

Inside Philanthropy



The State of
American Philanthropy

Giving for Dance

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ABOUT INSIDE PHILANTHROPY

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ABOUT THE STATE OF AMERICAN PHILANTHROPY

The State of American Philanthropy is a series of background papers on important topics and trends in U.S. philanthropy. The papers draw on past research and reporting by IP writers, as well as new interviews, grantmaking data, and other sources. Learn more at insidephilanthropy.com/state-of-american-philanthropy.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This brief explores the giving of private foundations, corporations, community foundations and major donors to dance organizations in fields like ballet and contemporary dance, as well as individual artists. The dance funding ecosystem is relatively small in comparison to other performing arts fields like music and theater, which consistently generate more support from funders. Dance advocates attribute this imbalance to a variety of factors, ranging from the American public's lack of exposure to dance from a young age, to fundraisers' struggles to cultivate long-term donors.

That said, there is a vibrant ecosystem of dance nonprofits and dance artists, and dedicated funders that support them. This brief looks at leaders, trends, challenges and opportunities in American philanthropy for dance.

Who's Giving

- Traditional grantmaking foundations like the Andrew W. Mellon and Doris Duke Charitable foundations are among the top funders of dance organizations.
- There is also considerable grantmaking for dance through donor-advised funds. Individuals are the leading source of contributions for the average arts organization.

Who's Getting

- Ballet companies receive the lion's share of philanthropy for dance.
- "Contemporary dance companies often start out with fewer donors, including trustees with deep pockets, and with a loyal cohort of institutional supporters but typically fewer of them," says one expert.
- Donors tend to prioritize gifts for capital projects and programming. This is true across types of private giving, but especially among "major donors."

The Big Issues & Funding Trends

- Artists and organizations across the dance world see the need for more funding as a top priority.
- In particular, organizations want to use additional funding to create more stable careers, with living wages and healthcare access, for dancers. Very few dancers earn a living entirely from dance. Even those who do often do multiple roles, work in the gig economy, and have inadequate access to healthcare. Dance organizations are advocating for changes to create better working conditions and livable wages for dancers.

Equity in the Sector

- Because ballet companies continue to receive the lion's share of funder support, until those companies and their audiences become more diverse, this core inequity will remain.

- Many arts organizations prioritize equity, and have called on funders to support their efforts.
- Gender equity has improved in the ballet world in recent years. In 2024, five of the largest 10 ballet companies had female artistic directors. And pay is getting close to even for male and female executive directors of dance organizations.

As Suzanne Callahan, who works to connect arts organizations to funders, told Inside Philanthropy, “Dance gets funded when funders prioritize it. Fortunately, some funders have.”

Introduction

This paper defines nonprofit dance organizations in accordance with the IRS National Taxonomy of Expert Entities' Arts, Culture & Humanities Activity Code. Applicable subcodes for the dance sector include, but are not limited to, dance, which includes modern, folk, country and western, and square dancing, ballet and folk arts, plus fields like hip-hop and jazz. The paper also covers nonprofit educational institutions that receive philanthropic support for dance-related activities and programming.

Public funding for all of the arts has been in general decline in the U.S. for decades, and nonprofit arts organizations have turned to philanthropy for support. While there was a notable increase in public funding for the arts amid and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is now likely to be a sharp decline amid the deep and broad funding cuts of the second Trump administration.

Nonprofit dance organizations are more reliant on philanthropy than nonprofits in other performing arts fields are, with individual donors providing substantial support. Foundations play an important role, as well, although this support is waning. "I have worked on the funding side of the dance field for a better part of 30 years," said Suzanne Callahan, an arts-philanthropy consultant whose involvement has included managing the Dance/USA Fellowships to Artists, a program of Dance/USA, the national service organization for professional dance. "If you counted the number of funders that support dance, there are fewer now than there were decades ago."

This is something of a paradox. As philanthropic support stagnates, dance as a cultural interest appears higher than ever across American society, thanks to YouTube, social media, Tik Tok, dance-inspired television shows like "Dance Moms" and "Dancing with the Stars," and the popularity of dance classes as an alternative form of exercise. According to market research firm IBISWorld, the market size of the dance studios industry in the U.S. grew 5% per year on average between 2018 and 2023 to \$4.5 billion, increasing faster than the economy overall. There are about 10,000 dance studios across the United States.

Yet dance nonprofits have been unable to translate this surging popularity into increased giving. How can we explain this disconnect? Partly it's that there's a gap between taking dance classes or enjoying dance on TV or social media and supporting nonprofit dance organizations. For example, the NEA reports that only 2% of American adults attended a ballet performance, and 3.3% attended another type of dance performance, in 2022.

Arts-philanthropy consultant Suzanne Callahan notes that exposure to dance is relative when weighed against other art forms. "Though dance is around us all the time, music, theater and visual arts are more prevalent in our education system," she said. "Dance classes in schools are few and far between, leaving our country more comfortable with other art forms."

Alejandra Duque Cifuentes, a former executive director of Dance/NYC, a nonprofit organization and regrantor, argues that the dance experience "is solely based on the human body," she said,

making it a “very specific form, and a vulnerable one that limits a donor’s ability to slap their name on something that’s immediate, visual, long-term and tangible.”

Ultimately, Cifuentes said, that “makes us ask: Do we value the worker? Or do we only value the product they produce? The latter is what we’re seeing in the philanthropic world, and it’s why the sector is hurting so much.”

To be clear, certain dance organizations are not “hurting” for philanthropic support. The sector’s leading recipients of foundation and donor-advised grants are ballet companies with comparatively large endowments and well-connected board members.

In contrast, small dance organizations make up the bulk of most major dance ecosystems, yet remain significantly undercapitalized.

Dance/USA’s [2024 survey](#) of the dance ecosystem found that only 6.2% of U.S. dance nonprofits have budgets over \$500,000.

This funding disparity explains why dance professionals who spoke with Inside Philanthropy have implored funders to prioritize support for historically undercapitalized fields, specifically organizations that are led by and engage BIPOC, disabled and immigrant audiences.

It is also worth noting that the dance ecosystem, broadly speaking, lacks consensus around semantics. For instance, professionals define “contemporary dance” as a particular genre of concert dance that has developed since the mid-to late 20th century. Others use “contemporary”

as a broad umbrella term that includes current modern, jazz, ballet and hip hop elements, and still others view “modern dance” as a standalone field with distinctive techniques and rules named after the pioneers who created them. Others, like Glenn Edgerton, dance faculty at the University of Oklahoma and a former artistic director of Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, believe “there’s no clear distinction” between “modern” and “contemporary” dance. Where does the preservation of traditional folk dance forms fall in the nonprofit dance sector? While defining “dance” is challenging, as it encompasses countless forms of artistic body movement, one stark fact can’t be denied: The vast majority of philanthropic support goes to classical ballet; meanwhile, modern and contemporary companies lag way behind, and other forms hardly register at all in dance-philanthropy data.

