Proposal Cover Sheet

**Proposal Submitted by:**

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| Name of Agency | Dancers’ Group |
| Contact Person – Name and Title | Wayne Hazzard, Executive Director |
| Address | 44 Gough Street, Suite 201 San Francisco, CA 94103 |
| Phone (with extension, if applicable) | 415-902-9181 |
| Fax | 415-920-9173 |
| E-mail | wayne@dancersgroup.org |
| Website | www.dancersgroup.org |
| Name of Executive Director (print) | Wayne Hazzard |

Project Title: Dancers’ Group Presents and Bay Area Dance Week

Brief Description: To support Dancers’ Group Presents, which includes the Rotunda Dance Series, ONSITE, and the Dance Discourse Project; and for the annual Bay Area Dance Week festival.

Project Budget: $269,500 Agency Budget: $1,217,500

**Request from Walter and Elise Haas Fund:** Amount: $20,000 # of Months: 12

***Proposal Summary***

Dancers’ Group is requesting $20,000 in support from the Walter and Elise Haas Fund for Dancers’ Group Presents, which includes the Rotunda Dance Series, ONSITE, and the Dance Discourse Project series; and for the annual region-wide Bay Area Dance Week festival. Combined, these admission-free programs offer multiple entry points for diverse audiences of both first-time dance viewers and long-time dance patrons, through a wide variety of free performances, participatory activities and discussion forums. Focused on highlighting the wide range of forms and styles within the country’s second largest and arguably most diverse dance community, Dancers’ Group’s project will support the growth and development of dance artists in the region. The opportunities that these programs will provide to both artists and audiences are central to Dancers’ Group’s commitment to promoting dance as a means of celebrating the region’s diversity and engaging new audiences.

***Applicant Organization***

Dancers’ Group (DG) is the primary dance service organization of the San Francisco Bay Area (SFBA), home to one of the largest and most diverse dance communities in the U.S. DG’s mission is to promote the visibility and viability of dance, and it serves SFBA artists, the dance community, and its audiences. The organization’s primary focus is on programs and services tailored to the needs of small and mid-size dance companies and individual artists.

Recognized as a national model in the field of dance, DG has roots that are broad and deep within the Bay Area dance community. Begun in 1982 as a small collective of dance choreographers in need of studio space, DG has always been, first and foremost, an artist-centric organization closely connected to its constituents, with programs, services and advocacy work developed specifically to address the needs of the dance community. Through a network of partnerships that have given it access to artists working across the broad spectrum of styles, forms, cultures, and practices in the Bay Area, DG has built programs and services designed to fulfill the wide-ranging needs of the region’s diverse dance community. In 1983, it began developing a menu of presenting programs that now are a central part of its operations and reach an audience of more than 30,000 per year.

Dancers’ Group’s major accomplishments over the past 30 years include:

* A first decade as a school and presenting organization, during which it presented master artists and showcased Bay Area choreographers;
* The preservation of essential services, by assuming responsibility for vital programs when Dance Bay Area dissolved in 1992;
* The initiation and development of major ongoing Bay Area dance programs such as CA$H grants (in partnership with Theater Bay Area);
* The commissioning and production of major new works through ONSITE;
* Recognition on a local, regional, and national level for its work, through such honors as two Isadora Duncan (IZZIE) Awards (for Special Achievement in 1997 and for Sustained Achievement in 2000 for Executive Director Wayne Hazzard);
* Inclusion in Philanthropedia’s Expert Fund in both 2012 and 2013, a distinction awarded to top non-profits deemed by a national group of experts to have a high impact in their region;
* The selection as one of two new administrators in the country for Dance/USA’s New Stages for Dance funding; and
* Leadership of the California Dance Network for the past 12 years.

DG’s current programs include **Dancers’ Group Presents**, which comprises the*Rotunda Dance Series* at San Francisco’s City Hall; *ONSITE*, which commissions major site-specific work; and *Dance Discourse Project*, a series of forums on dance; **In Dance**, a 12 to 16 page, monthly, color print publication with a calendar listing of upcoming performances, articles on dance, and job listings and other career development information; **Fiscal Sponsorship**, which provides ongoing advice, guidance, information, and access to philanthropic support to 120 local dance projects and is one of the largest in the nation exclusively serving the dance field; **Funding Opportunities**, which include the re-granting programs CA$H, Lighting Artists in Dance Award, New Stages for Dance, and the Parachute Fund; **Professional Development**, which includes workshops and internships; **Membership Services**, which keeps the community informed through a menu of e-communications, websites and access to resources; **Bay Area Dance Week,** an annual 10-day, region-wide festival of more than 600 free events by 200 local dance artists and organizations; and **Advocacy** on behalf of the dance community at the local, stage and national level.

