

Foundation Funding Proposal Template for *Yesterday's Tomorrows*

Project Overview/Abstract:

Yesterday's Tomorrows: Past Visions of the American Future is the third exhibition in an ongoing partnership between state humanities councils and the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) known as Museum on Main Street. The exhibition presents an historical overview of popular expectations and beliefs about the future from the late nineteenth century to today, exploring past perceptions of the future home, community, and transportation, and the media's role in creating them. The *****state humanities council ***** will bring *Yesterday's Tomorrows* to ** state ** for an exclusive tour in**year(s)**. The exhibition will travel to ***list state' s communities**in a **length of tour in months** itinerary that will bring the Smithsonian to our state's rural audiences for the first time ever.

Allowing *all* of our state's residents to have access to the cultural resources of our nation' s premiere museum is a priority of the ** state humanities council **. With this exclusive tour, we intend to augment the exhibition's educational impact with free public events such as ***list sample activities***. This proposal summarizes the compelling needs for this project among our state' s rural communities, its promise for a high quality educational experience, and our request of ****amount requested** for exclusive sponsorship for the**list corporation /foundation **.

The *****state humanities council ***

***You will want to use the 2-3 sentence description of your state humanities council, its outstanding features and mission—be sure to mention state agency status ***

What is Museum on Main Street?

Museum on Main Street is an ongoing partnership of the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) and state humanities councils nationwide that aims to serve the small town museums and audiences of rural America. Museum on Main Street is nearly ten years old, having developed from a cooperative national study of one hundred rural cultural organizations and their specific needs and preferences, specifically their severe budget and space constraints. Museum on Main Street combines the cachet of the Smithsonian' s name with the program expertise of state humanities councils and the unbridled enthusiasm resident in small town America to create an educational and entertainment experience that is characterized by its high quality, innovation, imagination, fun, and popularity. Public reactions to Museum on Main Street exhibitions and its attendant public activities are nothing short of astounding as local organizations and volunteers demonstrate unparalleled enthusiasm for welcoming the Smithsonian to town.

In addition to *Yesterday's Tomorrows*, Museum on Main Street is currently touring two additional exhibitions: *Produce for Victory: Posters on the American Home Front, 1941-45* and *Barn Again! Celebrating an American Icon*. The pilot exhibition, *Produce for Victory*, explores the

WWII home front experience, with an expressed focus on how the U.S. government influenced its citizenry to help with the war effort. In its sixteen-state tour to more than eighty rural communities, *Produce for Victory* has added immeasurably to our collective understanding of how small towns participated in “the last good war.” Archival photography collections in West Virginia and USO recreation shows in Oregon are just two fine examples of the ancillary events implemented by local communities with *Produce for Victory*. The exhibition originated at the National Museum of American History and was co-curated by Harry Rubenstein and Larry Bird.

So far, *Barn Again!*, an exhibition curated by Gregory K. Dreicer and produced in cooperation with the National Building Museum and the National Trust for Historic Preservation, has been wildly successful in sixty-five communities across thirteen states nationwide. *Barn Again!* examines the barn as an adaptable agricultural structure, as a symbol of community and country life, and as a monument on the American landscape. Through artifacts and images related to farming, politics, art, industry, and the relationship between city and country, *Barn Again!* considers the many forces that shaped the farmstead. Not surprisingly, *Barn Again!* has been met with enormous enthusiasm at local levels; from barn-to-barn fun runs and barn cake decorating contests in Ohio to the establishment of permanent barn restoration funds in Utah, local activities have run the gamut from the popular to the profound.

Why Rural? An Expression of Need

Despite recent technological advancements to bridge great distances, residents of America's small towns still experience severe geographic, economic, and cultural isolation. The present concentration of people in sprawling metropolitan areas leaves millions of rural residents effectively cut off from high quality educational and cultural opportunities.

A recent report to Congress by the Institute of Museum and Library Services highlighted the acute financial and programmatic needs of small, rural museums, noting that 75% of museums in the U.S. categorize themselves as “small” and nearly 60% as “rural.” Likewise, as the overwhelming majority of museums in our nation, these institutions hold a disproportionate share of important historical and natural history artifacts. However, they are financially strapped, with few, if any, opportunities for professional training or advancement. As a profile, these museums typically employ fewer than two full time staff, rely on twenty-five full-time volunteers, work within a program budget totaling less than \$500 annually, maintain fewer than 500 square feet of temporary exhibition space, but annually host more than 12,000 visitors.

