

MINNESOTA DANCE ADVOCACY TASK FORCE
MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, November 18, 2024 – 5-7PM – Zoom

In attendance:

Sarah Larose- Holland (facilitator), Louise Robinson, Gary Peterson, Kristen Brogden, LaTia Childers, Elsie Martin, Eve Schulte, and Laurie Van Wieren

Quick recap

The meeting focused on the challenges of attracting more people to dance performances and the potential for partnerships with other dance organizations and community resources. The team also discussed the history and current status of various dance organizations, including the Dance Alliance and Dance U.S.A., and the potential for expanding dance performances to suburban and outstate venues. The conversation ended with the team expressing interest in a new initiative to grow their audience and the possibility of hosting events across different cities in Minnesota.

Next steps

Here are the key action items from the meeting:

- Laurie to send full notes and budget information from Chicago Dance Makers Forum to the group.
- Kristen to follow up with Dance Metro DC contacts and arrange for them to potentially join a future meeting.
- Someone to reach out to Stuart and Dana about the Sage Awards. (Perhaps create a new awards structure to shine a spotlight on dance.)
- Louise to contact June Wilson about joining a future meeting to discuss the history of Dance Minnesota Alliance. June was Executive Director of the Dance Alliance/Dance Today after Louise.
- Gary to potentially contact Dancers Group in San Francisco for information on their organization structure and programs.
- Everyone to continue distributing the RFP for the consultant position to relevant organizations and contacts.
- Task force members to continue inviting more people to join the conversations and meetings.
- Dance community members to share photos (with credits/descriptions) that can be used for the future website and social media.
- A Hiring subcommittee is being formed to interview consultants. Louise & Zhane are confirmed and Val, Kayla, & Karen have been asked to be on the subcommittee.
- Everyone is invited to share possible interview questions for consultant candidates to review at the December 2nd & 16th meetings.

Summary:

Introductions

The meeting began with apologies for some attendees having trouble joining the Zoom meeting. The attendees introduced themselves, including Louise Robinson, Gary Peterson, Kristen Brogdon, Laurie van Wieren, Sarah LaRose-Holland, Elsie Martin, and LaTia Childers. Eve Schulte joined the meeting shortly after it began. The group shared their connections to dance and affiliations, with many being independent dance artists or involved in dance organizations and preferred pronouns.

Community Engagement and Consultant Hiring

The task force continues to invite more community members to join the conversations and share their perspectives. Visuals and photos from the community are also being collected to aid publicity efforts. An RFP has been issued to hire a consultant to guide community conversations next year. A hiring subcommittee is being formed to evaluate the RFP responses, with efforts underway to have representation from outside the metro area. The RFP has been distributed through various channels, including paying a fee to post on Springboard for the Arts. There are also attempts to find someone willing to do the consulting work pro bono. Carl Flink will reach out to his connections again to see who may be able to assist pro bono. An update was provided on similar national dance service organizations.

Chicago Dance Forum and Grants

Laurie Van Wieren was asked to contact the Chicago Dance Forum and share insights into their operating design. Laurie discussed the Chicago Dance Forum, an organization established in 2003 to support dance makers in Chicago. They formed with the support and assistance of three different organizations. The organization has received 1.2 million in grants and has supported over 1,000 dance artists. It has evolved over the years, adapting and growing during the pandemic by offering digital dance grants. The organization has a transparent budget and is part of the Working Artists and Greater Economy (WAGE) initiative. The Chicago Dance Forum has a focus on supporting individual artists more so than in supporting organizations. The discussion also touched on the importance of partnerships with other organizations to support dance endeavors. Laurie touched on the structure of the Chicago organization, which has three ongoing staff members and an independent contractor for grant writing. The organization does not have any earned income or membership. Laurie will share the written communications shared by the Chicago Dance Forum with the full Task Force. They were very thorough in responding to the questions and openly shared a substantial amount of information regarding the growth and operations.

Dance Metro DC

Krister offered to contact the Chicago Dance Forum and share insights into their operating design. Kristen provided an update on her research into Dance Metro DC, an organization that recently shut down operations. Key points were that Dance Metro DC was founded in the early 2000s with a weekly newsletter and annual awards ceremony, but struggled with funding and leadership challenges after the pandemic. The Kennedy Center is now exploring ways to potentially revive some of Dance Metro DC's functions. Kristen plans to share the list of questions from today's agenda with Dance Metro DC to get further details on their operations and reasons for sunseting the organization. Louise noted the ebb and flow of similar organizations in different cities, noting that she recognized many initiatives from her time with the Dance Alliance. She shared an observation that work performed by organizations shifted over time as different businesses closed and new businesses opened. These changes over time were recognized in many different cities across the country.