The Lay of the Land

Who's Giving

Broadly speaking, approximately half of performing arts organizations' revenues come from philanthropy and public funding, and the other half from earned income (which includes programmatic income such as ticket sales as well as a small percentage from investment income). Even with a surge in government support in the early 2020s in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, private giving accounted for a much larger share of unrestricted operating revenue for arts nonprofits than public funding in any given year from 2019 to 2023, according to SMU DataArts' [2024 report](#). Yet even as contributed revenue has become more important, private funding has not kept pace with inflation, SMU DataArts and Dance/USA [report](#).

Among the performing arts, "dance is a bit more reliant on earned revenue" than the average performing arts organization, said former SMU DataArts director Zannie Voss. For years, the average dance organization's revenue has been roughly half earned and half contributed, with slightly more revenue coming from the earned side. But in the post-pandemic years, the balance has shifted. Whereas in 2018 about 54% of total revenue came from earned income, in 2022 60% of revenue was contributed versus 40% earned, according to Dance/USA's [2024 report](#) on changes in the nonprofit dance ecosystem from 2018 to 2022.

The dance philanthropy ecosystem consists of private and family foundations, donor-advised

Dance Funders to Know

Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

Doris Duke Charitable Foundation

San Francisco Ballet Endowment Fund

Howard Gilman Foundation

Shubert Foundation

SHS Foundation

Ford Foundation

Boston Foundation

Arison Arts Foundation

Arnhold Foundation

funds (DAFs), individual donors, corporations, community foundations, regional arts organizations and government agencies.

The private foundations giving the most for dance in terms of dollar amounts are the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Doris Duke Charitable Fund and Howard Gilman Foundation. The Ford and Shubert foundations also give significantly for dance.

The Howard Gilman and Shubert foundations stand out for their commitments to providing general operating support to performing arts organizations.

There is also substantial grantmaking for dance happening through DAFs, as well as non-DAF individual giving. “People think of foundations like Mellon and Wallace making up a bulk of organizations’ revenue base, but that’s not borne out in the data,” said Lucas Bernays Held, a former VP of communications at the Wallace Foundation.

As recently as 2019, individuals were the leading source of contributions for the average arts organization, SMU DataArts [reported](#). But there has been a notable shift in the last few years, with foundation grantmaking playing an increased role while individual giving, including trustee giving, [has declined](#) after a 2020 peak, hitting a four-year low in 2022.

Additional top grantmakers for dance include Bloomberg Philanthropies, Foundation for Contemporary Arts, Arison Arts Foundation, Arnhold Foundation, Kresge Foundation, New England Foundation for the Arts, the New York Community Trust, Jerome Robbins Foundation, Surdna Foundation and Wallace Foundation.

Other notable national funders include American Dance Movement, the Capezio Foundation, Creative Capital, Hearst Foundations, the National YoungArts Foundation, Pew Center for Arts and Heritage, the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation and United States Artists.

Prominent New York-focused funders include the Leon Levy Foundation, the Jerome L. Greene Foundation, the Mertz Gilmore Foundation and the Harkness Foundation for Dance.

Grantmakers operating in the Bay Area include the Fleishhacker Foundation, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation, Walter and Elise Haas Fund, Hellman Foundation and the Kenneth Rainin Foundation. The Alphawood Foundation, the Gaylord & Dorothy Donnelley Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation are some of the funders focused on Chicago-based dance organizations.

Additional regional funders include Arts Midwest, the Barr Foundation (Boston), the William Penn Foundation (Philadelphia), the Brown Foundation (Gulf Coast states), Bonfils-Stanton Foundation (Denver), Amon G. Carter Foundation (Texas), Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation (New Jersey), Heinz Endowment (Pittsburgh), Houston Foundation, and the Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation.

Who's Getting

Ballet companies receive the lion’s share of dance philanthropy. Dance professionals attribute this fact to ballet’s long-standing relationships with institutional funders, board members’ fundraising acumen, and established companies’ high operating expenses.

Ballet companies that have been in operation for decades have cultivated longstanding relationships with affluent institutional foundations and donors.

The Kansas City Ballet, for example, enjoys deep ties with one of the sector’s largest DAF fund managers, the Kansas City Community

Foundation, plus funders like the Muriel McBrien Kauffman Foundation, whose chief executive officer, Julia I. Kauffman, is the ballet's chairman of the board. Major funders for the New York City Ballet include the Shubert Foundation, JPMorgan Chase, and a slew of family foundations. And the Houston Ballet raised millions from local funders after it lost \$12 million in revenues when Hurricane Harvey forced it to close its Wortham Theater Center in 2017.

Smaller organizations simply don't "have the same social circles or networks" as these large companies, said the Howard Gilman Foundation's Senior Director of Programs and Planning, Anna Campbell.

Dance Grantees to Know

New York City Ballet
Ballet Theatre Foundation (ABT)
San Francisco Ballet Association
Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation
Miami City Ballet
Joffrey Ballet
Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival
School of American Ballet
Boston Ballet
Sarasota Ballet of Florida

Ballet performances are inordinately expensive to produce, thereby requiring greater support, while some companies, like the San Francisco and Houston Ballets, have their own state-of-the-art performance venues, which require additional maintenance. The only non-ballet performing company with grant revenues anywhere near the scale of the big ballet companies is Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, one of the largest dance nonprofits in the US and one of the most well-known dance companies in the world. Like some of the ballet companies, Ailey has conducted a multimillion-dollar capital campaign to expand a dance center.

Most contemporary dance troupes "don't have facilities, and they aren't as well-resourced as the major ballet companies are," said Maurine Knighton, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation's chief program officer. "Contemporary dance companies often start out with fewer donors, including trustees with deep pockets, and with a loyal cohort of institutional supporters, but typically fewer of them."

Another other non-ballet organization that receives substantial grant support is Jacob's Pillow, the longest-running international dance festival in the U.S. Jacob's Pillow showcases diverse dance styles and traditions.

Dance/NYC and Dance/USA are the sector's two main nonprofit regrantee organizations. They provide support to individual artists and choreographers. For example, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation funds Dance/USA's Fellowships to Artists. The National Dance Project, housed at the New England Foundation for the Arts, is another important regrantee.

While large, established organizations receive the most grant support, it's important to remember that most dance nonprofits are operating on an entirely different scale. The vast majority of nonprofit dance organizations in the U.S. have budgets under \$500,000, Dance/USA [reports](#).

