

Serving Dance in Chicago
A Planning Process for
Small to Mid-sized Companies and Independent Artists

Executive Summary

by Suzanne Callahan
with Brooke Belott
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This document summarizes a full report on the planning process that was designed to study and respond to the needs of the Chicago dance community for service provision, with a focus on Small to Mid-sized companies and Independent artists in Dance (referred to as SMID, in this study). Funded by the Chicago Community Trust, the full report is available under separate cover. The Planning Process was co-directed by three artists whose companies and ways of working fall into the categories of independent and small/mid-size: Julia Rhoads of Lucky Plush Productions, Eduardo Vilaro of Luna Negra Dance Theater, and Ginger Farley, independent artist. It also benefited from the advice of a steering committee¹ and the Dance Advisory Committee (the Advisory) to the Chicago Community Trust (CCT or the Trust).²

Background: The Chicago Dance Community and the Need for a Study

Chicago can boast of a diverse dance community, one that spans the city and suburbs. Although the Chicago Dance Mapping Project reported as many as 258 dance-making entities in the six-county area, the largest and most visible organizations creating and producing dance, those with budgets over \$150,000, number only about a dozen. This means that the vast majority—over 90% or literally hundreds—work as independent artists, pick up ensembles and small or mid-sized companies. The ways of working in dance are so diverse that even the definitions of what constitutes a “small” or “mid-sized” company are not established; for example, the term mid-sized may refer to the number of dancers who perform or the somewhat arbitrary distinction of an annual budget size.

In embarking on the planning process, the premise on the part of the project directors was that the lifestyle and working conditions of this wide array of artists reflect the limitations in 1) resources available to them, and 2) the implications for service provision. However, adequate research had not been done to determine how this reality plays out in Chicago. Based on their own experience and extensive interaction with their peers, the directors felt that while it is possible to run a “company,”³ inadequate support structures make it almost impossible to sustain operations and provide the level of stability that can retain artists and staff. Whether they work independently or within a modest company structure, artists tend to wear multiple hats as choreographers, dancers, teachers, administrators or writers. A lifestyle that is pieced together in this manner causes a constant struggle to generate enough income to survive, while allowing some time to create, perform, and tour. Balancing these multiple roles becomes such a burden that in their effort to generate income, artists sacrifice the time to administer their own companies or manage their production schedule, let alone tour their work. And, they lack the monetary support to hire skilled administrators. Given the shortage of space, choreographers and dancers can work for months or years to create performances that close after a three-day run—projects that are often funded out of pocket by family, friends, and maybe a benefit. Regardless of these distinctions, their ways of working are predicated by limited or nonexistent staff, small budgets that go mostly for production, and minimal volunteer help.

Any consideration of the needs of artists who face such limitations must include an assessment of their need for services. While many services are provided for the nonprofit arts field, it appears that they are structured to respond more to organizations with larger budgets and full-time paid staff than to the needs

¹ Steering committee members included Ginger Farley, Co-Director, The 58 Group; Julia Rhoads, Co-Director, Lucky Plush Productions; Eduardo Vilaro, Co-Director, Luna Negra Dance Theater; Gail Kalver, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago; Laura Samson, Executive Director, Alphawood Foundation; and Hope Cooper, Program Officer, Mayer and Morris Family Foundation.

² The names of Advisory members appear at the end of this document.

³ The term company is used broadly in the dance field. In this report it refers to any entity that creates and performs dance, whether for profit or nonprofit, and regardless of size, budget, staffing, or other working arrangements.

of independent artists/small companies with limited budgets and staff. In fact, the budget, staff size and structure of these SMIDs leave them either ineligible for, or unable to take full advantage of, many services. Therefore, project directors surmised that while the perception is that services are provided, the reality is that small organizations are left with few or no alternatives for assistance or training in areas such as management, board development, and fundraising, among many other areas. And, it was assumed that artists lack information about how to access the services that do exist.

Historically, dance service organizations are one of the resources that have supported artists with limited capacity. The city is not unique in its need for such services; in a talk to Chicago funders Douglas Sonntag, Director of Dance for the National Endowment for the Arts, addressed the role that service organizations play in the professional development of independent artists and small companies, as well as the gap left by funding cuts and the subsequent loss of service organizations over the past decade:

Viable service organizations provide vehicles for communication such as newsletters, websites, and convening. Through their leadership and advocacy, these organizations focus what is too often perceived by the larger community as discontented static into a coherent message to help shape cultural policy and community priorities. They also provide tangible services to their artist constituents through showcasing opportunities, festivals, presentation, data collection and analysis, and publicity. Nationally, we have seen a serious demise in dance service organizations. Where there were once thriving organizations in the Bay Area, Los Angeles, Seattle, Chicago, Minneapolis, Pittsburgh, and Boston, they have vanished or become hollow shells of what they once were. This in turn has increased the isolation of dance artists, and limited the amount of information that can be distributed. Most crucially, it has diluted the unified voice of a dance constituency in shaping community life, from the building of theaters, to how the schools can incorporate arts into the curriculum. Service organizations, which [choreographer] Bella Lewitzky once described as the "sinews that hold our dance body together," were providing a means for local and national communication, sharing of knowledge, and an end to the deadening isolation that had marked so much of the dance field outside of New York. Unfortunately, the dance field is too large not to have a service organization but it's too small and poor to support one.

Sonntag's observations have proven true in Chicago: because there exists no one service organization in Chicago that is dedicated solely to dance, there is no range of necessary services provided; no regular forum for issues to be considered or addressed (outside of an occasional town meeting); and no center for advocacy or unified voice for the field. Such inadequate support and low visibility has left the dance field largely on its own to survive. And it has left funders without a central source of information about dance, its issues, and needs.

