

10-1998

Maine Communities in the New Century

Cultural Affairs Council

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalmaine.com/cac_docs

Recommended Citation

Cultural Affairs Council, "Maine Communities in the New Century" (1998). *Cultural Affairs Council Documents*. 16.
https://digitalmaine.com/cac_docs/16

This Text is brought to you for free and open access by the State Documents at Digital Maine. It has been accepted for inclusion in Cultural Affairs Council Documents by an authorized administrator of Digital Maine. For more information, please contact statedocs@maine.gov.

MAINE COMMUNITIES IN THE NEW CENTURY

**A Proposal for
Statewide Cultural Revitalization**

A Joint Initiative of:

**The Maine Arts Commission
The Maine Historic Preservation Commission
The Maine State Library
The Maine State Museum
The Maine Historical Society
The Maine State Archives
The Maine Humanities Council**

Under the Leadership of the Maine Cultural Affairs Council

With the Support of the Maine Community Cultural Alliance

October 1998

MAINE COMMUNITIES IN THE NEW CENTURY: A Proposal for Statewide Cultural Revitalization

Executive Summary

Under the leadership of the Maine Cultural Affairs Council, with the support of the Maine Community Cultural Alliance, seven organizations dedicated to the arts and culture of the Maine propose a coordinated grants and community assistance program to benefit cities and towns across the state.

The Joint Initiative will encompass three overall objectives:

- Preservation of Maine's historic resources – its properties, artifacts, and documents;
- Expanded access to educational resources;
- Community development through strengthened cultural resources.

This Joint Initiative is unprecedented in Maine and will serve as a model in inter-agency cooperation for the rest of the country. To plan the Initiative, the seven cooperating organizations have worked together closely over the past year, taking a hard look at the problems facing Maine's communities. They will continue this collaboration in implementing the initiative, coordinating their efforts, and sharing expertise, thus multiplying the power of their dollars. They will also, as a team, monitor, evaluate, and report on the results.

To carry out this pioneering adventure, the organizations seek a total of \$3,645,000 per year. The purposed use of these funds is set forth, starting on page 4. Descriptions of the Maine Cultural Affairs Council, the Maine Community Cultural Alliance, and the seven cooperating organizations are provided in the appendices.

Why this Initiative is Needed Now

The Joint Initiative aims to advance the well-being of the State of Maine, to ensure a richer quality of life for Maine residents, to protect Maine's unique cultural resources, to enhance educational opportunities for people of all generations, and to inspire those living in the next millennium.

The Joint Initiative is needed now since Maine's communities are at a critical point in their histories. Maine is essentially a state of small cities, towns and villages, and the cultural heritage of those communities is one of the most celebrated in America. But that heritage is endangered – crumbling buildings, fragile artifacts, disappearing cultural traditions, perishable manuscripts and deteriorating marine treasures demand urgent and systematic attention. As a result, in communities across Maine, citizens are seeking the tools to preserve their quality of life and revitalize their cultural institutions, and they look to state agencies for financial and technical support.

There is a growing understanding, moreover, that the state's economic well being is directly linked to the health and liveliness of Maine's cultural institutions. According to a recent study by the New England Foundation for the Arts, 1,113 Maine organizations in the arts, culture and

humanities have a total economic impact of \$150 million a year – more than \$100 million in direct expenditure, and the balance in indirect and induced spending. Further, these organizations provide nearly 6,000 jobs and attract nearly 7,000,000 admissions to their events.

And at a time when Maine's economic development is a high priority, its cultural institutions are playing a key role in attracting new or expanded industry. For example, CEOs cite cultural and educational opportunities as important factors in their investment decisions. The importance of cultural opportunities is recognized by the Maine Economic Growth Council, which plans to introduce cultural factors in its performance measures of economic growth. Libraries offer business readily available detailed information on everything from local economic conditions to national or international economic data, demographics, trends and programs in support of business. They provide information on how to manage a business, obtain funding, expand into export, identify trends and changes, and check out external markets or their competitors.

Further, tourism is the second largest industry in Maine, generating \$206 million each year in state and local tax revenues, and arts and heritage tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors. Arts and Heritage travelers stay longer than other travelers, spend an average of \$62 a day more, travel in larger parties, and are more likely to travel during the off-season. A dollar invested in cultural heritage can return more than \$11 in local impact. But Maine stands to lose market share to other regions of the country if we do not help our local communities support and develop their cultural offerings.

Finally, there is now a consensus that Maine needs to strengthen its educational resources at all levels to prepare its young people for the new millennium. A well-educated job force is essential to attracting and keeping new industry in the state. Yet one in six Mainers is unable to read well enough to fill out a job application or decipher a road map. Full literacy and access to lifelong learning is not a luxury, but an absolute necessity.

Thus, for an array of reasons, the Joint Initiative is a high priority for enriching Maine and its communities with a relatively modest infusion of state economic resources.

