

THE BETTERMENT FUND

Created by the will of William Bingham 2nd

Trustees: William B. Winship • Carolyn S. Wollen • William P. Clough III • Carol Berg Geist • Andrew L. Tansey • Martin J. Grohman
Bank of America N.A.

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Betterment Fund Current Grant Priorities

In order to guide applicants, the Betterment Fund trustees have identified current priorities in the fields of Education, Health, Community Support, Conservation, Creative Economy, and Philanthropy. We review and publish our grant priorities periodically. We are not able to fund all proposals we receive within our identified priorities, and funding decisions take into account the funds available as well as the merit of each proposal and other factors. Although we are willing to receive and consider an application which does not address any of the stated priorities, the likelihood of a favorable outcome for a non-conforming application is diminished. While a grant application that “hits the nail on the head” in terms of our stated priorities is at least assured of serious consideration, the funds available for grantmaking normally are less than the amount which would be needed to meet all requests made to the Fund.

The trustees are respectful of the energy and time it takes to complete an application to the Betterment Fund. In hopes that this may help organizations avoid making applications which are unlikely to be funded, in each priority area we have identified some of the organizations that have recently received Betterment funding as well as the types of proposals that are less likely to be funded at this time.

Our Grant Procedures statement outlines some of the qualities we hope to find in applications. The Fund has traditionally given preference to the projects and causes in the Western and rural interior sections of Maine.

The following five exhibits list our current priorities in each Betterment Fund grantmaking sector:

- Exhibit A Education
- Exhibit B Health
- Exhibit C Community Support
- Exhibit D Conservation
- Exhibit E Creative Economy and Philanthropy

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Betterment Fund Priorities

Exhibit A: Education

- ***Leadership, development and advancement of major educational policy initiatives on a state-wide basis:*** An example of a funded leadership initiative is the Betterment Fund's support for an "Early College" program through the *Maine Community College System*. Other examples include past support for aspects of the State's *Compact for Higher Education*, the *Mitchell Institute* and adult education programs leading to individuals having greater economic self-sufficiency.
- ***Educational Quality:*** We may fund broad-based projects to improve the quality of K-12 public education, such as greater evaluation capacity for *Job's for Maine's Graduates*.
- ***Arts education:*** We are primarily interested in making grants that have a regional or state-wide focus and that have the potential of improving the overall landscape for arts education in Maine. One current example is a recent grant to the *Maine Alliance for Arts Education* to initiate a broad assessment of arts education across the State.
- ***College scholarships for Maine students in Maine colleges and universities:*** We fund scholarships through particular educational institutions rather than making awards directly to individuals. Such scholarship funding will be initiated by the trustees rather than in response to grant requests.

Proposals that are not as likely to be funded include local school programs, agencies which seek to provide programming that is supplementary to the curricula of established schools and colleges, and capital construction projects for particular schools.

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Exhibit B: Health

- ***Increasing educational opportunities for health careers:*** In response to the need to expand the availability of Maine health care workers in the coming years, we support training initiatives such as development of the health worker curriculum through Sunrise Opportunities in Washington County, and the establishment of new health professions curricula in Maine education institutions, such as the *University of New England Pharmacy School*.
- ***Health care access for rural populations:*** We are interested in projects that feature innovative methods of delivery, such as telemedicine and mobile health care facilities.
- ***Oral health:*** We have made a substantial commitment over the last few years to improving oral health in Maine and we are continuing in this area of our interest, particularly in the matter of oral health education and policy development. Some examples are programs created to increase access to early childhood oral health exams and services and preventive care initiatives such as fluoride treatment.
- ***Maine public health:*** Maine's public health system is not developed to its full potential. We support initiatives that will increase the effectiveness and utilization of the system, such as *Maine Health InfoNet*, *Maine Public Health* projects and *Healthy Community* initiatives.

Proposals that are not as likely to be funded include pure medical research, projects relating to a single disease or condition, capital construction or equipment projects for hospitals or medical centers, and local programs impacting a small subpopulation.