***Statement of Need***

The Bay Area is a haven for new choreographers, ethnic dance practitioners, and small companies, as well as for countless veteran dance artists. The vitality of these artists is critical to the growth of Bay Area dance, but many of them lack the basic organizational infrastructure needed to support the development of new work and sustain their creative output. DG’s services provide a safety net to less-established artists and dance companies, including artists who are working in culturally specific or non-traditional dance forms and have limited access to infrastructure services and philanthropic support, which DG is able to provide through its free presenting programs, as well as through its re-granting; its fiscal sponsorship services; the administrative expertise, artistic guidance and technical support of its staff; and a network of colleagues and advisors.

Another need that DG addresses is that of ensuring that the work of the artists it serves reaches a wide audience, so that Bay Area residents have access to the full spectrum of dance in the region, regardless of their income level, their prior experience as dance viewers, and their ethnic or cultural orientation. DG presents a range of professionally produced, admission-free public programming that features diverse artists performing in non-traditional spaces at non-traditional times, in formats that are inviting to first-time dance viewers and by artists who reflect the region’s ethnic, cultural, and racial diversity.   
  
DG’s admission-free presenting programs also address the need for entry-level engagement activities that are appropriate for those who are new to dance; that build connections between artist and audience member, across boundaries of race, ethnicity, and culture; and that work to develop a more diverse and engaged audience for dance in the region.

***Program Goals and Objectives***

DG’s overarching goal is to ensure that audiences in the region have access to voices outside of the mainstream culture, so that dance truly represents and remains relevant to Bay Area residents, and that artists working in a wide range of dance forms, styles, and ethnic and cultural forms have the support they need to create new work and add their artistic voices to the region’s cultural dialogue. Specific objectives of the project are as follows:

**Objective #1** – Provide a diverse group of dance artists with ongoing access to opportunities that help them gain greater visibility, develop audiences, create new work, build organizational infrastructure and financial support, and network with and learn from professional arts administrators and their peers.

***Resulting Changes****:*

The work of dance artists in the region is influenced by exposure to their peers’ distinctly different styles or forms, and hybrid forms and cross-pollination of forms reflect a dance community that embraces diversity as a way to innovate and respond to the world around them through their art.

Artists advance and refine their artistic vision, articulating a unique artistic viewpoint that is powerful, clear, and compelling.

The Bay Area dance community strengthens its reputation for artistic excellence, diversity, and innovation.

**Objective #2** – Provide Bay Area audiences of all ages and at all income levels with access to free dance performances and other engagement activities (classes, lecture-demonstrations, participatory dance events, and so on) throughout the year, held in a variety of conventional and non-conventional venues, that encompass the full spectrum of dance forms in the region, from culturally specific to contemporary to classical ballet to fire dance to queer dance and others.

***Resulting Changes****:*

Audiences in the region will deepen their appreciation and understanding of dance and value it more highly as a source of cultural expression.

Barriers between audiences and artists will become more porous, and audiences will feel more connected to communities different than their own after seeing dance that touches them emotionally, aesthetically, and kinesthetically.

***Steps To Be Taken –***

* Commission new work;
* Present Rotunda Dance Series and ONSITE, featuring performances by Bay Area artists;
* Present Bay Area Dance Week festival;
* Present Dance Discourse Project forums;
* Publish *In Dance*;
* Fiscally sponsor 120 projects;
* Administer four re-granting programs; and,
* Promote dance via DG’s website, which includes a community calendar that annually promotes 500 unique dance productions; site will be re-designed and launched Feb 2013.

