

Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 550**Are you a 501(c)3 organization in good standing with the IRS?**

Yes

According to your 501(c)3 letter, in what town is your official office located?

Hartford

Where will your project be performed or exhibited?

Hartford

Will this activity occur after May 1, 2026 ?

Yes

Are you a recent grantee?

Yes

Enter your Report Code

320992-Roberts2022

Organization Name

The Hartford Dance Collective

Organization's IRS Tax ID #

833415925

Principal Contact Name

Jillian Cusano

Title

President

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Hartford, Connecticut 06106
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[Map It](#)

Website<https://www.thedancecollective.org/>

Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 550**Amount requested this application**

\$5,000.00

What is the organization's mission/vision statement?

The Hartford Dance Collective is a community-driven organization that empowers female leadership in dance while creating accessible, inclusive opportunities for artistic expression, connection, and community.

Describe the demographics of your audience/people served by your activities.

Hartford Dance Collective serves primarily adult movers and community members through classes, performances, and artist opportunities. Based on participation and observation, approximately 70% of those served are Hartford residents and 30% from surrounding communities. Participants are estimated to be 40–50% Black and Latinx, 40–45% White, and 5–10% multiracial/other. The majority are adults ages 18–64, across income levels.

Describe your organization's governance.

The Hartford Dance Collective is governed by a four-member, all-female Board of Directors. The Board meets officially twice per year, with strong attendance and active participation from all members. There have been no substantial changes in leadership since the organization's last application.

Ethnicity/Race + %

Female 100%

Ethnicity/Race + %

White 65%

Ethnicity/Race + %

Multiracial 35%

Ethnicity/Race + %

0

Ethnicity/Race + %

0

Ethnicity/Race + %

0

What percentage of your board makes personal financial contributions to your organization?

100%

Project Name

Hartford Dance Festival

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No

Project Description

The Hartford Dance Collective will present the 5th Annual Hartford Dance Festival on Saturday, June 6, 2026, from 11:00 AM–8:00 PM at Bushnell Park in Hartford, CT. This free, all-day outdoor event removes financial and social barriers to the arts while providing paid performance and teaching opportunities for local and regional artists.

Programming includes community movement classes, 25+ performances, and free-entry dance battles judged by professional artists. Dance styles span ballet, contemporary, jazz, tap, Afro-dance, Latin dance, hip-hop, and street styles.

The project also includes a week-long series of workshops at HDC's studio. Accessibility features include enhanced stage visibility, LED screens with live captions, ADA-accessible restrooms, and wheelchair-friendly pathways. The Festival aims to serve 2,200 attendees through broad community outreach.

Total estimated project budget

\$57,575.00

Project start/opening

06/06/2026

Project end/closing

06/06/2026

Project venue

Bushnell Park

Project town

Hartford

Admission fees, attendance, and activity details

The Hartford Dance Festival is fully free and open to the public, with no admission fees or ticketing. Estimated attendance for 2026 is 2,200 people. The one-day event on June 6, 2026, runs from 11 AM to 8 PM and includes 25+ performances, community movement classes, and free-entry dance battles, all accessible to attendees throughout the day.

How do you intend to promote/market this project?

The Hartford Dance Festival will be promoted through a multi-layered strategy combining digital, traditional, and grassroots outreach across Greater Hartford. Promotion includes social media marketing to 7,000+ followers, artist and partner cross-promotion, press outreach to local print, radio, and TV outlets, community flyers, and listings on event calendars. In 2025, this approach generated 149,000 impressions, with continued growth anticipated in 2026.

How is your organization going to use Roberts funding?

Roberts funding will support paid opportunities for local artists, the installation of a safe, professional dance floor, and expanded accessibility measures, including improved stage visibility, ADA-accessible infrastructure, and live captions displayed on LED screens to ensure an inclusive experience for artists and audiences.

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How will Roberts support be recognized?

Support from the Roberts Foundation will be publicly acknowledged before, during, and after the Hartford Dance Festival across digital, print, and on-site platforms. Recognition includes listing as a Festival supporter on the website, social media, emails, posters, and programs; logo placement and signage at Bushnell Park; verbal acknowledgment from the stage; and inclusion in post-event thank-yous, recap emails, and final reports.