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Betterment Fund Priorities Exhibit C: Community Support

- ***Selected economic development initiatives and use of scarce resources:*** Previous recipients of Betterment Fund grants include economically focused initiatives such as the *Maine Downtown Center of the Maine Development Foundation*, *Sunrise County Economic Council*, *Four Directions Development Corporation* and *CEI*. We also have supported organizations which promote traditional Maine occupations, such as *The Maine Center for Furniture Craftsmanship* and *The Landing School*. *The Good Shepherd Food Bank* and *Western Maine Community Action's* program "Keeping Seniors Home" are examples of organizations dedicated to the effective use of scarce resources.
- ***Building stronger rural communities and assets for rural families:*** To help build "social capital" in rural communities we have supported important community institutions such as libraries which expand their services beyond book-lending. We support community-based organizations that foster collaboration among members of the community such as the *Maine Woods Consortium*. We have also supported the extension of community services that may be more difficult to access in rural areas, such as transportation or legal services.
- ***Promoting state-wide policy initiatives consistent with our philanthropic themes:*** In the past we have supported organizations that provide research for state policy initiatives, such as *The Maine Children's Alliance* and its *Kids Count* project, and the *Maine Center for Economic Policy*. We have supported the development of new state or local policies and advocacy based on such research.

Proposals that are not as likely to be funded include projects that are essentially the provision of human services, libraries located in larger communities or which offer limited community services, historical societies, and restoration or preservation of historic buildings

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Betterment Fund Priorities

Exhibit D: Conservation

- ***Land preservation:*** The Fund supports projects in land and natural resource conservation across the State, but primarily in the northern forest area. Currently we are concentrating our resources on collaborative initiatives in Western Maine where large acreage ownership is in transition. That collaborative work, called *the Mahoosuc Initiative*, involves a number of conservation organizations from Maine and neighboring states and provinces.
- ***Resource development:*** The Fund supports efforts to conserve resources and the natural environment while recognizing the need for economic sustainability as well. Visionary projects that integrate and balance those two objectives are of special interest. Examples might be the organizations that assist private owners of land in forestry or agriculture, such as the *Small Woodlot Owners of Maine* and the *Maine Farmland Trust*.
- ***Resource preservation:*** The Fund supports projects created by organizations such as land trusts or established resource protection associations including *Maine Audubon Society's "Beginning with Habitat"* and *The Natural Resources Council of Maine*.
- ***Environmental tourism and economic development:*** Projects that promote tourism and development are of interest as long as they feature controls that meet environmental standards and make good environmental sense. Currently we are supporting *Maine Huts and Trails* and trails projects sponsored by the *Appalachian Mountain Club*.

Proposals that are not as likely to be funded include environmental education programs, land trust preservation projects outside Western Maine, projects involving the issues of coastal fishing, and efforts to protect lakes or rivers.

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Betterment Fund Priorities Exhibit E: Smaller Grant Categories

Creative Economy

The Fund recognizes arts and cultural assets as more than contributors to quality of life in a particular place, but as important economic drivers for the region and State. We are more likely to fund organizations and projects that (i) impact a region of Maine rather than a particular locale, (ii) have a rural focus rather than an urban focus, (iii) feature significant collaboration among organizations and individuals working in related areas, and (iv) have a demonstrable connection to the economic life of Maine.

In most cases we are not able to fund a specific arts organization with a project that relates only to the development of its own organization.

Philanthropy

The Betterment Fund acknowledges responsibility to help other organizations in the philanthropic world of Maine, leading to improvements in grantmaking and the support of charitable organizations in Maine overall. We have supported the Maine philanthropic community itself with grants and active participation in programs with such organizations as the *Maine Philanthropy Center*, the *Maine Association of Non-Profits* and *The Institute for Civic Leadership/The Board Network* and by giving funds to organizations such as the *Maine Community Foundation*, *Maine Initiatives*, and *Maine Humanities Council* for regranting to smaller projects with a more local perspective.