The Dance Advisory Committee's Retreat

The major recommendation from a retreat held in May of 2004 was to look at the feasibility of providing more adequate services for the dance field. The retreat was held to make recommendations, for use by CCT's Dance Initiative. The Initiative, shaped around the theme of excellence in dance, has accomplished much toward its goal to enhance dance in Chicago. The Trust could not sustain the same level of time, funding, and administrative resources that it had in the past. Specifically, the Trust sought advice about how it might build on its accomplishments, and perhaps leave a legacy for the dance field, without creating a financial dependency on the foundation. The major area of interest was service provision. Throughout the retreat, concern was expressed over the lack of services to independent artists and smaller companies and comments were made about how a service function might help sustain, in part, the Trust's objectives for the Dance Initiative, which are to:

1. Support artists' creative process in order to facilitate their artistic growth.
2. Raise visibility for the diverse range of artists and their work.
3. Boost interaction within the field.
4. Expand audiences in Chicago.
5. Increase the capacity for organizations that support dance.

Purpose

The purpose of the planning process was to:

- Present a composite picture of the needs of independent artists and small companies;
- Provide a plan for service provision for independent artists and small companies, as well as the broader field, for use by the leadership of the dance field itself as well as funders;
- Build on the planning, research, and direct support to artists that has been provided by and for the Chicago dance community in the past several years, by such funders such as the Chicago Community Trust, the Driehaus Foundation, the Alphawood Foundation, the Cheney Foundation, the Mayer and Morris Kaplan Family Foundation, and The Prince Charitable Trusts, among others.

Research Questions

The questions addressed through the planning process fell into two major areas.

1. Background Research on Artists' Needs and Current Service Provision

- To what degree are services being provided for small companies and independent artists? What gaps exist in current service provision?
- What are the community's needs and issues that should be addressed by a service function/organization?
- What efforts are underway in other cities to deal with the need for services?
- What can be learned from the successes of the theater community and applied to dance?
- What existing models of service provision might be replicated?

2. The Potential Structure and Function of a Dance Services Entity

These questions were answered by the project directors, steering committee, and Advisory, in conjunction with the consultant, based on their review of this report.

- What would programming consist of?
- Who will support a services function?
- Who will run it? Who will staff it? What leadership qualities are required?
- Where will it be housed?

Throughout the process, additional questions were raised: Is there a viable network in existence that could expand its service to dance? Can services be provided without creating a new organization? In short, this process would not necessarily result in a recommendation to form a new organization.

Scope of Planning Process

The planning process took place in seven phases.

1. Identification and convening of a steering committee. This committee informed the research design and findings, and assisted with developing recommendations.
2. Comparison of existing services for dance. Research was conducted on existing services offered by other organizations for dance and consolidated into a document. The research, called the Comparative Document of Services Available to Artists, is found in the Appendix to the full report and also on the Links Hall website.
3. Examination of artists' needs. Four focus groups with artists were conducted and served two purposes: 1) To assess what needs are, and are not, being met by the existing service organizations, based on the Comparative Document and; 2) To identify the major issues that artists face in creating work and managing their careers—issues that might be addressed through services. (The full findings from this rich discussion appear in Section 3 of the full report.)
4. Examination of existing service providers in Chicago. Interviews were conducted with major service providers in Chicago, who were asked about their history of and capacity to serve dance, as well as their interest in serving dance in the future. The findings from the focus groups were also shared with them so that they could benefit from knowing what artists thought of their services. In addition, individuals from the dance field who offered a unique perspective were interviewed, including Lisa Tylke, former Executive Director of the Chicago Dance Coalition. (The complete research appears in Section 4 of the full report.)
5. Examination of service provision in other cities. Efforts are underway in cities across the country to start dance service organizations. It was thought that Chicago might benefit from knowing more about the work that had taken place in these cities, and draw from any ideas that might work here. Interviews were conducted with individuals affiliated with these efforts in Minneapolis, Philadelphia, and Washington, DC. (The details on these cities' efforts can be found in Section 5 of the full report.)
6. Models of service provision. Throughout the Advisory's meetings and research conducted for this study, many dance practitioners, including artists, regularly referred to several organizations in New York that offer highly effective services to the dance community. An examination of what is offered and how it is delivered would provide ideas to the Chicago community as it developed its own service model. In March of 2005, research was conducted on Pentacle, Dance/NYC, The Field, and Dance Theater Workshop and their staff traveled to Chicago to speak to the Advisory. (An in depth description of these models can be found in Section 6 of the full report.)
7. Community response and next steps. The steering committee and Advisory has reviewed this information and it will be shared with the dance community in late spring of 2005. (The consultant offers talking points for next steps, which appear in Section 8 of the full report. A document that gives more details on next steps is available under separate cover.)

Outcomes

It was hoped that the planning process would:

- Reveal to the dance community the services that are already available, as well as the needs that are not being met. By creating such a knowledge base, in the form of a written document, artists would better understand what services can be accessed and how to attain them.
- Provide a timely assessment. A report that reflects current realities and needs would be of use to the community as well as funders, some of whom are not closely familiar with the dance field.
- Amass conversations within the dance community. Providing a structure for dialogue among artists would build awareness of the community's needs, as well as gaps in service provision. It would also allow for relationships to be built among artists.
- Create an interface between existing service providers and the dance community. New and stronger connections would be made between the artists and the service organizations that do exist, leaving them more likely to access and obtain help.

In addition, the information generated through the planning process has already been used in a variety of local and national settings:

- The information can help build or strengthen relationships with dance communities in other cities. Funders and administrators have already obtained the information that has been gathered from those cities, and have expressed an interest in sharing ideas.
- The information about services that is presented in the Comparative Document is now available on a website so that artists can access it, and it could be updated on a regular basis. It can be downloaded from the Links Hall website [www.linkshall.org].
- Local service organizations have benefited from knowing the findings from the artist focus groups, which were conveyed to them in interviews.

Relationship to the Chicago Community Trust's Dance Initiative

This planning process builds on, and complements, the prior planning and accomplishments of the Chicago dance community, largely through the Trust's Dance Initiative, in several ways.

- The Mapping Project provided sound statistics of the predominance of small organizations and independent artists in dance. This useful tool revealed how many artists exist, their budget size, and other crucial information that gave a quantitative view of the community. But it could not ask or answer questions about *why* artists operated in the manner that they did. Considering its findings in light of what is revealed in this study provides the background for the need for services to this substantial group of artists.
- The reports generated by the Trust that document the Dance Initiative point to the need for service provision.
- At Advisory meetings convened by the Trust, service provision has been a running theme. The issue is of concern to other dance funders and was discussed with funders at sessions that were held by the Trust in 2004. Though the Advisory has discussed this as a recurring topic, and shows concern for the artists through its demonstration projects, the needs of unincorporated and small organizations had remained largely unaddressed.
- Finally, this planning process reflects the needs that are being explored in other major dance centers across the country, where the fall-out in dance service provision over the past decade has been detrimental to small companies and unincorporated artists. The cities of Philadelphia, Minneapolis, San Francisco, and Washington, DC are currently looking at similar concerns.

