

Collective Motion: Dance/NYC's 5-Year Commitment to the Field

**STRATEGIC PLAN
OCTOBER 2025**

dance/NYC®



Photo by Jeffrey Lee | On the Spot Image

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ACCESSIBILITY AND INTERACTIVE FEATURES

This document is designed with a number of features to optimize accessibility for low-vision scenarios and electronic screen readers. In addition, interactive elements have been added to aid all readers.

Digital Accessibility

- PDF/UA-1 standard tags are used which have been tested to work best with modern screen readers in Adobe Acrobat.
- The layout has been designed with threaded text frames to maintain a linear flow for screen readers.
- Heading tags are used hierarchically:
H1 = page title
H2 = page subhead
H3 = body head
H4 = body subhead
- Body text is tagged as P.
- Bullets are set automatically for easier navigation using screen readers.
- Alt text metadata has been added to describe images.
- Page numbers and decorative elements are tagged as artifacts.

Visual Accessibility

- Headings and body introductions are set at 24 points, which is considered large print by the American Printing House for the Blind (APH).
- Body text is set at 18 points, which is considered enlarged by the APH.
- High contrast has been maintained by using black body text.
- Low contrast colors have been avoided for essential text.
- Ample white space has been applied (to page margins and line spacing) to make pages more readable by providing contrast to the print and creating luminance around the text.

Interactivity

- Table of Contents entries are linked to go directly to the content.
- Glossary terms are indicated with a hashtag and highlight where they first appear in the text. Definitions for glossary terms can be found starting on page 17.
- Hyperlinks to external webpages or documents have been added. Hyperlinks are called out with an underline and accent color.

A photograph of a diverse group of people at a social event. In the foreground, a woman with glasses and a red lanyard is smiling broadly while looking at a smartphone. Behind her, other people are also smiling and looking in the same direction. The background is dark and out of focus, suggesting an indoor event space.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Photo by Albin Lohr-Jones

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BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Amid shifting priorities and fiscal pressures, the national cultural infrastructure that once sustained arts and dance is under strain. In response, cities like New York are emerging as hubs of resilience, where artists and arts organizations are uniting through [#civic engagement](#) and mutual support to uphold the arts as a [#public](#) good and vital social infrastructure.

New York City's [#arts service organizations](#) are at a transformative moment. Once acting only as behind-the-scenes support systems, they are now also leaders in shaping an equitable and [#sustainable](#) future for the arts. This makes the "bridging" made possible by the volume of information and administration held by intermediaries like Dance/NYC even more vital. Their continued presence—and the health of the broader arts ecosystem—requires bold adaptation that centers [#equity](#) and access as well as strategic partnership that includes meaningful long-term investment from funders who recognize the unique value of this work.

Against this backdrop, Dance/NYC's [#Theory of Change](#) offers a purposeful and visionary roadmap, linking the programmatic work of the organization to larger, longer-term shifts in the sector. Grounded in the values of equity, integrity, collaboration, and optimism, it drives every facet of the organization's mission: from [#regranting](#) and policy [#advocacy](#) to research, equity-centered practice, and relationship-building across sectors.

These values-in-action shape five strategic goals—amplifying the [#public value](#) of dance, activating [#dance workers](#) as agents of change, refining equity-driven and accessible service, achieving long-term financial sustainability, and strengthening organizational well-being. Importantly, the internal goals of financial sustainability and organizational well-being are the foundation that makes the other three possible—providing the stability, capacity, and resilience needed for Dance/NYC to deliver on its commitments to the field.

Together, these goals lead to meaningful, field-level outcomes. Artists from historically disinvested communities are supported to work [#sustainably](#) and free from discrimination. Well-informed dance workers become civically engaged, and equipped with the resources they need. The larger arts ecosystem grows more interconnected and attuned to the needs and value of dance. These shifts lay the groundwork for a profound transformation: one in which dance is recognized as a just, sustainable, and [#accessible](#) cultural force, and dance workers are powerful contributors to public life that influence education, policy, and society as a whole.



THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Dance/NYC's strategic planning process, designed and facilitated by PENN Creative Strategy, was rooted in deep and continuous stakeholder engagement. Internal participants—including staff, board, and advisors—took part in interviews, surveys, focus groups, and retreats that examined organizational structure, leadership, mission clarity, and programmatic priorities. External input from funders, peer service organizations, and dance field leaders were also brought into the process to ensure the plan would resonate beyond the organization to reflect the needs of the sector.

The Strategic Planning Process captured Dance/NYC at a moment of internal transition. While the organization had built a strong external identity grounded in justice, equity, and advocacy, its internal operations were still evolving to fully embody those values. Challenges such as overextending services, staff burnout, and financial concentration within a limited pool of funders emerged as critical areas to address, alongside clear affirmation of Dance/NYC's positioning as a bridge between artists, funders, and policymakers. These insights shaped a visioning retreat, where board and staff reflected on key data, surfaced sector trends, and collaboratively articulated shared priorities: centering under-resourced dance workers, building stronger infrastructure, deepening data capacity, and clarifying the organization's core values and mission.

In the final stage, Dance/NYC tested the strategic framework with key external stakeholders to ensure its direction felt relevant across the field. These conversations confirmed the importance of the organization's role in research, advocacy, regranting, and knowledge-sharing, while offering valuable feedback to sharpen its focus and strengthen its long-term sustainability. This external reflection helped anchor the plan in sector realities and ensured broader alignment and buy-in for the work ahead.



A photograph of three young women standing outdoors in front of a green fence and trees. The woman on the left has brown hair and is smiling, wearing a black t-shirt. The woman in the middle has short blonde hair and is wearing a light purple t-shirt. The woman on the right has dark hair and is wearing a black t-shirt. They are all holding signs. The sign on the left is purple and orange with the text 'We are building OUR NEW YORK CITY DANCE' and the 'dance/NYC' logo at the bottom. The sign on the right is purple and orange with the text 'Help us build OUR NEW YORK CITY DANCE' and the 'dance/NYC' logo at the bottom. The background is a lush green park area with a black metal fence and several blue cars parked in the distance.

DANCE/NYC'S ROLE, MISSION AND VALUES

Photo by Caleb Bryant Miller

Help us build
OUR
NEW YORK CITY
DANCE

dance/NYC

DANCE/NYC'S ROLE

Dance/NYC centers the needs of individual dance workers—who, as part of our ecosystem, are statistically the most likely to face low pay, job insecurity, and systemic exclusion—by providing advocacy support, funding, research, and practical information that empower their professional lives and expand their agency in shaping the field.

To create lasting change, Dance/NYC also equips dance institutions and organizations with training, data, and resources to evolve their practices and better serve these individuals. This ecosystemic approach prioritizes people while mobilizing organizations to align with more equitable conditions across the dance sector.

The scale and diversity of sector-wide demands—especially in the wake of COVID-19—have prompted Dance/NYC to direct its efforts where it can make the most meaningful, lasting impact for dance workers and thus the field at large.

In response, Dance/NYC made a strategic decision to prioritize key pillars of its work, such as research, advocacy, regranting, and knowledge-sharing, while scaling back in other areas. This includes a move away from large-scale events like the annual symposium and limiting complex proprietary technological projects like the Reopening website. Projects like these have become increasingly difficult to sustain in terms of staff time and direct costs

while experiencing diminishing attendance and impact. The organization is reimagining how it brings the field together—hosting more concentrated convenings rooted in data and policy, and amplifying the work of #partner organizations who continue to lead convenings. These shifts in focus allow Dance/NYC to remain responsive and sustainable, while also deepening its programmatic impact.



OUR MISSION

NOW

Dance/NYC champions the New York City metropolitan area dance sector by fostering a more just, equitable, and #inclusive landscape where dance workers and organizations can thrive. Rooted in research, Dance/NYC engages in advocacy, regranting, and knowledge-sharing that works toward establishing dance as a valued form of cultural expression and a #common good.

THEN

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.



OUR VALUES

Our values are intentionally sequenced to reflect how each principle builds upon the other, forming a foundation for all that we do. Equity is the essential starting point. From there, Integrity ensures that our actions are accountable and build trust that allows for Collaboration with others in pursuit of shared goals. Finally, sustained by these commitments, Optimism propels us forward with deep belief in our work.

