A Significant Increase in Federal Funding for Humanities Councils Strengthens Communities Across the Nation

Councils stimulate local economies. Councils invigorate local economies by investing in communities’ cultural and educational infrastructure. By supporting museums, libraries, festivals, and public programming, councils enrich communities’ quality of life, making them more attractive to businesses and advancing a skilled, educated workforce. This support has been a lifeline for cultural organizations throughout the pandemic. The councils sent more than $80 million dollars of CARES Act and ARP funding back into communities across the nation.

Councils leverage more than $4 at the local level for every federal dollar they regrant. Each year, councils leverage their NEH funding to raise millions of dollars to invest in local communities. NEH support is the vital seed money that enables councils to raise additional funds from corporations, foundations, individuals, and state government.

Councils promote K-12 education. Councils provide resources for students and, in many states, the only summer institutes, weekend workshops, or other professional development programs for humanities teachers. Councils adeptly shifted these important programs to virtual platforms during the pandemic. By better preparing teachers in their subjects, these programs improve the quality of students’ education and reduce costly teacher turnover.

Councils partner with over 8,800 organizations nationwide. Councils partnered with museums, libraries, K-12 schools and universities, senior centers, correctional facilities, veterans hospitals, churches and social service agencies, corporations, local businesses, chambers of commerce and state tourism offices, radio and television stations, and many others.

Councils promote appreciation of local and national history and heritage. Councils support public discussion forums, exhibits, documentary films, online encyclopedias, and oral history projects.

Councils support cultural enrichment in rural communities. Councils serve rural residents through humanities speakers series, reading and discussion sessions, and other programs in local libraries, museums, and community centers. A number of councils grew their pen pal programs during the pandemic to connect those in rural areas without broadband.

Councils support innovative programs on veterans’ issues. Writing workshops and reading and discussion programs help veterans reintegrate into their communities. Literature & Medicine programs allow VA hospital staff to better understand and empathize with their patients, which improves the quality of their care. Community dialogues, speakers series, and films enable the general public to more fully appreciate the challenges veterans and their families face. Council veterans’ oral history projects have captured voices that were lost to COVID-19.

Councils reach diverse populations in tens of thousands of communities. Council programs across the nation benefit a wide range of people, including veterans, seniors, rural residents, parents, young children, students and teachers, LGBTQ populations, Black, Native, and Indigneous peoples, people of color, and those with disabilities.

Councils foster early childhood education. Council family literacy programs support children’s future educational and economic success, strengthen family ties, and increase parents’ job prospects by improving their reading skills.

Councils help us learn more about each other. Councils work with and in communities to bring together neighbors and strangers across differences to listen respectfully and learn from one another, creating spaces to talk about histories of inequity, issues we face today, and the future we can collaboratively create.

Councils support lifelong learning and civic education. Council programs encourage curiosity, civic engagement, critical reasoning, and understanding of diverse cultures – traits essential to building a more competitive workforce and stronger democracy in a rapidly changing, knowledge-based global economy.