Zooming out to the larger ecosystem, funders provide support to organizations that offer an array of dance instruction and programming spanning dance genres. For example, the Los Angeles-based American Dance Movement has awarded funding to include Everybody Dance Now!, a national nonprofit organization that provides hip-hop and street dance programming.

In other examples, the Boston Foundation made a grant to the nonprofit The Flavor Continues for a group dance competition using the “backyard” format, which “bridges the gaps between various dance styles, skill levels and generations”; William Penn Foundation has provided support to the Kulu Male African American Dance Ensemble through its Creative Community program; and Fordney Foundation provides grants to young people for training and competition in “dance sport,” a form of ballroom dancing.

Giving & Getting Deeper Dive

Dance, like all performing arts, was seriously affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. And like most performing arts nonprofits, dance organizations have not yet fully recovered. After adjusting for inflation, total revenue to dance organizations is not yet back to pre-pandemic levels, Dance/USA found in a 2024 [report](#) on changes in the nonprofit dance ecosystem from

2018 to 2022. In 2024, respondents to a Dance/USA survey highlighted the [need for more funding](#) as a top priority across the U.S. dance world.

Looking at the performing arts more broadly, data provided by Candid shows that dance is less supported by private grantmaking than music and theater. This has been the case for decades. There are simply fewer institutional funders providing fewer grants and less overall monetary support to dance than to music or theater nonprofits. That said, while philanthropy for dance is a relatively small funding space, there are a number of funders dedicated to the art.

As the “Who’s Giving” section of this paper illustrates, individual donors plus a handful of institutional grantmakers and DAF providers dominate dance philanthropy. This support is complemented by smaller national and regional grantmakers and community foundations.

Some funders limit giving to a certain field. For example, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation only supports contemporary dance; it does not fund ballet. This support includes funding for touring, production residencies and professional development services. Broadly speaking, funders support a broad spectrum of initiatives, like awards for dancers and choreographers, grants for building renovations and university dance programs, initiatives that boost audience engagement, and endowment gifts for artistic director positions and university deanships.

Funders also provide dance support under the larger “performing arts” rubric. For instance, the Jerome L. Greene Foundation gave the Juilliard

School a \$7 million gift to expand the Jerome L. Greene Fellowship for dance, music and drama. In a similar vein, funders award grants earmarked for the construction of multidisciplinary performing arts venues. This support benefits dance organizations that lease the space.

Dance differs from music and theater in ways that underscore the sector's reliance on general operating support. Performances typically have short runs while organizations rely on touring. Neither approach generates substantial earned income. Thus, "theaters' reliance on subscription revenue is almost double that of dance organizations," said SMU DataArts' Voss.

Dance companies "generally need a fairly large and unrestricted space so they move across the floor," arts-funding consultant Suzanne Callahan told Inside Philanthropy. This requirement "creates certain kinds of up-front costs."

The dance cost model can also vary based on the organization type. "There aren't many 'dance-only' presenters," said Callahan, noting that dance troupes typically perform in multidisciplinary spaces.

At the same time, funders often tie grant amounts to the size of an organization's budget or assets, unwittingly shutting out smaller organizations from the funding process. We'll explore this trend in greater detail in the "Perspectives on Equity" section.

For a long time, individuals, including trustees, have been the lifeblood of the dance funding ecosystem. Given the breadth of individual

Donor Spotlight

**BONFILS
STANTON**
FOUNDATION

The Bonfils-Stanton Foundation supports the arts in Denver. 2024 grantees include diverse dance organizations such as a flamenco group; a dance studio that focuses on Indian classical, contemporary and folk dance; and a modern dance company. The regional arts funder has engaged in strategic planning over the last few years to increase equity in arts funding, support a pipeline of nonprofit leaders and emerging artists, and intentionally evolve to most effectively support Denver's arts and culture ecosystem. Key initiatives include a program supporting equity in arts education and a flexible, thoughtful approach to increasing payout. To learn more, see Inside Philanthropy's [profile](#) of the foundation's recent strategic evolution.

giving and the fact that some gifts are not made public, it is difficult to lay out individual donors' priorities with the kind of quantitative rigor we see in analysis of foundation grants. That said, a search of donor gifts on sites like the Chronicle of Philanthropy and Philanthropy News Digest,

plus anecdotal evidence gleaned from discussions with dance professionals, suggests that on the whole, individual major donors tend to prioritize gifts for capital purposes and programming. This theme is explored in greater detail in the “Major Donors” section.

Inside Philanthropy’s August 2020 survey on the state of fundraising found that 51% of respondents cited revenues from “private and family foundations” as increasing in importance. “Smaller individual donors through general fundraising and online campaigns,” large individual donors, donor-advised funds and

community foundations were thought to be increasing as revenue sources by about 4 in 10 respondents. Looking at arts and culture organizations broadly (i.e., not only dance organizations), SMU DataArts found that from 2019 to 2023, foundation grantmaking was the only source of private funding that kept up with inflation.

The Big Issues & Beyond

Dance/USA’s 2024 survey of the dance ecosystem found individuals and organizations across the dance world highlighting the need for more funding as a top priority.

Equity advocates have long questioned funders’ overwhelming support for “the usual suspects”—large, well-connected, and relatively affluent organizations, many of which are in the ballet field. In fact, research from the [Dance Data Project](#) found a stratified resource landscape even within the field of large ballet companies. In 2022, the project reported that the top 10 ballet companies accounted for 59.3% of the total expenditures of the top 50 ballet companies.

Another area of concern is the industry’s low wages and limited opportunities. “Making a living as an American dancer and choreographer today is a fantasy,” wrote dancer Sarah Anne Austin on [Dance/USA’s site](#). In its 2024 [report](#) on the dance ecosystem, Dance/USA found that the vast majority of dancers and choreographers do not earn a living from dance alone. And even those who do typically work in multiple roles (e.g., dancer and dance teacher) at multiple organizations. They are largely gig workers with low incomes from dance and inadequate access to affordable healthcare.

Funder Spotlight



The Surdna Foundation’s Thriving Cultures program takes an interconnected grantmaking approach guided by “Radical Imagination for Racial Justice.” The program supports artists, communities of color, and cultural critics of color in an effort to build more equitable artistic infrastructure that advances racial equity. Grantees include the NDN Collective, TransLash Media and the National Black Theatre Workshop.

Dance advocates want to see more funding for dance in order to create stable dance careers with livable wages and healthcare access.

With public funding likely to precipitously decline after Trump administration cuts to federal funding across the board, the gap for arts philanthropy to fill will only grow larger.

The outlook is especially precarious for Black, Indigenous, and people-of-color-led arts organizations that typically lack robust cash reserves, wealthy board members and deep-pocketed funders. They now are also at risk of losing federal arts grants specifically because of their work to create a more diverse, equitable dance world.

