

oppaga Progress Report



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Report No. 04-57

Department of State Improves Administration of Cultural and Historical Programs

at a glance

The Department of State has made progress in improving the administration of its cultural and historical programs. The department has begun to streamline its grants process by eliminating several grant review panels, and continues to express interest in developing a fully electronic grants system. In addition, it has created the Office of the Deputy Secretary for Cultural and Historical Programs to bring the department closer to a collaborative vision for Florida's cultural and historical programs.

The cultural and historical programs need to continue to improve their performance measurement and planning systems, as well as the efficiency of their grants processes. In addition, the department needs to continue to take steps to ensure adequate oversight and maintenance of state-owned historic properties.

Scope

In accordance with state law, this progress report informs the Legislature of actions the Department of State has taken in response to a December 2002 OPPAGA program evaluation and justification review of the Divisions of

Cultural Affairs and Historical Resources.^{1,2} It presents our assessment of the extent to which our findings and recommendations have been addressed.

Background

The newly created Office of Cultural and Historical Programs within the Department of State preserves and promotes the state's cultural and historical resources, and makes them accessible to the public. The cultural program primarily supports the arts, but also supports cultural institutions such as science museums and historical societies. The historical program supports initiatives that focus on Florida history including historical museums and historic preservation efforts. The cultural and historical program office includes activities administered by the Division of Cultural Affairs and the Division of Historical Resources.

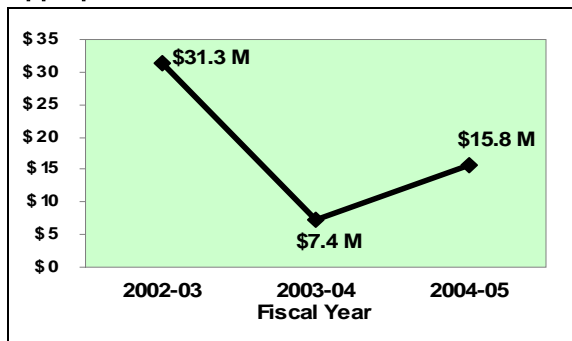
Division of Cultural Affairs. The cultural program manages the department's 11 cultural grants programs, which award matching grants to individuals and groups for the presentation of cultural activities and for the

¹ Section 11.51(6), *F.S.*

² *Two Department of State Divisions Would Benefit Through Coordination and Grants Streamlining*, [Report No. 02-68](#), December 2002.

acquisition, construction, and renovation of cultural facilities. It also provides a range of services that promote the arts, such as overseeing the Art in State Buildings Program, providing venues for Florida artists to exhibit their work, and publishing a resource tool for arts in education programs.³ As shown in Exhibit 1, the program's appropriation has fluctuated in recent years.

Exhibit 1
The Division of Cultural Affairs' Legislative Appropriation Has Fluctuated in Recent Years



Source: *Laws of Florida*, 2002 through 2004.

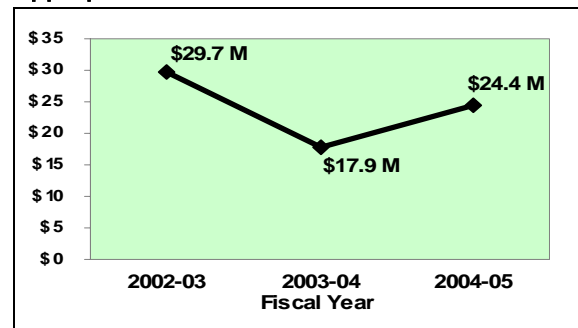
Despite an overall decrease in its legislative appropriation, the program continues to award around 700 grants each year. However, there has been a reduction in the size of the grants.

Division of Historical Resources. The historical resources program promotes knowledge and appreciation of Florida history by acquiring, preserving, and retaining sites, properties, and artifacts holding archaeological and historical value to the state. The program operates historical museums and sites of historical and archaeological significance, and provides information about the location of historical structures to state and local governments as well as private consultants. It also provides grants to support activities that contribute to the preservation, rehabilitation, and protection of archaeological sites.

³ The Department of State's website contains detailed information about its cultural grants programs as well as other programs that promote cultural activity in the state.

The historical program's annual appropriation from the Legislature has also fluctuated in recent years (see Exhibit 2). The program will award 180 grants, totaling \$13.8 million, in Fiscal Year 2004-05.

Exhibit 2
The Division of Historical Resources' Legislative Appropriation Has Fluctuated in Recent Years



Source: *Laws of Florida*, 2002 through 2004.

Current Status

Our 2002 review concluded that the cultural and historical programs provide benefits to the citizens of Florida by promoting access to Florida's cultural and historical resources, and contributing to economic development and education goals. We also found that Florida has a well-developed structure for awarding cultural and historical program grants. However, we identified four areas needing improvement: (1) grant-making processes; (2) planning; (3) performance data; and (4) oversight of state-owned historic properties.

