



October 2020

Dear Dance/USA Stakeholders:

It is my pleasure to release this update to the Dance/USA Strategic Plan. Originally, these materials were the culmination of over a year of planning in 2017 and 2018 with the Dance/USA Board of Trustee Strategic Planning Committee, staff, and consultants Ebony Noelle Golden (cultural strategist), Kim Ondreck Carim (financial and business planning), and Diana Pan (technology advisor). Dance/USA is now two and half years into implementation, and the vision, mission, values, and priorities remain as powerful and relevant as when they were first approved.

**Given the tremendous upheaval and change taking place due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our country's civil unrest, the Executive Director transition, and more, it was timely to provide an update to the Strategic Plan that addresses these dynamic times and the implementation timeline.**

Dance/USA is on a long-term equity journey and this plan is just one-step along the path. Leading up to the strategic planning process in early 2017, Dance/USA was already evolving to become a more welcoming organization to the wider dance field. With this strategic plan, Dance/USA aligned the language of its mission, vision, values, and priorities with the organization it was striving to become. This plan takes Dance/USA further down the road and helps the Board and staff do the deep work that must be done, internally and externally, in order to be equitable, relevant, and sustainable.

The **anticipated outcomes** from implementing this strategic plan continue to be inspiring and worthy:

- Dance/USA operates with equity at our core -- informing our business structure, Board and staff composition, policies, and programs -- and supports the field to do the same.
- Dance/USA places Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), LGBTQ individuals, and people with disabilities at the center of its decision-making.
- The value that Dance/USA creates for its constituents is well defined and makes engaging with the organization an easy decision for anyone in the dance field.
- Dance/USA's membership requirements and benefits reflect the organization's commitment to addressing historic inequities in the dance field.
- Through respectful, balanced partnerships with value-aligned organizations, Dance/USA co-creates and catalyzes a more equitable dance field and amplifies, at a national level, exemplary services and activities happening in local communities where our members are consistently innovating in the field of dance.
- Dance/USA's expense structure is efficient and its capacity is appropriately sized to its strategic goals.
- Dance/USA has an internal culture, rooted in equity and collaboratively led, that embraces listening, learning, communicating, professional development, and technology solutions.
- Dance/USA operates high-impact, value-aligned programs that are well-known by constituents.
- Dance/USA does not hold programs, services, or activities as "precious" – if the activity is no longer relevant to the organization's values, is no longer providing impact and/or is not financially reasonable, then the organization retires the program.
- With technology as a priority, the organization is efficient in its work, effective in its communications, and active in its constituent engagement.

I would like to express tremendous gratitude to the Dance/USA staff, Board, funders, and members that, together, are championing a more equitable and inclusive dance industry. Thank you for your vision, energy, compassion, and hope.

Warm regards,  
Amy Fitterer  
Executive Director

## Phased Implementation

The planning consultants determined that this strategic plan should be implemented in a phased-in, iterative approach. Each phase will create change and require the need for new reflection in order for the organization to design the next phase of action.

**PHASE 1:** Launched in Summer 2018, focuses on the building of staff capacity, investing in internal knowledge building on equity and justice, modernizing technology, listening to dance artists and administrators across the United States, and articulating a membership value proposition.

**PHASE 2:** To be designed and launched when Phase 1 is complete, may see the restructuring of Dance/USA's membership benefits & dues, decommissioning of select programs, revision of other select programs, and proto-typing of new programs and ways of operating.

**PHASES 3 AND BEYOND:** To be developed as needed to continue to advance Dance/USA's mission, vision, and values.

## Executive Director Transition 2020-2021

In quarter 3 of 2019, Dance/USA's Executive Director Amy Fitterer informed the Dance/USA Board of Trustees of her intent to depart Dance/USA at the end of 2020, completing a decade of service. The Board of Trustees organized a search committee in the fall of 2019 and launched a national search process in the spring of 2020. A new executive director will take the helm in January 2021.

### Dance/USA Announces Transition of Executive Director Amy Fitterer

<https://www.danceusa.org/danceusa-announces-transition-executive-director-amy-fitterer>

### Dance/USA Seeks Executive Director

<https://www.danceusa.org/danceusa-seeks-executive-director>

This strategic plan is designed in such a way that a new Executive Director can design Phase 2 and beyond of the strategic plan – enabling the new leader to use their vision and talents to direct Dance/USA's priorities and actions. With the mission, vision, and values as overarching guide-posts, the Board, staff, and new executive leadership will have the ability to influence the re-imagining of the membership structure, board structure, organizational culture, programs, and more..