“The Getty and the National Gallery of Art are in their own bubbles,” Ford Foundation President Darren Walker told the Washington Post in 2020 while describing the impetus for Ford and partner funders’ America’s Cultural Treasures initiative, which provided support for BIPOC cultural organizations amid the COVID-19 pandemic. However, Walker said, “when you get to the medium and smaller arts organizations—that don’t have endowments, that don’t have rich boards, that don’t have huge amounts of operating cash flow—those organizations are panicked. If we don’t help them, they will be gone.”

That sentiment remains true, perhaps even more so, as the second Trump administration cuts public funding across federal agencies, and specifically threatens diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives.

This paper’s “Perspectives on Equity” section explores funder insights around how best to support dance organizations serving communities of color.

While arts funders mobilized during the COVID-19 pandemic to throw dancers a lifeline, “generally speaking, the direct funding of artists is new territory for most foundations,” said SMU DataArts’ Voss.

Funder Trends & Strategies

Prior to 2020, performing arts organizations had implored funders to cut red tape and give a greater voice to the communities they serve. Organizations complained about funders’ complicated application processes and reporting requirements. “All of this red tape hasn’t allowed there to be long-term consistent support,” said Dance/NYC Duque Cifuentes. When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, grantmakers responded.

Many dance companies reported that funders streamlined their reporting requirements. Doris Duke’s Knighton provided the following example. Previously, foundations often asked organizations to provide multi-year budget projections. “The truth is, we could continue to require that,” said Knighton, “but it has far less meaning now than it might have a year ago. We are in an environment of so many unknowns that it doesn’t feel like a respectful use of time to ask a grantee to provide that information.” Instead, Knighton proposed that funders ask for financial information quarterly—a less resource-intensive and speculative task than asking organizations to project three to five years into the future.

“It takes philanthropy a while to change or even consider making a change; we don’t have that luxury anymore,” said Howard Gilman Foundation’s Campbell. The pandemic prompted trends in the dance funding space including more trust-based philanthropy practices such as embracing general operating support, streamlining reporting requirements and democratizing grantmaking, as well as more grantmaking to directly support individual artists.

“To see funders’ willingness to shift to be responsive was incredibly heartening,” Dance/NYC’s Duque Cifuentes told Inside Philanthropy. “And I remember thinking, ‘Why did it take you so long?’”

That said, in 2024, individuals and organizations throughout the U.S. dance world were still citing the need for more funding, and in particular more general operating support, as a top priority, according to a national [survey](#) of 331 individuals and 154 organizations conducted by Dance/USA.

As Karen Newell, director of external affairs at the Baltimore-based Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation, told IP back in 2020, “General operating support is like gold—there should be more of it.”

Another funder trend is participatory grantmaking. Dance funders can turn to the MacArthur Foundation as one model. In 2019, the funder implemented a participatory grantmaking panel that reviewed and recommended applicants to foundation leadership as part of its new Culture, Equity, and the Arts initiative. The late Geoffrey Banks, then

Collaboration Spotlight



Dance funders also partner with third-party consultants. The Hewlett Foundation worked with Helicon Collaborative in revising its performing arts strategy, the MacArthur Foundation collaborated with the Field Foundation of Illinois on its Culture, Equity, and the Arts initiative, and SMU DataArts has worked with funders to provide findings related to the diversity of the boards, staff and artists of grantees.

the program officer of MacArthur’s Chicago Commitment, called participatory grantmaking “a concrete way for residents who are not grantmakers to gain insights into philanthropy in the interest of contributing to the civic life of our city.”

But insights gleaned from Inside Philanthropy’s survey suggest advocates for democratizing philanthropy have considerable work to do. Only 1 in 10 funders and fundraisers said there is “truly a growing trend toward more democratization of philanthropy with more and more examples that can be documented.” About

4 in 10 said, “There are some good examples of democratization in philanthropy, but it is likely a trend that will happen very slowly over time.”

Perspectives on Equity

The world of dance, especially ballet, has been the subject of equity critiques for decades. The field's nonprofit and foundation leaders have also been discussing and working to address equity challenges in dance for a long time. Leaders in the dance funder community have been pursuing a wide variety of strategies to advance equity on multiple dimensions, taking on race and other concerns. These strategies include reconsiderations of funding smaller organizations, expanding notions of what constitutes a dance organization, actively soliciting proposals and conversations with BIPOC-led organizations, and having pointed conversations about how ballet needs to change.

Funders looking to advance equity can pull from the following insights on issues like grant eligibility requirements, community outreach, balancing support for larger and more affluent grantees, and gender equity.

Linking grant size to organizational budget size hurts BIPOC organizations, dance professionals tell IP. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, funders often tied grant size to an organization's assets or budget. By doing so, they shut out organizations of color that, broadly speaking, “may not have the kinds of fixed assets that a larger organization will have,” said Doris Duke's Knighton.

This model thereby creates an environment where “the biggest institutions absorb a

disproportionate share of your philanthropic capacity, and as they grow, that ratio needs to be sustained,” said Gary Steuer, president and CEO of Denver's Bonfils-Stanton Foundation, which has supported organizations like Cleo Parker Robinson Dance and Colorado Ballet.

Funders have taken note. The MacArthur Foundation's Culture, Equity, and the Arts initiative does not link grant amounts to an organization's size.



“Generally speaking, the arts community prides itself on being very open and inclusive of all groups of people. Artists are often social commentators on such important topics as injustice and inequality. Arts administrators and presenters strive to create programs and other offerings that attract people of various demographic groups. But as a field, we still have room to grow; room to better represent the diverse communities that many of us have emerged from; and room to reach out to, and speak on behalf of, a multiplicity of communities.”

—Ebonie Pittman, former senior director of development, Dance Theatre of Harlem

Helicon Collaborative’s co-director Alexis Frasz told Inside Philanthropy that funders must recognize that many diverse organizations may not look like typical “arts organizations” since they often do intersectional work across multiple areas like housing, youth development and economic development.

Performing arts funders corroborate this argument. Before launching its Culture, Equity, and the Arts initiative, MacArthur defined an “arts organization” as one whose sole mission was the “creation and exhibition or production of art.” While this definition covered organizations that primarily served white audiences, like symphonies, it “had the unintended consequence of excluding significant parts of the city’s population and a variety of art forms and genres,” says Cate Fox, who was a program officer at MacArthur at the time of the interview.

Similarly, Bonfils-Stanton Foundation’s Steuer told Inside Philanthropy that the foundation’s equity work revealed that the biggest provider of arts activity for Denver’s Filipino community were community centers. This kind of scenario wasn’t on the foundation’s radar because “we were looking for organizations with paid staff or those that were 100% dedicated to arts and culture,” Steuer said.

