



Mass Cultural Council - Cultural Facilities Fund -
Capital 2021

Middlesex Canal Association Inc.

Application #CFF-C-0091

Primary Contact: Mr. J. Jeremiah Breen
Phone: (978) 688-4322
Email: jj@middlesexcanal.org

Applicant Profile

Applicant Type	Organization
Legal Name	Middlesex Canal Association Inc.
Date of 501(c)3 incorporation	03/05/1964
Address	71 Faulkner Street Billerica, Massachusetts 01862 UNITED STATES
Telephone	(978) 670-2740
Primary Contact	Mr. J. Jeremiah Breen president Phone: (978) 688-4322 Email: jj@middlesexcanal.org
Applicant Status	Organization - Non-Profit
Applicant Institution	Historical Society
Applicant Discipline	Multidisciplinary
FEIN / TAX ID	51-0176731
DUNS Number	000000000



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Project Overview

Is this grant application for a Capital (CAP) Grant only OR both a Capital (CAP) Grant and a Systems Replacement Plan (SRP) Grant?

Capital Grant (CAP)

Name of Executive Director (or equivalent):

J. Jeremiah Breen

Title:

president

Email:

jbreen5@verizon.net

Telephone:

9786884322

How many years has this Executive Director (or equivalent) been serving?

9

Organization Website:

www.middlesexcanal.org

Type of Organization:

501c3 Cultural Organization

Name of Subject Facility:

Middlesex Canal Visitor Center/Museum

Street Address of Subject Facility:

71 Faulkner Street

City of Subject Facility:

Billerica

State of Subject Facility:

MA

Postal Code of Subject Facility:

01862



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What is the square footage of the municipal facility?

What percent of the municipally-owned building is dedicated to arts and cultural purposes?

Please indicate the age of the municipal building:

Project type:

New Construction/Expansion

Indicate the approximate stage your project is in:

In construction/implementation

In a few brief sentences, provide a summary of your project.

Adaptive reuse of a 150-year-old wool cloth storehouse at 2 Old Elm Street, Billerica MA 01862, as a visitor center/museum. The new visitor center will replace the existing, rented, 4,400 sq. ft. visitor center at 71 Faulkner Street, Billerica.

Total Project Costs:

\$2,00,000.

Grant Request:

\$200,000.

Has your organization ever applied to the Cultural Facilities Fund?

Yes

Has your organization previously received a Cultural Facilities Fund grant?

No

If "YES", has your organization fully drawn down the grant funds or declined the grant in whole or in part?



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Organization Information

Total operating expenses for your organization's most recently completed fiscal year:

(Municipalities and colleges/universities: Please provide operating expenses for the cultural facility only.)
\$21,000.

Number of full-time equivalents (FTEs) employed at your organization:

1

Provide a brief summary of the organization, its programs, and services.

The Association was incorporated in 1964 and is the successor to the Middlesex Canal Co. incorporated in 1793. The Association has as its motto, ". . . this work designed for the benefit of the present & all Future Generations", words from the invocation at the groundbreaking for the canal. Three notable achievements since 1964 have been

(1) creation of a Special Collection in 1971 at the UMass Lowell Library to make available to the public the records of the Middlesex Canal Company. The records had been ordered stored by the Supreme Court of Massachusetts in the Middlesex County Courthouse in 1860 after the dissolution of the company. The county commissioners a century later transferred them to the Middlesex Canal Special Collection at UMass Lowell.

(2) establishment in 1977 by the legislature of the Middlesex Canal Commission with authorization for a Middlesex Canal Heritage Park. The legislature has funded the Commission with \$600,000 since 1977. and (3) opening in 2001 of the visitor center/museum at the summit pond of the canal. The visitor center is located where watered canal is on both sides of the summit pond and near the only visible remnant of twenty locks exists. The future center is located at the spot on the summit pond/Concord river bank of the ceremonial first shovelful of the groundbreaking in 1794. Part of the invocation at that groundbreaking became the motto of the Association, ". . . for the benefit of the present & all Future Generations."

Services for the present generation, two centuries after John Hancock and his compatriots began the canal, are a website and Facebook page with all 57 years of the journal, Towpath Topics, now published three times-a-year, online; walks on the towpath, twice a year, co-sponsored with the Appalachian Mountain Club; bike tours of the canal, twice a year; guest speakers at Association meetings, three times a year; host 16 classes of 3rd graders for a history lesson with funding from the Barker Foundation; staff the visitor center and have it open to the public, 100 days every year.

