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Arts Endowment Slashes Budget

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 8 — The National Endowment for the Arts, struggling to meet the Reagan Administration's demand that it reduce spending by about 50 percent, has sent to Congress a revised budget for fiscal 1982 that would cut the challenge-grant program by more than 80 percent and eliminate several other programs.

The challenge-grant program awards funds to museums, orchestras and theater companies, on condition that they match the award three to one. According to the Endowment's report to Congress, the program has "been responsible in its first four years — at a cost of less than \$95 million in terms of Federal investment — for bringing some one-half billion dollars of sorely needed new funds into American arts organizations."

Under the new proposal, the Endowment would award \$2.5 million in challenge grants next year, compared to an estimated \$13.45 million in 1981. Only five to seven awards would be made. In December 1980 the Endowment made 64 awards. Past recipients have included the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the New York City Ballet and the Brooklyn Philharmonic.

To be dropped is a constituencies program to make the arts more accessible to older Americans, veterans, the handicapped and the institutionalized.

Also proposed for elimination are the Endowment's research arm, a fellowship program to train managers of artistic institutions and an office that arranges international exchanges.

The Endowment's advancement effort, which awards special building grants to "emerging organizations of high artistic significance and future potential" will also be discontinued.

Most other Endowment branches will work on budgets reduced by between 20 and 50 percent.

Support of state arts programs, required by law, would be cut from \$23.6 million to \$11.6 million. The Artists in Education program to bring artists into educational communities, would be slashed from \$5.25 million in 1981 to \$235,000 in 1982. Support of media programs would be reduced from \$12.4 million in 1981 to \$3.25 million in 1982, museum support would fall from \$13 million to \$7.7 million and theater support from \$10.7 million to \$3.4 million.

Only administrative costs are not scheduled to be cut, but will rise by \$530,000. The reason, according to the report, is that "the Endowment does not see any great slackening of the application load, currently running at more than 30,000 a year." By tightening eligibility requirements, applications might be reduced 12 percent, but even that will not cut administrative costs appreciably, the report said.

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