Elaborate and resource-intensive grant applications can unwittingly exclude diverse dance organizations run by non-English speakers, those that can’t afford to hire a professional grant writer, or those that lack access to technology.

“Grant writing is a specific kind of storytelling,” said Dance/NYC’s former executive director Duque Cifuentes. “The process and data-keeping is very intensive for most of our folks who are struggling to keep their doors open.” The Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation’s Newell encourages fellow funders to “provide alternative means of applying, such as videos, interactive interviews—phone calls, even.”

Funders’ restrictive grantmaking model creates an environment where leadership lacks a deep network of small organizations serving communities of color. There is an increasing number of ways that performing arts funders are expanding their footprint with historically under-engaged BIPOC organizations.

Jennifer Coleman, who oversees the George Gund Foundation’s Creative Culture and Arts Program, told Inside Philanthropy she drew up a list of

BIPOC organizations that had been “shut out of the grantmaking process.” She found them by going online, cold-calling groups, and asking nonprofit leaders to recommend peers.

Many dance funders have concluded that it’s more effective to partner with an experienced third party than build a diverse organizational ecosystem from scratch. Strategies include funding regrantors, working with third-party consultants, and paying representatives at front-line organizations.

“Grantmakers can best advance equity in performing arts by granting multi-year support to organizations that are by, for and about people of color, people with disabilities, trans people,

etc.,” said Eddie Torres, president and CEO of Grantmakers in the Arts, a consortium of the sector’s most influential foundations.

While funders almost unanimously voice agreement with this sentiment, some grantmakers have discovered that one extra dollar for a BIPOC organization is one less dollar for a ballet or opera company. As a result, funders like the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation are gradually dialing back capital and general operating support for large organizations to free up investments for BIPOC organizations.

Funders are also encouraging “legacy” institutions “to think about the enormous assets they have to be meaningful to folks to all walks of

life,” said arts philanthropy professional Judilee Reed. This requires funders and institutions to “pivot relevance and how it relates to people and what they want, at a really local level. That will get us to a program of grantmaking that makes more sense from a racial equity perspective.”

The “Who’s Getting” section showed that ballet companies receive the lion’s share of funder support. But the largest ballet companies play an outsized role within the field. Research from the Dance Data Project, an organization that informs equity through data analysis, advocacy and programming, found that the 10 largest ballet companies in the U.S. together represent 59.3% of the entire expenditures of the largest 50.

“Foundations and individuals should do the homework, instead of just continuing to pay out the biggest checks to the largest organizations,” said Dance Data Project founder Elizabeth Yntema.

The project also found striking gender disparities across the ballet space. For instance, in 2024, at the largest 50 ballet companies, there are 11 female and 40 male artistic directors. Broadening out to the 150 largest ballet companies, 59.7% of artistic directors were men in 2024.

The ABT Women’s Movement, an ongoing initiative launched in 2018 by American Ballet Theatre, supports the creation of new works by female choreographers. Dance Data Project’s Elizabeth Yntema, along with the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation and Rockefeller Brothers Fund, are among the supports of the initiative.

Coalition Spotlight



Based in Atlanta, Georgia, Alternate ROOTS is a regional arts service organization that “support(s) the creation and presentation of original art, in all its forms, which is rooted in a particular community of place, tradition or spirit.”

Founded in 1976, ROOTS, an acronym for Regional Organization of Theaters South, advocates for social and economic justice while “working to dismantle all forms of oppression, everywhere.”

Funders are also working to boost diversity in a space where, as of 2022, [less than 5%](#) of degrees awarded in ballet went to Black, African American, Hispanic, or Latino students.

In a socioeconomically stratified society, cost is also a factor in who participates in dance. A decade ago, data reporter Abby Abrams calculated that it costs nearly \$120,000 to train a ballerina over 15 years. While that number can only have grown since Abrams estimated it in 2015, Abrams' point remains relevant: "Those in the profession say the high costs associated with ballet can be an obstacle for many students, especially for dancers of color," she said.

ABT's Project Plié, which supports the training of ballet students from underrepresented communities, receives support from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation. And in 2018, Dance Theatre of Harlem, the International Association of Blacks in Dance, and Dance/USA launched the Equity Project: Increasing the Presence of Blacks in Ballet, with support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

The Dance Artists' National Collective, a group of dancers advocating for safe, equitable and sustainable working conditions for US dancers, grew out of discussions among dancers around 2018. By 2025, they had paused most activities, as a result of being in a period of "great financial need." This resonates with Dance/USA's 2024 ecosystem survey findings: that very few dancers are able to earn a sustainable living from dance, and that more funding is needed across the board to sustain dancers and dance organizations.

Collaboration Spotlight



DISABILITY. DANCE. ARTISTRY. FUND

The Disability. Dance. Artistry Fund "aims to advance inclusion and access to the art form for disabled people." The initiative highlights the work of disabled dance performers and workers in metro New York City.

Administered by Dance/USA, the initiative is funded by the Stavros Niarchos, Andrew W. Mellon, Ford, Doris Duke Charitable, Booth Ferris, Mertz Gilmore and Lucille Lortel foundations.

A Closer Look at Funder Types

Private & Family Foundations

As noted in the “Who’s Getting” section, private and family foundations play a hugely influential role in the world of dance. Similar to the visual arts field, artist-endowed foundations are also players in dance philanthropy, but are often set up as operating foundations to support the performance of that artist’s work, rather than a grantmaker to support new work.

Private foundations focus on priorities like general operating support, capacity building, and programming, while generally providing relatively less direct support for individual dancers. The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, an iconic arts and humanities funder, is one of the top private foundations making grants for dance. Mellon is guided in its arts grantmaking by three interconnected strategies: supporting visionary artists and practitioners; supporting historically under-resourced organizations and artists; and seeding experiments with new economic and organizational models that center equity, justice, and creative problem-solving.

Another important institutional funder of dance is the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, which only funds contemporary dance. This support flows through programs administered by Creative Capital Foundation, MAP Fund, National Performance Network and New England Foundation for the Arts, which hosts the National Dance Project. It also provides substantial support to individual artists.

The Howard Gilman Foundation supports New York City-based dance organizations of varying structures, styles and budget sizes. Most of its funding comes in the form of general operating support. It also provides what the foundation’s Campbell called “capitalization mechanisms to allow organizations to have appropriate funds for appropriate needs,” like additional support for cash and building reserves.

The New York City-based Shubert Foundation is the nation’s largest funder dedicated to unrestricted funding of dance and theatre nonprofits. While dance is the foundation’s secondary focus and receives less funding from Shubert than theatre does, the Shubert Foundation supports numerous dance organizations specializing in different types of dance across the country.

