Application form planning worksheet

Plan a job, volunteer, grant, scholarship, membership or program application on paper before you build it. One worksheet per application.

How to use this worksheet

1. Work from top to bottom. Decide what you are choosing between before you write a single question.
2. The grey rows are a filled-in example (a community garden plot application). Cross them out or write over them.
3. Keep the worksheet next to you while you build the form, then run the test log before you share the link.
4. The sections match the guide at hornetforms.com/blog/how-to-make-an-application-form.

1. The decision this application feeds

Application name (what applicants will see at the top)

What are you choosing? (a hire, a place, a grant, a member, a plot...)

Example: 24 garden plots for the 2027 season, for people who live in the city.

How many places, and roughly how many applications do you expect?

Who reviews the applications, and by what date do you decide?

How and when will you tell applicants the result?

2. Must-know or nice-to-know?

List everything you want to ask. Keep a question only if it changes who you pick or what you do next. Move the rest to a later form, or cross it out.

#	What I want to know	Must-know or nice-to-know?	What I will do with the answer
1	*Do they live in the city?*	*Must-know*	*Only residents can get a plot*
2	*Have they gardened before?*	*Must-know*	*Mix new and experienced growers*
3	*Favorite vegetable*	*Nice-to-know*	*Nothing: cross it out*
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			

Hiring? The US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) says pre-employment questions "should be limited to those essential for determining if a person is qualified for the job". Read its page on prohibited employment policies and practices (eeoc.gov) and check your state's rules. This worksheet is not legal advice.

3. The sections, page by page

Put each section on its own page. Tick the ones you need and write the questions for each.

Page	Section	Need it?	Questions on this page
1	*Contact details (name, email, phone)*	*Yes*	*Full name; Email; Phone*
2	*Eligibility (the yes or no questions that decide who can apply)*	*Yes*	*Do you live in the city?; Are you 18 or older?*
3	*Experience (what they have done before)*	*Yes*	*Have you gardened before?; Tell us about it*
4	*Statement or short essay (why them, why now)*	*Yes*	*Why do you want a plot? (up to 150 words)*
5	*Documents (CV, portfolio, transcript, proof of address)*	*Yes*	*Proof of address*
6	*Agreement (a plain yes or no to your rules)*	*Yes*	*I have read the garden rules: Yes or No*

Help text for the first page: who is asking, what happens next and the deadline

4. Screening rules (send people who do not qualify to an ending)

Write one rule per row. A logic jump can send someone straight to a named ending, so they skip the rest of the form and read a kind message instead.

If someone answers...	Then...	Ending or page	What the ending says
Do you live in the city? is "No"	*Jump to*	*Ending: Not eligible*	*Plots are for city residents. Here is the county garden list.*
Are you 18 or older? is "No"	*Jump to*	*Ending: Ask a parent*	*Ask a parent or guardian to apply for your family.*

The thank-you message for people who finish: what happens next, and when

Example: Thanks! We draw plots on 15 March and email everyone by 20 March.

5. Documents to collect

One file upload question per document. Each question takes up to 10 files, and you choose the file types. On the Free plan each file can be up to 10 MB; Pro and Business have no plan cap on file size.

Document	File types	Max files	Required ?	Help text
Proof of address	*PDF, images*	*1*	*Yes*	*A utility bill or lease from this year*

6. Dates, caps and long forms

[ ] Opening date and time [ ] Close date and time [ ] Response limit

[ ] Multi-page with a progress bar [ ] Partial responses and a resume link (Pro, Business)

[ ] Email verification with a 6-digit code (Pro, Business)

Opens on (date and time)

Closes on (date and time, in your time zone)

Response limit (if any): the most applications you can read

Closed message (plain text, up to 500 characters): what people see after the close date

Example: Applications for 2027 plots are closed. We open again in January 2028.

7. Where the applications go

Destination	Use it?	Who watches it
Email to yourself for each new response (starts switched off)	*Yes*	*Garden coordinator*
Confirmation email to the applicant (needs an email question)		
Google Sheets (one row per application)		
Slack or Discord channel		
CSV export from the responses table		

Everyone you add to your HornetForms workspace can read every response in it, whatever their role. Add only the people who should read the applications.

8. Your review sheet columns

Review in a spreadsheet. The first columns come from the form; the rest are columns you add and fill in yourself. Write the columns here before the first application arrives.

Column	Comes from	Notes
Response ID	*The form*	*Use it to find the full application*
Submitted at	*The form*	*When they finished*
Full name, Email	*The form*	
Do you live in the city?	*The form*	*Filter out the No answers first*
Reviewer 1 score (1 to 5)	*You add it*	*Score against the same rubric*
Reviewer 2 score (1 to 5)	*You add it*	
Average score	*You add it*	*=AVERAGE of the two scores*
Decision	*You add it*	*Yes, Waitlist or No*
Told on	*You add it*	*The date you emailed the result*

Scoring rubric: what a 1, a 3 and a 5 look like

9. Test log, then share

#	Test	What happened	Works?
1	Fill it in on your own phone, start to finish		
2	Answer "No" to each eligibility question: right ending?		
3	Upload each document type, including one that is not allowed		
4	Skip a required question: is the message clear?		
5	Check the thank-you message and the confirmation email		
6	Check the email to yourself and the Google Sheets row arrived		
7	Check the close date and the closed message		
8	Ask one person who has never seen it to apply		

Before you open applications

Every question has a reason. People who do not qualify find out on page 2, not after 20 minutes. The deadline is on the first page. You know who reads new applications, how you score them and when you will reply.