What is your organization's definition of artistic excellence?

The Hartford Dance Collective defines artistic excellence not only by technical mastery, but by integrity, intention, and impact. We believe excellence emerges when artists are supported to create work that is both highly skilled and deeply meaningful, and when it is shared in environments that honor artists, audiences, and community. Excellence is reflected in choreography that has originality and clarity of vision, while also embracing diverse aesthetics, cultural traditions, and movement languages. We value work rooted in lived experience, cultural awareness, and authenticity rather than spectacle alone, and present dance across forms—from concert to street styles—without hierarchy. Equally important is how art is made and shared: fair artist compensation, professional production, thoughtful curation, and accessible presentation. For us, excellence and equity are inseparable. When artists are respected and audiences welcomed, the work becomes more resonant, inclusive, and impactful.

How does this project align with that definition, and how does it advance your mission?

The Hartford Dance Festival embodies our definition of artistic excellence by presenting work that is both artistically rigorous and grounded in community, equity, and access. The Festival curates high-quality dance across forms, highlighting technical skill, originality, and clear artistic vision while honoring multiple traditions. By elevating diverse choreographic voices in a professional production context, the Festival affirms that excellence exists across genres and communities. The Festival also reflects excellence through ethical and inclusive presentation. Artists are fairly compensated, performances are supported by professional technical production, and accessibility is central to the audience experience through free admission, ADA-accessible infrastructure, improved sightlines, and captions on LED screens. By removing barriers, the Festival expands access to world-class dance, supports local artists through paid opportunities, and strengthens Hartford's creative ecosystem.

How will your audience and the community benefit from this project?

The Hartford Dance Festival benefits the broader Hartford community by expanding access to high-quality arts experiences and supporting the local creative economy. Free admission removes financial barriers, ensuring individuals and families of all ages and backgrounds can engage with dance. Audiences experience a wide range of dance styles and cultural traditions in a welcoming outdoor setting, fostering curiosity, cultural awareness, and appreciation for creative voices. Community classes and interactive programming invite participation alongside professional artists.

The Festival also activates Bushnell Park as a shared cultural gathering space, bringing together people from across neighborhoods and lived experiences. Accessibility enhancements allow community members of varying abilities to participate fully. Beyond the audience experience, the Festival provides paid opportunities for dancers, teaching artists, technicians, media artists, and vendors.

How will this project be evaluated?

The Hartford Dance Festival will be evaluated through a combination of quantitative data, qualitative feedback, and internal reflection to assess impact. Quantitatively, we will track attendance through observational counts with a target of 2,200 attendees, and analyze digital engagement metrics and website traffic to assess promotional effectiveness and audience reach.

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Qualitatively, post-event surveys will be distributed to audience members, performers, teaching artists, vendors, and volunteers digitally. Surveys will measure audience satisfaction, accessibility, artistic quality, and overall experience, while also gathering artist feedback on production quality, compensation, and professional value.

Staff and board members will conduct post-event debriefs to review logistics, accessibility, scheduling, and production flow. Together, these methods ensure success is measured not only by attendance, but by the Festival's ability to deliver a high-quality, and accessible experience.

Cover letter

- [roberts-foundation-cover-letter.pdf](#)

Board list

- [2026-Board-List.pdf](#)

IRS 501(c)3 determination letter

- [501c3-1.pdf](#)

Financial statement

- [form990-833415925-hartford-dance-collective-2024-07-1.pdf](#)

Last year operational budget

- [25-26-Operational-Budget-990-info.pdf](#)

Current year operational budget

- [25-26-Operational-Budget-990-info1.pdf](#)

Balance sheet

- [feb-2026-balance-sheet-Sheet1.pdf](#)

Project budget

- [HDF-Budget.xlsx.pdf](#)

Does your organization produce an annual report?

No

Has your organization adopted a strategic plan?

No

Grant Report

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- [The-Hartford-Dance-Collective-Grantee-Reporting-Form.pdf](#)

Other materials?

- [artist-biographies.pdf](#)

Have you contacted the Executive Director by email or phone to discuss this proposal?

Yes

Is your cover letter signed by your senior executive? on your letterhead? with your official office address?

Yes