Equity

Our practice of equity means working to close the gap in resources, recognition, and opportunities as an act of opposition to systemic economic, racial, colorist, xenophobic, homophobic, transphobic, misogynist and ableist inequity and inequality. Influenced by the disability justice movement's expression ['Nothing About Us Without Us'](#), we strive to create feedback processes to learn with and from our constituents in an attempt to prioritize the needs of the historically disinvested in the design and delivery of our programs and services.

Integrity

Our practice of integrity is grounded in clarity and accountability to the communities we serve, prioritizing those most impacted by our work. In service of being a reliable resource to the field, we communicate our decisions, weigh the impact of our actions over their intention, address repair within our capacity, and learn from our shortcomings to inform solutions.

Collaboration

Our practice of collaboration is grounded in the belief that our efforts are stronger when we integrate diverse perspectives, share skills and labor, and work in concert with others toward common goals. Through internal teamwork and external strategic partnerships, we address sector-wide issues in ways that center access, transparent communication, and adaptability to emergent ideas.

Optimism

Our practice of optimism means that building a more just future is based on both the belief in a world not yet realized and the belief that our work will make progress toward that world. We embrace curiosity, learning, and critical thinking about the challenges that confront us. In reckoning with past and present inequities, we are fueled by creative problem-solving, joy, and pragmatism.





GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Photo by Rachel Monteleone

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Goal 1: Amplify the Public Value of Dance

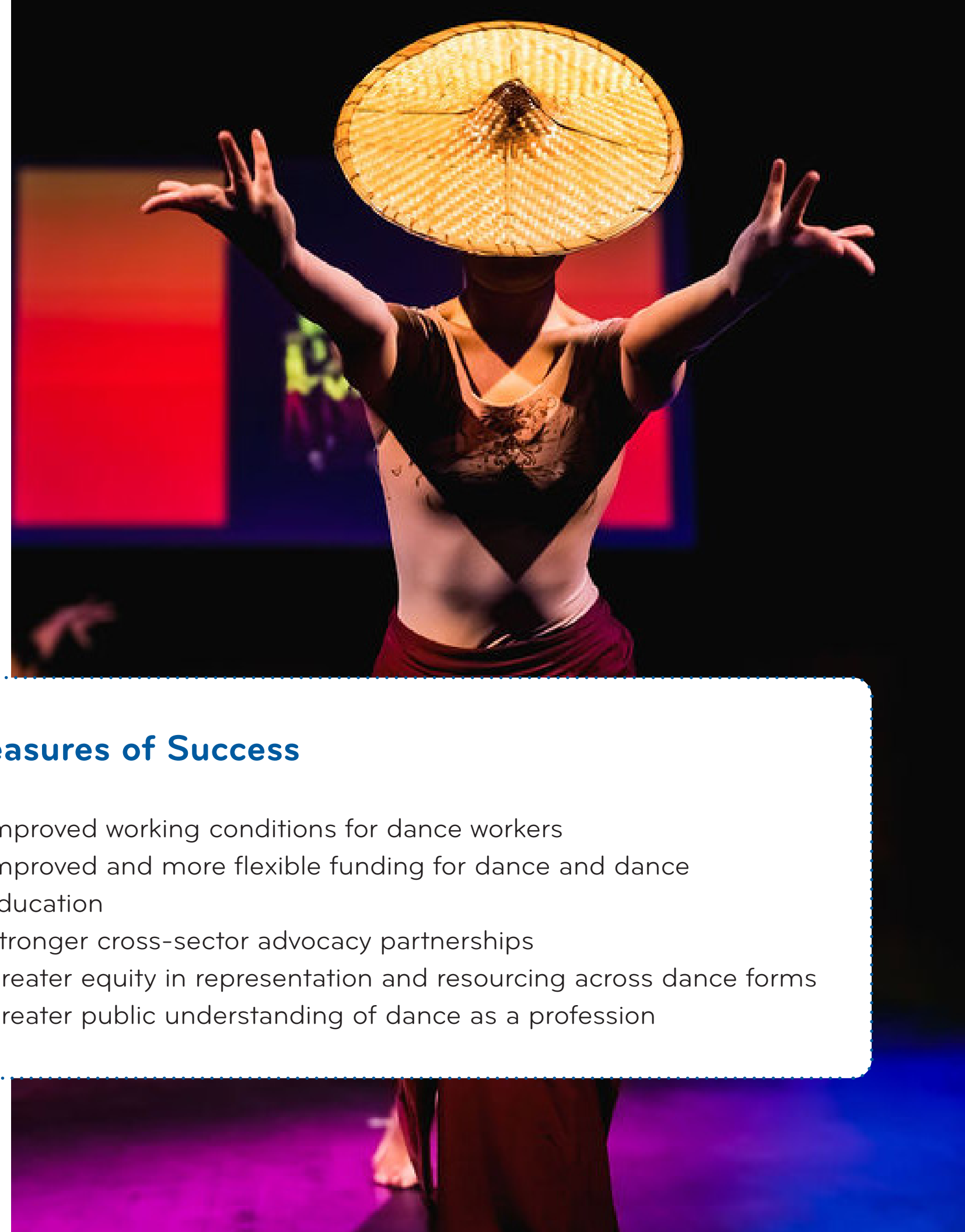
This goal is about using Dance/NYC's influence as a service to increase understanding, respect, and funding of dance. External stakeholders reported they perceive Dance/NYC as "in multiple rooms"—a critical bridge among artists, policymakers, and funders. Many external stakeholders also called for greater transparency and clarity of purpose. To effectively channel and amplify its influence, Dance/NYC must strengthen its external brand, clarify its advocacy positions/messaging, and engage more deeply in strategic partnerships. This goal guides Dance/NYC's leadership in delivering relatable, actionable advocacy that drives systems-level change centered on historically disinvested identities.

