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The New Century Community Program: Proposal for Continuing Funding

Cultural Affairs Council

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The New Century Community Program

Proposal for Continued Funding in FY 2002 and FY 2003

Purpose of the Program

In 1998, the Maine Cultural Affairs Council, consisting of seven agencies dedicated to the arts and culture of Maine, developed the New Century Community Program, an innovative statewide program for the cultural revitalization of Maine's communities. The seven agencies include the Maine Arts Commission, Maine Historic Preservation Commission, Maine State Library, Maine State Museum, Maine Historical Society, Maine State Archives, and Maine Humanities Council.

The New Century program was designed:

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 new millennium.

Toward these ends, the program encompassed both matching grants and direct assistance to Maine communities with three overall objectives:

- I. Expanding access to educational resources through the promotion of literacy and access to historic materials and contemporary information.
- II. Preserving Maine's historic resources, its properties, artifacts, and documents.
- III. Building communities through strengthened cultural resources.

Achievements to Date

The program was proposed for funding to the 1999 Maine Legislature with the support of the Maine Community Cultural Alliance, a private nonprofit organization to preserve, promote, and increase awareness of Maine's cultural resources. The 1999 Maine State Legislature appropriated \$3.2 million for FY 2000, ending June 30, 2000.

In that initial year, the New Century program distributed more than \$2.3 million in state funds through more than 420 grants to communities in all areas of Maine. In addition, the program spent \$859,000 for direct service and outreach programs to community institutions — libraries, schools, day care centers, historic sites, museums, archives, and other organizations — from Madawaska to Kittery. Overall, New Century-funded programming directly benefited 183 communities in all of the state's counties, and its grants generated nearly \$9.8 million in matching funds and in-kind assistance.

A map of Maine showing the communities benefited by the above grants and direct service programs is attached. *(also available upon request)*

The response to the program was far greater than the funds available — grant requests amounted to two and one-half times the amount granted. This was clear evidence that the program met a statewide need and that an even greater need persists.

Proposal for FY 2002 and FY 2003

To continue and expand the program, consequently, the Maine Cultural Affairs Council is requesting legislative appropriations of \$4,355,000 each for FY 2002 and FY 2003. Based on experience in FY 2000, these appropriations would generate for Maine communities an estimated \$27 million in matching funds from private donors and other public funders. The renewal appropriations would be spent for the following program components:

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

Library Development

\$1,500,000 per year

Matching grants by the Maine State Library to community libraries for critical construction and renovation projects and for improving their information and educational services to local residents. Funds will also support three Area Reference Resource Centers, which provide research facilities and resources to public libraries, and statewide digital licensing of databases to make available to the libraries further research resources.

The Maine Center for the Book

\$300,000 per year

Reading and book discussion programs provided by the Maine Humanities Council for Maine residents of all ages and reading levels. The Center offers a range of services, including pre-literacy programs for young children, parents, and care-givers; library programs; and programs focused on the special needs of youth at risk.

The Maine Memory Network

\$300,000 per year

A web-based virtual museum and educational resource serving community libraries, schools, museums, and historical societies as well as individual researchers throughout the state. A project of the Maine Historical Society in cooperation with the Maine State Archives and Maine State Museum, the Network will make the primary treasures of Maine history — images, interviews, maps, photographs, documents, and much more — available over the Internet starting next year.

Objective II: Preserving Historic Properties, Artifacts, and Documents

Preservation Grants for Historic Properties

\$850,000 per year

Matching grants and technical support by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission to assist communities in identifying, restoring and preserving their historic and archeological sites. The grants will focus on buildings and sites listed in, or eligible for, the National Register of Historic Places, and are in public or non-profit ownership and open to the public.

Cultural Resources Information Center (CRIC)

\$70,000 per year

Technical support to historical societies, town offices, libraries, and small museums in preserving art, artifacts, scientific specimens, documents, and architecture. CRIC, a joint project of the Maine State Archives and Maine State Museum, assists in staff training, curatorial practices, collection management, resource development, and organizational management.

Protecting Historical Records and Artifacts

\$300,000 per year

Matching grants by the Maine State Archives and Maine State Museum for the protection and preservation of important historical records, manuscripts, newspapers, photographs, and artifacts. In addition, the two agencies will be joined by the Maine State Library in a special effort to protect and preserve early Maine newspapers.

Objective III: Building Communities through Strengthened Cultural Resources

Building Communities Program

\$1,035,000 per year

Further expansion of pilot-tested programs of matching grants to local communities to strengthen and develop their arts, heritage, and educational institutions and programs.

The Maine Humanities Council will expand its grants to assist towns and villages in exploring their history and heritage and developing interpretive programs through cultural events, exhibits, conferences, seminars, school-based public programs, oral histories, and programs for teachers, festivals, and other public presentations. Continued funding will also provide for a new pilot program of arts and heritage grants for youth at risk.

The Maine Arts Commission will continue to assist communities in surveying and inventorying their cultural resources and institutions as the basis for their long-range planning, development and preservation. Grants will also be made to enable Maine's leading cultural institutions and professional artists to assist community institutions in strengthening their programming. Finally, funds will expand the Partners in Arts & Learning program (PAL), which involves school systems in assessing school/community arts resources and planning with partners initiatives to support learning for all students.

Why the New Century Community Program Is Still Needed

1. The cultural heritage of Maine's towns, villages and cities is one of the most celebrated in America, but that *heritage is endangered* — crumbling buildings, fragile artifacts, perishable manuscripts and disappearing cultural traditions. As a result, these communities seek the tools to revitalize their cultural institutions, and they look to statewide agencies for financial and technical support.
2. 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 provide more than 6,000 jobs and have a total economic impact of \$150 million a year.
3. Maine's *cultural and educational institutions are recognized as major assets in the attraction of new or expanded industry*. CEOs cite cultural and educational opportunities as important factors in their investment decisions. The Maine Economic Growth Council now includes cultural indicators in its performance measures of economic growth. A recent report by the New England Council, the country's oldest regional business organization, emphasized the importance of arts and culture in assuring the region's continued economic growth.
4. 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. But Maine stands to lose market share to our New England neighbors and to other regions of the country if we do not help our local communities support and develop their cultural offerings.
5. Maine needs to *strengthen its educational resources at all levels to attract and keep new industry and to prepare its young people for the new millennium*. This need is particularly urgent at the literacy level, a major focus of the New Century program. According to a 1998 study by the National Institute for Literacy, an independent federal agency, nearly one in six Maine adults cannot read well enough to fill out a Social Security card application or locate an intersection on a street map.
6. There is a growing realization that *culture and the arts play a key role in this educational process*. For example, a new report by the U. S. Secretary of Labor's Commission on Necessary Skills (SCANS) concluded, after a two-year study of the skills necessary to assure the nation's future economic growth, that a solid education in and through the arts will contribute significantly to the training of skillful worker and innovative leaders.

