

GRANT WILL MEAN AFFORDABLE STUDIO SPACE FOR NYC DANCERS

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By Aaron Elstein, Crain's New York Business

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Photo: Bloomberg News

Gotta dance! But where?

For the city's legions of professional and amateur dancers, affordable practice space has become as scarce as an inexpensive Broadway ticket. But a new program administered by Dance/NYC is expected to help.

The New York City Dance Rehearsal Space Subsidy Program, which kicks off this month, is designed to let dancers rent space at 15 locations throughout the city for the next three years at an average cost of \$10 per hour. Market rates for dance space start at \$25 per hour, according to city Department of Cultural Affairs, and often are much higher. The subsidized-space program is funded by a \$1.65 million grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

"Nothing is more important than affordable dance space, and nothing is more lacking," said Alejandra Duque Cifuentes, acting executive director of Dance/NYC, a research and advocacy nonprofit.

Affordable dance studios have succumbed to the same market forces that have caused many restaurants, cafés and other small businesses to close. The DANY Studios in the Garment District, for example, had provided 11 affordable spaces to dance troupes and independent performers but was unable to renew its lease and shut down in 2016.

Organizations including the New York City Ballet and Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater draw large crowds and attract deep-pocketed donors, but most of the city's 172 registered dance troupes perform before small audiences and survive on shoestring budgets.

Public interest in all forms of dance is growing. The National Endowment for the Arts reported in the fall that attendance for ballet and for other dance [rose](#) between 2012 and 2017.

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