Strategies

1. Leverage institutional relationships and positional influence to advance policies and campaigns that improve working and living conditions for dance workers. Even if policies and campaigns or partner efforts are more broad, clarify that Dance/NYC's participation is a result of the endpoint benefit for individual dance workers.
2. Influence public and philanthropic funding for dance and dance education, with a focus on historically disinvested communities.
3. Amplify public awareness of dance's value, diversity, and viability as a profession.
4. Strengthen cross-sector advocacy partnerships to maximize collective impact.

Measures of Success

- Improved working conditions for dance workers
- Improved and more flexible funding for dance and dance education
- Stronger cross-sector advocacy partnerships
- Greater equity in representation and resourcing across dance forms
- Greater public understanding of dance as a profession



Goal 2: Activate Dance Workers as Agents of Change

Emerging from retreat discussions and stakeholder interviews, there is a clear mandate: center the needs and power of dance workers. While Dance/NYC is widely perceived as deeply engaged with and focused on individual dance workers, that perception currently outpaces practice. This gap presents a powerful opportunity for growth over the course of this plan to deepen engagement with individual workers. A civically engaged base of dance workers is essential to realizing a just, thriving dance ecosystem. By expanding access to tools for self-advocacy and organizing, Dance/NYC can foster greater autonomy, resilience, and community-driven change across the sector.

Strategies

1. Mobilize constituents to join or co-create campaigns that advance policies to improve working/living conditions for dance workers.
2. Embed dance workers in civic, cultural, and institutional decision-making processes by increasing civic participation.
3. Deepen engagement with curated tools and information to support self-advocacy.



Measures of Success

- Improved funding and working conditions for dance workers
- Expanded civic and social engagement among dance workers
- Increased influence of dance workers in funding or policy decision-making spaces

Goal 3: Refine Dance/NYC's Equity and Access-Driven Service to the NYC-Metropolitan Area Dance Sector