Still, **state's** small rural museums are not without some compelling virtues. Because they are organized by *place*, they're typically less concerned with the disciplinary divisions we find in larger museums. Under one roof, they often house everything from anthropological, geological, historical, and paleontological specimens, to regular showings of the local high school's watercolor show. **may want to cite an in-state example of a museum here** They are, in fact, true community centers, safe places for learning and fine conservators of a town's objects and values. Their “amateur” status, while limiting in some ways, serves them well in many others; for instance, they are unashamed experts in volunteerism and well-positioned to offer exciting public events that engage every age level and every organizational type, from libraries to businesses, hospitals to schools.

Answering The Need

Most of **state's** museums are restricted from hosting national traveling exhibitions by their limited budgets and insufficient staff. Typically, they cannot accommodate large structural components, complex installations, and expensive shipping and participation fees. With *Yesterday's Tomorrows*, Smithsonian designers have developed a novel structural format that is free-standing, durable, easy to install, adjustable to a wide variety of exhibit spaces, and features original artifacts, photographs, interpretive texts, and audio/video components. This exhibit format earned a Presidential Design Award for Excellence not only because it delivers high-quality content in a compact package, but also because it is tailored so precisely to the specific needs of resource-poor museums.

However, there are other key project components for participating museums with *Yesterday's Tomorrows*. Each host community will augment the Smithsonian exhibition with its own stories and artifacts in the development of a companion exhibition. In this way, the national story will be localized and its pertinence and appeal will be strengthened. ****add at least two strong examples of how host towns will build on the exhibition's themes with their own exhibition: may be kids' participation in community-forecasting exercises, design and invention contests, local collections of retro future objects, or "then and now" community planning artifacts/photos***** The **state humanities council** has employed **state scholar/exhibit developer** to work in cooperation with each local museum to ensure that their efforts are accomplished with historical accuracy and improved levels of museum professionalism.

With *Yesterday's Tomorrows*, **state's** rural museums will have an opportunity to shine. Not only will they benefit from the prestige of hosting a Smithsonian traveling exhibition and from learning to build their own high-quality exhibition, but they'll embark on a year-long process of comprehensive institutional advancement. In concert with the **state humanities council** and our peers at the Smithsonian, we're providing these isolated institutions with opportunities for advancement and hands-on training in **list specific emphases here; may include: grantwriting and fund raising, marketing and public relations, educational programming, docent training, exhibit design, collections management, etc.** Through on-site consultations, a statewide planning workshop, and a hands-on installation workshop **list other tech asst efforts here**, we're committed to seeing that each participating museum is significantly improved because of their participation with *Yesterday's Tomorrows*.

Most rural museums which have partnered with Museum on Main Street around the country have recognized multiple key benefits. In **state** our tour of *Yesterday's Tomorrows* will:

- ❑ allow participating museums to reach rural audiences with a high-quality, portable exhibition, which in turn sparks ambitious, locally-organized public programming;
- ❑ allow the Smithsonian imprimatur and name-recognition to work on behalf of fund raising and programming efforts and to leverage public support to embark on institutional advancement and capital development projects;
- ❑ compile federal, state, and local resources to address local needs;
- ❑ develop and implement public events at local levels;
- ❑ provide training opportunities for small museum staff and volunteers in **number** towns across **state**;
- ❑ attract a broader audience because of the appeal of the Smithsonian name;
- ❑ establish local and statewide networks and partnerships between museums, schools, libraries, colleges, historical societies, adult education groups, and area businesses.

***Yesterday's Tomorrows* Content**

Yesterday's Tomorrows: Past Visions of the American Future is co-curated by Joseph J. Corn, Stanford University and Brian Horrigan, Minnesota Historical Society. Originally produced at the National Museum of American History, the exhibition presents an historical overview of popular expectations and beliefs about the future from the late nineteenth century through the late twentieth century. Divided into four sections, the exhibition will explore how the home, the community, and transportation were envisioned in the past, and will examine predictions for the future found in the media. At times lighthearted, as with the 1950s living room that can be cleaned with a garden hose, the exhibition features abundant and colorful examples of predictions and inventions that went awry. Focusing on the belief in a technological utopia and progress based on material means, the exhibition's artifacts will demonstrate how the predictions of the past shed light on the values and attitudes of their times.

