

Inside Philanthropy



The State of
American Philanthropy

Giving for Dance

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ABOUT INSIDE PHILANTHROPY

Inside Philanthropy is a digital media site that covers the world of charitable giving. We report daily on foundations, major donors, and trends in philanthropy. Through our GrantFinder resource, we also profile and track thousands of funders working across key issue areas and geographic regions. Inside Philanthropy is supported by reader subscriptions and advertising. We do not receive funding from any other source. Learn more at insidephilanthropy.com

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' inability to cultivate long-term donors. What dance organizations and funders can both agree on is the extent to which the pandemic and growing calls for social justice are radically transforming the sector.

Beyond the events of the pandemic era, which have been extraordinarily difficult for the dance community, there are long-term factors and trends every funder and fundraiser in the dance community should keep in mind, which are explored in depth in this brief:

Who's Giving

- Traditional grantmaking foundations like Mellon and the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation are seven of the top 10 funders to dance organizations.
- Donor-advised fund managers are also a large segment of the giving mix to dance, and individuals are the leading source of contributions for the average arts organization.

Who's Getting

- Ballet companies continue to dominate the list of top recipients of private funding 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 purposes and programming. This is true across types of private giving, but especially among "major donors."

The Big Issues & Funding Trends

- Many dance companies are struggling to survive in the COVID-19 era, so the most pressing issues for the field of dance revolve around long-term financial sustainability, including general operating support, organizational cash reserves and support for individual artists.
- Prior to 2020, dance advocates were already calling out philanthropy's lack of support for BIPOC-led organizations, individual artists, and dance education initiatives; now, those calls are intensifying.
- In an era when other innovations in performance are on hold, more foundations are supporting the optimization of virtual programming.
- A May 2020 Americans for the Arts survey of 11,500 performing arts professionals found that 95% of respondents' organizations canceled events due to COVID-19. In response, funders loosened restrictions and provided emergency support to a historically under-capitalized dance field.

- The pandemic also underscored how working dancers, reliant upon supplemental income, don't have a reliable and durable safety net. Funders have ramped up support for artists while eyeing deeper structural reforms to enable dancers to withstand the next crisis.

Equity in the Sector

- Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) artists and organizations—and an increasing number of white allies—are calling for the dismantling of systemic racism with a renewed energy, and many arts funders are responding in robust, thoughtful, and committed ways.
- Because ballet companies continue to receive the lion's share of funder support, until those companies transform from being by and for white people or the ratio of funding to ballet companies change, this core inequity will remain an inescapable fact for dance.
- There are also striking gender disparities across the ballet space. For instance, of the top 10 salaries for artistic directors, only one was earned by a woman. Meanwhile, in the top 10 ballet companies, seven have resident choreographers, and none of them are women.

Fundraising Now

- While many dance organizations are getting very creative with their virtual fundraising efforts, the struggle to continue even the most paired down operations through the pandemic remains an extraordinarily tough challenge.
- Virtual events have a bigger reach, even though they can never fill the void left by earned revenue from live performances. Many dance companies say they plan to continue holding virtual events after the pandemic subsides.

About a year into the pandemic, organizations and artists are facing potentially another year without substantial earned income. As a result, funders' role across the next 12 months can be best summed up in two words: "organizational survival," said Zannie Voss, director of SMU DataArts.

The long-term outlook is far from certain, however, as institutional grantmakers and donors remain focused on critical pandemic-related needs. From an Inside Philanthropy survey subset of respondents, performing arts fundraisers and foundation professionals indicated that almost half said they've noticed a reduced funder interest and resources as a result of the current shifting of funds for COVID and racial justice; and another group, over 1 in 10, said the same is true, but that it is a gradual trend over many years.

As Dance/USA's Suzanne Callahan told Inside Philanthropy, "Dance gets funded when funders prioritize it. Fortunately, some funders have. With COVID, they have competing priorities now."

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 hop-hop and jazz. The paper also covers nonprofit educational institutions that receive philanthropic support for dance-related activities and programming.

This brief's analysis arrives amidst an era of plummeting public funding for the arts. According to a [2017 Grantmakers in the Arts report](#), total public arts funding, when adjusted for inflation, decreased by 12.8% over the past two decades. In real dollars, state arts agency appropriations decreased by 25%, local funding contracted by 9% and federal funds have remained virtually flat. As a result, nonprofit arts organizations are increasingly turning to philanthropy to fill the gap.

Nonprofit dance organizations are more reliant on philanthropy than other performing arts fields, with individuals 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, the program director of 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."

Leaders at dance organizations and funders told Inside Philanthropy that philanthropic support has

not increased substantially from 2019–2020 and will likely remain flat, if not decrease, in the months and years ahead due to philanthropy's focus on COVID-19 and social justice causes.

This prediction presents 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 3% per year on average between 2015 and 2020 to \$4 billion, increasing faster than the economy overall. The industry currently includes over [53,000 studios](#) employing over 108,000 individuals.

Dance organizations have been unable to translate this surging popularity into increased giving. How can we explain this disconnect?

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, 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, Dance/NYC's, Cifuentes said, “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. As the “Who’s Getting” section of this paper illustrates, eight of the sector’s top 10 recipients of foundation and donor-advised grants from 2014–2018 were ballet companies with comparatively large endowments and well-connected board members. Grantmakers and DAFs awarded 3,702 grants totalling \$221 million to these eight organizations during this four-year period.