The Ford Foundation’s dance support falls under its Creativity and Free Expression program. The funder prioritizes support to “artist-driven projects and organizations that include deep and meaningful engagement with communities.” Dance projects supported in 2024 included Kinetic Light, a dance company committed to intersectional disability aesthetics; the International Association of Blacks in Dance; and dance companies including Gina Gibney Dance, Debbie Allen Dance, Miami City Ballet, and many others.

The San Francisco Ballet Endowment Foundation was established in 1980 as a separate nonprofit public benefit corporation for the purpose of holding and managing endowment funds for the San Francisco Ballet Association. The SHS Foundation is the giving arm of Samuel

H. Scripps (1927–2007), an influential American dance patron and descendant of the Scripps newspaper family. The foundation has provided support for Ballet Hispánico, the dance company JLD, and the Joyce Theater’s Dance Presentation Program.

Funders also provide support earmarked for building organizational capacity. For instance, Bloomberg Philanthropies’ Arts Innovation and Management (AIM) Program grantees participate in a training program developed by the DeVos Institute of Arts Management to improve fundraising and increase audiences. “The combination appears to be having an impressive impact in terms of capacity building,” said SMU DataArts’ Voss, whose August 2020 study, “[The Alchemy of High-Performing Arts Organizations](#),” identifies strategies that leaders of 20 high-performing arts organizations reported using to achieve organizational health.

Although representing only a small portion of all private foundations in the U.S., artist-endowed foundations are a growing force in arts philanthropy. A 2019 report from the Aspen Institute’s Artist-Endowed Foundation Initiative found that the value of assets more than doubled in the five-year period of 2011 through 2015, rising from \$7.66 billion from \$3.48 billion.

Dance-related AEFs include the George Balanchine Foundation, the Rudolf Nureyev Dance Foundation, and the Jerome Robbins Foundation. Many AEFs, like the Merce Cunningham Trust, are not grantmakers in the traditional sense. “The only funding we provide is for specific projects related to the Cunningham legacy, mostly research into his repertory or

related issues,” Ken Tabachnick, the executive director of the Merce Cunningham Trust, told Inside Philanthropy.

Funder Spotlight



Since 2009, PNC Arts Alive has awarded more than \$21 million in grants to arts and culture organizations in Central Ohio, greater Philadelphia, Southern New Jersey, Delaware and greater St. Louis. In addition to dance, the program funds classical music, film and theater.

Corporate Giving

When considering corporations’ support for dance, some context is required. A 2024 survey conducted by Chief Executives for Corporate Purpose found that the “culture and arts” program area comprised a mere 4% of total giving for reporting companies in 2023. Moreover, surveys on corporate giving for the arts rarely differentiate between charitable contributions and sponsorships, making it difficult to gauge the true extent of corporate philanthropic support for dance.

The Conference Board, which tracks corporate giving, reported, “Financial contributions typically come from philanthropy/foundation budgets, but companies often fund their support through sponsorship budgets, as well.”

Unlike a charitable gift, in which a donor (in theory) receives nothing in return, in a sponsorship the corporation pays the organization money in exchange for something “that will help them make more money, be it through alignment with the property,” or through sales, brand development, public relations or employee engagement, according to the Partnership Group.

Corporate sponsors of dance organizations might receive any combination of opportunities, such as advertising, entertaining clients at dance performances, and brand visibility at events.

Corporations are a particularly important funding source for ballet companies. IEG named Wells Fargo as the “most active brand” sponsoring ballets, followed by Freed of London, Bank of America, Macy’s, JPMorgan Chase, U.S. Bank, American Airlines, PNC Bank and Northern Trust.

Examples of a corporation providing charitable support for dance organizations include PNC Foundation (of PNC Bank), whose PNC Arts Alive program funds arts and culture organizations in five geographic focus areas.

The Aetna Foundation supported organizations providing dance-oriented health and fitness programs for children and families who live in underserved areas as part of its Dancing for Health Initiative.

Companies also set up corporate donor-advised funds to serve as their corporate foundations or to set up employer match programs. For example, the Greater Kansas City Community

Foundation has a program through which a company can setup a corporate DAF, employees can make gifts to nonprofits through the community foundation web portal, and the community foundation processes employer matching gifts.

The following list includes major corporate supporters for dance—with the caveat that some of this support may take the form of sponsorships rather than charitable giving: 3M, American Express, Ameriprise Financial, Chase, Chevron, ConocoPhillips, Costco, FirstEnergy Foundation, GlaxoSmithKline, KeyBank Foundation, Kimberly-Clark Foundation, Macy’s, Merck, Prudential Foundation, Salesforce Foundation, Shell, Sprint Foundation, Target and United Airlines.

Community Foundations

Community foundations provide critical support to dance organizations, but like corporations, arts and culture funding represents a small percentage of funders’ total grantmaking—typically between 5 and 8%. Community foundation giving to the arts frequently flows from donor-advised funds, which, as noted, is essentially individual giving.

The Silicon Valley Community Foundation, New York Community Trust, Chicago Community Trust, and Greater Kansas City Community Foundation (GKCCF) stand out as substantial supporters of dance. From 2020 to 2024, more than 200 grants for dance totaling more than \$5 million flowed through the New York Community Trust, according to data from Candid. The Silicon Valley Community Foundation made more than 100 grants for

dance in that period. Again, it's important to remember that community foundations' support for dance organizations is usually a mix of DAF giving directed by individual fund holders and programmatic giving by the community foundation itself.

An important category of funder to note in dance philanthropy is regional arts organizations. Six regional arts organizations were established across the U.S. in 1976, with initial funding from the National Endowment for the Arts. Today, the regional arts organizations are funded by a mix of public and private funding. One of them, the New England Foundation for the Arts, is the home of the National Dance Project, one of the leading sources of funding and field building for dance in the United States. The Mellon Foundation, Doris Duke Foundation, and the Aliad Fund at the Boston Foundation have been key funders of the National Dance Project.

In late 2024, the Mellon Foundation announced it will be ending the funding arc that has supported the National Dance Project for decades. This funding cycle will support works through 2028. NEFA is currently going through a strategic planning process to reimagine the National Dance Project. And while there are definite concerns about future funding, NEFA and the other regional arts organizations are likely to continue to play an important role in grantmaking for dance in years to come.

Major Donors

Broadly speaking, individual major donors to dance organizations tend to earmark gifts for programming, educational activities and capital

projects at companies with which they have a personal connection. "Donors are interested in being connected to the artists," said Dance/NYC's former executive director Duque Cifuentes. "The relationship is different and more time-consuming to develop, because it's about people in time and in space, it's about experience and community, and not a product."