The first theme, "Finding the Future," examines the ways that Americans have expressed their imaginings about the future in books, movies, magazines, television, radio, toys, and advertising. The future presented in these media ranges from cheerful utopias of technological wizardry to dark visions of societal dysfunction.

The second theme, "Home of Tomorrow," demonstrates how ideas about the home have evolved, with the home becoming a "machine for living." Modern architecture, mass production, and increased automation within the home often take precedence over human needs, and home designs continue to reflect contemporary beliefs about family life, gender roles, and social relations.

"Ideal" American communities envisioned in the early twentieth century reflected hopes, excitement, and fears about the reality of an increasingly urban society. This third theme, "Community of Tomorrow," explores strategies for future communities marked by a series of contradictions: communitarianism v. individualism, image v. social reality, utopia v. urban chaos.

Finally, futuristic vehicles are uniquely American ways of imagining tomorrow, reflecting Americans' faith in progress and technology, and illustrated in the fourth exhibition theme, "Transportation of Tomorrow." Before the 1920s, mass transit systems dominated Americans' visualizations of tomorrow's transportation. Later, the automobile became the dominant mode of transportation and the focus of designers' and planners' futuristic visions.

In this new millennium, *Yesterday's Tomorrows* offers us the opportunity to examine how ideas of the future from the past shape our contemporary values and attitudes as well as to assess our current ideas about what the future holds. In so doing, the exhibition also provides a unique opportunity to reexamine futuristic visions and the society which created them, thus giving us a deeper understanding of American history and culture.

Instate**, Our State's Plans**

****As required, it may be helpful to outline the specific state initiatives that are in place for your hosting of *Yesterday's Tomorrows*. This section may be particularly relevant as it sets up the following paragraphs detailing the requested support ****

Evaluation

Too often projects rooted in the arts and humanities rely on purely anecdotal evidence of their value. With *Yesterday's Tomorrows'* tour of **state**, project evaluation is a key ingredient to success. In addition to the ongoing consultations of program officers and state scholars, each participating host of the exhibition and public programs will complete a Close-Out Summary of their overall experience. This summary gathers both qualitative and quantitative data on the project, investigating everything from visitorship, attendance, and fund raising to marketing and organizational partnerships. The evaluation process is designed to augment the training aspects of the project, recording areas of marked improvement for participating rural organizations and highlighting their future needs for advancement.

Request

We respectfully request **dollar amount** of the **foundation** to support the exclusive **state** tour of the Smithsonian's *Yesterday's Tomorrows*. We are approaching the **foundation** because of your long-standing support for **add rationale/ pertinence of this request to this foundation**. **how do the project and fundor mesh?** The **state humanities council** is contributing ** dollar amount ** in direct costs to this project; local communities are also adding **dollar amount ** in cash and in-kind contributions to ensure that this project will be successful. Among our outstanding expenses, **dollar amount** is needed for **list specific element of dollars requested; may be to off-set national fee, add tech asst component, publication or website initiative**. We have attached a complete project budget to this proposal as well as the most recent annual report from the **state humanities council** for additional financial information.

It is understood that **foundation name** will be generously credited in ***name specific guarantees for credit in state and local programs, publications, etc.—depending on amount requested you may want the sponsor' s name added to the exhibition credit panel on Smithsonian exhibition****.

Conclusion

The support of **foundation name** will provide our state' s rural residents with first-time access to the excellence and scholarship of the Smithsonian Institution. This opportunity for cooperation at national, state, and local levels is truly rare. And in answering the compelling needs of **state's** highly motivated rural museums, *Yesterday's Tomorrows* can prove a catalyst for strategic institutional improvement. In addition, the exhibition and its attendant educational programs, events, and activities will reach thousands of **state's** citizens, engaging them in fruitful examinations of their futures and asking that they participate actively in the planning and design of their homes, transportation and communities.

With this project we can offer these museums the opportunity to host popular public events that can serve to invigorate otherwise isolated communities

** Don't forget to attach:

- IRS tax exempt confirmation letter
- state exhibition itinerary (may be expanded to include project timeline)
- in-state project budget
- latest shc statement of revenues and expenses (audit info as required)
- listing(with one sentence descriptions) of current board members listing of key project

- personnel and scholars(s), including one sentence description of roles;
- ❑ resumes available as needed

** You may also want to include:

- ❑ *Yesterday's Tomorrows* catalog
- ❑ most recent shc annual report / newsletter