

ADVANCING FISCALLY SPONSORED DANCE ARTISTS & PROJECTS RECOMMENDATIONS



A Call to Action for Fiscally Sponsored Dance Artists & Dance Projects

It is the overarching recommendation of the project partners that work focused on advancing sponsored dance artists and projects continue and deepen.

The four specific recommendations offered here are grounded in comprehensive survey research and informed by discussion among a coalition of fiscal sponsor partners and their sponsored dance artists. The recommendations are neither comprehensive nor absolute, but reflect the most pressing priorities of the partners for meeting identified dance workforce needs and removing barriers to creativity and effective management.

The recommendations align with those put forward by the coalition of partners in *Advancing Fiscally Sponsored Artists & Art Projects* ([Dance.NYC/FiscalSponsors2017](#)), which was targeted to the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and the CreateNYC team undertaking cultural planning for the City of New York. Yet, they are intended to apply across a wider set of key stakeholders, including: public and private funders; fiscal sponsors and service providers; sponsored dance artists and projects; 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.

Making the case for these priorities and realizing their implementation will require continued advocacy and action by the fiscal sponsor partners, the population of sponsored dance artists and dance projects, and the wider dance field. Join us! Spread the word and weigh in on [facebook.com/DanceNYCorg](#) and [twitter.com/DanceNYC](#).



1. Address need for affordable space: in particular, artistic development space

Survey responses indicate that affordable development space is, along with living wages, one of the top two most critical needs of the sponsored dance workforce. To help meet this need, the project partners recommend:

- Protecting, repurposing, and increasing use of existing spaces suitable for dance rehearsals and residencies, using survey findings organized by geography and identity categories to guide action, by, for example:
 - Expanding the CUNY Dance Initiative (cuny.edu/sites/dance-initiative), which offers dance projects access to studios at CUNY campuses, and adapting the model to available dance studios at additional universities and in the public schools;
 - Improving access to nontraditional spaces, such as sacred spaces, community centers, senior centers, libraries, and retail and office space for short- and long-term use;
 - Expanding promotion of dance spaces through centralized platforms such as SpaceFinder's Dance Space Directory (nyc.spacefinder.org/communities/DisabilityNYCDance), a community partnership between Fractured Atlas and Dance/NYC, and delivering accessible, multilanguage information to populations that are underrepresented in the demographic findings, in particular, African, Latina/o/x, Asian, Arab, and Native American (ALAANA) dance workers, aging dance workers, and those born outside the United States;
 - Improving physical and communications access for disabled dance artists at existing dance spaces through, for instance, capital investment in accessibility features, training for facilities managers, and marketing (visit SpaceFinder Accessible and Inclusive Workspaces (nyc.spacefinder.org/communities/DisabilityNYCDance) for a sample marketing tool, and learn more about Dance/NYC's Disability. Dance. Artistry. initiative at Dance.NYC/partner-resources/disability/disability-initiative);
 - Strengthening and expanding 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, to offset costs for both sponsored dance artists and dance venues; and
 - Pooling administrative resources to create efficiencies for space managers and users, as has been modeled by Fourth Arts Block Dance Block program (fabnyc.org/portfolio/dance-block);

- Driving the creation of new permanent and affordable development space for sponsored dance, using survey findings to guide action, with a focus on:
 - Ensuring that dance-specific needs are expressly and equitably considered as part of artswide efforts to develop affordable workspace, in particular, the implementation of the City's new cultural plan;
 - Shaping new policy and funding mechanisms to incentivize rehearsal space development in public and private sectors, including the continued development of City-owned spaces, as has been modeled by SpaceWorks (spaceworksnyc.org/aboutus);
 - Exploring "blue sky" creative innovations to address space needs; for instance, by imagining and building mobile dance studios; and
 - Fostering collaboration by connecting developers to fiscal sponsors and the sponsored dance workforce, to local residents, and to borough arts councils to ensure that new spaces reflect community interests, with a strong emphasis on non-Manhattan geographies where the majority of sponsored dance workers are located.

2. Improve Wages for Artists

Survey responses indicate that living wages is one of the top two most critical needs of the sponsored dance workforce. To help meet this need, the project partners recommend:

- Increasing funding allocations to sponsored dance and improving delivery by designating institutional funds to 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 (scroll below for additional funding recommendations);
- Ensuring that sponsored 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;
- Working 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
- Mobilizing the sponsored dance workforce to advocate individually and collectively for living wages to their employers, presenters, policymakers, and funders.