Andrew A. Davis, for example, is a trustee of the Shelby Cullom Davis Charitable Fund and gave \$2 million to New York City-based Gibney for its resident company, Gibney Company. The commitment funded the company's reinvention as a commission-based repertory group and doubled its size from six dancers to 12.

Donor Spotlight: Jody Gottfried Arnhold

Jody Gottfried Arnhold is a legend in dance education. She is also one of the most impactful individual donors in dance philanthropy. She founded the Dance Education Laboratory, and with her husband, banking-fortune heir John Arnhold, she has given more than \$45 million to support dance education. Major gift recipients include the 92nd Street Y and Columbia University's Teachers' College, both of which have dance facilities named after the Arnholds. At Columbia, Arnhold funded the only doctoral program in dance education in the United States.

“In the fields of dance and dance education, Jody Gottfried Arnhold could be considered the most influential philanthropist in the country,” wrote Brian Seibert in the *New York Times* in 2023. A former dancer and dance educator and the wife of banking fortune heir John Arnhold, Jody maintains she thinks of herself more as a dance educator than as a philanthropist. But by any measure her impact as a dance philanthropist is substantial. The Arnholds have donated \$30 million to the 92nd Street Y’s dance and performance complex (now known as the Arnhold Center). In a series of multimillion-dollar gifts from 2016 to 2022, they gave Columbia University’s Teachers College \$15 million for dance education and research.

Glorya Kaufman, the heiress to a real estate fortune, gave \$20 million to the Performing Arts Center of Los Angeles County’s Dance at the Music Center program and a multi-million-

dollar donation to the University of Southern California to start a dance school, the USC Glorya Kaufman School of Dance.

Ernest Butler, a retired otolaryngologist, and his wife, Sarah, are longtime supporters of Ballet Austin and other Austin arts organizations, including a \$3 million to Ballet Austin for an endowment to support new performances.

Major donors also provide substantial support to construct multi-disciplinary performing arts spaces. These gifts indirectly benefit dance organizations, most of which don’t own their own buildings. For example, Ohio State University alumna Violet L. Patton has donated approximately \$30 million since 2010 to support the design and construction of the Violet L. Patton Center for Arts Education. In another example, Brown University received \$20 million from alumnus and financier John Atwater and his wife, Diana Nelson, to create the Diana Nelson and John Atwater Lobby in the center, a space that will serve as a hub for music, dance, theater, and multimedia arts scholarship.

As noted, donors also provide support through donor-advised funds housed at community foundations and DAF sponsors like Fidelity Charitable. According to Fidelity Charitable, 6% of grants and 6% of grant dollars in 2023 flowed to arts and culture organizations.

Associations & Intermediaries

The performing arts sector enjoys a robust network of entities providing funders with networking, advocacy and data gathering.

Donor Spotlight: Glorya Kaufman

Glorya Kaufman gave \$20 million to the Performing Arts Center of Los Angeles County’s Dance at the Music Center program and a multimillion-dollar donation to the University of Southern California to start the USC Glorya Kaufman School of Dance. *“My vision is for the students to leave and go into dance and the business of dance—to do whatever they want because they’ll be that talented and prepared.”*

[Grantmakers in the Arts \(GIA\)](#) is the national network of private, public and corporate arts funders focused on providing “leadership and service that advances the use of philanthropic and governmental resources to support the growth of the arts and culture.” GIA maintains an [active online repository](#) of equity-related research, articles and opinion pieces.

[Americans for the Arts](#), whose primary focus is advancing the arts broadly in the United States, is an important organization for the dance community. Its website includes white papers and research on fundraising trends and best practices.

[SMU DataArts](#)’ mission is “to empower arts and cultural leaders with high-quality data and evidence-based resources and insights that help them to overcome challenges and increase impact.” SMU DataArts provides resources for arts organizations, fundraisers and arts grantmakers.

[The Dance Data Project](#), established in 2015, provides research and advocacy to advance gender equity in the dance world. Some of their published research addresses funding, pay equity, and other resource issues relevant to dance philanthropy.

The New Orleans-based [National Performance Network](#) seeks to provide performing and visual artists with the resources needed to develop and tour new work and ensure arts leaders have the skills and opportunities to be successful.

The [National Dance Education Organization](#) is a nonprofit membership organization dedicated to

advancing dance education. It provides dance artists, educators and administrators a network of resources and support, a base for advocacy and research, and access to professional development opportunities that focus on the importance of dance in the human experience.

The Washington Ballet, a 76-year-old organization, is also pleased with the results of an online family tea. The virtual event replaced two live events at the prestigious Willard Hotel that coincide with the ballet’s annual performance of “The Nutcracker.” The in-person family teas typically draw about 300 people, according to Mary Bounds, the ballet’s associate director of development. The Washington Ballet delivered 272 tea kits to 76 households that paid to attend with multiple family members. Depending on how much each household gave, the kits contained tea, sandwiches, an arts and crafts project for children and, in some cases, champagne and flowers for especially generous parents. Says Bounds: “We got rave reviews.”

With virtual events, Bounds says, “we have a bigger reach. We were getting out-of-town grandparents. We can see how many people are online, how long people are watching, and allow this to inform us. There are silver linings in this digital moment.” Like many other dance organizations, the Washington Ballet continues holding virtual events after the pandemic subsided. “This is an exciting way to keep donors and ticket holders engaged,” she says.

Chicago’s Hubbard Street Dance reports better-than-expected returns by offering films of live performances for free, but suggesting a donation in each film. For example, it projected that one

film would generate \$5,000 in donations, but \$10,000 came in. “By making it free and suggesting a donation during the films, we saw much more generosity,” says David McDermott, the dance company’s executive director. “Instead of buying a \$10 ticket, many people donated much more.”

Some dance companies have avoided holding virtual fundraising events. AirDance New Mexico, a tiny company specializing in trapeze

and other forms of aerial dance, raised \$600 by holding a low-cost photoshoot at a local farm so students who take aerial dance classes could get their pictures taken. “Parents are already talking about the next time, so we will make this annual or seasonal, for sure,” says Joanna Furgal, the company’s executive director. AirDance has also continued its in-person classes, albeit with fewer students. “Arts are seen as a luxury,” Furgal says. “But so many of my students have said that dance class is not a luxury. It is self-care, part of how they handle their mental health.”

In July, Dance/USA, a national service organization for professional dance, lowered its annual membership fee to just \$25 so dance professionals could remain members regardless of their financial status, and new members can join and connect with peers. It has also been convening members for discussions on topics such as how and when live performances can safely resume.

More than a year before last summer’s protests over racial inequality, Dance/USA started a program to provide direct support to artists working through dance to address social change. By loosening up existing fellowship requirements and adopting new criteria, Dance/USA identified 31 dancers whose artistry was rewarded with five-figure grants for each person. Their contributions to dance and the traditions underpinning their work are the subject of a new [free book](#). The program has just been renewed.

