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Progress Report



May 1999

Report No. 98-79

DOS Developing Ringling Museum Measures; No Action Taken on Coconut Grove Playhouse

at a glance

The Legislature has not taken action on our recommendations regarding state ownership of the Coconut Grove Playhouse.

The Department of State has partially addressed the recommendations in our report. The department is developing performance measures for the Ringling Museum of Art as a part of its efforts to implement performance-based program budgeting. The department has not developed performance measures for the Coconut Grove Playhouse.

Purpose

In accordance with state law, this progress report informs the Legislature of actions taken by the Department of State in response to our 1997 report.^{1,2} This report presents our assessment of the extent to which the department has addressed the findings and recommendations included in our report.

Background

The Department of State is responsible for oversight of two state-owned properties, the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art and the Coconut Grove Playhouse in Miami.³ John Ringling left the 66-acre Ringling Museum of Art to the State of Florida following his death in 1936. An 11-member board with representatives from seven counties manages the museum. The state purchased the Coconut Grove Playhouse in 1980. The Department of State contracts with a nonprofit corporation to operate the playhouse.

¹ Section 11.45(7)(f), F.S.

² *Review of State-Owned Cultural Properties: Ringling Museum of Art and Coconut Grove Playhouse*, OPPAGA- [Report No. 96-71](#), March 1997.

³ Oversight of state-owned cultural properties is also assigned to the Department of Environmental Protection (for properties located in state parks) and to the Department of Education (for properties located in public schools and universities.)

Prior Findings

In our previous report, we found that state ownership of cultural properties is warranted for sites that are accessible to the public and provide unique programs with a statewide impact.

Florida has a long history of preserving cultural properties deemed significant enough to belong to the public at large. We found that the Ringling Museum's art collection and historic properties are accessible to the public, draw visitors from outside the local area, and have a statewide impact. However, we found the Coconut Grove Playhouse primarily serves the local community and has limited public access.

We recommended that the state retain ownership of the Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota. The Ringling Museum includes a valuable art collection and historic properties accessible to the public with free admissions to Florida students and teachers. In addition, the art galleries are free to the general public on Saturdays. The museum attracts two-thirds of its visitors from outside the local area.

We recommended that the Legislature consider alternatives to state control of the Coconut Grove Playhouse in Miami. While the playhouse provides valued cultural programs, its productions primarily serve a local audience and public access is limited by the costs of theater tickets (\$20 to \$40 per play). We recommended three options to state control of the playhouse:

- turn the playhouse over to local government or to a non-profit organization;
- sell the playhouse; or
- continue state ownership of the playhouse and continue to pay for ongoing maintenance cost.

Our previous report found that the Department of State does not routinely collect information to evaluate the benefits and impacts of the Ringling Museum and the Coconut Grove Playhouse.

Florida's efforts to redesign state government, such as performance-based program budgeting, have emphasized the need for agencies to evaluate program outcomes.⁴ Such evaluation is needed to assess a program's results relative to its costs. We recommended that the Department of State develop a performance accountability system that will allow it to assess the benefits received from the state's investment in the Ringling Museum and the Coconut Grove Playhouse.

Current Status

The Legislature has not taken action on our recommendations regarding state ownership of the Coconut Grove Playhouse. The Department of State has partially addressed our recommendations to develop performance measures as a part of its oversight of state-owned cultural properties.

Actions Taken

The department has proposed the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art as a separate performance-based budgeting program to begin during the Fiscal Year 2000-2001 budget cycle. Exhibit 1 shows the performance measures proposed for the Museum.

⁴ The Government Performance and Accountability Act of 1994 (ss. 216.0166 - 216.0235, F.S.) requires agencies to develop performance measures to provide information to legislators to assist them in making informed budgeting decisions.

Exhibit 1: Measures Proposed for Ringling Museum

Outputs (Units Produced)	Outcome (Results)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Net asset balance of the museum and foundation▪ Number of items on loan▪ Number of items on exhibit▪ Total number of objects maintained▪ Number of publications and presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Annual number of visitors▪ Number of individual participants in scheduled education programs▪ Percentages of visitors rating the museum visit better than expected

Source: Department of State.

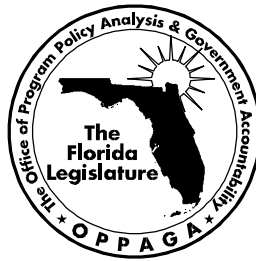
Actions Not Taken

The department has not developed performance measures for the Coconut Grove Playhouse. According to the department, legislative action should precede the development of performance measures for the playhouse. The department provided two reasons for taking this position. First, the playhouse is currently operated by an independent, nonprofit theater company through a long-term contract. Second, the department believes the issue of whether to continue state ownership needs to be addressed before measures are developed.

In our opinion, until such time as the Legislature takes action to discontinue state ownership, the department has a responsibility to assess the cost and benefits of the state's investment of funds in the Coconut Grove Playhouse.

The Florida Legislature

Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability



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