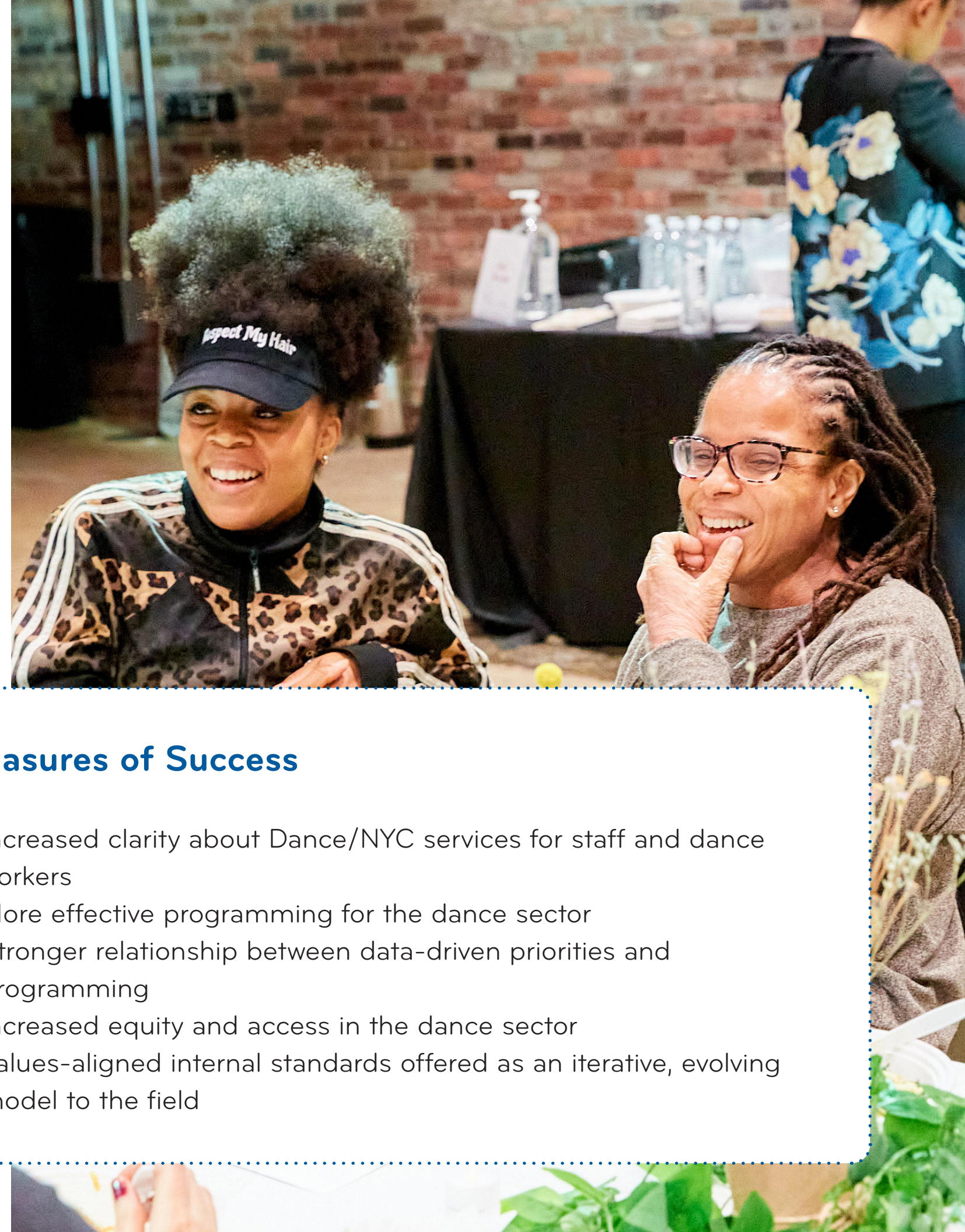
Dance/NYC has already been clarifying its core services in alignment with articulating its unique value proposition and honoring a need to maximize precious capacity/resources. These emergent shifts from the organization's previous five core services are affirmed by both internal and external feedback cited during the Strategic Planning process that highlighted the value of research, advocacy, regranting and knowledge-sharing. Refining service to the field through a rigorous equity and accessibility lens to demonstrate organizational values and the interconnected nature of our programs will amplify impact and Dance/NYC's leadership in the field.

Strategies

1. Produce and publicize research that advances the needs of dance workers.
2. Align convening and technological projects as supports for advocacy and research priorities.
3. Fairly distribute funding to address economic inequity for historically disinvested dance workers and organizations.
4. Clarify communication with internal and external stakeholders.
5. Deepen Justice, Equity, and Inclusion (JEI) and accessibility learning and practice across all programs.
6. Translate internal values-driven programming standards into external accountability models.

