

# NEW YORK CITY'S FOREIGN-BORN DANCE WORKFORCE DEMOGRAPHICS RECOMMENDATIONS



## A Call to Action for Foreign-Born Dance Workers

The six recommendations offered here are grounded in the findings from survey research and informed by discussion among Dance/NYC's Immigrant Artist Task Force, fiscal sponsor partners, and their sponsored dance artists. The recommendations are neither comprehensive nor absolute, but reflect priorities for advancing the immigrant and foreign-born dance workforce in New York City. They are intended to apply across a wide set of key stakeholders, including public and private funders; immigrant and arts service providers; foreign-born dance artists and workers; and the wider community of dance making, presenting, and educational organizations. While generated with a focus that is discipline- and geography-specific, the recommendations may inform approaches to peer disciplines and geographies as well as national efforts.

### 1. Engage Foreign-Born New Yorkers to Advance Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Dance

- Expressly and equitably include foreign-born workforce in diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts and relevant research, policies, programs, and funding addressing the cultural sector. This study directly supports the objective of CreateNYC, the City of New York's new cultural plan, to "support arts, culture, and science organizations as inclusive spaces for New Yorkers of all immigration status" (page 80);
- Develop identity-specific and intersectional initiatives to strengthen marginalized groups within populations born outside the United States, using survey findings to guide action:
  - Consider targeted strategies to increase engagement by New Yorkers from countries and regions underrepresented in the dance workforce studied, for example, the Dominican Republic;
  - Undertake explicit and sustained efforts to address racial homogeneity, including efforts to engage foreign-born New Yorkers who identify as Black/African American and/or Latina/o/x, who are underrepresented in the dance workforce studied;

- Create opportunities for disabled New Yorkers who identify as foreign-born; and
- Target activity to engage members of the Greatest/Silent Generation, who are underrepresented in the foreign-born workforce studied; and
- To achieve scale and impact, build the individual and collective capacity of immigrant and arts service providers to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in their networks. Providers could be offered training, technical assistance, and financial resources to offer relevant programs: for example, antiracism training and training on how best to engage and integrate immigrant and foreign-born New Yorkers.

## **2. Address Organizational Barriers to Advancing Foreign-Born Dance Workers**

- Support CreateNYC's strategies to "inform cultural organizations of opportunities to learn about immigration issues as they relate to their staff, participants, artists, performers, and audiences" and "encourage cultural organizations to participate in citywide opportunities to engage New Yorkers of all immigration status, such as IDNYC or similar" (page 80);
- Address general absence of foreign-born workers at nonprofit dance education institutions, and improve pipelines into the arts for foreign-born students, through, for example, targeted training for teaching artists and educators;
- Provide relevant resources and training to both small and large institutions, including the correction of underrepresentation of the foreign-born dance workers at the largest institutions, those with budgets of \$5 million or more;
- Strengthen nonprofit board recruitment and development activity to more greatly engage and advance foreign-born New Yorkers; and
- Create and message volunteer opportunities for foreign-born New Yorkers.

## **3. Strengthen Funding for Dance Made by and with Foreign-Born New Yorkers**

- Maintain and grow institutional support of organizations and sponsored projects working with foreign-born artists, for example, by expanding targeted initiatives such as the City's Cultural Immigrant Initiative and generating new regrant funds. This directly supports CreateNYC's objective to "support individual artists who are from and/or work with immigrant communities, cultures, and artists" (page 80);

- Meet the need for individual support signaled by the findings from sponsored respondents by introducing individual patrons to the foreign-born dance workforce; by considering opportunities to pool individual resources: for example, regrants; and by addressing a perceived gap in individual dance patrons' knowledge about fiscal sponsorship through communications and convening;
- Intervene to support foreign-born dance workers in identifying and accessing funding by strengthening communications environments and expanding technical assistance and training, with a focus on earned income opportunities; and
- Ensure that foreign-born dance workers are present at every stage of developing, implementing, and evaluating the success of funding initiatives impacting their work.

#### **4. Address Need for Affordable Artistic Development and Presentation Space**

- Protect, repurpose, and increase use of existing spaces suitable for development and presentation, using survey findings organized by geography to guide action, by, for example:
  - Expanding promotion of dance spaces through centralized platforms such as SpaceFinder's Dance Space Directory ([nyc.spacefinder.org/communities/DanceNYC](http://nyc.spacefinder.org/communities/DanceNYC)), a community partnership between Fractured Atlas and Dance/NYC, and delivering accessible, multi-language information to those born outside the United States;
  - Expand dance rehearsal space subsidy programs, as have been led by New York State Council on the Arts, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and Mertz Gilmore Foundation, and targeted funding to offset costs for foreign-born dance workers;
  - Examine, expand, and adapt existing dance residency and presentation programs to ensure that foreign-born dance workers are equitably served; and
  - Improve access for dance making and presentation at nontraditional spaces, such as sacred spaces and community centers that serve foreign-born populations;
- Drive the creation of new permanent and affordable development and presentation space for dance, with a strong emphasis on neighborhoods where the majority of foreign-born dance workers studied are located.
- Foster collaboration by connecting developers to artists, residents, and borough arts councils to ensure that new spaces reflect community interests.

## 5. Improve Wages for Foreign-Born Dance Workers

- Strengthen funding by increasing institutional funds for general operations and/or workforce development that can be used for living wages; by eliminating limits to administrative overhead from the philanthropic field; by incentivizing best practices for grantees, for example, by requiring funded projects support living wages and holding grantees accountable;
- Ensure that foreign-born dance workers are expressly and equitably included in government policy and programs focused on supporting wages for cultural workers: for example, initiatives recommended by the City's new cultural plan;
- Work with employers to find solutions for providing sufficient compensation to eliminate economic status as a barrier to dance making and to allow artists to thrive; ensure employers of sponsored workers become early adopters of the City and State's commitment to a minimum wage of \$15 per hour and model leadership to the wider creative sector; and
- Mobilize the whole dance workforce, to advocate individually and collectively for living wages to their employers, presenters, policymakers, and funders.

## 6. Expand Purview of Dance Beyond Nonprofit Dance Organizations and Sponsored Projects

- Undertake comprehensive research to assess the landscape of immigrant and foreign-born New Yorkers engaging in dance making and performance outside the traditional 501(c)(3) and fiscal sponsor models and develop policy, fund, and programs development to address findings. To that end, Dance/NYC has begun a parallel effort to examine informal settings where foreign-born artists are active. If you are a foreign-born New Yorker and would like to be involved in our work, please write [research@dance.nyc](mailto:research@dance.nyc).