As evidenced from the findings contained in this report, the Chicago arts community had much to say about service provision and what can be offered to its dance artists. The findings give insight into how artists create work and manage their careers and how service organizations strive to support that process. Most importantly, the findings provide much food for thought, for reflection and action.

Summary of Findings

The research conducted produced a wealth of information about dance service provision in Chicago. Service organizations are assisting artists in many ways, yet gaps remain between existing services and the needs of artists.

Comparative Document of Services Available to Artists

As the Comparative Document shows, a wide array of services are currently being offered to the arts community in Chicago. Until now, detailed information about these services did not exist in one place and artists were not fully aware of them. Having this information accessible, and eventually on a website, may increase usage of services. The Comparative Document has already proved useful to some local artists and organizations, as well as in planning projects in other cities.

Artist Focus Groups

The well-attended focus groups revealed much about artists' major issues in managing their work and careers and their needs for services. *As these discussions showed, solving the problem of service provision may have less to do with the quantity of services that are available and more with artists' awareness of and access to those services, as well as the relevance of those services to their needs.*

Demographics. The 35 artists who attended the focus groups had been working in Chicago for a long time, with an average of over 14 years in the field. The majority (two-thirds) have nonprofit status, which brings with it a higher level of administrative responsibility than being independent. However, the majority of artists also have no paid staff; only three percent of those with budgets under \$100,000 have paid assistance of any kind. Artists are strongly committed to paying dancers; if additional funds became available, many artists said they would first use the money to compensate their dancers. The majority of artists derive income from their own sources including jobs, box office revenue, and individual donations; a much smaller percentage is supported by foundations and government funding.

Barriers to Accessing Services. Despite the existence of services, accessibility can vary for artists due to a number of factors related to eligibility, as well as the appropriateness of services to artists' real needs:

- Eligibility requirements show that most of the substantive services are geared toward nonprofit organizations. This leaves independent artists with fewer options. One of the issues that brought up frustration was the need to form nonprofits in order to access funds. Artists wished there were other models or opportunities for accessing support.
- Access to services is exacerbated by the need for paid staff. The artists themselves are caught between working their day jobs to finance their companies and producing the art itself. This leaves little or no time to attend to the administrative details, let alone to work with service providers, which are often only open during the normal work day. The reality is that artists lack

the human power to attend workshops, obtain information, attend meetings with consultants, and complete tasks that would be required by service organizations.

- A number of organizations offer volunteer assistance from qualified consultants. Those artists who had accessed these services had mostly positive comments about them. But many of the services require artists to deal with long waiting periods. Artists either have to wait for consultants to be assigned to them, or hope that a volunteer selects them over arts ensembles; in actuality pro bono consultants tend to pass over artists with small companies in favor of larger, more established organizations. This may leave artists with little control over the process, and no alternative but to wait and hope that they are selected by a lawyer, accountant, or other consultant.
- The activities of service organizations are not always offered on a regular basis, though the larger organizations are more reliable in this regard. Artists may not be aware of activities. This means that the Comparative Document of services may imply ongoing events that are in actuality either rarely offered or not well-attended.
- Artists appreciate that service organizations have gathered resource information about fundraising and other topics and made it available to them. However, the quality and comprehensiveness of information varied from organization to organization; with some organizations artists had to dig for information and in other instances they felt overwhelmed by the amount and complexity of information. Information resources are most useful when there is dedicated staff available to assist artists.
- Though there are options for publicizing information about performances, there are not enough of them and their reach is limited. An important observation was made about websites that may exist, but which are either incomplete or difficult to navigate. There is not any one information hub that is fully serving the needs of artists. Technology should be used effectively; a high-quality website is much more than a URL and a calendar, but a site that is planned and designed carefully to take into account the needs and interests of artists and audiences.
- Some of the smaller service organizations themselves either lack adequate staff or are run on a solely volunteer basis; this may leave them unable to respond to artists' requests for information or assistance.
- Finally, another barrier is cost. Some artists prefer to work day jobs and pay for assistance, because payment brings a level of control that does not exist with volunteers.

Artists' Priorities for Service Provision

Administration. The conundrum of administration came up often and in many different ways. Securing staff and finding time are the biggest barriers to using services and perhaps to organizational growth and stability. Artists who were aware of services in New York longed for what was provided by leading organizations. DTW and The Field saves artists from having to obtain nonprofit status to access services. Pentacle and The Field offer targeted services to specific kinds of artists and can meet artists' need for administration without requiring them to commit to hiring their own staff. *There is a common thread among many of the needs expressed by artists: they want services that would save time and money—by both circumventing artists' lack of staff and streamlining access to information.* Artists wondered if a service organization could set up effective relationships with arts administration programs, which could then provide students to work as either interns or part-time staff. But, feelings about volunteer assistance

and interns were mixed. There was a tradeoff between having this assistance, versus having to take the time to train people who were either unpaid or likely to be temporary.

Networking and Information Exchange. Artists desire more opportunities to network and build relationships with the larger community. This was the issue about which they were most passionate. They desire more connections with other artists through forums about their work and administrative issues; with audiences, to gain a better understanding of who attends and why; and funders, who they feel are not aware of their work or issues. Even though their hours are limited, artists would find the time to gather as a group, in order to form relationships and decrease the isolation that can exist when working independently. Artists also desired more opportunity to share works-in-progress with their peers.

Artists voiced a strong desire for a comprehensive hub, probably in the form of a website, which would provide information on everything from performances to space rental. This site would serve two major functions: 1) as a center for audience development, by publicizing performances and encouraging ticket sales; and 2) as a resource bank, allowing artists to save time on their own research by accessing everything from costume designers to grant deadlines to rehearsal space and possibly access to qualified help. Such information would save them time, money, and hassle.

