

BUSINESS SUPPORT FOR THE ARTS (HUFFINGTON POST)

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By Lane Harwell

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It is not coincidental that New York is a business and cultural capital; business and the arts are one. Arts and culture improve livability, drive tourism and economic development and make the city desirable for businesses and their employees. Robust and strategic corporate giving is critical to realizing these and more deliverables.

To better understand and to advocate for corporate giving, the organization I run, Dance/NYC, has produced its first-ever corporate giving snapshot, which is based on the New York State Cultural Data Project (CDP) and an extension of our recent State of NYC Dance (2013).

The snapshot is, in part, a response to the Wall Street Journal headline "Corporate Support for Dance Wanes," sparked by our first CDP report released in 2011. It is also a response to more recent studies by the Business Committee for the Arts (BCA) and by the Committee Encouraging Corporate Philanthropy, which suggest the opposite; in fact, based on their sources, corporate giving may be up.

Dance/NYC's new CDP findings reveal an uneven patchwork of growth and decline in corporate giving to dance makers in the five boroughs at the core of our analysis. The amount received "in donations from corporations, including grants, funds and matching gifts" (source: CDP) grew 7.7 percent in the aggregate from 2009 to 2011. Corporate donations benefit dance makers of all budget sizes, and equal 5.1 percent of their total private contributions.

The welcome story of growth over time is, however, tied exclusively to giving to the largest dance makers, with budgets of more than \$5M. Those with smaller budgets all reported losses, and for dance makers in the \$100K-\$1M range, the aggregate loss exceeded 50 percent. This variation by budget size bucks the trends found for other sources; for instance, dance makers with budgets of less than \$5M report gains in public funds, and groups in nearly every budget category increased their total private contributions.

We are in discovery mode. The findings do not tell the full story of business support for dance in our City, which includes in-kind contributions and special event income. Readers of State of NYC Dance (2013) report will note that special event income to dance makers is up 8 percent, and in-kind contributions are of special value to the smallest groups, with budgets \$25K-\$99K, who are demonstrating considerable resourcefulness.

But the corporate giving findings are an entry point for discussion to advance the state of the field in our City. For policy makers, they may encourage new thinking about public/private partnerships and messaging to local businesses. Dance makers, I urge you to act on another opportunity identified in the BCA National Survey of Business Support for the Arts (2013): 96 percent of business contributions to the arts are allocated locally. Consider the Dance/NYC findings as a tool for advocacy and awareness building for your work, and as a reminder to engage local businesses and grow your corporate giving.

Finally, for corporate funders, the findings are an invitation not only to renew and increase your commitments to dance and culture, but also to join Dance/NYC and our constituents in an effort to better understand and meet your priorities. Together, we can and will do more to make the case for corporate giving.

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