## COVID-19 Pandemic

The late winter of 2020 brought the COVID-19 pandemic to the world, shuttering live events, and creating a staggering disruption to the creation, education, performance, and live experience of dance. As of the writing of this update in the fall of 2020, the majority of dance performances and classes continue to be virtual or on hiatus. The dance industry is operating under government mandated restrictions of social-distancing, mask wearing, and intense sanitization rules. Despite these challenges, many in the dance industry have been determined to bring dance to the public via virtual experiences, outdoor performances, drive-in dance movie screenings, and more. The dance field is showing its resiliency and tenacity.

Dance/USA responded quickly to crisis. The organization immediately launched weekly member network calls for information sharing, joint problem-solving, and peer support. Federal advocacy geared up with increased Action Alerts and Updates related to federal COVID-19 relief legislation resulting in over 10,000 letters sent to Congress through Dance/USA's Voter Voice page. In-person programming pivoted to virtual and in some cases was completely re-designed. The first-ever Virtual Conference offered a sliding scale of registration (\$10, \$25, \$50, \$100) and had over 1,300 registered attendees. Membership dues were halted for the remainder of 2020 and a new member rate of \$25 regardless of member type was launched. A COVID-19 Initial Impact Survey was conducted, with future surveys scheduled to come. Dance/USA re-allocated travel funds to give the Dance/USA Artist Fellows and the Dance/USA Mentees additional cash in the summer of

2020 and moved up the payments of the Dance/USA Artist Fellows in the spring. The Dance/USA staff worked remotely from their homes in Washington DC, Virginia, Maryland, New York, Illinois, Arizona, and Utah. The staff juggled work and family life along with the rest of the country as many schools and day cares continue to be closed.

In reality, the COVID-19 pandemic is giving Dance/USA a tremendous window of opportunity to accelerate implementation of the strategic plan and move further down the equity continuum. COVID-19 dismantled the annual in-person conference and forced experimentation with virtual programming, technology, and sliding scale registration fees. The pandemic has made paying Dance/USA member dues almost impossible for many, forcing Dance/USA to lower dues and re-imagine a more equitable dues & benefit structure. The crises have driven the growing membership to come together with an astounding level of vulnerability and underscored the importance of national service organization networks and community building. Despite the great loss and heart ache brought by the pandemic, Dance/USA may find itself a more equitable and stronger organization when this is all over.

## **Civil Unrest**

On May 26, 2020, George Floyd, a 46 year old black man, was killed by a white police officer in Minneapolis, MN. The killing of yet another black person at the hands of white police officers ignited protests around the country calling for justice and police reform. The civil unrest in the country also ignited a renewed calling for racial equity in the dance industry. Organizations and artists scrambled to release statements and to commit to racial equity, many doing so more authentically than in the past. An awakening seemed to take place among some white arts administrators who previously did not fully absorb the extent to which the professional, not-for-profit arts industry is systemically inequitable and racist. More and more dance leaders seem to be committed to champion racial equity and inclusion, and to evolving their organizations and practices.

Like the COVID-19 pandemic, the civil unrest of 2020 has created a tremendous opportunity for the dance industry and the entire arts world to advance on the equity continuum. More truths are being told and heard by administrators and artists about their experiences as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in the dance. There is an increasing vulnerability, humility, and motivation by arts leaders to champion long-term systemic change. One can only hope that this increased awakening, particularly, among white arts administrators and leaders will continue and will result in a more welcoming, equitable, and just industry.

## Vision

Propelled by our belief that dance can inspire a more just and humane world, Dance/USA will amplify the power of dance to inform and inspire a nation where creativity and the field thrive.

## Mission

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.

- **Engagement.** Dance/USA engages and activates its network through meaningful programs, convenings, and educational opportunities.
- **Advocacy.** Dance/USA advocates for the increased visibility of, and engagement in, dance and for government policies that positively impact the dance field on a national, regional, and local level.
- **Research.** Dance/USA provides rigorous, relevant, and accessible research on the dance field.
- **Preservation.** Dance/USA provides resources and programs to advance the archiving and preservation of America’s dance legacy.