***Program Description and Workplan***

Over the course of the grant period, Dancers’ Group will produce a range of free public performances under the auspices of its presenting program, Dancers’ Group Presents. These will include its two major presenting series, the Rotunda Dance Series and ONSITE, as well as its Dance Discourse Project series presented in collaboration with CounterPULSE. In addition, Dancers’ Group will produce the annual region-wide extravaganza of dance known as Bay Area Dance Week. This program is the Bay Area’s largest celebration of dance and is timed to coincide with National Dance Week celebrations across the country.

The Rotunda Dance Series (RDS) will consist of ten free noon-time performances throughout the year in the Rotunda of San Francisco’s City Hall. Curated in partnership with World Arts West, RDS will feature artists working in culturally specific dance forms, who will be selected from the pool of applicants auditioning this month for the SF Ethnic Dance Festival, for which DG’s executive director is serving as a panelist. Contemporary dance artists will round out the series’ roster of artists during the grant period. RDS 2012 included artists such as Duniya Dance & Drum Company (traditional and innovative performance pieces from Guinea, West Africa, and Punjab, India), SoulForce Dance Company (dynamic group with its roots in the hip hop genre), Los Lupeños de San José (exploring the rich and passionate culture of México through dance), Chris Black (award-winning choreographer and restless explorer), and others.

Since its debut in 2010, the Rotunda Dance Series has provided visibility to artists working in culturally specific forms, giving them a high profile platform on which to reach audiences that include many first-time dance viewers and the general public. RDS has seen strong attendance through 2012, with a larger number of school groups and a growing number of the general public in attendance. The series has also been successful at attracting audiences from within the dance community, giving dancers the opportunity to see a wide range of dance forms outside of their own specialty. Rotunda Dance Series will run year-round, with the months of January and July off.

Dancers’ Group’s ONSITE presenting series commissions major new works from Bay Area artists, which premiere in outdoor and other non-traditional performance sites. One of a very few commissioning programs for local artists, ONSITE is unique in that it offers sustained artistic, logistical, and technical support — including a full-scale promotional and outreach campaign, production management, and artistic guidance and feedback — tailored to each choreographer’s (and project’s) specific needs. In June of 2013, DG will present the world premiere of choreographer Amara Tabor-Smith’s *He Moved Swiftly but Gently Down the Not Too Crowded Street: Ed Mock and Other True Tales of Hoodoo Magic in a City That Once Was . . . .* A site-specific dance theater exploration of the life and work of latter day Bay Area dance griot and social and political commentator Ed Mock. *He Moved Swiftly* will conjure the spirit and magic that characterized Mock’s distinctive approach during the ’70s and early ’80s, while examining deeper artistic and social questions related to memory, ancestry, place, time, and legacy. The ONSITE production will feature a cast of 15 to 20 performers and will be performed free of charge during a two-week run in sites located primarily in San Francisco’s Mission District.

During the grant period, DG will also begin development of its 2014 ONSITE commission, Sara Shelton Mann’s *Eye of Horus*. A series of site-specific solos, the new work will feature choreography created by Mann and a group of six to nine performers, plus sound, media, and light designed to interact with the performer, cityscape, and audience. The new work is conceived as both an intimate piece and a large-scale spectacle that re-envisions San Francisco as a transformative space of sound, light, and visual movement. Dancers’ Group will present *Eye of Horus* outdoors and free of charge in different city sites. The work will premiere in April 2014.

DG will present the 15th Anniversary Bay Area Dance Week (BADW) from April 26 through May 5. The 10-day festival is a true celebration of the extraordinary diversity of the region’s dance community, with more than 200 companies, individual artists, and dance organizations participating each year. It will feature more than 600 free events across the entire Bay Area region, with nearly 80 percent of them in the counties of San Francisco (39 percent) and Alameda (41 percent). BADW will have a range of events for people to actively participate in or to watch: classes, workshops, performances, lecture demonstrations, and other activities. Styles represented will include Argentine tango, classical Indian, jazz, hula, fire dance, ballet, queer, modern, Afro-Haitian, contact improvisation, and many, many more.

Conceived of as a way to honor dance in the region, BADW strives to increase the presence of dance in the region, through a full-blown marketing campaign, broad participation from all sectors of the dance community, and a series of high-profile events. The 15th anniversary festival will include the return of local dance legend Anna Halprin’s *Planetary Dance*, which last year was presented locally for the first time in an urban setting and drew more than 3,000 people. This world-famous, seminal piece has been performed by large groups of people around the world for more than 20 years.

