

DANCE ADVANCEMENT FUND

2024-2026 Dance Advancement Fund Past Funds

Wednesday, May 8, 2024

Overview

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Program Overview & Goals

Made possible by the generous support of the Howard Gilman Foundation and the Ford Foundation, the purpose of the funding initiative is to address the inequitable distribution of resources in the dance field and advance its resilience and thriving by supporting dance makers in the metropolitan New York City area with operating budgets between \$25,000 and \$250,000 with two-year general operating support grants of \$6,000 to \$40,000, including ongoing professional development, from September 1, 2024 - August 31, 2026.

Dance/NYC [established the Dance Advancement Fund in 2017](#) to address the inequitable distribution of resources in the dance field, which was underscored by its research, 2016 *State of NYC Dance and Workforce Demographics* ([Dance.NYC/StateofDance2016](#)) report, which shows that the smallest organizations demonstrate the greatest capacity to adapt and have workforces that better reflect the racial diversity and presence of disabled and immigrant people in New York City's population than the workforces of larger organizations. The research also revealed that dance makers with annual budgets of less than \$1 million comprise the lion's share (84%) of total groups but have access to only 10% of the total revenue.

In 2020, Dance/NYC's research study, *Defining "Small-Budget" Dance Makers in a Changing Dance Ecology* ([Dance.NYC/SBDMdata2020](#)), further revealed that nearly all "small-budget" dance makers need funding for salaries/wages (95%) and general operations (93%), with more than half (56%) indicating that the salaries/wages category was the most critical funding need. These needs then deepened as the sector responded to the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Dance/NYC's *Coronavirus Dance Impact Informational Brief* ([bit.ly/DNYC_COVID_DanceImpactBrief](#)) found that individual dance workers and dance making organizations expressed an inability to provide for basic needs. That work also found that 84% of organizations facing permanent closure at that time had budgets under \$100K.

Released in 2023, *State of NYC Dance 2023: Findings from the Dance Industry Census* ([Dance.NYC/StateOfNYCDance23](#)) reveals that small budget entities may comprise even more of the dance industry than originally believed. That work welcomed input from all entities regardless of budget size and structure. While previous research had been limited to non-profit entities and entities with budgets of more than \$25K. Nearly 60% of dance entities responding to the Dance Industry Census had budgets less than \$100K and 76% had budgets less than \$250K. The Census research also found that smaller budget entities:

- Experienced more significant pandemic-related budget declines
- Access the lowest proportion of contributed revenue
- Lack capacity to pay living wages and effectively address diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility and social justice.

As of 2023, the Dance Advancement Fund has provided \$1.6 million in general operating support to 61 unique dance making organizations and groups with budgets under \$1 million across three grant cycles. As *Dance/NYC moves into the fourth iteration of the program, it will distribute \$600,000 over the course of the grant period to up to 25 dance makers with the goals to:*

- Address the long-term impacts of systems of oppression as manifested through white supremacy, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and the current economic landscape;
- Advance economic justice in the dance field by continuing to fill gaps in the availability of resources where they are most needed; and
- Address the critical need for consistent financial and knowledge-based support that will allow dance making organizations to move into a state of thriving.

For Dance/NYC, *thriving dance makers have the resources to make dance with dignity* defined as the ability to:

- Pay dignified wages to all dance workers and collaborators who engage in the ideation, creation, execution, performance, and distribution of their artistic works;
- Remain generative artists, defined as the creation of new works and/or the sustaining, archiving, performance, and preservation of repertory and/or legacy works; and
- Work in accountability and healthy interdependent relationships with their collaborators, audiences, local communities, and the field.

Dance/NYC's definition of thriving is a reflection of its ongoing dialogue with current and former Dance Advancement Fund grantees. It is also only one definition of the many manifestations and iterations that thriving can embody for dance makers in the field.

Legacy, Evolution & Administration of the Fund

Dance/NYC believes the dance ecology must itself be just, equitable, and inclusive to meaningfully contribute to social progress and envisions a dance ecology wherein power, funding, opportunities, conduct, and impacts are fair for all artists, cultural workers, and audiences. It seeks to advance policies, investments, programs, mindsets, and actions that remove and prevent inequities that exist along the continuum of lives in dance, from the public-school classroom to the stage.

Dance/NYC's approach cuts across its public programs—advocacy; research; leadership training, networking and convening; technology and visibility; and regranteeing—and all aspects of its operations. Its approach is intersectional, building upon multiple issue areas that together create a more just, equitable, and inclusive dance ecology. Dance/NYC's approach is also grounded in collaboration. It recognizes generations of people and organizations working to advance justice, equity, and inclusion in the arts and culture and strives to contribute to their efforts. It has established formal partnerships with colleague arts service organizations.