## Guiding Priorities

- **Equity and Justice:** Dance/USA cultivates and advances systems and practices of equity and justice at all levels of the organization.
- **Partnerships:** Dance/USA builds and sustains partnerships that align with our core values, advance equity goals, and elevate the work of the dance field.
- **Technology:** Dance/USA conducts its programs, services, and operations through technology, increasing efficiency, impact, and visibility.
- **Financial Sustainability:** Dance/USA optimizes its impact with a financially sustainable business model.

## Core Values

Creativity	Connectivity	Equity	Integrity
Creativity inspires change. Dance/USA values our nation’s creative capacity and artistry to imagine and build a world we have never encountered and deeply desire.	Dance/USA strives to be a catalytic network enlivened by connection, community, and collaboration. We value calling people in as a practice of leading, listening, learning, and deepening our impact.	Through the lens of equity, Dance/USA strives to remove the boundaries erected by a legacy of racism, classism, ableism, ageism, homophobia, transphobia, sexism, gender bias, and xenophobia and we work to dismantle institutional and systemic oppression that attack the dance field’s progress, impede the creation of work, and negatively impact dance audiences and communities.	Integrity is critical to our organizational culture and the way we lead, serve, and collaborate with the dance field. We seek to provide transparency about our internal processes, professional resources, and information about the field.

## Goals

Dance/USA has identified six goals that advance our impact on the dance field and strengthen our ability to fulfil our mission. Action steps will be taken on an iterative process in order to allow the organization to remain adaptive. We will build our ongoing strategic muscle as we take action, assess progress, design next steps, and take action again.

- Goal 1: Continue to incorporate equitable practices and policies into the organization’s programs and operations.**
- Goal 2: Re-affirm the value of membership.**
- Goal 3: Establish and Strengthen Partnerships with Value-Aligned Organizations.**
- Goal 4: Sustain and Increase Operational and Financial Sustainability.**
- Goal 5: Measure and articulate the organization’s impact.**
- Goal 6: Utilize technology to improve operational efficiency, maximize prior technology investments, and modernize online presence**

## **Goal 1: Continue to incorporate equitable practices and policies into the organization's programs and operations.**

### **Background**

Since 2011, Dance/USA has been working to address issues of equity, inclusion, and diversity throughout the organization. In 2012, Dance/USA hired an equity consultant to work with the organization for a 12-month period. In 2013, the organization established a Board Committee on Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity which drafted Dance/USA's Core Values Statement and Commitment to EID. The Board and staff have been through workshops and learning on equity and inclusion and the demographics of the Board and staff have shifted to be more reflective of the communities we serve. Over the past ten years, Dance/USA's conference programming, re-granting, leadership training program, networking groups, advocacy actions, and research have evolved to better align with our core values of equity and inclusion. New programs over the years, such as Dance Business Bootcamp, Staff Residency Program, Regional Dance Forums, Rounds 3 and 4 of Engaging Dance Audiences, Dance/USA Fellowships to Artists, The Equity Project: Increasing the Presence of Blacks in Ballet, Archiving & Preservation Fellowship Program have been designed in line with the core values as well.

Dance/USA is on a continuum of learning as it becomes more inclusive of all dance makers and administrators. This goal will move Dance/USA further ahead on the path of evolution.

### **Action Steps, Goal 1**

#### **A. Analysis**

- Refresh the organization's language and understanding about what it means for Dance/USA to operate with "equity at our core."
- Re-apply an equity lens as follows:
  - Analyze operations to uncover and reallocate structures of power and privilege.
  - Analyze the ways in which historical practices that have created barriers to access in the arts and culture field, specifically within the dance field.

#### **B. Decisions and Modifications**

- Continue to place new voices and perspectives in roles of power in the organizational structure.
- Conduct a Listening Tour to continue to call new voices of dance artists and administrators into policies to inform shifts in the organization's programs.
- Continue to build staff and board skills and knowledge around equity and justice and how those values inform and evolve the dance field.
- Consider establishing a new position within Dance/USA to support the implementation of this plan, and the ongoing prioritization of equity within the organization's operations and programs.