BADW 2013 will kick off with is signature opening event, *One Dance*, in Union Square, produced in partnership with Rhythm and Motion, and Union Square Live. Intended to attract people of all ages and dance abilities to take part in the festival, generate publicity and visibility, and reflect BADW’s vision to showcase the amazing diversity of dance in the region, *One Dance* will be a five- or six-minute dance performed in unison. Designed to incorporate the many different stylistic variations of the participants, *One Dance* can be learned from an online tutorial or by attending a class at Rhythm and Motion. The closing event for BADW will also be a participatory event, Halprin’s *Planetary Dance* at Yerba Buena Gardens, which will invite people of all ages and abilities to participate in a simple circle dance, a symbol of and commitment to peace.

DG will present two different fall and spring Dance Discourse programs as part of its attempts to foster dialogue within the dance community on topics that are far reaching and wide ranging. The format for the presentations is a moderated panel discussion, with members of the dance community focusing on topics such as dance and aging, dancing in spaces designed for visual arts (for example, museums), and so on. Dance Discourse programs are artist-driven, organized by Mary Armentrout and co-produced by Dancers’ Group and CounterPULSE.

In addition to its presenting activities, Dancers’ Group will offer other forms of support to artists that serve to foster the development of new work in less direct ways. DG’s Fiscal Sponsorship Program will offer year-round administrative support and guidance to choreographers and dance organizations, along with access to funding agencies and contributors. The program — which serves choreographers, companies, and projects — sponsors grant applications, administers grant funds, and monitors expenditures to ensure they conform to funder specifications; offers consultation on writing of grants and on final reports to funders; and produces quarterly finance statements. DG will publish and widely distribute ten issues of the free, 12 to 16 page, color print periodical *In Dance*, complete with an extensive listing of performances in the region. This listing is available to the public online, as well, on DG’s newly re-designed community calendar section of its website, where artists and presenters will be able to upload photos and video to promote upcoming events (new website to be launched in February 2013). The calendar, along with in-depth articles on dance and preview articles on upcoming performances, is critical to promoting performances to the dance community and beyond and to the growth and cohesiveness of the field. Lastly, DG will offer four re-granting programs: Lighting Artists in Dance, which will award $12,000 in grants to lighting designers who are working in partnership with a choreographer or dance company toward the presentation of a public performance; CA$H grants, which distributes approximately $40,000 in support for dance artists and small companies; the Parachute Fund of small grants for members of the Bay Area dance community who are facing life-threatening illnesses; and the nationally funded New Stages for Dance, which will provide $40,000 in theater rental subsidies to Bay Area dance companies and artists.

Dancers’ Group will rely on a number of partnerships to achieve its goals during the grant period. For the Rotunda Dance Series, it will partner with World Arts West, as well as with San Francisco City Hall and Grants for the Arts. For the ONSITE production with Amara Tabor-Smith, DG’s partners will be ODC Theater and Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. Theatre Bay Area is the lead partner on the administration and evaluation of the CA$H grant program, and CounterPULSE will continue to be a partner for the Dance Discourse Project. For New Stages for Dance, DG relies on five theater partners: CounterPULSE, Dance Mission, ODC Theater, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, and Z Space. In addition, DG staff will meet to discuss best practices and new approaches and to share information and resources in regards to fiscal sponsorship services with Intersection for the Arts and CounterPULSE. Bay Area Dance Week will involve continued partnerships with Union Square Live, Rhythm & Motion, and Yerba Buena Gardens Festival. DG will use its relationships with its partners to share information about ways to provide more visibility for the full spectrum of dance made and presented here, and will provide the community with examples of different presenting models and ways to partner with each other and other communities.

***Rationale for Approach***

Taken as a whole, Dancers’ Group’s presenting activities provide multiple entry points for diverse audiences who are new to dance or are long-time dance patrons, and offer an array of services designed to directly and indirectly support the creation of new work by artists who are working in forms and styles reflective of the wide diversity of the region’s demographics. They reimagine how to provide access to live performance, taking dance out of the theater and into outdoor venues, non-traditional performance spaces, prominent civic institutions, and other spaces dictated by the artists themselves, based on the nature of their artistic exploration. By offering its public programming free of charge, the barrier of cost is eliminated, ensuring that people of all means have easy access.