Measures of Success

- Increased clarity about Dance/NYC services for staff and dance workers
- More effective programming for the dance sector
- Stronger relationship between data-driven priorities and programming
- Increased equity and access in the dance sector
- Values-aligned internal standards offered as an iterative, evolving model to the field



Goal 4: Grow Dance/NYC's Long-Term Financial Sustainability

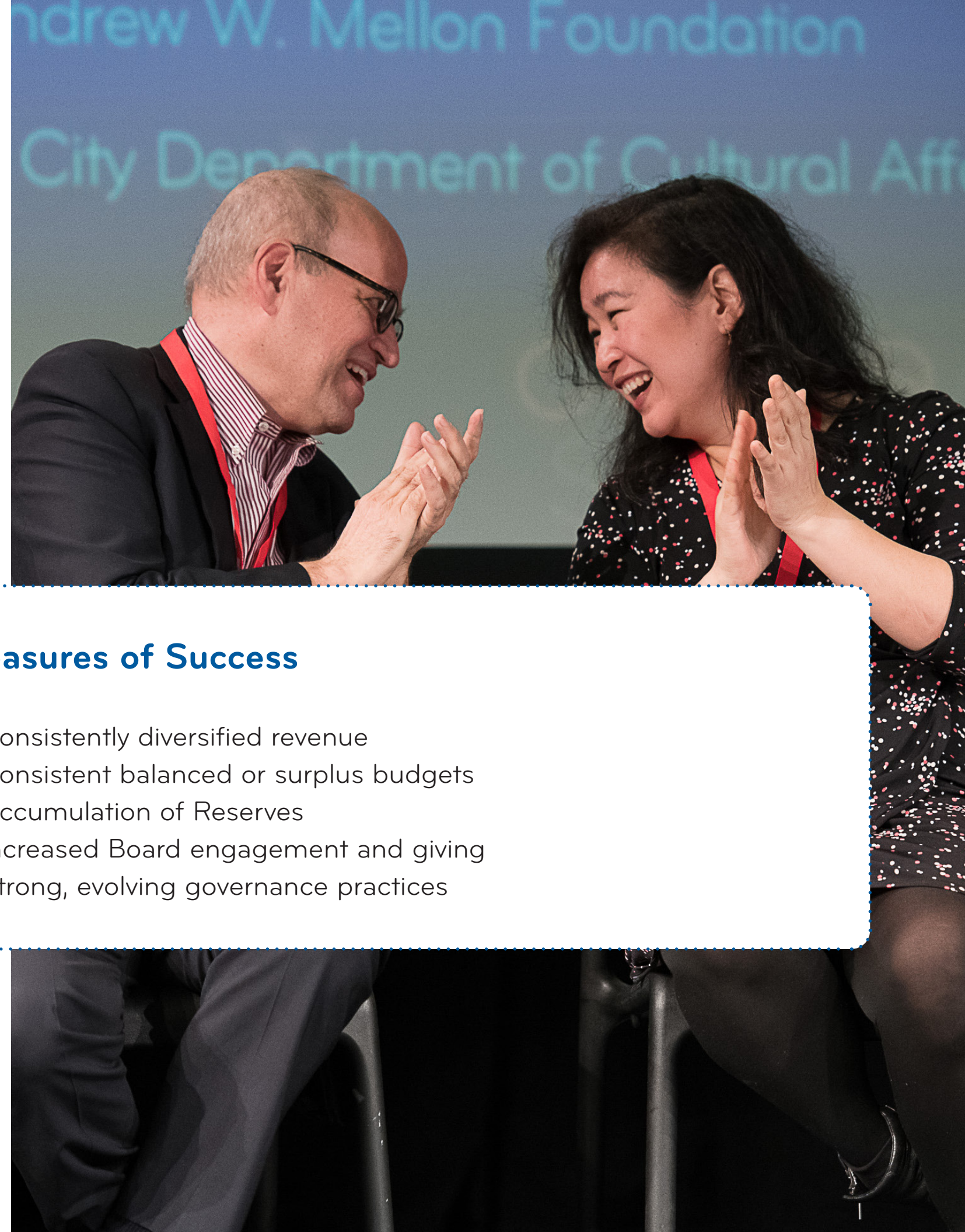
Sustainability emerged as a core concern throughout the planning process. With funder volatility and donor attrition, the need to diversify and stabilize funding is urgent. A strengthened and more diversified development strategy—combined with expanded Board leadership and fundraising capacity—will allow Dance/NYC to remain adaptive and mission-driven in service to the dance sector.