Reviving Awards

The group discussed the former Sage Awards in the Twin Cities, which provided recognition and opportunities for local dance artists but was discontinued due to lack of funding and volunteer capacity. There is interest in potentially reviving a similar awards program if it can be sustainably funded and staffed. This could be a possible focus of a new service organization.

Dance Alliance and Dance U.S.A. History

The meeting discussed the history of the Dance Alliance and current status of Dance U.S.A. Louise and Laurie recalled that the Dance Alliance became Dance Today in the early 2000s. The group also discussed the possibility of reaching out to June Wilson, a former director of Dance Today, for her insights. The group also discussed the potential for collaboration with Dance U.S.A. and the possible interest of further communication with their staff.

City Community Organizations and Partnerships

Laurie, Louise, and Kristen discussed the community organizations and resources in Chicago, particularly the park boards and cultural centers. They shared that some of Chicago city park facilities were very nice buildings with beautiful venues for dance performances. They noted that these organizations have been around for a long time and are used by many dance companies. They also discussed the potential for partnerships with cities across the state to develop and expand programs. There was conversation around growing relationships with arts councils and park boards across the state. The conversation also touched on the opportunities within community education and how to reach out to new audiences. There was conversation about the dance education programs that had been built by the Cowles Center that ended with the closing of the Cowles Center.

Expanding Dance Performances to Suburbs

The team discussed the potential for expanding dance performances to suburban venues. Gary shared his recollection of a plan from the late 1990s to establish dance performances in seven locations, funded by local businesses like Target and Menards. He recalled conversations happening at Danny Shapiro and Joanie Smith's home back in the 90s or early 2000s. Gary shared that John Munger was involved in a study funded by the Bush Foundation. Perhaps the Bush Foundation might have some written documents from these conversations. Gary also mentioned a survey conducted in 1998 by James Sewell Ballet, which showed varying levels of audience crossover between different dance companies. Gary suggested that there might be valuable information in the archives of the Southern Theater and Dance Today.

Dancers Group in San Francisco

Gary Peterson mentioned the Dancers Group in San Francisco, a well-funded organization offering various services to dance artists. He offered to reach out to them to request more information using the template of questions and topics shared in today's agenda

New Initiative and Dance Group Collaboration

The team discussed the concept of a new initiative, possibly involving a presenter role, to grow their audience. The idea was well-received, with the team expressing interest in pursuing it. The team also discussed the potential for collaboration with other dance groups and the possibility of hosting events across different cities in Minnesota. This could become a service facilitated and offered by a new service organization.

Growing Audiences and Pooling Resources

A topic of discussion was the challenge of attracting more people to dance performances. The group discussed a shared interest in growing audiences. Elsie shared her interest in growing audiences before the meeting began. This topic was again brought up later in the meeting. Gary shared that the Guthrie started out years ago with bussing youth in to see theater. This intentional work to organize youth to attend theater performances helped lay the groundwork for long-term success for the Guthrie Theater. Perhaps rebuilding these efforts would help grow audiences. Sarah reminded the group of an idea the Eve Schulte mentioned months ago, having staff that work on providing consistent resources to all dancers. Some examples included having a graphic designer that could work with all dance artists and shared information regarding publicizing events. There was conversation around press releases and compiling a list of where to send information to promote your performance or event.

Links shared in the meeting

- <https://wageforwork.com/>
- <https://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com/parks-facilities/cultural-centers>
- <https://npnweb.org/programs/>
- [Dancers' Group – Amplify, Strengthen & Unify](#)

Future Meetings

The group discussed meeting every two weeks and if this frequency of meeting was working well. It was shared that it's challenging to attend every two weeks. The group proposed that shortening the meetings to one hour could make things more efficient. Those present suggested the group continue to meet biweekly and to shorten the meeting time from two hours to one hour instead.

NEXT MEETING -

Monday, December 2, 2024

Zoom

5:00PM -6:00PM (4:45 pm -5:00 pm; new visitors welcoming)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87377874575?pwd=4HHcLIJLsNVuUrVGtA7HQ5Cag06tFz.1>

Meeting ID: 873 7787 4575

Passcode: 026866