DG’s most prominent presenting program, ONSITE, offers major commissioning fees to established, mid-career choreographers to realize their vision on a larger scale. The program’s approach is designed to accomplish the important goals of 1) providing major, sustained support to mature choreographers so they can take the kind of artistic risk that leads to artistic growth and development; and 2) bringing dance to audiences in a high-profile context that has the ability to engage non-traditional and first-time dance viewers through visual spectacle, connection to place, and emotional impact. Over the past five years, more than 100,000 people have attended ONSITE performances, with eight performances of the most recent ONSITE project, *Niagara Falling* by aerial choreographer/director Jo Kreiter and filmmakers David Hodge and Hi-Jin Hodge, attracting 6,000 viewers. These included not only thousands of San Francisco’s Critical Mass riders on the 20th anniversary of the ride, but residents of single-room occupancy hotels adjacent to the performance site at Seventh and Market Streets, who were the heart of *Niagara Falling* and were featured in the film that provided the backdrop for the dance.

Rotunda Dance Series shines a spotlight on the region’s ethnically specific dance artists, embedding their performances within the halls of city government in a spectacular setting open to all passing through the building. These noon-time performances reached an audience of more than 2,700 in 2012 and have become a favorite of school groups of all ages, with the December 2012 performance featuring 20 third graders in a piece inspired by the movement patterns of the solar system and concepts of home. The ethnic diversity of the programming has attracted a culturally diverse audience, and special performances have featured multiple performance groups working in dissimilar styles, helping DG cross-pollinate audiences and expose viewers to a wider range of dance forms.

With its plethora of dance events sustained over 10 days, Bay Area Dance Week is one of the dance community’s most effective means for reaching out to new and non-traditional audiences and for highlighting the region’s cross-section of dance forms and styles. The festival’s opening event was attended by 2,600 people, the closing event by 3,000, and overall attendance for the entire festival in 2012 was estimated to be 24,000. BADW requires broad participation throughout the region on the part of dance organizations, choreographers, teachers, and others in the dance field in order to be successful, with those in the dance community working together to promote a host of dance activities. Partnerships within the dance community are formed and sustained, while audiences throughout the nine-county region have multiple opportunities to engage in dance on a participatory level through classes, open rehearsals, dance discussions, and other means that provide a more deeply engaging experience, with greater impact, than passive viewing of dance.

Given the lack of administrative infrastructure for so many artists, DG’s fiscal sponsorship program and re-granting programs help ensure that the region continues to be infused with new dance ideas, forms, perspectives, and approaches that represent the full spectrum of Bay Area cultures, races, and ethnicities — something that is vital to a dynamic, creative, and healthy dance ecosystem. Fiscal sponsorship provides access to funding for the creation of new work and its presentation to audiences for artists who otherwise would not be able to support their work through philanthropic contributions, while re-granting programs are designed to address different needs, target different sectors of the community, and promote audience development through shared presentations and longer performance runs.

***Key Personnel***

DG’s five-person staff includes an executive director, program director, outreach director, financial manager, and administrative support, all of whom have extensive backgrounds in the dance field as practicing artists. Cross-trained to function optimally as a small staff overseeing a large number of programs and public performances, the staff also relies on support from a pool of 20 to 30 volunteers and three to five interns each year, in addition to the oversight and work from its nine-person board of directors. Over the past year, the board has added new members and ramped up its committee work, in particular in the areas of governance and technology, which has helped to maximize operations.

Executive director and co-founder Wayne Hazzard is an Isadora Duncan Award Winner for Sustained Achievement; a board member of the country’s most prominent dance organization, Dance/USA; co-chair of the host committee for the recent, June 2012, Dance/USA conference in San Francisco, and a leader in the service field. DG’s most recent staff member is program director Michelle Lynch, hired in August 2012. Michelle has been a fellow with San Francisco Bay Area Emerging Arts Professionals and most recently was senior development associate with the Bay Area arts fundraising firm of Quinn Associates. She holds a BA in dance and international studies from Goucher College in Baltimore and an MA in dance theatre: the body in performance from the Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance in London.