Strategies

1. Increase and diversify unrestricted revenue year over year by prospecting new multi-year commitments, cultivating individual and corporate giving, launching at least one income-generating initiative, and articulating ethical considerations that guide all diversification along organizational values and mission.
2. Exercise budget discipline to maintain baseline expenses in line with balanced or surplus budgeting.
3. Strengthen Board governance, compliance, and culture by renewing ongoing accountability structures.

Measures of Success

- Consistently diversified revenue
- Consistent balanced or surplus budgets
- Accumulation of Reserves
- Increased Board engagement and giving
- Strong, evolving governance practices



Goal 5: Strengthen Organizational Capacity and Well-Being

Dance/NYC has boldly explored new models of organizational leadership that reflect the organization's commitment to shared power and equity-oriented values. This approach brought notable benefits, such as distributing responsibility more equitably and supporting work-life balance across the team. At the same time, the experience surfaced valuable lessons around the need for clearer decision-making pathways, stronger accountability mechanisms, and greater alignment between capacity and scope. Moving forward, refining internal systems and reinforcing a culture of collaboration and effectiveness—anchored in JEI principles—will strengthen Dance/NYC's ability to lead externally while sustaining a healthy, mission-aligned organizational core.

Strategies

1. Establish long-term staffing structure to balance organizational needs with staff wellness and retention.
2. Increase operational clarity, efficiency, and collaboration.
3. Define and develop clear pathways for professional development, leadership, and career growth.
4. Track and improve staff engagement, satisfaction, and wellness.
5. Track and improve Board member engagement and satisfaction.

Measures of Success

- Mission and values-aligned internal and external work
- Increased operational effectiveness
- Career progression through the organization
- Increased staff satisfaction, wellness, and retention
- Increased Board satisfaction and engagement



GLOSSARY

Dance/NYC recognizes that language is constantly in flux and that words might have different meanings depending on their context and use. This glossary of terms is meant to contextualize the use of these terms within this plan. While not comprehensive, it reflects Dance/NYC's understanding and application of these terms at the time of writing.

#Accessible: Dance/NYC recognizes that the term "accessibility" is broad and can take on a number of different definitions. It often refers to, or is used in the context of, the Americans for Disabilities Act (ADA), a federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in everyday activities. In this report, "accessibility" refers to the ability of disabled people to access, experience, and benefit from dance industry offerings and experiences, including programs, spaces, and jobs. Accessible modifications allow unrestricted admittance to accommodate: individuals who may or may not have mobility disabilities or use assistive moving devices, like wheelchairs or canes; individuals who may have sensory disabilities; and individuals who communicate in different languages, are d/Deaf or hard of hearing, blind or low vision, and/or have cognitive or learning disabilities (National Disability Rights Network). Accessibility is both collective and individual, requiring practices of care and relationship, and not limited to legal accommodations provided by the ADA. Accessibility as it is defined in a radical sense, and as it merges with Disability Justice, is also an ongoing and ever-shifting process that goes beyond individual needs and considers the surrounding social and political systems that create inaccessibility (Fritsch, 2016: 26).

#Activism: Collective action (e.g. mobilization, protests) that seeks to bring about social or political change by challenging systems of power in ways that are more public-facing and disruptive than advocacy.

#Advocacy: Support for a particular cause or policy on the part of individuals, collectives, communities, or entities. In this context, Dance/NYC refers to advocacy in terms of public support for dance as an industry, its programs and outputs, and its workers.

