

How To Form a State Horse Council

The American Horse Council Definition of a State Horse Council: A state horse council is an association which actively seeks, throughout the state, the participation of individuals and groups from all breeds and all types of horse activities, amateur or professional. Its primary purpose is to further the common interests of horse people and promote the entire equine industry. A major emphasis is to establish an effective government relations program with both the state legislature and state agencies such as the department of natural resources, the state board of business regulation, and the state department of agriculture. It serves as a means of communication for horse groups within the state, monitors legislative and regulatory programs, and seeks to promote interest in horse related activities.

- 1. Assess need.** Has a Horse Council ever been formed in the state? If inactive, can it be revitalized? Does another group exist (perhaps not called a horse council) that can be augmented or enlarged to serve the function of a horse council? (The American Horse Council's State Horse Council Advisory Committee will recognize only one Council in each state.)
- 2. Assess purpose.** A council can be formed in answer to a specific problem in your state, and then expand to other interests. It might also be needed to counter persistent anti-horse attitudes resulting in unfair taxes or fees, loss of trails and recreational opportunities, prohibitive zoning or other restrictive legislation.
- 3. Assess Funding.** State Horse Councils fund their activities in a variety of ways, and some possibilities are: Membership dues, grants from other organizations, surcharges on feed sales or brand inspections, or fund raising events. A good budget will indicate whether the Council can hire part-time paid help or must depend on committed volunteers (the backbone of any organization).
- 4. Hold an organizational Meeting of Potential Members. This will create core groups to originate:**
 - A. Statement of Purpose** or mission statement.
 - B. Bylaws** (check state requirements)
 - C. Articles of Incorporation**

- D. Filing for tax-exempt status (state and Federal)
- E. Initial Board of Directors and Officers
- F. Bank accounts for initial funds. Suggest a checking account for day-to-day bills and a savings account for other funds. Safeguard both accounts with required multiple signatures and audits.
- G. Membership brochure and plan for membership drive.
- H. When funds permit, consider a business telephone and listing in yellow pages, and creating a website.

5. Contact the State Horse Councils Advisory Committee. They can inform you of current issues with other state horse councils and the date of the next SHCAC meeting (scheduled at approximate six-month intervals). They will also put you in touch with Councils in neighboring states.

6. Other affiliations: establish relations with horse racing, county extension, farm bureau, state veterinarian and other groups **in your state** concerned with horses, livestock and related education.