In contrast, small dance organizations make up the bulk of most major dance ecosystems, yet remain significantly undercapitalized. A Dance/USA survey of 109 organizations found that only 7% had annual budgets over \$500,000. Similarly, a [2019 report](#) funded by grantmakers like the MacArthur Foundation found that nearly two-thirds of Chicago’s nonprofit dance organizations have budgets below \$100,000—twice the rate of the nonprofit sector as a whole, where nationally, 30% have budgets below \$100,000. Despite the proliferation of small organizations across the city, in 2015, four dance organizations received over 60% of philanthropic dollars.

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 broad and uncodified umbrella term that includes modern, jazz, ballet and hip hop elements, whereas others view “modern dance” as a standalone field with distinctive techniques and rules named after the pioneers who created them. Others, like Glenn Edgerton, the 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 Candid’s tracking of philanthropic record keeping.

The Lay of the Land

Who’s Giving

Broadly speaking, approximately half of performing arts organizations’ revenues come from private donations or public support. A 2017 [Grantmakers in the Arts \(GIA\)](#) study found that in 2013, the latest year for which comparable data was available, performing arts organizations’ top source of revenue was earned income (46%), followed by “other public support” (30%), foundations (14%) and government grants (10%), for a non-earned income total of 54%.

SMU DataArts’ 2019 fundraising report reached a similar conclusion. In 2017, the average performing arts organization covered [50% of expenses](#) (before depreciation) with “unrestricted contributed revenue,” which includes revenue from individuals, corporations, foundations and government agencies. Dance organizations, however, covered [44% of expenses](#) with “unrestricted contributed revenue,” versus 56% of earned revenue, suggesting that “dance is a bit more reliant on earned revenue” than the average performing arts organization, said SMU DataArts’ Voss.

The dance philanthropy ecosystem consists of private and family foundations, donor-advised funds (DAFs), individual donors, corporations and government agencies.

Candid’s top three dance funders—the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Doris Duke Charitable Fund and the Howard Gilman Foundation—account for nearly 50% of funding among its list of top 10 grantmakers.

According to Candid, the 10 most prodigious givers among institutional funders from 2014-2018 are as follows:

Grantmaker	Dollar Value of Grants Awarded
Andrew W. Mellon Foundation	\$35.71M
Doris Duke Charitable Foundation	\$32.51M
Howard Gilman Foundation	\$20.17M
Shubert Foundation	\$18.35M
San Francisco Ballet Endowment Foundation	\$14.34M
SHS Foundation	\$13.45M
Ford Foundation	\$13.44M
Robert W. Plaster Foundation	\$11.68M
Boston Foundation	\$11.11M
William Penn Foundation	\$11.03M

Source: Candid

The Howard Gilman and Shubert foundations only provide general operating support, which Candid defines as “grants to organizations for day-to-day operating costs or to further the general purpose or work of an organization, rather than for a specific purpose or project.”

Again, the Candid data does not include the largest source of private funding for dance organizations—non-DAF individual donors. “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, the Wallace Foundation’s director of communications.

To Held’s point, SMU DataArts’ [2019 Fundraising Report](#) states: “Individuals are the leading source of contributions for the average [arts] organization.” The same can be said for [dance organizations](#). The report found that 15% of the 44% of expenses covered by “unrestricted contributed revenue” at dance organizations came from individuals and trustees in 2017.

Here’s a full breakdown by specific source:

Other Individuals	8%
Trustees	7%
Foundations	7%
Government	4%
Corporations	2%
Other Contributed Revenue	16%

The Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation provides an illuminating case study underscoring the influence of individual donors. The foundation received \$54 million from a handful of donors for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater’s \$50 million capital campaign—Board Chairman Joan Weill and her husband, then-Citigroup CEO Sandy Weill, gave \$16 million; Elaine P. Wynn and Family Foundation gave \$5 million; and Ronald O. Perelman, Daria L. and Eric J. Wallach gave \$3 million each.

Their commitment is \$15 million more than the total grantmaking of the dance sector’s top

institutional grantmaker, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, between 2014–2018.

Major dance grantmakers not included in Candid’s top 10 list include the Bloomberg Philanthropies, Foundation for Contemporary Arts, the Harkness Foundation for Dance, 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 and the Mertz Gilmore Foundation. Grantmakers operating in the Bay Area include the Fleishhacker 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 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

Candid's data shows that an overwhelming percentage of foundation and DAF grants flowed to ballet companies from 2014-2018. Dance professionals attribute this fact to ballet's long-standing relationships with institutional funders, board members' fundraising acumen, and companies' high operating expenses.

The sector's top 10 recipients of foundation and DAF grants from 2014 to 2018 are as follows:

TOP 10 DANCE GRANT RECIPIENTS 2014 - 2018 ²	
Recipient	Dollar Value of Grants Received
Kansas City Ballet	\$48.43M
New York City Ballet	\$40.96M
Ballet Memphis	\$27.62M
San Francisco Ballet Association	\$26.83M
New England Foundation for the Arts	\$21.69M
School of American Ballet	\$20.56M
Boston Ballet	\$19.34M
Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation	\$19.00M
Houston Ballet Foundation	\$18.97M
Joffrey Ballet	\$18.84M

Source: Candid

Ballet companies operated for decades and have cultivated longstanding relationships with affluent institutional foundations and donors.

The Kansas City Ballet enjoys deep ties with one of the sector's largest DAFs, 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 Program Officer Anna Campbell.

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. As the only non-ballet performing company on the list, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater earmarked half of its \$50 million capital campaign toward expanding the Joan Weill Center for Dance.

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 program director for the arts. "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."

The other non-ballet organization on the list, New England Foundation for the Arts, makes grants to leading regional cultural nonprofits.