Incidental services, not scheduled, not programmed, occur. Three examples,

(1) an admirer of Henry Thoreau wanted to place a wayside exhibit aside the canal where he boated between the Concord and Merrimack Rivers in 1839. The Association sponsored her effort and received



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\$1600 from a real estate developer for the exhibit, now in place.

(2) a cub scout leader wanted a guide to the canal for his pack. A proprietor - the Association has two levels of membership, proprietor and associate - volunteered. One of the requirements of the cubs Bear Paws for Action Badge is to learn about two famous Americans. Coincidentally, the proprietor was a grandson of Loammi Baldwin, famous for building the canal.

and (3) a builder of a twelve-story apartment tower at Haymarket Square, Boston, wanted a painting for its entrance pavilion. The tower is named after its address, One Canal Street, and the visitor center's resident artist, Dahill, was commissioned and created The Canal that Bisected Boston for the pavilion, hung at 7' by 20' .

List any planning, capital, or preservation grants received for this facility from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts within the past 10 years.

None

Briefly interpret your organization's recent financial history, including any financial challenges. If your audits, review, or 990 are not up to date, please explain the circumstances.

In 2014, the Middlesex Canal Association accepted the gift of a dilapidated, 150-year-old, wool cloth storehouse. The first estimate for its adaptive reuse as a replacement for the existing, rented visitor center/museum was less than one million dollars. As of December 23, 2020, marked by a new roof, its renovation was nearly complete and had cost \$1 million. Another million is needed to reuse the renovated storehouse as a visitor center.

What are the start and end dates of your most recent strategic plan?

No plan - small organization.



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Facility Information

Type of facility:

Other

If "other", explain:

The visitor center is on the bank of the Concord River. The National Park Service's Sudbury, Assabet, and Concord Wild and Scenic River Stewardship Council has granted \$11,500 towards an environmental observation deck and interpretive panel.

Is the building currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places?

No

What is the square footage of the facility or site that is the subject of this proposal?

5,800.

Do you have maintenance staff on payroll?

No

If not, who is charged with maintenance?

Board of directors.

Type of ownership of the facility:

Owned

If "other", explain:

If you own the facility

If the organization is carrying debt, what is the term of debt financing?

What is the current outstanding principal balance of the debt?

Who is listed as the owner on the title?

Middlesex Canal Association, Incorporated.

Be sure to provide a copy of the lease when uploading your required materials.

What is the term (start and end dates) of your current lease?

If your lease is expiring within the next 2 years, please make the case for investment.



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What are the owner's responsibilities for building maintenance and repair, as stated in the lease?

What are your responsibilities for building maintenance and repair, as stated in the lease?

If none of the above apply, briefly explain:



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Project Information

Briefly summarize the facility project that is the subject of this application.

Adaptive reuse of a 150-year-old wool cloth storehouse at 2 Old Elm Street, Billerica MA 01862, as a visitor center/museum. The new visitor center will replace the existing, rented, 4,400 sq. ft. visitor center at 71 Faulkner Street, Billerica. Having done \$1 million of renovation, the remaining work is outfitting the interior and connecting electricity, water and sewer to the building.

Briefly describe your existing facility, if different.

The existing visitor center/museum was completed in 2001 in rented 4,800 sq. ft. The rent has been \$1,700/month for several years.

Virtual tour, <https://tinyurl.com/01862museum>

Or <https://360.goterest.com/sphere/virtual-riverfest-billerica?scene=5ec7f145ffd0e1cb7fa5baeb>

Describe the challenge or opportunity that led to the development of the proposed facilities project:

The location of the dilapidated, 150-year-old wool cloth storehouse is where the ceremonial groundbreaking for the then greatest work of its kind in the United States took place September 10, 1793. The best location possible, on the river bank aside the canal, across the street from a remnant of the twenty locks, and where Thoreau left the Concord to travel through the canal to the Merrimack, described in */A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers/*. The Thoreau Towpath is one of the most visited parts of the canal and it begins here.

The challenge has been getting permission from the conservation commission for riverfront development and getting donations.

For Municipalities: Please describe how 50% or more of the facility has programming for arts, humanities, or interpretive sciences.

For colleges or universities: Please describe how this facility provides service and open access to the community and general public outside of the regular educational mission.