Advocacy. Finally, artists made a strong call for advocacy and leadership on behalf of dance in Chicago. There is no presenter here who is, they thought, serving as a proponent in taking their work to the next level. There is no champion—no one to be present at tables to speak for the art form overall. In artists' view, there are also few connections with the dance field outside of the city.

Audience Development. Artists would be thankful for anything that could help them to understand, form connections with, and build audiences. The website above would, they thought, help substantially. Though not stated outright, it can be inferred that they would appreciate and benefit from the information that has been gathered through the Hubbard Street marketing project.

Health Insurance. Although not discussed in detail, health insurance was a major interest to artists. Any assistance with access to information would be appreciated, including affordable plans for which artists would be eligible.

Professional Development. Artists would benefit from professional development in the areas of board development, marketing, and fundraising. They thought that one option that would help is mentorships with seasoned managers who could train them in administrative skills.

Press Coverage. Artists desire better relations with the press and more coverage, although there was little consensus on how this could be achieved.

Space. A strong desire was expressed for a centralized space for meetings, performances, and classes. Moming was spoken of as an example of the ways in which a common space can provide service and help to establish a sense of community. While artists understood that this would not happen in the short-term, they hoped that such a space could be a long-term goal.

The Role of Chicago Service Organizations

A number of Chicago organizations are offering a wide range of services. Their services are largely complementary and there was little duplication of efforts. The most frequently used service organizations were the Chicago Music and Dance Alliance, Links Hall, Lawyers for the Creative Arts, Arts and Business Council of Chicago, the Department of Cultural Affairs, and Donors Forum of Chicago.

However, the quality of services varied, as did their relevance to artists' lives and ways of working. Both Links Hall and the Arts and Business Council were viewed most positively. Though the Music and Dance Alliance was the most frequently accessed, reservations were expressed about the quality of its services. The remaining organizations received mixed to positive reviews. Artists who had accessed services reaped benefits from them, although some had had problematic experiences with consultants who had been assigned to them. However, as outlined above, most of the problems related more to access to, or relevance of, the service than with the quality of product or service provided. In addition to the six above, a long list of organizations were used by fewer than 20% of artists.

The organizations that were interviewed each fulfill a unique niche in service provision, and can play different roles in dance provision in the future. Lawyers for the Creative Arts offers services in incorporation and general business planning and has a long history of assisting organizations in making the decision to incorporate; their service provision is limited but straightforward, and they have assisted longstanding organizations such as Hubbard Street. Links Hall meets the needs of independent artists to develop and show work; their space and performance services for smaller groups are vital, and staff believe there is a need to expand and enhance the quantity of services if new resources are made available. Arts and Business Council targets support in the areas of board development, strategic planning, and organizational assessment, but works most effectively with organizations that are incorporated and have a functioning board. Though opinions of it were favorable, it offers little for the independent artist, apart from workshops. The Department of Cultural Affairs feels that having a strong dance organization with which to collaborate would be a major boost to what it could offer, and would bring the services that it can offer to dance in line with what it already offers to other art forms. Because of its affiliation with the city, DCA can provide a pathway to a much larger universe of individuals who may be interested in attending and supporting dance. Donors Forum provides extensive fundraising research and insight into the priorities of funders, as well as assistance with accessing that information. However, some artists found it overwhelming to find the time to access and navigate the enormous amount of information that is housed at DFC. The League of Chicago Theaters was not discussed in focus groups, nor did it appear to be considered a major dance service provider. Yet it has potential for serving the dance field through its tried and true audience development and marketing services. The League's services are open to dance, but they are more appropriate for dance companies than individuals. As conveyed by the Sacred Dance Guild, the liturgical community operates quite differently from the concert dance world. Though it exists mainly in churches, there may eventually be potential to develop crossover audiences. It is difficult to pinpoint services that would be of use to concert dance artists as well as liturgical dance at this time. Perhaps the study of liturgical dance that was funded by CCT will aid in developing relationships between these two groups and eventually determining areas of crossover.

Service Provision in Other Cities

It is interesting that many of the major cities across the country are currently addressing the question of dance service provision. In the past decade, dance service organizations that once thrived have closed in several cities, including Chicago, Philadelphia and Minneapolis. In contrast, Washington, DC has never had such an organization. All three of the cities in Section 5 of the full report have been meeting and planning to discuss artists' needs and two of the three have gathered advisory groups. Two of the cities are looking at forming service organizations; for the time being, Minneapolis is addressing service needs by funding specific projects rather than a service organization.

Inevitably, questions arose about why dance service organizations that used to exist closed their doors. Most of these organizations shared certain characteristics related to their structure, staffing and funding. First, the organizations were run by staff who were recruited when they were young, and who worked tirelessly, exhibiting great loyalty to artists and the dance field. However, staff eventually burnt out due

to the heavy workload and low pay. Second, as Douglas Sonntag stated, and the research indicates, dance service organizations have historically been under-resourced. Several dance service organizations folded with substantial debt. Lisa Tylke, former executive director of the Chicago Dance Coalition describes the situation there, which may be indicative of what happened in other cities: “When you have 70% contributed income, but you have no director of development, no board funding levels, and it’s not a moneyed board, that’s a losing combination by any textbook. There was only so much money to do programs...and pay staff to stay around...I literally could not breathe [from the burden of trying to balance the budget].” Funders were reluctant to make long term commitments, preferring instead to fund for a while, take a year off, and then want to support a new project. Tylke advised that “It takes a long time for a service entity to develop” and suggested that any start-up organization be given five years of salary and other support. Finally, two counteracting changes were at work at the national level: the dance field itself was proliferating, while the resources to support it were shrinking. In the dance boom of the 1980s literally hundreds of dance companies and independent artists sprouted up across the country. After the NEA’s cuts in 1995, funding possibilities were no longer available for service organizations, as well as independent choreographers and small companies. This demise in support had ripple effects on the local level, as detailed by Sally Sommer in 2000:⁴