Dance/NYC and Dance/USA are the sector's two main nonprofit regrantee organizations

providing support to individual artists and choreographers. For example, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation funds Dance/USA’s Fellowships to Artists. Last year, Dance/USA allocated over \$1 million to 31 dance artists addressing social change. Each fellow received \$32,275.

Zooming out to the larger ecosystem, funders provide support to organizations that offer an array of dance instruction and programming spanning genres within the broader “contemporary dance” field. 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

A closer look at Candid’s data shows that performing arts grantmakers provided less support to the dance field compared to music and theater between 2014 and 2018. In addition, funding to the dance field decreased in 2016 and 2017 and bounced back by a small margin in 2018. This section posits possible causes for these trends and takes a closer look into how funding flows across the dance sector.

According to Candid, the dance field’s top 10 funders—including institutional grantmakers and DAF managers—gave \$297 million from 2014 to 2018. This figure is considerably less than in music (\$466 million) and theater (\$400 million) during this same period. However, Candid research also shows that the total dollar value of grants awarded by all funders increased by 150% from 2014 (\$175 million) to 2018 (\$262 million).

SMU DataArts’ came to a different conclusion as it applies to the larger dance funding ecosystem. Its [2019 Fundraising Report](#) found that average unrestricted contributed revenue to organizations declined by 0.3%, adjusted for inflation, from 2014 to 2017. Meanwhile, average total expenses (before depreciation) increased 12.6%, adjusted for inflation, during this same period.

Year	Dollar Value of Grants	Total Number of Grantmakers	Total Grants Awarded	Total Number of Recipients	Year-over-Year Trend in Total Funding
2014	\$174.73M	3,182	8,575	2,796	---
2015	\$289.56M	3,714	11,377	3,287	39.65%
2016	\$270.85M	3,550	11,816	3,396	-6.91%
2017	\$244.56M	3,289	8,802	3,043	-10.75%
2018	\$262.18M	3,595	9,599	3,499	6.73%

Source: Candid

As the “Who’s Giving” section of this paper illustrates, individual donors plus a handful of institutional grantmakers and DAF providers dominate the dance philanthropy space. 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. Similarly, “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,” Dance/USA’s 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 Dance/USA’s Callahan, noting that dance troupes typically perform in multidisciplinary spaces. As a result, these organizations have fewer fixed costs, which has made the pandemic slightly less devastating for applicable organizations.

On the other hand, 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.

Candid found that the \$1.24 billion in total dance grants awarded from 2014 to 2018 could be linked to one of the following five dance funder priorities:

TOP 5 FUNDING PRIORITIES: DANCE 2014 - 2018 ²	
Subject	Amount Funded
Ballet	\$793.92M
Modern Dance	\$36.30M
Choreography	\$35.94M
Jazz and Tap	\$6.42M
Folk and Ethnic Dance	\$5.62M

Source: Candid

This data does not include support from the lifeblood of the dance funding ecosystem—individuals and trustees. Given the breadth of individual giving and the fact that some gifts are not made public, it is difficult to lay out donors’ priorities with the kind of quantitative rigor we see in Candid’s analysis of institutional grantmakers and DAFs.

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, 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.

Not surprisingly, respondents cited “program revenue” as the top decreasing revenue source (6 in 10), followed by corporate foundations (5 in 10), government grants and contracts (4 in 10), smaller individual donors through events (including virtual events) (one-third), and public-private partnerships (one-quarter).

The Big Issues & Beyond

Prior to 2020, dance advocates were already calling out philanthropy’s lack of support for BIPOC-led organizations, individual artists and dance

education initiatives. Now, this issue is intensifying. But in the COVID-19 era, when most live performances have been sidelined indefinitely and companies are struggling to survive, the most pressing issues for the field of dance revolve around long-term financial sustainability, including general operating support, organizational cash reserves and support for individual artists.

In 2015, Grantmakers in the Arts published a “Racial Equity in Arts Funding Statement of Purpose” that “made racial equity in arts funding a primary focus.” Two years later, however, a study by Helicon Collective found that only 4% of arts funding flowed to groups whose primary mission is to serve communities of color.

Equity advocates also questioned funders’ overwhelming support for “the usual suspects”—large, well-connected, and relatively affluent organizations, many of which were in the ballet field. In fact, research from the Dance Data Project found a stratified funding landscape within the ballet field itself. In 2019, the project reported, the top 10 ballet companies had 61% of the total financial resources of the top 50 ballet companies. Likewise, the top 25 companies possessed 82% of the available resources.

Dance professionals also lamented 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 in a 2015 piece on [Dance/USA’s site](#). The hourly wage for dancers and choreographers was \$16.31 and \$22.98, respectively, as of May 2018, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Citing stagnant public support for the arts, organizations like Advancing Dance Education in

the Arts and the National Dance Institute, plus regional groups like the California Dance Education Association, maintained their ongoing advocacy for dance education during this pre-pandemic period. (In a particularly drastic example in 2018, the state of Florida temporarily [slashed funding](#) for arts and cultural programs by 90%, from \$25 million to \$2.6 million, citing Hurricane Irma, the opioid crisis and the Parkland school shooting.)

Nonetheless, Candid research found that only 2% of grants from foundations and DAFs were earmarked for “education” in dance from 2014–2018.

Events of 2020 ultimately amplified what dance professionals had been asking for all along—more financial security and increased support for BIPOC-led organizations and individual artists. Funders grasped the severity of the pandemic and quickly pivoted to provide critical emergency support. Beyond maintaining a steady financial lifeline to

besieged organizations, funders are focusing on two particularly vulnerable and historically undercapitalized constituencies—organizations serving communities of color and individual artists.