Streamlining grant processes continues to be a goal of the department

Our 2002 review concluded that while the department had increased the efficiency of its grant-making process, additional streamlining was possible. The department had moved to multi-year funding for some programs, which reduced the number of grant applications that need to be submitted and reviewed each year, and reduced administrative tasks such as arranging meetings and travel for grant review panels. We recommended that the department

explore ways to further reduce the number of grant review panels. We also recommended that the department pursue developing a system in which grants could be submitted and reviewed electronically.

The department has taken steps to implement our recommendations to further streamline its grants process. It has reduced the number of grant review panels for individual artist fellowships by accepting applications for different arts disciplines in alternating years. To achieve efficiencies in the grant process, the department has also consolidated administrative functions related to grants in the cultural and historical program areas.

While the department has adopted a goal of developing an electronic grants system, little progress has been made to date on this effort. We continue to believe that an electronic grants system would streamline the process for both grantees and the department.

The department has increased coordination between its cultural and historical programs

Our 2002 report noted that the department's cultural and historical programs share the goal of promoting local resource development. However, the department did not promote the programs' common goals, and it lacked a well-developed mechanism for coordination between the cultural and historical programs. To facilitate coordination, we recommended merging the department's Divisions of Cultural Affairs and Historical Resources. While a merger may not necessarily translate into direct cost savings, it would aid in developing a coordinated state cultural policy; result in a more strategic approach to planning and the use of state funds; and streamline the process for local organizations to access state grants and technical assistance. We also recommended that the department develop a single strategic plan that addresses both cultural and historical resources development.

The department has increased coordination between the cultural and historical programs by creating an Office of the Deputy Secretary for Historical and Cultural Programs. This organizational change, while not fully merging the two divisions, does aid in realizing a collective vision for the two program areas. The cultural program also has begun to develop a strategic plan, which the department believes will redefine the role of arts and culture in the state. However, the plan is not currently intended to incorporate the state's historical initiatives.⁴ We continue to believe that developing a single strategic plan for both cultural and historical resource development would benefit the state.

The programs have devised more reliable data collection methods, but have not yet developed meaningful performance measures

Our 2002 report concluded that the department's performance information was not reliable enough to be used to evaluate program performance. Further, the department's legislative performance measures provided some useful information such as the number and amounts of grants awarded, but did not provide meaningful information about the impact of programs. To enhance the usefulness of its performance measurement system, we recommended that the department improve the accuracy of performance data. We also recommended that it develop internal performance measures that demonstrate program impact.⁵

In addressing our recommendations, the department has formalized its data collection procedures, and plans to train staff in how to verify performance data. These initiatives are designed to achieve greater consistency in the measurement and reporting of data. However, the department has not made progress in

⁴ The strategic plan will be presented to the advisory Florida Arts Council in September 2004.

⁵ Our 2002 report included suggestions about developing more meaningful performance measures.

developing more meaningful measures of the impact of the cultural and historical programs. We continue to believe that this effort is needed so that the department can demonstrate the value derived from the states investment in cultural and historical initiatives.

The department is developing a statewide inventory of cultural facilities, which includes a history of state funding. When fully operational, this system will help grant review panelists understand conditions in local communities that are seeking grants, and can therefore serve as a tool for assessing the potential impact of state funds.

Problems in maintenance and ownership of state-owned historic properties have not been resolved

Our 2002 report concluded that the department needed to improve its oversight of state-owned historic properties. While the department passes maintenance responsibility to entities that lease and manage the sites, it ultimately retains the responsibility to ensure that these properties are maintained and preserved. Our report noted that maintenance and repair needs for state-owned historic properties totaled over \$19 million, and recommended that the department develop a planning and budgeting process to ensure that facilities are maintained in the most favorable conditions, while promoting life cycle

economies. We also recommended that the Legislature consider whether the state should continue ownership or divest itself of certain historic properties.

In response to our recommendation, the department submitted a proposal for funding the maintenance needs of four state-owned historic properties to the 2003 Legislature. While the Legislature did not fund the proposal, several state-owned historic properties each year generally receive funding for maintenance needs through the department's ongoing historic preservation grants-in-aid program.⁶

The ownership of one state-owned historic property, the Coconut Grove Playhouse in Miami, has changed since our 2002 report. The playhouse facility was turned over to the not-for-profit corporation that operates the playhouse in June 2004. We continue to believe that the department and the Legislature should consider whether the state should continue ownership or divest itself of other state-owned historic properties.⁷

⁶ With the decline in the division's budget for Fiscal Year 2003-04 (see Exhibit 2), the historical program did not provide grant funds for maintenance needs of any state-owned historic properties.

⁷ The department has developed a list of recommendations regarding which state-owned properties could be managed by other entities.

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