In looking back at the 1970s and 1980s, the issue to emerge was how would the NEA be able to sustain the proliferation of dance it had initially encouraged?...The interplay among touring, individual fellowships and presenter [support] gave birth to what one person called a healthy “ecosystem” of dance. The most severe blow was the demise of the NEA’s individual artist fellowships in 1995...a true loss for the creative process. The devastating effect was strain on the service organizations and the feeder system. The infrastructure was stretched to the breaking point.⁵

Comparison of the Four Cities Today

It appears that the needs for services are similar in the four cities researched, and focus on:

- Centralized sources of information. Most cities are interested in a formal website that would serve as an identity and hub for dance; connect artists with information needed to fund and produce their work; and inform audiences about performances.
- Forums for artists and other peer groups. Artists desired mechanisms for convening to discuss issues of common concern; view each other’s work; and form relationships to offset the feeling of working in isolation.
- Audience development. All cities desire effective ways to reach and expand audiences. Though there are options for publicizing information about performances, there are not enough of them and their reach is limited.
- Advocacy. Artists are concerned that there is not one voice representing them at tables where issues are discussed and decisions made. The lack of such a representative is hindering their visibility, the resources that are allocated to the art form on a local level, and even policy makers’ understanding of their needs.

⁴ The assertions in this paragraph came primarily from the Chicago research, but are consistent with Callahan’s own experience of running the NEA’s Services to the Dance Field funding program (which was done away with in 1994), as well as her prior research on dance communities in Chicago, Minneapolis, Philadelphia, and San Francisco.

⁵ Sommer, Sally and Suzanne Callahan. From an unpublished report for The Pew Charitable Trusts in 2000.

- Capacity building. The interest level in the issue of organizational capacity varied from city to city. While administration is a substantial issue in Chicago, it is not a problem that those interviewed in Minneapolis think can be solved.

Below is a preliminary comparison of each city regarding its history of service provision, planning, and service priorities. (Note that this chart was developed from written materials and has not been reviewed by representatives in each city.)

COMPARISON OF THE FOUR CITIES IN:	Chicago	Philadelphia	Minneapolis	DC
Services Structure				
Had a service organization in the past	X	X	X	
Has a service organization now				new
Operates by projects taken on				
By organizations and individuals	X	X	X	
Has a formal Advisory Board	X	X		informal
Has paid staff dedicated to services				X
Received foundation support	X	X	for projects	X
Planning				
Formal study conducted on community and/or services	X			X
Town meetings to discuss service provision	not yet	X	X	X
Timing of new service organization	tbd- study done in 2004-05	2005-2007	No plans to date	2005-2007 Study done in 2003
Top Service Priorities				
Information exchange/hub	X	X		X
Audience development	X	X	X	X
Networking among artists	X	X	X	X
Advocacy	X	X	X	X
Capacity building	X	X		
Space	Later	Later		

Models for Service Provision in New York

New York can boast one of the largest dance communities in the country and probably the world. Though each major U.S. city is unique, New York does provide a broad and impressive array of services for its dance makers and its success can serve as a model for Chicago. In offering the range and quality of services that it does, New York service organizations remove a considerable amount of administrative burden from artists. They support dance makers in a variety of key ways:

- A wide range of services are geared toward the individual artist with limited or no staff. Services include one-on-one assistance and staffing in booking, financial administration, fiscal sponsorship, advertising, and office space rental. They also includes professional development in a wide arrange of areas all aspects of management (including fundraising, marketing, booking and touring) as well as help with creative process (through works in progress showings, peer feedback, and subsidized rehearsal space).
- Select services are geared to benefit the field overall. These include advocacy with municipal, state and national legislators, funders and corporations. Dance leaders find creative solutions for

issues that affect the field overall, such as the decrease in press coverage about dance, or the real estate crisis. (Both Dance/NYC and DTW have played leadership roles in these crises.)

- Time- and money-saving tools are geared toward the dance field and the general public. Services include websites that offer information on performances, which serves audiences as well as artists. Websites also offer information that saves each artist from time-consuming duplication of research about fundraising, touring, and other areas. Written tools include guides to press relations, and advertising, as well as press and rate lists. These tools are particularly helpful for artists with no staff, and are offered by Dance/NYC, DTW and The Field.
- Connections to the national dance field are maintained through vocal leadership. Leaders provide connections between local artists and other cities through assisting with touring and arranging artistic retreats. Some services have been replicated in other cities (such as Field Works, which now exists in 16 other sites). Dance leaders represent the city's artists, issues and needs at national gatherings.
- Service organizations communicate regularly and collaborate when it will benefit the field. Dance leaders have established a congenial and flexible way of collaborating on projects, such as publicity (both Pentacle and DTW address this need) and health care (an affordable alternative clinic is being explored by numerous organizations). Though services occasionally are duplicated (such as fiscal sponsorship), the overlap is healthy due to the enormous size of the dance community and because organizations understand the field's needs, talk to each other and coordinate their efforts.
- Leadership is paramount, and is integrally tied to service provision. Service providers can boast of the ineffable asset of leadership. Individuals such as David White, Cathy Edwards, Steve Gross, Bob Yesselman, Laurie Uprichard, Janice Shapiro, Ted Berger, Carla Peterson, and Ivan Sygoda have devoted decades to understanding, serving, representing and speaking for the dance field. They are supported by another generation of administrators who are committed and talented, many of whom are artists themselves, and who will likely assume positions of greater responsibility in the coming years.

It is crucial that New York City offers a substantial amount of support for dance services, in both contributed and earned income. Details about budget categories are enlightening:

- It is estimated that over \$1 million in support goes for salaries and benefits for dance services. The full time positions for three of the four major dance service providers in Manhattan, who are associated with administrative support for services, including DTW, The Field, and Dance/NYC, is over half a million. (Information on Pentacle was not available.) Staff costs for three of the four major dance service organizations are very close to one another, at about \$175,000. The half a million figure does not include Pentacle and does not even take into account staff support from other positions at those organizations (such as prorated portions of DTW's 25 staff members). The figure also does not include other organizations that are known primarily for creative development and presenting but also offer crucial services (such as Danspace Project, Movement Research, and the Joyce Theater, as well as many others). Nor does it include service providers that are multidisciplinary, such as NYFA. Therefore, the real administrative salaries associated with dance services (not even presenting) is arguably much higher.
- Budgets for dance service provision for three of the four organizations averages between \$300,000-\$400,000. This is modest considering the impact and reach of these organizations. Again, this does

not include organizations focused on creative development. If pass through monies are included, the budget size more than doubles (The Field provides double its own budget in fiscal pass through monies, and DTW provides double its services budget in pass through monies for advertising and fundraising).