In late March, Dance/NYC set up the Coronavirus Dance Relief Fund for freelance dancers and organizations with budgets between \$25,000 and \$500,000. By May, the fund raised \$695,000 through a coalition of foundations that includes the Howard Gilman Foundation, the Arnhold Foundation, the Ford Foundation and the Harkness Foundation for Dance.

Also in March, the New York Community Trust launched the NYC COVID-19 Response & Impact Fund. Four months later, the fund announced that it had raised more than \$110 million for emergency grants and zero-interest loans to New York City-based performing organizations like the Bronx Academy of Arts and Dance, Mark Morris Dance Group, and STEM from Dance.

All the while, many dance organizations, including the San Francisco Ballet, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago and Houston Ballet, launched separate emergency funds.

In September, Americans for the Arts [published findings](#) gleaned from 17,982 survey respondents underscoring the scope of the pandemic’s impact on the country’s arts sector. Nationally, financial losses to nonprofit arts and cultural organizations were an estimated \$13.1 billion. Ninety percent of organizations had a pandemic-related closing, 48% had no target date for re-opening, and 10% were “not confident” that they would survive.

Donor Spotlight:

BONFILS STANTON FOUNDATION

The Bonfils-Stanton Foundation asked community members to create a list of regional BIPOC organizations. The foundation then invited them to a series of listening sessions. A consultant facilitated the sessions, with representatives from 30 organizations attending. The foundation invited these organizations to apply for its new Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Opportunity Grants in April of 2020.

Inside Philanthropy’s survey of fundraisers and foundation professionals revealed a similar sense of dread. About 6 in 10 arts respondents said “the current economic downturn and long-term effects of a recession on populations with the greatest need” will have the “most pronounced effect” on nonprofit fundraising.

“The transactional nature of our donors has resulted in a virtually total loss in sustaining donations from our patrons,” said one respondent who works in the arts. “While we have reduced expenses by 94% without local community support, we are in danger of becoming insolvent.”

The outlook is especially dire for Black, Indigenous, and people-of-color-led arts organizations that typically lack robust cash reserves, wealthy board members and deep-pocketed funders.

“The Getty and the National Gallery of Art are in their own bubbles,” Ford Foundation President Darren Walker told the Washington Post while describing the impetus for America’s Cultural Treasures initiative, which provides support for BIPOC cultural organizations. 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.”

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

While arts funders are now mobilizing to throw dancers a lifeline, “generally speaking, the direct funding of artists is new territory for most foundations,” said SMU DataArts’ Voss.

In April, grantmakers launched the \$10 million Artist Relief Fund, which provides unrestricted \$5,000 grants to artists. The fund consists of \$5 million in seed funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, matched with \$5 million in initial contributions from funders like the Ford Foundation.

Five months later, an Americans for the Arts survey of 24,996 artists/creatives found that **63% of respondents** reported they have become fully unemployed. These individuals expected to lose an average of \$22,000 each in creativity-based income

Spotlight: Pandemic Response



SAN FRANCISCO BALLET
HELGI TOMASSON, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

The San Francisco Ballet lost around \$10 million in ticket sales in March 2020 due to canceled performances. In response, it created an emergency relief fund to raise \$5 million and adopted pay cuts while closely monitoring expenses for its 78 dancers and full orchestra. The ballet's chief development officer Danielle St. Germain-Gordon noted one positive takeaway regarding the current environment: *“We’ve had dancers and board and staff raising money from their networks. 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.”*

in 2020. A follow-up survey in October found that 95% of respondents reported a loss of income and that Black, Indigenous, and artists of color have higher rates of unemployment than white artists due to the pandemic (69% vs. 60%). Moreover, “experienced musicians and actors don’t need to take class every week like dancers do,” said Dance/NYC’s Duque Cifuentes told Inside Philanthropy. “Constant preparation is required to perform and create a performance, and dancers typically have a shorter career span than musicians and actors.”

During the quarter ending in September, when the overall unemployment rate averaged 8.5%, 55% of dancers were out of work, according to the National Endowment for the Arts. By comparison, the jobless rate was 27% for servers, 19% for cooks, and about 13% for retail salespeople over the same period.

Inside Philanthropy August 2020 Survey

“Funding from traditional foundations and legacy corporate gifts are being directed to social services and food insecurity and away from the arts. Arts is viewed as discretionary, value-added and non-essential.”

—Nonprofit advancement professional, San Antonio, Texas

Assessing the state of the field, Howard Gilman Foundation’s Campbell told Inside Philanthropy she fears “careers are being lost because of an inability to dance.”

Funders remain committed to keeping the emergency funding flowing. “The situation is dire for the artist, and we’re concerned with the artists themselves, so that is a primary issue right now,” said Doris Duke’s Knighton.

In June 2020, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation’s board of trustees approved a plan to boost giving in 2020 from \$300 million to \$500 million. Mellon’s commitment was part of a broader partnership between the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, and the Ford, W.K. Kellogg and John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur foundations designed to unleash over \$1.7 billion in enhanced grantmaking.

Smaller dance funders dug deep, as well. The Howard Gilman Foundation approved an additional \$1 million in contributions to support emergency re-grant and response programs aimed at dancers and dance organizations.

Dance/NYC’s Duque Cifuentes says these efforts “removed gates and barriers for organizations” by catalyzing greater collaboration between funders. “I’d talk to multiple funders that said, ‘We want to one-up what another funder gave you; just give us the same report and the money’s yours.’”

Smaller foundations concerned about tight budgets and market volatility haven’t opened the vaults, while others are considering increasing their annual 5% endowment payout to unlock more funding. “Maybe self-perpetuation isn’t the highest priority,” said Joan Finkelstein, executive director at New York City’s Harkness Foundation for Dance. “The highest priority is to have a field once we emerge from this.”