Apart from growing success with online fundraising events, there are other silver linings associated with the pandemic for dance

Collaboration Spotlight



The New Orleans-based National Performance Network emphasizes relationship building and “reciprocity between individuals, institutions, and communities,” while working to “advance racial and cultural justice in the arts, build artists’ power, and foster systems change in arts and philanthropy.”

NPN is funded by major arts funders including the Mellon, Doris Duke, Surdna, Lambent, and Ford foundations. It also supported by the National Endowment for the Arts, South Arts, and the Louisiana Office of Cultural Development.

organizations, says Danielle St. Germain-Gordon, chief development officer at San Francisco Ballet, which lost about \$10 million in ticket sales after canceling performances in March. The ballet created an emergency relief fund to raise \$5 million, a goal it reached shortly after its fiscal year ended in June. To get through the pandemic, the ballet has adopted pay cuts and is keeping a watchful eye on expenses with a staff of 78 dancers and a full orchestra. What's gratifying to St. Germain-Gordon now is that dancers and musicians, who normally don't interact with administrative staff, have been helping her and her team raise money in the pandemic.

"We've had dancers and board and staff raising money from their networks," says St. Germain-Gordon. "This has been a coalescing moment for the company."

Working with dancers who attend virtual events with donors, she adds, "is like seeing still photos of them in our building come to life. We are engaging people much more with them. When you put dancers with donors, it is magic."



Grantmakers in the Arts
Supporting a Creative America

"Racial equity is different from diversity or inclusion in that racial equity calls upon grantmakers to invest in African, Latinx, Arab, Asian, and Native American (ALAANA) communities/communities of color. Art and culture are the means by which we express what makes us truly human. Investments in culture are investments in our full humanity. Helicon Collaborative's research points to investments in ALAANA communities/communities of color declining, rather than increasing."

—Eddie Torres, president and CEO,
Grantmakers in the Arts

An Analysis of Opportunities & Challenges

The dance world, like all performing arts, was rocked by the COVID-19 pandemic. After making it through that era of crisis, by 2025 U.S. dance nonprofits' revenue was starting to return to pre-pandemic levels, just in time for a new emergency as the second Trump administration slashed public funding across the board while targeting nonprofits' and foundations' equity initiatives.

Dance has always received a small share of overall philanthropy, but can count on a few highly dedicated funders. The hope is that foundations and individual donors who have long been dedicated to dance will continue and perhaps even expand their support in this time. Especially as more generalist funders are called to fill funding gaps in every area from health to human rights in the face of the federal funding cuts, those funders who have dedicated programs for dance will be critical to sustaining dance nonprofits.

Even before the public funding cuts, the post-COVID years had seen a notable shift in reliance on contributed revenue among dance nonprofits. At the same time, live cultural events where communities can come together to encounter art are especially important in times of cultural repression and social isolation, so earned revenue may once again increase to pre-pandemic levels.

In recent years, performing arts grantmakers, and grantmakers whose primary focus is in other areas such as health or youth well-being, have supported dance through an integrated approach

that employs dance to address issues like poverty, PTSD and hunger. Two examples are the New York City-based Gibney, which offers hundreds of movement workshops per year that use dance to support survivors of partner violence, and the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund's Arts in Health Initiative, which supports organizations like the Mark Morris Dance Group, which provides dance and movement workshops for people with Parkinson's disease.

"Arts in health' isn't an either/or proposition," Rick Luftglass, the fund's executive director, told Inside Philanthropy. "But it can be hard for all of us to fund across traditional boundaries. More funders have been expressing interest in this intersection, so we think that's going to change." Grantmakers in the Arts' website tracks [ongoing collaborations](#) between arts and health funders.

Another opportunity for dance funders is to reimagine support systems, Inside Philanthropy's interviews indicate. In 2019, the Surdna Foundation provided support for the Center for Cultural Innovation [AmbitioUS](#), a regranting fund that provides artists and cultural communities with equitable access to capital, debt reduction, and asset and wealth building. That investment now looks quite prescient. COVID-19 showed that "our social infrastructure is not designed to support arts and culture practitioners," said Surdna's Torres. "Reimagining all support systems for the social sector is a ripe opportunity for the field to collaborate on."

Dance nonprofits are asking performing arts funders to support fundamental and systemic reforms, like increased protections for gig workers, support for ongoing training, livable wages for non-unionized artists, new income-generating platforms, and improved access to healthcare and capital as part of a broader effort to frame working artists as what Dance/NYC's former executive director Alejandra Duque Cifuentes calls "dignified labor."

As with many program areas, leaders in the dance world say that increasing collaboration—both among funders and between dance companies—could greatly benefit the sector.

Surdna's Torres said, "Grantmakers' funding coalitions have the ability to more equitably resource an ecosystem and not just siloed institutions/organizations."

Multiple interviewees cited the Mosaic Network and Fund as a particularly promising collaborative model. The fund is housed at the New York Community Trust and guided by funders and arts practitioners serving African, Latinx, Asian, Arab and Native American (ALAANA) communities. Since its official launch in 2019, the fund has pooled millions of dollars from 20 funders and supports 27 ALAANA arts groups, including STEM from Dance and Yaa Samar! Dance Theatre. Former fund co-chair Kerry McCarthy told Inside Philanthropy that the fund's model is an "effective tool to tackle larger agendas and longer-term challenges."

Funder Spotlight

Wallace 

The Wallace Foundation makes grants and produces knowledge to support organizations throughout the fields where they fund: the arts, education and youth development. The foundation stands out for its collaborative research initiatives to support grantmakers and grantees in advancing their missions most effectively.

Wallace is currently in the midst of a \$104 million initiative, Advancing Well-Being in the Arts, which supports the organizational well-being of organizations founded by, with, and for communities of color. Grantees include PHILADANCO! and Ragamala Dance Company.

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Prerena Reddy, A Blade of Grass

Judilee Reed, formerly William Penn Foundation, now United States Artists

Victoria Rogers, Knight Foundation

Michael L. Royce, New York Foundation for the Arts

Gary Steuer, Bonfils-Stanton Foundation

Ken Tabachnick, Merce Cunningham Trust

Eddie Torres, Grantmakers in the Arts

F. Javier Torres-Campos, Surdna Foundation

Salam Tsegaye, New York Community Trust

Zannie Voss, formerly SMU Data Arts

Melissa Cowley Wolf, Arts Funders Forum

Elizabeth Yntema, Dance Data Project

Feedback?

The State of American Philanthropy is an ongoing project, each SAP brief will be updated periodically to integrate new information, additional data and evolving perspectives. If you have comments or information you'd like to share with us, please email us at managingeditor@insidephilanthropy.org.