- Contributed support from foundations and government comprise about two thirds of these budgets and earned income makes up the other third. Contributed income for three of the four organizations totals \$657,000 and earned is \$341,000, with a total of \$1.015 million. Since Dance/NYC has almost no earned income, it skews the percentage; the other two organizations exist on about half earned income. And, most of this earned income does not come from membership dues, but rather fees for services. To generate earned income they offer services that artists are willing to pay for, at modest prices. *Therefore, in many ways, these organizations are the de facto staff for SMID-type artists, who do not have staff.*

In summary, the research and presentations showed that New York is successfully providing most or all of the very services that Chicago artists say they need. It accomplishes this through employing experienced leaders, who design crucial programs that are relevant to artists needs, and working with funders, both public and private, who allocate adequate resources for these programs.

Other Suggestions for Service Provision

Lessons Learned. The following suggestions come from service providers and have implications for the way in which a service organization can function effectively.

- Service organizations are critical in fighting isolation and connecting artists to their peers – they provide a voice and a sense of identity, and encourage solidarity. They provide services that might not be exciting but are nonetheless needed. However, a service entity should be wary of presenting, which can create conflict with its mission of service. The realm of presenting raises constituents' expectations and can cause resentment for artists who are not selected.
- Careful thought should be given to the pros and cons of a membership model that promises artists a set amount of services for a set fee; instead, a model that may be more effective would encourage members to pay a set amount that would go for the betterment of the field, rather than for reciprocal services that they themselves would receive. A new organization might explore ways to generate earned income from members. The League of Chicago Theaters should be more closely examined for lessons that might be learned from their success in working with both for-profit and nonprofit organizations.
- Service organizations must be cognizant of artists' struggle to balance the art with the administration, and anything that they can do to fill that gap is worth considering. It is unrealistic to expect artists to have the time, or the expertise, to perform both of these jobs well.
- There is substantial need for fiscal sponsorship on the part of artists. Because of the extent to which fiscal sponsorship came up, this need should be looked at in closer detail. However, offering it poses a major challenge for most of the organizations interviewed, due to legal ramifications that they are not willing to take on. Furthermore, it is not clear as to whether foundations would be amenable to accepting the larger volume of applications that such sponsorship would encourage.
- Most importantly, a dance service organization must be adequately resourced and staffed. The major reason why the Dance Coalition failed was its ongoing financial shortfall. It must be run by a

qualified leader who is able to serve as a knowledgeable advocate for the dance field overall, and who is paid a salary that is truly commensurate with their expertise level. For these reasons, funders who truly wish to support dance services are encouraged to seriously consider multi-year commitments.

Finally, in making decisions about dance service provision, the challenge will be to focus on a few select services. The array of what is found in New York cannot be offered by one organization. Therefore, priorities will need to be set, and choices made, about what would be most helpful and what can be provided.

Consultant Talking Points

The Final Report provides a wealth of information about dance artists and service provision. It has examined the services that are both available and desired in Chicago, surveyed what is offered in other cities, and explained what works well in New York, as model of service provision. The process has been strengthened by the involvement of the Dance Advisory Committee, which includes leaders with a wide range of experience and perspectives in management, choreography, performance, touring, presenting, teaching, funding, and services; its members are connected to the national dance community and understand the overall ecology of the field. Another major strength of this process is that it's been directed by artists who understand and live with the very needs that are to be addressed by service provision. The project directors' ideas about the study's design, and their imperative to challenge existing assumptions about artist' needs and capacity, was a major reason for the insight that came from the Comparative Document and artist focus groups.

These Talking Points are geared toward answering the questions that were posed at the beginning of the planning process. *They express the viewpoints of the consultant about next steps, and are not meant to be interpreted as the opinions of the majority of the Dance Advisory or project directors. As of the time of this writing, consensus had not yet been reached about next steps.*

There is ample evidence that the needs of the majority of artists in the Chicago dance community are not being comprehensively addressed and that some form of dance service provision would fill a significant gap. Regardless of its structure, the DSE should:

- Listen closely to the real needs of artists, and creatively solve the problem of addressing those needs through service provision.
- Take advantage of existing resources, including other organizations, ideas that can be replicated from other cities, as well as technological advances that allow for sharing information.
- Exist in as lean and affordable structure as possible, without compromising on the quality and experience of staff.
- Exhibit leadership and vision in program design and communication.
- Remain flexible, so that it can respond to artists' needs and grow accordingly.

The talking points are presented in eight areas.

1. Collaborations with Local Arts Organizations

Associations with leading arts service providers in Chicago should be explored. Taking advantage of mutually beneficial collaborations, when possible and suitable to the dance field, will economize on resources and avoid duplication of services. The research contained in the Comparative Document has shown a wide range of services that are offered to Chicago's artists. In some instances, services are provided by multiple organizations. Yet the focus groups showed the weaknesses of the current service rubric in meeting artist needs, largely because these artists are not able to access existing services, due to

lack of staff and time. Nevertheless, the city can boast of several outstanding service providers, which fulfill important roles, from legal incorporation to board development and marketing to audience development. It is important to begin by exploring these organizations and their service provision in more depth, in order to determine how they could benefit dance.

2. Housing of Dance Services Entity

Serious consideration should be given to housing the DSE as a project within an existing organization. Options should be explored and a decision made about where to locate this project. Strong consideration should be given to the organization's openness to serve as a fiscal sponsor for artists. Throughout the planning process, questions arose as to whether existing organizations could expand their services to address the needs of dance. Now that initial research has been gathered, these organizations should be explored in more depth about the possibility of either starting a dance program or housing a dedicated staff person for dance. Housing the DSE within an existing 501(c)3 will save on overhead and accelerate the speed at which services can be offered. Specifically, it would save on costs such as accounting, rent, and possibly utilities and equipment. The most likely candidates are profiled in this report, but their interest level in housing a DSE has not been explored in detail, nor has the cost required of doing so. In addition, the need for fiscal sponsorship is so prevalent that it should be explored, and possibly linked to, the decision about what organization houses the DSE.