#Arts Service Organization: A nonprofit entity that exists to strengthen, support, and advance the arts ecosystem rather than producing or presenting artistic work itself. These organizations provide infrastructure, resources, and advocacy that enable artists, cultural workers, and arts organizations to thrive. Their services may include funding and **#grantmaking**, professional development, convenings, research, policy advocacy, and capacity-building support.

#Civic Engagement: Participating in established pathways (e.g. voting, volunteering, attending meetings) within a community to contribute to local decision-making or influence living conditions.

Example: Dance workers voting in local elections, joining cultural policy advisory boards, or volunteering in community arts projects.

#Common Good: A common good is anything (material, cultural, institutional, etc.) that is available and accessible to everyone in a society and benefits that given society. In this report, there is discussion about the need to advocate for dance as a common good.

#Dance Artist: Dance artist refers specifically to individuals whose primary creative practice is in the art of dance performance and creation. This includes dancers, choreographers, and those who embody, interpret, and generate movement as artistic expression, whether on stage, in rehearsal, in community settings, or through other modes of performance and creation.

#Dance Worker: A dance worker is meant to encompass anyone who works in dance including: dancers, choreographers, and directors; dance teachers and studio personnel; dance presenters and producers; musicians and accompanists; photographers and videographers; lighting, costume, and scenic designers; stage managers and production professionals; writers, journalists, critics, and dramaturgs; researchers, scholars, educators, and academics; wellness providers and practitioners; managers, agents, and publicists; and dance administrators and service providers

#Equity: Equity is a process of eliminating disparities so all people can have the same outcomes. It is the intentional and continual practice of changing policies, procedures, systems, and structures by prioritizing measurable change especially in the lives of underinvested and marginalized populations and communities. (Adapted from [Race Forward](#))

#Equity Primes: Equity primes are guiding principles or questions that anchor organizational decisions in equity, ensuring choices about resources, priorities, and programs actively advance values of justice, inclusion, and accessibility

#Grantmaking: The process by which a foundation, government agency, or other institution distributes money from its own resources (endowment, public funds, contributions) directly to individuals or organizations in support of their work.

Example: When Dance/NYC grants money to small-budget dance organizations in a program like Dance Advancement Fund

#Inclusive: Authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/ or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power. (OpenSource Leadership Strategies)

#Partner: An individual, entity, institution, nonprofit, business, or collective that collaborates with an organization toward shared goals. Partnerships may involve exchanging or sharing resources, labor, information, or networks, and are built on mutual benefit, trust, and values alignment.

#Public: The broad community that benefits from dance as a cultural and social good. This includes individual dance workers and organizations at the center of the ecosystem, as well as audiences, funders, policymakers, educators, and the wider New York City community whose civic and cultural life is enriched through dance.

#Public Value: The “public,” referenced above, collectively understand and respect dance as a profession - and support it as such with the necessary resources (time, attention, money, etc) to advance equitable conditions for dance workers.

#Regranting: When a funder provides money to an intermediary organization—an organization that is both grant recipient and grantmaker—which then redistributes those funds as grants to individuals or groups, often with field-specific expertise or closer proximity to the grantees. This process can increase equity and access by leveraging intermediaries’ trust and knowledge of their communities.

Example: When national arts funders award money to Dance/NYC, which then regrants it to individual dance workers and small dance groups in New York City.

#Sustainably: Another term that is defined in multiple ways, “sustainability” by definition is the ability to be maintained at a certain rate or level. This research refers to sustainability in terms of people and entities. For dance workers, sustainability refers to their ability to maintain a basic quality of life and access basic necessities. For entities, sustainability refers to financial health and ongoing operations that are breaking even or resulting in surplus over time such that the entity is able to continue operating.

#Theory of Change: A strategic framework that maps how an organization’s activities are intended to lead to desired long-term outcomes. It identifies the connections between immediate programmatic work and broader sectoral or societal change, clarifying assumptions and values that guide decision-making. For Dance/NYC, the Theory of Change functions as a roadmap rooted in equity, integrity, collaboration, and optimism, linking its work—such as regranting, advocacy, research, and knowledge-sharing—to lasting transformation in the dance field and beyond.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dance/NYC Board of Directors

Reshma Patel, Chair
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