Outcome I: Preserving Historic Properties, Artifacts, and Documents

Maine has a remarkable and rich legacy of historic sites, precious artifacts and important documents, which tell the unique story of our people and our State. The attractiveness and quality of life in Maine is directly related to its cultural uniqueness. But this special character is rapidly being lost as crumbling historic buildings, fragile artifacts, photographs, and documents remain unprotected in vulnerable conditions in our local communities. A matching grants and technical assistance program will help remedy this situation, thus preserving our historic resources for future generations of Mainers.

Preservation Grants for Historic Properties

Through a program of Preservation and Survey Grants for Historic Properties, the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, proposes: a) a statewide competitive matching grant program for protection of historic buildings and sites listed in or nominated to the National Register of Historic Places, and b) support for professional assistance in documenting over seven hundred recorded Maine shipwreck sites -- an invaluable historic record, largely unknown and at risk of irreversible deterioration.

Cultural Resources Information Center

Historical societies, town clerks, libraries, and small museums in every county in Maine preserve Maine's rich cultural heritage of art, artifacts, scientific specimens, documents, and architecture. These organizations also attract Maine families and visitors to historic sites and special events. Many who care for such treasures are enthusiastic, but untrained, volunteers. In 1993 the Cultural Resources Information Center (CRIC) emerged as a collaborative pilot project housed in the State Archives, staffed and equipped by the Maine State Museum, and facilitated by a statewide association now called Maine Archives and Museums. It supported museums and historical societies seeking assistance in professional staff training, curatorial practices, collection management, resource development, technical support, volunteer training, and organizational management. This successful pilot project ended with state budget cuts in 1996. No Maine organization offers this support. As a result, many local projects languish, or worse, proceed without proper training or advice. The proposed funding would reinstate a strengthened program.

Protecting Important Historical Records and Artifacts

Many of Maine's important historical records, manuscripts, newspapers, photographs, and artifacts languish unprotected in dusty attics and dank basements. The Maine State Archives and Maine State Museum propose to establish jointly-administered matching grants program to meet critical needs: assessing priorities for action; preserving endangered materials; cleaning and housing of artifacts and documents; creating preservation negatives, microfilming fragile records and newspapers; and creating catalogues (in paper, computer media, and the Internet), volunteer training and collections management.

Budget for Outcome I: \$845,000

Outcome II: Expanding Educational Resources through the Promotion of Literacy and Access to Historic Materials and Contemporary Information

Maine's public libraries and cultural organizations are vital partners in providing education and information to Maine citizens. But libraries around the state have pressing needs for new construction; and with the dramatic increase in demand for services, new funds must be allocated to enable greater access to information. In addition, reading and literacy programs must be provided to ensure the economic well being of our citizens. Technological advances will widen educational access to the state's cultural treasures.

Public Library Development

Recent advances in information retrieval, together with the statewide development of fiber-optic cable networks and other technological resources, have made Maine libraries national leaders in library technology, innovation, and community programming. Most of Maine's 260 public libraries are inadequate in design and space to meet this exploding demand for advanced information technology. Loss of federal funding, through the demise of the Library Services and Construction Act, has eliminated the only prior source for meeting this demand. The proposed matching funds would support critical construction and renovation projects, to assist libraries in meeting the needs of every citizen, irrespective of financial status, to gain access to this increasingly essential service.

Demands for information services, including interlibrary loans, have soared dramatically since the increased availability of electronic information, including listings of holdings in other libraries. Matching grants will assist in such public services as: increased hours of public access, supportive technology for those with disabilities, additional public access terminals, expanded data capacity, and cooperative resource building, thereby making these ever more essential resources available to all citizens, regardless of economic status.

The Maine Center for the Book

Maine adults today flock to informal classes, conferences, community center gatherings, business training sessions, and reading groups. In contrast, low literacy rates plague Maine and hamper the state's economic well being. The Maine Humanities Council in 1997 established the Maine Center for the Book, an affiliate of the Library of Congress Center for the Book, to encourage family literacy and to promote reading, books, libraries, and Maine's literary heritage, through reading and discussion programs for people of all ages, all socio-economic groups, and all levels of reading facility. Family literacy programs respond to the new brain research that demonstrates reading is a critical means of ensuring normal brain development in babies and young children, while the programs for more sophisticated readers are the kind of cultural opportunity that makes Maine an alluring place to live, attracting new businesses as well as affluent retirees. With increased funding, the Maine Center for the Book can expand its highly successful reading group programs, as well as enlarge its family literacy program with more child care providers, more Head Start programs, and more family health clinics.

The Maine Memory Network

The Maine Historical Society, the Maine State Archives, and the Maine State Museum plan to link their unparalleled archival and material collections with other statewide and local

repositories in a Maine Memory Network, a web-based educational service modeled on the American Memory Project of the Library of Congress. Designed to give Maine's collective memory a home and a meaningful future, the Network will provide central access to images, documents, artifacts, photographs, maps, and data related to the history and development of the state. The Network will serve all Maine schools and teachers by providing interpretive lesson plans, learning results-based projects, and thematic archives for classroom use. It will serve thousands of community researchers and tens of thousands of Mainers (in and out of state) engaged in family history and genealogical research -- the second largest hobby in the United States. It will also be a worldwide resource for prospective visitors and for the rapidly growing field of heritage and cultural tourism.