### **Outcome, Goal 1:**

- *Dance/USA operates with equity at our core -- informing our business structure, Board and staff composition, policies, and programs -- and supports the field to do the same.*
- *Dance/USA places Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), LGBTQ individuals, and people with disabilities at the center of its decision-making.*

## Goal 2: Re-affirm the Value of Membership and Engagement

### Background

In the United States, there are more artists working in more dance styles and genres than can be documented, accurately. The environment in which dance is created and shared is in constant change: revenue is coming from different sources in different amounts; technology is always evolving; and there is tremendous competition for the public's free time and money. What is a national association's refreshed value proposition to its members, and a large constituent base, in this constantly changing environment?

### Action Steps, Goal 2

- Conduct a Listening Tour to continue to call new voices in to membership as well as with longtime members, whose voices and presence is valued. The tour will collect field-wide needs and reflections to inform Dance/USA's member benefits, programs, and services.
- Articulate a membership value proposition.

### Outcome, Goal 2:

- *The value that Dance/USA creates for its constituents is well defined and makes engaging with the organization an easy decision for anyone in the dance field.*
- *Dance/USA's membership requirements and benefits reflect the organization's commitment to addressing historic inequities in the dance field.*

### **Goal 3: Establish and Strengthen Partnerships with value-aligned organizations.**

#### **Background**

In order for Dance/USA to engage with a wide array of dance makers, strengthen support for the art form, and avoid duplication, Dance/USA will utilize partnerships with value-aligned organizations. Dance/USA has a history of collaborating with like-minded organizations, particularly in the areas of federal advocacy, convenings, equity & justice, and leadership training. This goal will allow Dance/USA to go deeper in understanding genuine organizational partnerships to create an effective network of support for dance.

#### **Action Steps, Goal 3:**

- Grow Dance/USA's ability to foster networks within the field. Working with like-minded organizations, these networks will better disseminate resources and support for those in the dance field.
- Establish partnerships with groups that are also doing the work to help move equity work in the dance field comprehensively.
- Identify dance organizations that have a proven-track record of operating with equity and inclusion at their core and help provide visibility for those organizations.

#### **Outcome, Goal 3:**

- ***Through respectful, balanced partnerships with value-aligned organizations, Dance/USA co-creates and catalyzes a more equitable dance field and amplifies, at a national level, exemplary services and activities happening in local communities where our members are consistently innovating in the field of dance.***



## Goal 4: Increase Operational and Financial Sustainability

### Background

Dance/USA will grow and diversify its revenue sources to increase its operational and financial sustainability. Dance/USA will also assess and address staff capacity issues and promote a culture of collaboration and efficiency.

### Action Steps, Goal 4:

- Design and implement new strategies for individual giving.
- Establish an Earned Revenue Working Group to design and test the viability of earned income activities.
- Assess the structure by which the Board can further support Dance/USA's financial sustainability.
- Increase opportunities for staff to collaborate.
- Assess and address the skill-set gaps at the staff and board level.

### Outcome, Goal 4:

- *Dance/USA's expense structure is efficient and its capacity is appropriately sized to its strategic goals.*
- *Dance/USA has an internal culture, rooted in equity and collaboratively led, that embraces listening, learning, communicating, professional development, and technology solutions.*

## **Goal 5: Measure and articulate the organization's impact**

### **Background**

Dance/USA will ensure resources are supporting the programs with the most impact and alignment with strategic goals. Dance/USA will consider phasing out programs that generate low impact and are unprofitable.

### **Action Steps, Goal 5:**

- Develop a program assessment tool to assist staff and Board in making decisions on programs. Such a tool might consider factors such as profitability, funding potential, capacity to implement, and evaluation of impact.
- Dance/USA will expand upon its current program evaluation efforts and utilize evaluation findings more consistently to illustrate the impact of Dance/USA's activities.

### **Outcome, Goal 5:**

- *Dance/USA operates high-impact, value-aligned programs that are well-known by constituents.*
- *Dance/USA does not hold programs, services, or activities as "precious" – if the activity is no longer relevant to the organization's values, is no longer providing impact and/or is not financially reasonable, then the organization retires the program.*

## **Goal 6: Utilize technology to improve operational efficiency, advance Dance/USA's mission, vision, and values, maximize prior technology investments, and modernize online presence.**

### **Background**

Dance/USA will utilize as much automation as possible, leverage cloud technologies to reduce cost of ownership, and implement a common internal toolset for managing projects and team collaboration.

### **Action Steps, Goal 6:**

- Assess current operations and programs and identify, fund, and implement technologies that will increase operational efficiency and streamline internal and external communications.
- Evaluate current technology investments, such as Salesforce, and identify and leverage more of current investments to support the organization's operations and services.
- Modernize the organization's virtual presence through a website re-design and refreshed social media strategies.

