, and reflect how much of each activity would be funded by the grant versus cash and in-kind contributions from the Association and the partners in this proposal. We currently estimate that approximately \$100,000 in grant funds would be necessary in order to complete all activities.

## **Section 2: About the applicant**

The Pennsylvania State Association of County Fairs was created in 1912 by thirteen member fairs. The Association has steadily grown to our current membership of 116. Each agricultural fair, association, or society has at its focal point the education and showcase of agriculture, horticulture, and more. Governed by a board of directors drawn from individual fair boards in each region of Pennsylvania, the Association is a voluntary, non-profit educational organization. With funding from membership dues, the Association’s work is conducted by a full-time staff person and volunteer officers and directors.

Primary objectives of the Association are:

- ✓ To promote the growth and improvement of agricultural fairs, associations and societies within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania;
- ✓ To educate and to provide for the exchange of information among members; and
- ✓ To educate and to provide for the exchange of information between the membership and the general public and government agencies for the betterment of the fairs and fair industry.

This proposal is intended to help the Association reach its third objective, by raising the visibility of the targeted fairs and other agricultural heritage assets among the general public traveling in Berks and Lehigh Counties.

## **Section 3: Support Information**

Note: Please see attachments for letters of support from the two TPAs involved and others, plus additional information on the agricultural heritage assets proposed for the program.

	<b>Information Requested</b>	<b>Responses</b>
1	A statement agreeing to participate in the project	Please see Attachments 1a, 1b, and 1c.
2	Days and hours of operation	Please see Attachment 2.

3	Visitor amenities	All fairs and wineries involved in this application offer rest rooms, potable water, and sufficient parking for group tours, as does Cabela's, Meadowlands Race Track and Meadowcroft Museum. Fairs offer concessions, as well. Capacity of farmers markets varies in this regard, primarily due to the fairly short average visit.
4	Admission prices and policies	Policies are up to individual venues. Many fairs now use a single admission price, normally \$5 - \$8, with unlimited access to rides. Others still offer free admission, but charge per ride.
5	Ability to accurately count visitors	Admission tickets provide the most accurate measure of fair visitors. It is more difficult to measure visitors to a farmers' market. The passport acts a measurement tool of visitors to each venue.
6	Feedback tools for visitors	Fair visitors and farm market visitors are able to provide feedback on site. Farm vacations offer guest comment cards. Since wine tours often involve tastings, there is extensive interaction between visitors and winery operators
7	Revenues/expenses for the last two years	Please see Attachment 3.
8	Current/recent tourism marketing efforts	Individual fairs conduct their own marketing efforts, relying on radio, television, display ads, brochures, and coupons. The 2004 Blue Ribbon Passport was the first of it kind partnering these venues together in a single campaign.
9	Evidence of the number of visitors in the last two years	Please see Attachment 2.
10	Visitors who were school children in bused groups	Unknown, though most fairs occur during the Summer months when school is not in session, Farm markets and the Meadowcroft Museum offer tours to school children
11	Description of any research or training used during the last two years to ensure authenticity	The fairs involved in this application have been in continuous operation, and have been members of the applicant organization, for many years.
12	Measuring effectiveness of marketing efforts	For the fairs, marketing effectiveness has traditionally been measured by the number of attendees as compared to prior years. The Passport offers methods of tracking visitors who fill out the entry forms at each venue.

**Western Pennsylvania**

<b>Agricultural Heritage Asset</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Operating</b>	<b>2005 Dates</b>	<b>2004 Visitors</b>	<b>03 Visitors</b>
------------------------------------	---------------	------------------	-------------------	----------------------	--------------------

Since

Greene County Fair	Greene	1975	Aug 5 - 13	17,213	18,409
Washington County Fair	Washington	1798	Aug 13 - 20	70,000	68,354
Mt. Nebo Fair	Allegheny	1970	Aug 11 - 13	2,900	2,850
Butler Fair	Butler	1854	July 1 - 9	98,000	98,000
Butler Farm Show	Butler	1948	Aug 8 - 13	30,052	27,656
Lawrence County Fair	Lawrence	1953	Aug 15 - 20	75,000	70,000
Cochranton Fair	Crawford	1928	Aug 7 - 13	15,500	15,000
Crawford County Fair	Crawford	1945	Aug 20 - 27	158,572	165,000
Stoneboro Fair	Mercer	1868	Aug 31 - Sept 5	40,683	29,108
Waterford Fair	Erie	1937	Sept 5 - 10	30,000	45,000
North East Fair	Erie	1926	Sept 15 - 17	2,563	2,103
Erie County Fair	Erie	1853	Aug 30 - Sept 4	19,875	16,000
Big Knob Fair	Beaver	1937	Aug 30 - Sept 3	35,000	30,000
Trax Farms	Washington	1865	Year-round	1,000,00	1,000,00
Sorgels Orchards	Allegheny	1968	Year-round	600,000	600,000
Janoski's Farm Market	Allegheny	1919	April - December	275,000	275,000
Metricks Farm Market	Butler	1972	May - December	150,000	150,000
Mason Farm Market	Erie	1975	Year-round	500,000	500,000
Spring House	Washington	1975	Year-round	146,000	146,000
C.T. Miller Winery	Washington	1998	April - December	15,000	15,000
Lapic Winery	Beaver	1977	Year-round	10,000	10,000
Mazza Winery	Erie	1972	Year-round	20,000	20,000
Presque Isle Winery	Erie	1969	Year-round	22,000	22,000
Arrowhead Winery	Erie	1998	Year-round	22,000	22,000
Weatherbury B&B	Washington	1983	Year-round	556	550
Armstrong Farms B&B	Butler	1997	Year-round	500	500
Ber-Nita B&B	Butler	1998	Year-round	650	650
Vineyard B&B	Erie	1999	Year-round	450	450
Meadows Race Track	Washington	1963	Year-round	50,000	50,000
Meadowcroft Museum	Washington	1969	May - October	15,000	15,000

**total attendance:** **2,422,514** **2,414,630**

<b>Eastern Pennsylvania</b>					
<b>Agricultural Heritage Asset</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Operting Since</b>	<b>2005 Dates of Operations</b>	<b>2004 Visitors</b>	<b>03 Visitors</b>

Allentown Fair	Lehigh	1852	Aug 30 - Sept 5	694,000	547,000
Kempton Fair	Berks	1955	June 15 - 18	7,380	4,630
Kutztown Fair	Berks	1871	Aug 15 - 20	30,000	30,000
Oley Valley Fair	Berks	1946	Sept 15 - 17	22,000	27,000
Reading Fair	Berks	1884	Aug 8 - 13	19,913	17,774
Schnecksville Fair	Lehigh	1983	June 20 25	28,000	31,353
Schuylkill County Fair	Schuylkill	1884	July 31 - Aug 6	35,000	29,111
Cabela's	Berks	2003	Year-round	6,996,000	6,966,000
Pinnacle Ridge Winery	Berks	1993	Closed Mondays	18,000	18,000
Clover Hill Winery	Lehigh	1985	Year-round	22,000	22,000
Meadow View Farm	Berks		March - December M-SA	2,400	2,400
Allentown TP Farm Market	Lehigh		May - November TH-SA	4,800	4,800

**total:**

<b>7,879,493</b>	<b>7,700,068</b>
------------------	------------------

Add space as appropriate to this form. Return to:  
**CSG Innovations Awards 2005**  
The Council of State Governments  
2760 Research Park Drive, P.O. Box 11910  
Lexington, KY 40578-1910  
[innovations@csg.org](mailto:innovations@csg.org)