Budget for Outcome II: \$2,000,000

Outcome III: Developing Communities through Strengthened Cultural Resources

Across America, local arts and heritage institutions are recognized as major assets and spurs to the economic development of communities. Their role in reinvigorating and defining the unique character of each town's traditions, in strengthening the pride of residents, and in preserving the integrity of rural community life has been demonstrated again and again. These same cultural organizations can also play an important role in attracting visitors through cultural heritage tourism, generating new jobs for local people, attracting new residents, increasing tax revenues, and strengthening local institutions. Maine's rich history and striking contemporary arts – tradition and innovation – distinguish our state's culture and are potentially powerful magnets.

However, Maine stands to lose out economically to our New England neighbors, the rest of the country, and to our own people, unless urgent attention is paid to the condition of our local cultural arts and heritage organizations across the state, to the quality of their offerings and products, and to their ability to tell the story of their history in clear and convincing ways. The New Century Program will not only make community arts and cultural institutions vital components of a statewide tourism strategy, but will also enhance our communities for our own residents.

The New Century Program

The New Century Program involves expansion of pilot-tested programs of matching grants to local communities to strengthen and develop their arts and heritage institutions and programs. The objective is to ensure the accuracy and authenticity of the institutions' offerings, to support public projects that address important themes in Maine history and heritage, and to encourage and promote local creativity. The program would also aim to strengthen boards and staff, promote more effective marketing of cultural activities, stimulate matching private sector support, and encourage collaboration among cultural, economic, government and tourism sectors. Potential recipients of the matching grant funds include local planning and assessment groups, museums, historical societies, galleries, theaters, concert presenters, folk festivals, historic sites, and other similar attractions.

The Maine Arts Commission and the Maine Humanities Council, two agencies with a long history of successful collaboration, will carry out the New Century Program. Each agency bases its experience on major programs it has initiated during the last four years. The Maine Humanities Council, through its "Century Project" grant program has involved more than 100 Maine towns in exploring their history. These studies have engaged 128 schools, historical societies, churches, retirement communities, libraries, adult education programs and other community groups and resulted in a great variety of cultural events, exhibits, festivals, and other public presentations. The Maine Arts Commission's "Community Arts Development Program" has assisted 17 local communities and several counties in surveying and inventorying their cultural resources and traditions. Such initiatives, typically involving a broad range of community institutions and individual artists, have provided a basis for the long-range planning, development and preservation of these cultural resources and further community cultural revitalization efforts.

The New Century Program will extend the range of the two pilot programs to include the whole state. Each dollar awarded through the grants program will be matched on a one-to-one basis by outside funding. Public-private community partnerships now receive major support from national and state foundations and corporate and private donors. State dollars will thus help leverage outside funding for Maine communities that would not otherwise be available.

Budget for Outcome III: \$800,000

Membership and History of the Maine State Cultural Affairs Council

The Cultural Affairs Council

The Maine State Cultural Affairs Council was established in 1991 to unite four, and ultimately seven, of the State's cultural agencies in their encouragement of cooperation within the cultural activities of Maine. The duties of the Council call for the coordination of budget requests, the provision of a forum for interagency planning, a liaison capacity for receipt and distribution of notices and instructions from other governmental administrative agencies, a mechanism to enhance statewide cultural planning, and the presentation of an annual report. Members include:

Maine Arts Commission

The Maine Arts Commission's statutory purpose is to "encourage and stimulate public interest in and participation in the cultural heritage and programs of our state," ... to "expand the state's cultural resources" ... and to "encourage and assist freedom of artistic expression for the well being of the arts, to meet the legitimate needs and aspirations of persons in all parts of the state." The Governor appoints the 21 member governing board; the Commission is the official state agency to receive funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

Maine Historic Preservation Commission

The Maine Historic Preservation Commission was created by the 105th Legislature in 1971 to administer the provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. The Commission is responsible for identifying and protecting historic, architectural, and archeological resources by conducting surveys statewide and by nominating significant buildings, sites, and districts to the National Register of Historic Places.

Maine State Library

The Maine State Library was established in 1837. The purpose of the State Library is to lead in efforts that will provide, broaden and improve access to information regardless of location or residency of individual citizens. The Maine Library Commission, a policy board that is broadly representative of Maine's library community, governs the State Library.

Maine State Museum

The Maine State Museum presents exhibits on Maine's natural environment, prehistoric cultures, and unique history within the Cultural Building in Augusta's State House Complex, and cares for the historic art and furnishings of the State House and Governor's Mansion. Extensive research collections and fieldwork support publications, television broadcasts, and artifact loans to other museums.

Maine Historical Society

The Maine Historical Society was chartered by the State Legislature in 1822, making it the third largest historical organization in the United States. Its purpose is to collect, preserve, and interpret the history of Maine and its people. The Society received its first state appropriation in 1849, intermittent support until 1940, and regular annual support thereafter.