### **Outcome, Goal 6:**

- ***With technology as a priority, the organization is efficient in its work, effective in its communications, and active in its constituent engagement.***

## The Planning Process 2017-2018

Ebony Noelle Golden, Founder and CEO, Betty's Daughter Arts Collective (BDAC), designed a rigorous planning process for Dance/USA. We started with looking back at our last strategic plan and then looked to the future and to the impact we wanted to have on the world. The process allowed for important and needed conversation among board members and staff. Board member Kim Ondreck Carim, former CFO of San Francisco Ballet and current COO/CFO of Oakland Museum of California provided expertise on financial modeling, metrics, and implementation. MoMA's Chief Technology Officer Diana Pan served as our technology advisor.

- **Stakeholder Interviews**  
Roughly 50 individual interviews conducted by BDAC with Dance/USA staff, strategic planning committee, additional Trustees, leaders of national arts service organizations, and members.
- **Desk Research**  
Reviewed extensive information on Dance/USA including prior strategic plan, written staff Board reports, prior technology plan, financial statements, audits, program materials, prior drafts of an equity, inclusion, and diversity action plan. Reviewed revenue comparisons of other national arts service organizations. Reviewed equity plans from arts organizations and non-arts organizations.
- **Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) (became Executive Committee July 1, 2017)**  
The strategic planning committee held its first monthly meeting in May 2017. Meetings were held once a month except for December 2017 and January 2018.
- **Two Retreats for Planning Committee (June and August 2017)**  
The SPC gathered for a two-day, in-person retreat in June 2017 in Kansas City, MO. The June Retreat addressed desired big-picture impact, relevance of current programs, organizational values, and long-term vision. The SPC gathered virtually for a two, half-days in August to finalize values and address priorities.
- **Intensives with All Staff (May 2017, September 2017, March 2018)**  
BDAC spent several days in Washington, DC with all staff in May 2017 for in-person interviews. In September 2017, Kim Ondreck Carim and Ebony Noelle Golden visited with the staff to review drafts of the plan elements, develop breakthrough objectives, and brainstorm 3-5 year goals. In March 2018, Kim Ondreck Carim convened with the staff to address annual objectives, among other activities.
- **EID Learning Labs**  
BDAC facilitated six Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity Learning Labs between May and November 2017. EID Learning Labs were open to all staff and Board, though a core group of 4-6 individuals participated most consistently. The Labs covered topics such as intersectionality, disability justice, gender equity, and systems of power and privilege.
- **Business Planning Subcommittee**  
The Business Planning Subcommittee of the larger Strategic Planning Committee met between the fall 2017 and the spring 2018. Topics discussed included earned revenue ideas and the framework for building Dance/USA's business plan.
- **Technology Surveys of Organization**  
Technology Advisor Diana Pan collected information on how Dance/USA currently uses technology and how technology can help the organization reach its strategic vision. In addition to meetings with staff, these surveys informed the creation of the Technology Plan (Goal #6).
- **Full Board Discussions and Updates on the Strategic Plan**  
The Board of Trustees had the opportunity to hear updates and participate in discussion on the strategic planning process in June 2017, November 2017, and April 2018. April 2018 includes a series of four Dialogues with the Executive Committee to discuss strategic plan materials. May 2018 includes a series of four Board Dialogues for Trustees to review the strategic planning materials.

## **Strategic Planning Committee**

**Appointed by the Board in November 2016**

Dance/USA's Strategic Planning Committee (which also serves as its Executive Committee), consisted of dance artists and administrators working across the country, in small and large dance organizations, in various job positions, with a variety of skill sets. The Committee was also diverse in terms of age, gender, race, ethnicity, ability, and experience in the field.

Michelle Ramos, Board Chair  
Arthur Espinoza, Vice Chair  
Doug Singleton, Past Chair  
Robert Dorf, Treasurer  
Nancy Kadel, Secretary  
Kim Ondreck Carim  
C.C. Conner  
Thaddeus Davis  
Stanford Makishi  
Kristopher McDowell  
Malik Robinson  
Cookie Ruiz  
Denise Saunders Thompson  
Mary Verdi Fletcher  
Sixto Wagan  
Amy Fitterer, Executive Director