Please indicate whether the project includes any of the following:

(check all that apply)

Fire & Safety System Upgrades

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance

Please confirm whether you are applying for the Capital (CAP) Grant or both the Capital (CAP) Grant and System Replacement Plan (SRP) Grant.

CAP



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If you have already been a recipient of a Cultural Facilities Fund Capital grant, please describe how this project is distinct from the previously funded project:

If you have already been a recipient of a Cultural Facilities Fund Feasibility & Technical Assistance Grant, please describe how the planning has informed the capital project:



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Threshold Criteria #1 - Statutory - Community Impact

Describe the community need for this project:

The Middlesex Canal Association was founded in 1962 as the result of a rousing talk about the Middlesex Canal at the 1961 annual meeting of the Billerica Historical Society. The speaker challenged those present to preserve the historic canal. When the Association applied for incorporation in 1963, among the Billerica addresses of the signers of the Articles of Organization were those of Lexington, Woburn, Shirley, Cambridge, Winchester, showing its community of supporters was already larger than Billerica.

In 1977, Woburn supporters convinced the legislature of the need for a Middlesex Canal Commission. A photo of Gov. Dukakis and other supporters in a canal boat in Woburn is in the Box miscellaneous folder along with the law authorizing a Middlesex Heritage Canal Park. The Commission has spent more than \$200,000 on plans for a Middlesex Canal Park at the summit pond, including 6 Old Elm St, the lot across the canal from the new visitor center. Plans for the park are in Box, folder miscellaneous/park at summit pond.

In 1983, a gift of 14 acres in Wilmington with a beautiful 0.8 miles of canal was received by the Association. A flyer for the 2018 walk of the property led by the Appalachian Mountain Club and the Association is in the Box miscellaneous folder.

In 1997, the Medford Historical Society and others, 200 years after the building of the canal, realized the need for a book on the canal and sponsored *The Incredible Ditch: A Bicentennial History of the Middlesex Canal*.

Above are a few items from the nine municipal communities* in which the canal was built and which indicate the demonstrated need to keep alive the canal for the benefit of present and future generations. The visitor center is part of the present and future.

*Nine Middlesex Canal communities: Boston, Somerville, Medford, Winchester, Woburn, Wilmington, Billerica, Chelmsford, Lowell.

Describe the tourism impact of your organization.

A review of the first 100 addresses in the visitor log has among those, in sequence, tourists from British Columbia, Canada; North Stonington, CT; Ledyard, CT; Upland, CA; Portland, OR; Palomar Mountain, CA; Venice, FL; Lewis, NY; Plainville, CT; Bristol, RI; Anchorage, AK; Bristol, RI; Tucson, AZ; indicating 13 % of visitors who signed the log were tourists. Notable is the lack of a tourist from England as canals are popular there with a consequent interest in America's greatest canal before the Erie located near the tourist destination of Boston. File uploaded, "Visitor Log of Tourist Addresses", in folder miscellaneous.

The English engineer, William Weston, who was a consultant in 1794 to the American, Loammi Baldwin, who was the builder of the canal, has some fame in England. In 2017, Pamela Gardner wrote from England to share information on Weston. Gardner is the author of *Billingsley*,



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Brampton and Beyond: In Search of the Weston Connection. Tourists from overseas are mostly English, one time French.

Canal societies from other States have joined with the Association in scheduling a weekend of tours and talks on the Middlesex and Lowell canals.

Describe the financial need for this grant:

After the gift of the storehouse in 2014, the Association consulted an architect and a structural engineer for conceptual drawings at a total cost of \$5,830. The general contractor recommended by the engineer provided an estimate > \$600,000. After pledges of > \$600,000 to the building fund, the Association began spending again on the new visitor center in August 2017, signing a \$20,160 agreement with Caveney Architects for schematic drawings. As of December 23, 2020, marked by a new roof, the Association has spent one million dollars. The general contractor has continued working inside during the winter.

The Association treasurer's January 2021 report has \$251,000 with \$135,000 in the endowment fund which is restricted.

The Association is dependent on donations to continue beyond the \$1 million which has been received.

Describe local support for the project (In terms of your organization and/or programming.):

Town of Billerica Grant of \$100,000.

On September 6, 2018, the Community Preservation Committee recommended that \$100,000 be granted to the Middlesex Canal Association for the visitor center/museum at 2 Old Elm St. At the fall 2018 town meeting, town meeting members voted a grant of \$100,000 to the Middlesex Canal Association which was paid in 2019.