A November report by TRG Arts and Purple Seven brought more discouraging news for struggling performing arts organizations. The study found that while the number of gifts received by performing arts organizations in North America increased by 15% in the first nine months of 2020, the average value of the gifts fell by 24% from the previous year. And while gifts from “super-active

patrons”—defined as those who had donated to the organization and/or attended performances at least 10 times—were up 47%, total revenue and average gift size were down 38% and 8% for the nine-month period.

The report is all the more unsettling given the broader economic context. TRG Arts/Purple Seven found that aggregate gift revenue from June to September was down 29% compared to 2019. Yet that tried-and-true barometer of philanthropic giving, the S&P 500 Index, was up 8.4% from June to September 2020, and up 12.9% from September 2019 to September 2020.

Funder Trends & Strategies

Prior to 2020, performing arts organizations implored funders to cut red tape and give a greater voice to the communities they serve. When the pandemic struck, grantmakers responded. “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 major trends in the dance funding space include related “trust-based philanthropy” practices such as embracing general operating support, streamlining reporting requirements and democratizing grantmaking, as well as a programmatic funding trend: support for optimizing virtual presentation of dance.

“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?’”

In the early and uncertain days of the pandemic, grantmakers converted funding into general

operating support to pay staff, upgrade virtual platforms and keep the organization’s lights on. “General operating funding is the most flexible form of funding, and puts the organization in control of how it gets spent,” said Cate Fox, senior program officer, regarding the MacArthur Foundation’s Chicago Commitment.

Inside Philanthropy research suggests that grantmakers will continue to provide this funding after the pandemic subsides. “General operating support is like gold—there should be more of it,” said Karen Newell, director of external affairs at the Baltimore-based Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation.

Collaboration Spotlight: America's Cultural Treasures



America's Cultural Treasures is a \$156 million commitment made by 16 major donors and foundations. The initiative supports Black, Latinx, Asian, and Indigenous arts organizations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. When speaking of the program Ford Foundation president Darren 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.”

Pre-2020, 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. But many dance companies report that funders are currently streamlining 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 proposes 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.

Leadership Spotlight: F. Javier Torres-Campos



The Surdna Foundation's director of the Thriving Cultures program, F. Javier Torres-Campos, encourages fellow dance

funders to "pay for the expertise and wisdom of, and listen to, the recommendations of front-line organizations" such as Urban Bush Women, Axis Dance Company, and Ananya Dance.

In a world transformed by the pandemic and protests sparked by the death of George Floyd, funders need to "listen to and trust constituents, rather than prescribing what we think they need," said the Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation's Newell. "This is a big leap and basic shift in the way

most funders work." These ideas, Inside Philanthropy's sources said, are contributing to a trend of increasing democratization in 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. Geoffrey Banks, MacArthur's program officer, 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."

In an era when other innovations in performance are on hold, more foundations are supporting the optimization of virtual programming. Virtual work "was not an allowable expense for many funders" before 2020, said the Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation's Newell. But in this uncertain era, funders quickly set aside the rule book. "We listened and heard what the field was saying and are now providing support for virtual programming, as well as providing the equipment needed to produce that programming."

F. Javier Torres-Campos is program director of the Surdna Foundation’s Thriving Cultures program, which awards grants to “foster the growth and success of local artists as economic engines and agents for social change.” Previous dance grantees include Dancing While Black, Urban Bush Women, and San Francisco’s [Zaccho Dance Theatre](#).

Torres-Campos told Inside Philanthropy that “one of the critical transcendent issues that we are seeing—and will continue to grapple with—is the purchase, integration and distribution of virtual and/or immersive technology equipment and content during and beyond the COVID-19 health crisis.” Campos cited Albuquerque-based Crux, an arts co-op focused on independent Black creatives as “an organization doing an amazing job supporting performing arts organizations.” (Crux is a Surdna grantee.)

Some funders are clear-eyed about virtual programming’s long-term potential. “If you look at the data, there’s been a huge consumption of arts and culture, but fewer examples of how its been monetized online,” said Judilee Reed, program director of Creative Communities at the William Penn Foundation, which has supported organizations in the Philadelphia region, including BalletX, Kulu Mele African American Dance Ensemble, and Koresh Dance Company.

Inside Philanthropy’s survey of performing arts fundraisers and foundation professionals corroborate Reed’s takeaway. Only 3 in 10 respondents said that “smaller individual donors through events (including virtual events)” were increasing in importance. About a third cited a decrease, while a third said revenues were “about the same.”

Program Spotlight: Wallace

The Wallace Foundation announced Building Audiences for Sustainability in 2015. The six-year \$52 million initiative aims at engaging, developing and retaining new audiences in the performing arts.

Wallace has published a series of in-depth case studies of successful practitioners, including Ballet Austin, which expanded audiences for unfamiliar works and Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and Pacific Northwest Ballet that have leveraged digital technology to effectively engage audiences in the age of social distancing.

Perspectives on Equity

The world of dance, especially ballet, has been the subject of equity critiques for decades. But the field’s nonprofit and foundation leaders have also been discussing and working to address equity challenges in dance long before the current upsurge in public demands for racial justice. 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.

The pandemic and protests that followed the death of George Floyd further amplified calls for change. Inside Philanthropy survey respondents from the performing arts field cited “centering racial justice” as the strategy most worthy of “increasing attention and commitment from the philanthropic sector.”