The fourth iteration of the Dance Advancement Fund, its components, and continued evolution is a reflection of ongoing learning and dialogue with current and past grantees, field partners, Dance/NYC's task forces and committees, and ongoing field research and current events

impacting the field. Dance/NYC is also working in collaboration with Niya Nicholson of MOVE|NYC, a justice driven, creatively inclined nonprofit arts leader with 9 years of advancement expertise—namely, business strategy, fundraising, DEI, marketing, and Board & program development.

In alignment with these stated [values of justice, equity, and inclusion](#), Dance/NYC will lead the development, implementation, and evaluation of the Fund to ensure the following:

- Fund priorities are met;
- Applicant pool is a reflection of the demography of the metropolitan New York City area;
- Applicants receive clear information regarding the eligibility and application process;
- Applicants across geographies and demographics have the opportunity to receive support in completing their application;
- The application process and the dissemination of information regarding the application is led by and in conversation with community partners, organizers, and members of the field;
- The application process creates opportunities for more meaningful engagement with local dance-making communities; and
- As many barriers to participation as possible are removed.

The fourth iteration of the Dance Advancement Fund is led by the following Dance/NYC Staff:

- Sara Roer, Co-Executive Director
- Alexeya EM, Grantmaking Manager
- Rithika Ashok, Grantmaking Assistant

About Dance/NYC ([Dance.NYC](#))

Dance/NYC's mission is to promote the knowledge, appreciation, practice, and performance of dance in the metropolitan New York City area. It embeds [values of justice, equity, and inclusion](#) into all aspects of the organization.

About Niya Nicholson (<https://www.movenyc.nyc/niya-nicholson>)

Niya Nicholson is a justice driven, creatively inclined nonprofit arts leader with 9 years of advancement expertise—namely, business strategy, fundraising, DEI, marketing & program development. A native New Yorker raised in Harlem, Niya studied dance at Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School and obtained her B.A. in 2014 from Vassar College. Niya's arts administration and advocacy career began in 2015, simultaneously supporting emerging and established nonprofits and artists. Upon MOVE|NYC's 2015 launch, Niya served as its sole volunteer administrator and was promoted to Executive Director in 2023, helping the nonprofit rise from a \$25K to \$1M budget & implementing 7 tuition-free and subsidized programs in NYC and DC with a 100% college matriculation rate. Niya's prior positions include Director of Development of the José Limón Dance Foundation and Development Manager at Gibney, resulting in 6 new studios and an elevator at 280 Broadway. Niya is Board Chair of MICHİYAYA Dance.

Niya was an inaugural and 5-year member of Dance/NYC's Symposium Programming Committee and has been featured at the Symposium as a 2-time SMART Bar Consultant and 2018 session speaker, in addition to being the former Co-Chair of the 2017-18 Dance/NYC Junior Committee. Niya's leadership honors include being a 2023 New York Foundation for the Arts' Incubator for Executive Leaders of Color member and a 2018-19 Dance/USA Institute for Leadership Training mentee. Niya was a panel facilitator and audition adjudicator for the 2024 International Association of Blacks in Dance Conference; a featured speaker at the 2019 Dance/USA Conference addressing DEI; and additional speaking engagements include American Express, Gibney, Vassar College, and S.U.N.Y. Purchase. Niya has made funding and leadership selection recommendations for the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs' Cultural Development Fund and New York Foundation for the Arts' Incubator for Executive Leaders of Color and Fiscal Sponsorship programs.

About the Howard Gilman Foundation (<https://howardgilmanfoundation.org/>)

Howard Gilman believed in the power of the arts to transform lives. The Howard Gilman Foundation honors his legacy by supporting the most robust, innovative, and promising performing arts organizations in New York City.

About the Ford Foundation (<http://www.fordfoundation.org/>)

The Ford Foundation was founded in 1936, and has invested in innovative ideas, visionary individuals, and frontline institutions advancing human dignity around the world across eight decades. We believe in the inherent dignity of all people. But around the world, too many people are excluded from the political, economic, and social institutions that shape their lives. In addressing this reality, we are guided by a vision of social justice—a world in which all individuals, communities, and peoples work toward the protections and full expressions of their human rights; are active participants in the decisions that affect them; share equitably in the knowledge, wealth, and resources of society; and are free to achieve their full potential. Across eight decades, our mission has been to reduce poverty and injustice, strengthen democratic values, promote international cooperation, and advance human achievement.

[< back](#)

[next listing](#)