Town of Billerica grant of \$280,000.

On September 2, 2020, the the Community Preservation Committee voted that the Association was eligible for a grant for ADA compliance. On December 27, 2020, the Association applied for a \$280,000 grant. No hearing has been scheduled.

National Park Service

The Sudbury, Assabet, and Concord Wild and Scenic River Stewardship Council has made two grants, total \$11,500, towards an environmental observation deck and interpretive panel.



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Threshold Criteria #2 - Financial Capacity

Describe your ability to raise the funds required to complete the project.

In 2014, the Middlesex Canal Association accepted the gift of a dilapidated, 150-year-old, wool cloth storehouse. The first estimate for its adaptive reuse as a replacement for the existing, rented visitor center/museum was less than one million dollars. The Association submitted an 89-page Notice of Intent prepared by a professional environmentalist at a cost of something like \$25,000 to the Billerica Conservation Commission on Sep. 12, 2018. After nine months and \$15,000 more in consulting fees and many tens of thousands of dollars more in construction costs, the Commission published a 29-page order recorded in the Middlesex North Registry, book 33074/page 159, permitting the adaptive reuse of the 150-year-old wool cloth storehouse as a visitor center/museum. The sticking point was a 25' no build zone on the banks of the Concord River. A building permit was issued on October 15, 2019. As of December 23, 2020, marked by topping off the renovated storehouse with a new roof, the Association has raised and spent approx. 1 million dollars on the project. A demonstrated ability to raise funds for the project.

As of December 23, 2020, marked by a new roof, its renovation was nearly complete and had cost \$1 million.

What percentage of matching funds are committed at the time of this application submission? (All grants require a 1:1 match.)

100%

What percentage of the total project costs are committed?

50%

Does your organization have dedicated capital replacement cash reserves?

No

Please describe how you fund the ongoing your capital maintenance and replacement costs of your facility:

Donations. The Association was incorporated in 1964 and has operated a visitor center/museum at 71 Faulkner St since 2001. The rent has been increased over the years and annual rent is now \$20,400. The annual cash cost in the new building will be less than half that with the remainder added to the cash reserve. Presently, after spending \$1 million towards the new visitor center, the Association has \$250,000 including \$135,000 in a restricted endowment.

If you are expanding a current facility, building a new facility, and/or increasing programming,



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describe how you will financially support the new venture.

Member dues and donations. The visitor center is open 100 days per year with staffing by volunteers. Private parties renting the visitor center pay separately. While signs are on Rte. 3 directing the traveller to the Middlesex Canal exit, signs on I-495 will be placed after the Association has its own building and public parking. MassDOT District 4 placed the signs on Rte. 3 when it was re-built, but apparently changed policy when I-495 was re-built.



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Capital Project Planning

Is the building or site you are making capital improvements to currently offering cultural programming?

No

Have you recently had a comprehensive capital needs assessment (for all your properties) done in-house or by a third-party qualified professional?

No

Describe how you identify capital maintenance needs and what your process is for addressing these needs.

Inspections for fire alarm, sprinkler, and elevator identify maintenance on critical items. In the present 4,800 sq. ft., which opened to the public in 2001, capital maintenance has been replacing a fuse, \$240, replacing an AC condensate pump, \$50, etc. In the new visitor center/museum, similarly, when equipment fails it will be replaced.

Are you either expanding the square footage of programable/usable space in your current space or planning a new construction project?

Yes

If yes, do you have a business plan for this expansion?

For New Construction or Expansions

If you are building a new facility or expanding square footage in your current space, describe the evidence of 'market demand' that justifies the expansion of square footage and/or new construction.

The Association presently rents the Reardon Room in the existing visitor center for \$200 plus \$10/hour for an attendant. The attendant is a volunteer. The renters do the setting up and cleaning afterwards, knowing that the center/museum is open every weekend. The volunteer rental coordinator uses Google Voice to speak and reach agreement with the renter.

While the venue is expected to be more popular because of the riverside location, the new visitor center is being built because it is the site of the ceremonial groundbreaking in 1794 and its centrality to the State's Middlesex Canal Heritage Park.