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 authorities tell IP. Prior to the 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, nor does the Ford Foundation's America's Cultural Treasures. One of the latter program's recipients, Ballet Hispánico, received a four-year, \$4 million grant; the amount is more

than half of the organization's \$7 million annual budget.

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, MacArthur's senior program officer.

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.



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

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 Duque Cifuentes. “The process and data-keeping is very intensive for most of our folks who are struggling to keep their doors open.” Looking ahead, 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 regrants, 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 “to think about the enormous assets they have to be meaningful to folks to all walks of life,” said William Penn Foundation’s 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

Collaboration Spotlight



dance/NYC
IN ALLIANCE WITH DANCE/USA

**Disability.
Dance.
Artistry.**

Announced in July 2015, Disability. Dance. Artistry "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 the 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. Disability. Dance. Artistry also receives support from multiple New York state offices and the National Endowment for the Arts.

grantmaking that makes more sense from a racial equity perspective.”

The “Who’s Getting” section showed that ballet companies received the lion’s share of funder support from 2014–2018. 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 61% of the entire combined budgets 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 project founder Elizabeth Yntema.

The project also found striking gender disparities across the ballet space. For instance, of the top 10 salaries for artistic directors, only one was earned by a woman. Meanwhile, in the top 10 ballet companies, seven have resident choreographers, and none of them are women.

The project’s findings came a year after the American Ballet Theatre (ABT) launched ABT Women’s Movement, a multi-year initiative supporting the creation of new works by female choreographers. Yntema, along with the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation and Rockefeller Brothers Fund, provided support for the project.

Funders are also working to boost diversity in a space where, as of 2017, [less than 5%](#) of degrees awarded in ballet went to Black or African American students due, in part, to formidable financial barriers to entry. FiveThirtyEight’s Abby Abrams calculated that it costs nearly \$120,000 to train a ballerina over 15 years. “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.



Based in Atlanta, Georgia, Alternate Roots is a regional arts service organization that has a mission is to “support 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.”

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 dance sector’s most prolific funder, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, supports four priorities in its dance grantmaking—Artists and New Work, Adaptive Organizational Practices, the Public Value of the Arts, and Diversity and Inclusion. In June of 2020, the foundation’s trustees announced it was adjusting its mission to prioritize social justice. The announcement came a few weeks after Mellon’s board of trustees approved a plan to boost 2020 giving to \$500,000 from \$300,000.

The sector’s second-largest institutional funder of dance, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, 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. It also provides substantial support to individual artists. In September 2020, the foundation announced the winners of its 2020 Doris Duke Artists in the fields of contemporary dance, jazz and theater. Four winners from the dance field

received \$275,000 to \$250,000 of which is unrestricted.

The Howard Gilman Foundation supports New York City-based dance organizations of varying structure, styles and budget size. 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.

In June 2020, the Shubert Foundation awarded a total of \$32 million in grants to 560 not-for-profit performing arts organizations across the United States. While the New York City-based foundation was the fourth-largest grantmaker in the dance sector from 2014 to 2018, **only 16%** of funding flows to dance companies, versus 74% to theaters, with an emphasis on producing, rather than presenting, organizations.

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.” In September, Ford announced America’s Cultural Treasures, a two-pronged, \$156 million initiative supporting arts organizations led by and serving BIPOC arts groups. The initiative’s first national component **provided \$81 million** in operational and general support funds to 20 organizations, including Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Ballet Hispánico, and Dance Theatre of Harlem. In 2021, Ford plans to launch the second wave, \$35 million in funding for organizations in seven regions, with matching support from local foundations.

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’ 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.

Corporate Giving

When considering corporations’ support for dance, some context is required. A 2019 survey conducted by Chief Executives for Corporate Purpose found that the “culture and arts” program area comprised a mere 6% of total giving for reporting companies.

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.

Inside Philanthropy August 2020 Survey

“Small town USA arts needs funding. Their usual source has virtually dried up as small businesses fight to stay alive. Large foundations, private citizens, and other philanthropic professionals need to reach down and light those small torches that keep the arts affordable for the general public.”

—Major donor, Tavares, Florida

For example, in 2018, the Conference Board reported that 42% of 113 corporate survey respondents [support the dance field](#). That figure jumped to 63% for the 16 surveyed companies with annual revenues exceeding \$25 billion. “Financial contributions typically come from philanthropy/foundation budgets,” the report states, “but companies often fund their support through sponsorship budgets, as well, which could explain the high response rate of companies making financial contributions.”

Unlike a charitable gift, in which a donor (in theory) receives nothing in return, a sponsorship finds the corporation paying 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.

American Ballet Theatre (ABT) does not make it on Candid’s top 10 list but come close as the 12th largest recipient of grantmaker and DAF support from 2014 to 2018. ABT provides corporate sponsors with a [menu of benefits](#) to “align their brands with a first-rate culture institution.” By giving over \$20,000, Golden Benefactor Partners receive 20 event passes, a listing on the theater’s website and in Playbill, and the opportunity to host a private client event with ABT dancers.

Research from IEG found that sponsorship spending on performing arts organizations increased 3.7% from 2018—the largest year-over-year increase since 2006. Banks are eight times more likely to sponsor the arts than the average of all categories, IEG reported. 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’s RESILIENCE program presents trauma-informed dance programming “to battle adversity through movement” in St. Louis, Missouri, and surrounding counties with education, community outreach and

performances. 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.

Funder
Spotlight:

Since 2009, PNC Arts Alive has awarded more than \$18 million in grants to over 350 arts and cultural organizations. In 2019 PNC expanded the program with the launch of the Arts Alive CONNECT initiative. A competitive grant program, Arts Alive CONNECT offers two-year funding to smaller, community-based arts and cultural organizations with operating budgets of \$50,000 to \$149,999.