3. Hiring

It is critical that a qualified leader be hired to run and coordinate the DSE. Recruiting and hiring senior staff is an important decision and may make or break the effectiveness of the DSE. As evidenced in the presentations in March, the speakers from New York service organizations showed a high level of insight and understanding of how the dance community works and the ability to speak articulately for the field. Those who run organizations and make major decisions have worked tirelessly for decades (between 20 and 30 years) to understand the needs of the dance field, comprised largely of the "SMIDs" in their own city, and to develop and maintain services that respond to those needs. They are the veterans, the leaders, with senior level skills and experience, who have a perspective of a large proportion of the dance field, from the emerging individual artist to the large company, from what is happening in NYC to the country as a whole, from the creative process to the capital campaign. The hire for staff in Chicago should be held to the same high standard, which should be reflected in the recruitment process, salary, job description, expectations for performance, and annual review. This position will be a challenge but also an opportunity for the right person.

4. Program Options

The research revealed a number of services that are of high priority to artists in Chicago. In forming a DSE they should be given serious consideration. Indeed, these same services are priorities for most cities that are now considering dance service provision. These recommendations do not provide detail about the service priorities, since 1) detailed research was not conducted in those areas, and 2) such decisions would be the responsibility of the hired staff and Advisory. Programs that might be undertaken are briefly outlined below, and the consultant makes suggestions about how to undertake them.

Information Sharing and Website Development. Having a website is key to sharing information, developing audiences, and advocating for the art form. Explore the overlaps in website goals and scope with DCA, Carol Fox and associates, and the League. Research designers and costs, such as Cabanga, who did the Dance/NYC site. Consider replicating much of what has been done on that site, since it addresses the same needs that were expressed by Chicago artists. Information areas would include audience development, through a searchable and up to date performance calendar; fundraising,

including grant deadlines, applications and requirements; consultants, in management, and technical areas; and space for performance and rehearsals.

Advocacy on Behalf of the Dance Field. Aggressively meet with city officials and funders, to talk about the needs of the dance field, using the Advisory and its connections to open doors. Encourage the local dance field to become active and vocal in speaking to the need for the DSE. Launch a publicity campaign to announce the formation of the DSE. Consult with organizations such as the League of Chicago Theaters about advocacy. Develop a working group or task force to look at the issue of press coverage and explore the concerns about this issue in other cities; arrange for a meeting with editors of major papers about dance coverage. To encourage writing, send writers to American Dance Festival's program on dance criticism; consider starting a website like DanceView Times, which allows dance writers who are not given adequate space in the print media to cover performances online; and encourage local arts writers, including choreographers, to develop stories about performances and submit them to the Reader and other local papers. Dance/NYC could be consulted and seen as a model for successful advocacy.

Fiscal Sponsorship. A high priority for artists, fiscal sponsorship has proven to be a successful model for securing support for New York artists. New York service organizations offer it successfully, and can be used as models for how to develop such a program for Chicago. Consult with organizations that offer this service, including DTW, Pentacle and the Field, but also NYFA, and Fractured Atlas. NYFA has been developing a guide to fiscal sponsorship that can be used by other cities and could serve as a resource. And, staff at the Jerome Foundation has developed a packet of information for funders to encourage them to consider allowing fiscal sponsorship of artists. Questions to address include: workload and staff time involved; costs incurred and charged; and working with funders, including encouraging them to allow for fiscal sponsors.

Networking and Forums for Exchange Among Artists. This area was of high priority to many artists in the focus groups. Explore options for a regular meeting time and space for artists to gather and exchange information, referrals and ideas, and generally get to know one another. New York has had success at hosting happy hours for this purpose.

Creative and Professional Development. Explore options that would complement what is being offered by other organizations, but provide new opportunities for dance artists. Consider setting up a mentorship program with senior level administrators, as well as a program with area universities, which could provide interns or students to work with artists.

Fiscal Administration, Booking and Management. Explore offering one-on-one assistance in these areas for artists who are willing to pay a fee for it. Again, New York organizations can be used as a model.

Health Care and Insurance. Explore any options for reduced cost health care and insurance for artists. New York has identified and worked with a clinic that is willing to offer reduced costs for artists. Several on the Advisory thought that similar options might exist in Chicago. Any such information and assistance would be appreciated by artists; health care was a top concern for them in the focus groups.

National Visibility and Connections. To help with national visibility, consider forming an ad-hoc national committee of friends who have been interested and helpful to Chicago's efforts, such as Steve Gross, Cathy Edwards, Cary Baker, Christine Kite, Bob Yesselman, Ivan Sygoda, Dance/USA staff

and/or Suzanne Callahan. Share the information from this report with those in other cities who are exploring dance service provision, including Philadelphia, Washington, DC and Minneapolis.

5. Budget

A multi-year budget that will cover baseline costs for staff and overhead should be developed. The budget should be able to expand to include specific projects and service priorities. Research showed that dance service organizations have had difficulty surviving on their own in cities outside of New York primarily because of the lack of income, both contributed and earned. Most organizations in New York provide services for a budget of \$300,000 to \$400,000, excluding fiscal sponsorship, and their staff salaries are about \$170,000. They exist from about half or more contributed income and half to one-third earned income (with the exception of Dance/NYC). Most organizations do not draw substantial income from their membership dues (DTW draws 15% and the Field draws 10%). And, those that do charge membership fees offer an incentive to artists in the form of services that are crucial to managing, fundraising and performing their work (such as discounted ad rates, fiscal sponsorship, etc.).

6. Roles and Responsibilities

The Advisory will play a role in the success of the DSE and should agree to take some responsibility for its function. In addition, the dance community overall must be involved in planning and running a DSE, and their input should be welcome. The artists who attended the focus groups were extremely interested in services and will probably be willing to help. Advisory members can be an enormous asset to, and influence on, this process. They should commit to an agreed-upon set of responsibilities, understanding that more volunteer time will be required in the first year.