During the project period, the workplan will involve weekly staff meetings to assess program workload and efficiency; three one-day staff retreats to support analysis of core programs and services; assimilation of new board members into operations and committees; annual year-end reports on programs, with quantitative and qualitative data; and a facilitated planning process for a new strategic plan over the course of an eight to ten-month period. Professional development opportunities will be offered to staff as resources and/or time become available and will be vetted in terms of staff interest for such learning and engagement opportunities.

***Evaluation***

DG will determine its success based on whether 1) programs are serving dance artists who are representative of the dance community’s cultural, ethnic, and stylistic breadth (as determined by data on the artists in the Bay Area Dance Week, Rotunda Dance Series, ONSITE, and Dance Discourse Project, as well as in the Fiscal Sponsorship program, gathered through required surveys); 2) programs are reaching audiences of all ages, socio-economic backgrounds, and cultural and ethnic backgrounds (attendance figures and demographic data compiled from audience surveys or from staff, board, and volunteers talking to people in attendance to better understand who is in attendance); 3) access to services that support dance artists is maintained with an eye to expansion in select areas as opportunities arise; and 4) services continue to be relevant (member, sponsor, and performer feedback; community input via strategic planning process).

The executive director and program director are responsible for evaluating programs and assessing organizational progress, using a year-round data collection system that was implemented in 2010. This system tracks attendance, demographics, and new audiences served; scope and extent of media coverage; critical discourse in the media and the arts community; and artist feedback. DG’s own surveying and data collection, along with the use of SurveyMonkey, are used to gather input from participants and general audiences for its presenting, fiscal sponsorship, and other programs; Google Analytics tracks website activity; and Filemaker tracks statistics on the organization’s membership and communication services. Internal operations are evaluated at weekly staff meetings, at three half-day retreats, and through year-end staff evaluations.

Data is gathered on a regular basis for each program, especially audience numbers, and used by the program director to generate reports that provide historical data and organizational or programmatic goals for context. They are distributed to the entire staff to review, and then discussed at the next weekly meeting. These reports become the basis for an annual report to the board. The executive director also provides comprehensive monthly reports to the board, which cover membership (including fiscal sponsorship), DG Presents, staff and board, community (workshops, re-granting), development (fundraising), goodwill, and additional info.

It will be challenging to determine whether the changes (as detailed on page 3) DG anticipates as a result of its work occur. Given its broad and deep connections within many sectors of the dance community, though, DG will have many opportunities to solicit feedback from its peers about these changes, as well as review responses from audience members and the artists it presents on survey forms and via in-person conversations. DG conducts exit interviews with all ONSITE artists, and all artists on the Rotunda series are required as part of their contract to provide feedback.

In addition, as a leader in the national field for its approach to providing direct services to and commissioning and presenting dance artists, DG will continue to take part in national discussions about presenting, expanding audiences, engagement of new and non-traditional audiences, community cohesiveness, and effective ways to build community through dance. DG will disseminate any findings at local, regional, and national convenings. Its open source model will allow others to learn from its own experiences, while inviting discussions that will inform its own work in the future. The organization will also disseminate information to funders in the region with whom it has an ongoing relationship, in order to keep them informed about the needs of the dance community and the programs, services, and approaches that have been most successful.

***Finances***

Following a three-year period of substantial growth and development of its organizational budget (43 percent since 2007) and its programming, DG engaged in a comprehensive strategic-planning process in 2010 to take stock of its position. The organization’s focus since that time has been on consolidation of its new level of services and continued analysis of the effectiveness of its core services. Dancers’ Group has been remarkably successful at generating contributed support to achieve its goal to sustain its higher level of operations. This has been achieved through a combination of support from local, state, and national government agencies; multi-year and special project support from private foundations (primarily Hewlett and Irvine); and contributions from individual donors. Given its commitment to free programming, earned income accounts for a relatively small portion of operating funds (10 percent), although membership dues and advertising, professional development, and fiscal sponsorship fees do play a role in sustaining operations.

DG’s fundraising plan will focus on institutional grants, individual donations, memberships, and various earned revenue streams. DG has strong relationships with its base of institutional grantmakers, a number of whom seek out the executive director for his knowledge of the field to help refine their grantmaking policies. DG’s ED will continue to partner closely with program officers and his contacts in the community to ensure access to funding from a wide range of sources. DG has secured multi-year general operating support from the Hewlett Foundation and Irvine Foundation through 2015 and anticipates that Grants for the Arts will continue to provide consistent support each year.