Companies also set up corporate donor-advised funds to serve as their corporate foundations. For example, in 2019, nearly 4,000 employees used their employers’ matching dollars to donate more than \$5 million to charities through the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation.

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 to 8%. Community foundation giving to the arts frequently flows from donor-advised funds, which, as noted, is essentially individual giving.

The Greater Kansas City Community Foundation (GKCCF) was the entire dance sector's largest grantmaker from 2014–2018, according to Candid. In 2019, Giving from GKCCF's donor-advised funds accounted for 51% of the foundation's \$464 million in grants. Nine percent of DAFs focused on arts, culture and humanities charities. The foundation's support for dance organizations comes from an array of DAFs and organization-designated funds like the Kansas City Ballet Association Endowment Fund and Todd Bolender Scholarship Fund for the Benefit of the Kansas City Ballet.

Data from the Community Foundation of Greater Memphis (CFGM), which according to Candid data, awarded \$27.82 million in dance related grants, reveals how the pandemic is reshaping the composition of regional community foundation-led arts giving. As the largest charitable grantmaker in the mid-South, the foundation granted \$163 million in FY 2020, when 15.6% of grants flowed to the Arts and Culture program area. In March, it launched the Mid-South COVID-19 Regional Response Fund. Like countless other funders across the U.S., the CFGM's first wave of emergency grantmaking prioritized high-risk populations like the elderly, uninsured, and low-income individuals experiencing food and housing insecurity. In July's second wave, the foundation gave grants to ArtsMemphis, Collage Dance Collective, and Total Arts Coalition. While this support provides struggling performing arts organizations with a critical lifeline, it represented a small percentage of the fund's emergency grantmaking. As a result,

THE NEW YORK
COMMUNITY TRUST



“Though the city has had urgent needs for food and healthcare, New Yorkers also recognized that the arts are important to the quality of their own lives and to the economic health of the city. Donors know that the arts are created by dedicated workers—whose efforts contribute a stunning 4.2% to the country’s gross domestic product—and their livelihoods have been threatened by the pandemic.”

—Kerry McCarthy, vice president for philanthropic initiatives, New York Community Trust

arts-related giving at the CFGM fell from 15.6% in 2018 to 13% in 2020—a seemingly minor but nonetheless ominous drop for performing dance groups that have seen earned income sources evaporate.

The New York Community Trust's NYC COVID-19 Response & Impact Fund received donations from more than 1,300 donors, allowing it to provide \$29.4 million in grants to arts and cultural nonprofits in the early days of the pandemic. “Though the city has had urgent needs for food and healthcare, New Yorkers also recognized that the arts are important to the quality of their own lives and to the economic health of the city,” Kerry McCarthy, the trust's vice president for Philanthropic Initiatives, told Inside Philanthropy. “Donors know that the arts are created by dedicated workers—whose efforts contribute a stunning 4.2% to the country's gross domestic product—and their livelihoods have been threatened by the pandemic. Whether they experience art on the streets or a computer screen, our donors know that New York remains the heartbeat of our nation's cultural sector, and direct grants from our donor-advised funds stayed strong in 2020.”

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 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.

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.

Donor Spotlight: Glorya Kauffman

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.”*

Banking fortune heir John Arnhold and his former-dancer wife Jody Gofffriend gave the 92nd Street Y’s Harkness Dance Center \$5 million to expand Bittenweiser Hall and create a new flexible-use space. The Arnholds also gave Columbia University’s Teachers College a \$6.1 million gift to launch an institute dedicated to expanding the evidence base in dance education. Ernest Butler, a retired otolaryngologist, and his wife, Sarah, gave \$3 million to the Austin Ballet 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, 7% of grants and 7% of grant dollars in 2018 flowed to arts and culture organizations. In contrast, Giving USA found that arts and culture represented 5% of total charitable giving during that year.

Looking ahead, organizations and dancers affected by the pandemic will become increasingly reliant on small donors and crowdfunding platforms.

“Philanthropy can mean a lot of things, and issues like equity are bigger than institutional philanthropy and foundations,” said the Howard Gilman Foundation’s Campbell. “We need to include all types of giving.”

Associations & Intermediaries

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

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’s **Black Arts & Cultural Funding and Justice Resource Hub** aims to amplify funds and resources that explicitly center Black artists, cultural communities and experiences. GIA also 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.

With lead funding from the Wallace Foundation and Barr Foundation, additional support from Art Bridges and the Terra Foundation for American

Art, and participation from over 350 performing arts organizations, Culture Track’s “**Culture + Community in a Time of Crisis**” is a national research and strategy initiative designed to “deepen our understanding of how arts and culture organizations can help their communities” and “how communities can support their arts and cultural organizations.”

Dance/USA champions an inclusive and equitable dance field by leading, convening, advocating and supporting individuals and organizations. Dance/USA’s core programs are focused in the areas of engagement, advocacy, research and preservation. The organization serves over 500 organizational and individual members nationwide.

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.

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.

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“I think the arts have been left to fend for themselves, and many will close, including many good long-term institutions and organizations. I think that will be a problem for the community moving forward because I think it allows for growth by individuals, as well as an escape in the current coronavirus environment.”

—Fundraiser, Newfane, Vermont

Fundraising Now

Since the start of the pandemic, a number of [philanthropic efforts](#) have emerged to support the performing arts community, and many fundraisers are adapting to meet the moment. But fields like dance have been hard hit, with donations and revenues becoming unreliable at best. Individual dancers have suffered far more in the pandemic than the choreographers and nonprofit dance organizations with fan bases or the infrastructure to attract contributions from individuals, foundations and corporations, according to Melissa Riker, artistic director of New York's Kinesis Project, a dance theater.