In 1977, the legislature established Middlesex Canal commission. In 1981, it established the Blackstone River and Canal Commission. Today the Mass Department of Conservation and Recreation Central Regional Office is in the Blackstone Heritage Corridor Visitor Center which opened in 2018. The future Middlesex Canal Park at the summit pond might lead to a DCR office for



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the Middlesex Canal Commission as described in the following Worcester Telegram article from 2018:
<https://www.telegram.com/news/20181022/blackstone-heritage-corridor-ready-to-unveil-worcester-visitor-center>
<http://tinyurl.com/yctf5na3>

If expanding, please describe what planning and preparation your organization has undertaken to address the impact the expansion will have on staffing and operations. (There is an opportunity to address how you will financially support this expansion in the financial section of this application).

This is more change of location than expansion.

The new attic, 18' x 60', just short of a 25% increase in floor space, will greatly benefit the library, storage of documents, and artifacts.



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Transformative Impact

Describe the transformative impact of your project. Include a description of the urban or village center in which your project is located and to what extent your project will improve the appearance of the immediately surrounding area.

The storehouse is a contributing building to the Billerica Mills Historic District.

Mill Village walking tour begins with a map and guide at the visitor center.

Dilapidated, 2½ story, 40' x 60' storehouse will have new woodwork, repaired and repointed brickwork. Now private parking lot will be opened for public use by 9-18 cars. The river bank will now be accessible for the launching of canoes, kayaks, and fishing. Non-native invasive plants will be removed and the river bank landscaped.

A town engineer has said Old Elm St will be rebuilt with new sidewalks on both sides as was done to Faulkner, Rogers, and Mt. Pleasant Streets on the north side of the river. Old Elm will be rebuilt after the Association has torn up the street for its 300' of sewer connection.

Describe how your project creates opportunities for additional private investment in the surrounding area due to vacancies, blight, or underutilized properties and what opportunities for additional private investment exist in the vicinity of your project.

Six Old Elm Street is owned by Pace Industries, which gifted the adjacent 2 Old Elm to the Association. Six Old Elm is approx. 1-3/4 acre and has a storehouse even larger than 2 Old Elm. The community development director in 2018 gave a tour inside to a brew pub developer. Pace Industries has mentioned riverfront condos.

Identify neighborhood, public, and/or private partners who will participate in your efforts to spur transformative impact and identify any specific private or public investment in the surrounding area.

Pace Industries, community development director, town engineer, as above.

N.B. Pace granted an easement to the Middlesex Canal Commission for a \$3 million park on Pace's property between the Concord River at 6 Old Elm and the Middlesex Canal's Red Lock near the firehouse at 20 Lowell St.

Provide a statement regarding the opportunity for this project to attract an increased number of visitors to the facility and area.

The project will provide public parking for the visitor center and for access to the Concord River.



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Implementation

Describe how the project will be ready to proceed by June 2022. Be specific about any preparation that supports your implementation timeline (e.g., financial readiness, contracts, design plans, project planning).



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Implementation - Key Project Team Members

Name #1

Organization

Title

Describe this person's role in the project and provide a brief summary of their relevant experience:

If a third party, are they currently under contract?

Name #2

Organization

Title

Describe this person's role in the project and provide a brief summary of their relevant experience:

If a third party, are they currently under contract?

Name #3

Organization

Title

Describe this person's role in the project and provide a brief summary of their relevant experience:

If a third party, are they currently under contract?

Name #4

Organization

Title

Describe this person's role in the project and provide a brief summary of their relevant experience:

If a third party, are they currently under contract?



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Name #5

Organization

Title

Describe this person's role in the project and provide a brief summary of their relevant experience:

If a third party, are they currently under contract?

Name #6

Organization

Title

Describe this person's role in the project and provide a brief summary of their relevant experience:

If a third party, are they currently under contract?

Name #7

Organization

Title

Describe this person's role in the project and provide a brief summary of their relevant experience:

If a third party, are they currently under contract?

Name #8

Organization

Title

Describe this person's role in the project and provide a brief summary of their relevant experience:

If a third party, are they currently under contract?

Be sure to include the following in your Required Materials:



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- **Provide a timeline for implementation, detailing what happens when. Please provide as an attachment in table format.**
- **Provide a clear project budget with the status of “sources” and “uses” of funds,**



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Systems Replacement Plan Project Planning

Describe why this capital needs assessment is the next logical step in the overall facilities planning process for your organization.

If you recently completed a building condition, accessibility, or energy-efficiency assessment, please provide the details of these assessments.