DG actively pursues project support for artistic commissions, *In Dance,* and its free public presentations. It works with its long-time development consultant to create strategies for each project and develop proposals to funders such as the NEA, SF Arts Commission, and the Bernard Osher, Fleishhacker, Rainin, and Zellerbach Family Foundations, all of whom have been consistent funders over the past six years. DG has had good success generating support for its ONSITE program, through artist-centered grants from the Gerbode Foundation, Columbia Foundation, Creative Work Fund, and others, and will continue pursuing this strategy for future projects.

DG will more actively pursue funding from corporate sponsors, especially those in the mid-Market region, for the high visibility BADW festival. In addition, DG will continue to seek contributions from private sources and use its board to help leverage resources in whatever ways possible. DG will also continue its current strategic partnerships with Dance/USA, Theatre Bay Area, CounterPULSE, World Arts West, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, California Dance Network, and so on, and identify new ones, as a way to share resources and attract funding for joint programs.

***Context***

Dancers’ Group operates at the nexus of the amazingly diverse array of dance practitioners of all styles, forms, approaches, perspectives, company sizes, and stages of development in the Bay Area. Charged with responding to the needs of this large dance community, Dancers’ Group manages 18 distinct programs and services. These allow for access to resources on multiple levels so that artists at all career stages have the potential of being supported and Dancers’ Group is kept abreast of changing needs within the field, from the ground up. Its emphasis on communications, whether within the dance community itself or aimed at audiences, funders, government officials, policy makers, etc., means that it has an excellent collection of outreach tools with which to effectively advocate for the field as a whole, promote the value of dance to the general population, and support dialogue within the field in order to nurture artistic growth and development.

Its longevity and connectivity in the local dance community and its reach and influence nationally make Dancers’ Group particularly positioned to conduct its work. Although other organizations serve the dance community in the Bay Area, Dancers’ Group provides the most comprehensive set of services and programs and has the broadest reach. That said, DG actively partners with the region’s other service organizations, in order to share resources, knowledge, and best practices; run joint programs where appropriate; and maximize its effectiveness. The national profile that Dancers’ Group has also sets it apart from others specifically serving the dance community and gives it access to re-granting opportunities and participation in pilot programs and a prominent place in the national dialogue about dance. The organization serves as a role model for others around the country that are seeking to hone their own creative and distinctive approaches to presenting dance, engaging audiences deeply, and reaching a broader and more diverse audience. The essential way in which its presenting activities are informed by the work it does with artists, to make their work more visible and viable in front of the public, gives DG great credibility as a presenter in the dance community, where it is perceived as a true partner in all its artistic endeavors.

The most significant challenge that Dancers’ Group faces at this time is that of providing programming and services that meet the growing needs of the community, at a time when the organization faces its own decrease in funding from long-time supporters because of shifts in funders’ policy priorities. Reduced funding has the potential to significantly impact Dancers’ Group’s ability to maintain its current level of programming and services. At the same time, the organization knows that the community’s needs are growing, as dance companies, individual artists, and dance institutions face great uncertainty about funding and have had to cut their budgets.

In spite of these concerns, Dancers’ Group is optimistic about the future. It has valuable assets on which it can rely — an excellent staff, comprehensive strategic plan, strong partnerships, deep roots in the community, a national profile, and long-standing relationships within the philanthropic community — to help meet these challenges in the best way possible. This past summer, for example, DG was able to manage two major staff transitions and the moving of its office within the span of two months, in spite of the executive director being out of the office for a week following emergency surgery. The fact that operations were relatively unaffected is a testament to DG’s strong administrative infrastructure, its effective cross-training model, and the ability of the staff and the board to apply their creative skills to navigate change, so that programs and services relied upon by the dance community were able to continue without interruption. Furthermore, DG’s practical and comprehensive approach to problem solving allows it to look carefully at all areas of how a dance company, artist, presenter, and/or service organization can adapt to an ever-evolving world and economic climate. Dancers’ Group is confident that by assessing risk based on research findings, considering different business models, and working closely with its board of directors, it will be able to continue to operate effectively within a still-challenging economic environment, striking the right balance between its roles as a business, a non-profit, and a passionate advocate and supporter of dance.