"Dancers have been isolated at home and are trying to stay resilient and positive with very little support," she says. "The pandemic has exposed the tenuous existence of what was already a fragile sector, and many people don't understand how dramatically this is impacting dance artists." To help dancers, many of whom are leaving New York, and their organizations, Riker and her colleagues formed [Dance Rising](#), a new movement to build awareness for New York's vibrant dance community. So far, Dance Rising has raised \$8,000 and is soliciting another \$205,000 from individuals and private foundations to bring visibility to the dance industry.

Ballet Hispanico, a 50-year-old company, is surviving the pandemic with help from 10 grantmakers who had committed money to programs canceled by the pandemic. "We asked if they'd be willing to let us use the money for general operating support, and they all said yes," says lead fundraiser Lorraine LaHuta.

Other dance and performing arts companies aren't faring as well. Before the pandemic, Jump Rhythm, a small company in Chicago, had scaled back its operations to just two performers and an executive director. A 2020 year-end solicitation brought in \$5,000, down from the typical returns of up to \$9,000. The money raised barely covers expenses. "Our performers have not been paid for a long time, and they are giving with nothing in return," says Executive Director Suzanne Scott. "I'm certain we are not the only small company in this situation." Scott says she knows many out-of-work people in New York's arts community.

The resurgent push for racial justice has generated new support for some organizations, like the Dance Theatre of Harlem, which won a \$4 million grant from the Mellon Foundation and a chunk of the \$156 million contributed by 16 major donors and foundations to Black, Latinx, Asian and Indigenous arts groups last year. In addition, Dance Theatre of Harlem expects to meet its goal of raising \$2.4 million in the fiscal year ending on June 30, down from \$3 million in normal times.

"We had a virtual gala in October that went well and replaced a live event in the spring," says Ebonie Pittman, the Dance Theatre of Harlem's senior director of development. "People pre-registered for free. We had 2,800 new names that we put in our system. We had two platforms: one free and the other in which you could buy a virtual table and sit in a Zoom room with your guests." The virtual event raised less than its live counterpart, she adds, "but we exceeded our goal for it." Still, the online event was expensive, Pittman says. The Dance Theatre of Harlem had to invest in videotaping dancers, and it also commissioned works from paid choreographers.

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 plans to continue holding virtual events after the pandemic subsides. "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.



DANCE THEATRE OF HARLEM

"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, senior director of development, Dance Theatre of Harlem

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 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."



Spotlight: Pandemic Response

The Guggenheim's Works & Process initiative serves as an encouraging model for dance organizations looking to bridge the gap between virtual and in-person performances.

The performing arts series that will produce seven dance "bubble residencies" taking place in summer and fall 2020 in the Hudson

Valley. The Guggenheim will virtually present a docudrama capturing participants' experience in the fall of 2020. The residencies will culminate in live outdoor performances in 2021.

"Through these creative bubble residencies, Works & Process is championing diverse voices and dance cultures which is essential—especially now when artists are so vulnerable," said Guggenheim Museum producer Caroline Cronson.

Lead funding for Works & Process is provided by the Ford Foundation, the Christian Humann Foundation, Leon Levy Foundation, Mertz Gilmore Foundation, NYC COVID-19 Response and Impact Fund, and Rockefeller Brothers Fund.

An Analysis of Opportunities & Challenges

Devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the dance community is in crisis. The funders of this art form are looking for ways to simply sustain this art form in an era when permanent closures of a large number of companies is a real possibility. Beyond the main priority of ensuring the sector's survival, and funders' increasingly strong focus on advancing equity, funders are also ramping up advocacy for the performing arts, expanding support for under-capitalized dancers, and exploring collaborations that drive maximal impact.

The pandemic and growing calls for social justice have forced funders to clearly and consistently articulate the social and economic benefits of a vibrant performing arts field.

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"There is much more need for housing and economic development support in COVID. The arts are in serious trouble given the restrictions against live performances. Equity is a huge issue, especially for women and people of color."

—Nonprofit consultant, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

The New York Community Trust's NYC COVID-19 Response & Impact Fund serves as an effective model moving forward, said Kate Levin, who oversees Bloomberg Philanthropies' arts program. Levin called the fund "a significant acknowledgment by a consortium of donors that cultural organizations are essential to the city's identity, resilience and future dynamism."

Performing arts grantmakers can also remain relevant in a post-COVID world by embracing intersectionality, an integrated approach by which programming acknowledges overlapping identities and may address social 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."

Expect performing arts funders to look beyond short-term emergency aid toward more fundamental and systemic reforms, like increased protections for gig workers, support for ongoing training, liveable 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 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.

“Since the onset of COVID-19, we have received more and more inquiries from partnerships of performing arts organizations related by demographics and by geography,” said Surdna’s Torres. “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 over \$6 million from 20 funders and supports 27 ALAANA arts groups, including STEM from Dance and Yaa Samar! Dance Theatre. 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.”

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.

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Thank You

Thank you to these experts who were interviewed:

Thank you to these individuals who were interviewed:

Geoffrey Banks, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, April 7, 2020.

Suzanne Callahan, Dance/USA, September 14, 2020.

Anna Campbell, Howard Gilman Foundation, October, 13, 2020.

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¹Based on available grantmaker data from Candid. Excludes federal funding, funding by higher education institutions and donor advised funds (DAFs.)

²Based on available grant recipient data from Candid. Excludes government organizations and higher education institutions.

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.