7. Fundraising

It will be critical for the DSE to secure contributed support. The Advisory and the local community should advocate for the importance of funding for the DSE. The research has shown that a major reason for the failure of dance service organizations has been lack of resources. This shortcoming was the major reason why the Chicago Dance Coalition failed and this finding was supported by comments by NEA staff, national studies, recent research by Dance/USA, as well as the consultant's own experience (in running the Services to the Dance Field funding program for the NEA in the 1990s). The information in this report provides both quantitative and qualitative evidence of the needs for a DSE and justification for its cost and potential impact. In particular, the budgets of the New York service organizations and their reliance on foundation and government funding, can support the case for funding in Chicago. And, the budgets of New York service providers provide documentation of how much support has been given to dance services. It will be necessary to prepare a case statement, with a timeline and plan of action; much of that can be taken from this Report. In raising funds, it would be very helpful to obtain the buy-in on the part of the local community, through letters of support or other such endorsements.

Ideas for Case Statement:

1. The dance community and Advisory has just completed a major planning process, which is documented in this Report. The findings cover the current issues that SMIDs face, and the recommendations are supported by the Advisory, which includes major dance leadership throughout the city of Chicago.
2. The need for a DSE is documented by findings of this study, and supported by statistics in the Chicago Dance Mapping Project.
3. A DSE will assist funders in understanding the field; it would provide an educated liaison, in the form of staff, which could communicate with artists about funders, and vice versa.
4. The reach of the DSE is broad. Services are designed to meet the needs of a wide range of the dance field, including SMIDs, and may eventually focus on the needs of the 90% of artists that make up the Chicago community. Therefore, funders would be getting a big “bank for their buck.”
5. Other cities with large dance communities provide support for dance services, including administrative costs. The success of having DSEs has been shown, in cities such as New York.
6. The lack of dance service organizations in major dance centers (Philadelphia, Washington, DC and Minneapolis) has caused problems such that they are now also looking at forming their own DSEs. A national meeting just took place in Washington, DC to address this problem.
7. A DSE would serve a vital role in advocacy, with municipal leaders, press, and beyond.
8. A DSE would provide an important hub and identity for the field. It would serve as a liaison and coordinator among dance leadership in the city.
9. A DSE can respond to and address specific issues and come up with solutions. It can problem solve for the community as whole.
10. A DSE is economical. In providing consolidated services such as a website, audience development, and fundraising information, it would save time and administrative energy for a large number of artists.
11. A DSE would build national connections for Chicago’s dance community and eventually could encourage touring and other support.
12. CCT has played a major role through its Dance Initiative, but their support for dance cannot continue at the same level.

8. Timeline

A timeline of three years is recommended to transition to a DSE. The timeline would allow for a transition to paid staff, which would be supported by the Advisory. The timeline must take into account that up until this time the Dance Initiative has been largely supported by the pro bono and financial support of the Trust, an independent consultant who lives elsewhere, and the volunteer time of the Advisory.

Conclusion

These steps outlined in this summary should position Chicago to create a Dance Services Entity, which could have a tremendous impact on the dance field in the city. Moving forward would help the Chicago Community Trust and the Advisory Committee capitalize on the enormous investment they have made in the Dance Initiative over the past four years. Committing to funding and hiring qualified staff will save time and money over long run and help ensure the success of the DSE. The consultant would like to acknowledge the talents and insight of the three project directors, who led this process: Ginger Farley, Julia Rhoads, and Eduardo Vilaro. In addition, the Advisory has played a critical role and has been a model of collaboration; the spirit of sincerity around the table has been heartening. The artists and staff of local services organizations interviewed for this study are thoughtful and energetic, and will be a major asset in moving forward. Finally, the leadership and commitment of the Chicago Community Trust has been exceptional. It has been a pleasure to work with Chicago’s dance leaders and artists.

Dance Advisory Committee Members

Brenda Hull, Chicago Community Trust
Sarah Solotaroff, Chicago Community Trust
Bonnie Brooks, Dance Center of Columbia College
CJ Mitchell, Links Hall
Asimina Chremos, Links Hall
Ginger Farley, Independent Artist
Joan Grey, Muntu Dance Theatre
Gail Kalver, Hubbard Street Dance Company
Anna Paskevaska, Chicago Academy of the Arts
Julia Rhoads, Lucky Plush Productions
John Schmidt, Dance Chicago
Fred Solari, Dance Chicago
Peter Taub, Museum of Contemporary Art
Jon Teeuwissen, Joffrey Ballet of Chicago
Eduardo Vilaro, Luna Negra Dance Theater

About the Author

Suzanne Callahan, CFRE, founded Callahan Consulting for the Arts in 1996, to help artists, arts organizations and funders realize their vision through services that include strategic planning, resource development, program evaluation, and philanthropic counsel. Among the company's clients served nationally are Dance Theater Workshop, Danspace Project, Urban Bush Women, The Pew Charitable Trusts, and the Washington Performing Arts Society. The firm has advised the *Chicago Community Trust's Dance Initiative* (2001 to 2005), which was designed to enhance its dance community in the areas of creation, audience development, and education. Callahan Consulting designed, and now manages and evaluates, *Dance/USA's National College Choreography Initiative* (2000 to present), a successful funding program that supports collaborations between guest artists, colleges and communities across the country. Callahan served as Senior Specialist for the Dance Program at the National Endowment for the Arts for nine years, where she was responsible for several annual funding programs and providing technical assistance to artists and arts organizations. A Certified Fund Raising Executive based in Washington, DC, she has spoken and published for many national and local arts organizations and funders including Dance/USA, the National Performance Network, the Association of Performing Arts Presenters, The Rockefeller Foundation, Washington Regional Association of Grantmakers and the Association Foundation Group. Just published by the Association of Performing Arts Presenters, Callahan's new book *Singing Our Praises* highlights how artists and arts organizations can use evaluation to learn about their success; it features the Chicago Dancemaker's Forum, a project of the Museum of Contemporary Art. A former dancer and dance teacher, Callahan holds a Master's Degree in Dance Education from George Washington University, a Certificate in Fundraising from George Washington University, and a Bachelor's Degree in Social Policy from Northwestern University. She completed post-graduate study in program evaluation and research methods at George Washington University.