3. Strengthen Funding for Fiscally Sponsored Dance Artists & Projects

The project partners also recommend strengthened and more equitable funding for sponsored dance artists and projects. In particular, they recommend:

- Increasing and improving government (City, State, and Federal) support for sponsored dance makers by:
 - Growing funding allocations to existing decentralized grant programs with borough arts councils and partners such as New York Foundation for the Arts for which sponsored dance makers are already eligible;
 - Assessing and then refreshing existing decentralization programs to better serve sponsored dance artists and projects, with a focus on: sharing information and learning; standardizing grant applications and reports; intervening to address the inequitable distribution of resources by workforce demographics (especially ethnicity, race, and disability); and incentivizing best practices for grantees: for example, by requiring funded projects to provide living wages;
 - In the mid- and long-range, adding funding programs with existing or new partners that provide grantees with multiyear and general operating support to meet artistic and operational needs identified through survey research, including salaries: for example, by adapting the State-funded NYSCA-A.R.T./ New York Create Opportunity Fund (A Statewide Theater Regrant Program) (art-newyork.org/creative-opportunity-fund) to dance; and
 - Considering mid- and long-range opportunities for government agencies to provide greater direct financial support to sponsored dance artists: for example, by expanding New York State Council on the Arts' Individual Artists Program (IAP) (nysca.org/public/guidelines/individual_artists), adapting the IAP model at the City and Federal level, and making New York City Council member funds available through the Department of Cultural Affairs for sponsored groups in every city council district;
- Advancing foundation support for sponsored dance makers by eliminating restrictive eligibility requirements on foundation support that limit opportunities for funding organizations that do not have their own 501(c)(3) status; increasing general support grants and project grants that support wages; identifying and investing in regrant partners to achieve scale in the delivery of funds; and correcting existing foundation giving practices that, according to survey findings, disproportionately serve white non-Hispanic and/or nondisabled sponsored dance workers;

- Expanding and enhancing individual support by addressing a perceived gap in individual dance patrons' knowledge about fiscal sponsorship through communications and convening; by introducing individual patrons to the wide landscape of sponsored artists, especially African, Latina/o/x, Asian, Arab, Native American (ALAANA), and disabled artists, who are undersupported by individuals; and by considering opportunities to pool individual resources: for example, regranting;
- Strengthening corporate support, which was not addressed by the research survey but, as demonstrated through Dance/NYC research ([Dance.NYC/CorporateGiving2014](#)), has declined significantly in dance;
- Intervening to support sponsored dance artists and projects in identifying and accessing funding by strengthening communications environments and expanding technical assistance and training; and
- Ensuring that fiscal sponsors and sponsored dance artists and projects are present at every stage of developing, implementing, and evaluating the success of funding initiatives impacting their work.

4. Increase Diversity, Equity & Inclusion in the Sponsored Dance Workforce

The workforce demographic survey findings reveal key opportunities to foster equity in the sponsored dance landscape. The project partners recommend:

- Expressly and equitably including sponsored dance artists and projects in diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts and relevant research, policies, programs, and funding addressing the creative sector. This study directly responds to a 2016 Ithaca S+R workforce demographics report (sr.ithaca.org/publications/diversity-in-the-new-york-city-dance-community) on the Department of Cultural Affairs' grantees, which excluded sponsored dance workers;
- Reversing exclusionary funding practices across charitable sources (individual, foundation, and government) that disproportionately serve white non-Hispanic and/or nondisabled sponsored workers, according to survey findings;

- Developing identity-specific and intersectional initiatives to strengthen marginalized groups, using survey findings to guide action:
 - Undertake explicit and sustained efforts to advance African, Latina/o/x, Asian, Arab, and Native American (ALAANA) populations along the continuum of career readiness and advancement in sponsored dance;
 - Amplify the voices of dance workers who identify as disabled, who are well represented in the study sample but are underemployed by 501(c)(3) dance organizations, according to Dance/NYC research ([Dance.NYC/StateofDance2016](https://www.dancenyc.org/state-of-dance-2016));
 - Create opportunities for members of aging populations, particularly those in the Baby Boomer and Greatest/Silent Generation (born pre-1965), who are underrepresented in the sponsored dance workforce; and
 - Pursue deeper research and action to better engage those born outside of the United States, including immigrant artists, in the sponsored dance landscape;
- To achieve scale and impact, building the individual and collective capacity of fiscal sponsors to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in their networks. Fiscal sponsors could be offered training, technical assistance, and financial resources to provide sponsored dance artists and projects with relevant programs: for example, antiracism training and training on how best to engage disabled New Yorkers.

