



FY21 Flexible Support Program

Threads Dance Project

1740 Bridgewater Rd
Golden Valley, MN 55422

Organization Fiscal Year End: 12/31/2019
Organization Annual Income: \$164,177.00
Organization Annual Expense: \$151,694.00

FS21-1-056 Rent and Programming Support

Funding for facility and rental costs for programming including community classes, outreach, and artistic endeavors.

Amount Requested: \$15,000.00
Project Start Date: 01/01/2021
Project End Date: 12/31/2021
Total Project Expenses: \$16,626.00

Group's Purpose & Background

Threads Dance Project's mission is to examine, expose, and celebrate the threads that connect us through dance. Since 2011, Threads remains committed to this mission through performance, dance education, and community initiatives. Threads has achieved a number of milestones including successful tours to Atlanta, GA, Philadelphia, PA and extended residencies at Carleton College, Macalester College, University of Iowa and University of Georgia, collaborations with Grammy-nominated a cappella group Sweet Honey in the Rock, nominations for a Sage Dance Award, recognition in American Dance Abroad's biannual publication Pitchbook, and hosting McKnight International Choreographer Salia Sanou (Burkina Faso/France) who premiered a work on the company in Fall 2017. Threads continually engages in local youth and education initiatives with afterschool workshops for low-income students, school matinee performances and other outreach activities. Threads Dance Project is steadfastly committed to expanding the dance narrative, broadening arts access, and using dance to explore our world. Threads' work focuses on human stories and experiences whilst

uplifting social justice, resulting in the work we call HUMAN JUSTICE. Threads' goals are to create community dialogue, acceptance and understanding through:

- Performances
- Arts Education
- Community Engagement and Outreach

Community

1. Our community is the Greater Twin Cities Area, comprised of the audiences that attend our performances (34% Black, 51% White, 10% Asian, 5% other), students that have participated in our programs (90% students of color at 5 schools WISE, North HS, Hazel Park Preparatory Academy, Dowling Elementary, St. Paul Conservatory for the Performing Arts et al.); our board members (40% Black, 30% White, 20% Asian, 10% Native American/American Indian) and our company members (15% Black, 15% Other, 70% White) and especially the SW Minneapolis neighborhood where our new space – Threads Dance Nexus will be located at 2213 Snelling Avenue.

2. The community is included in the leadership of our group and this project first and foremost by being an organization based in the community. Our Board of Directors, Artistic Director and Company Members represent a broad diverse swath of this community. Despite being challenged over the past ten years to consistently engage with the community, we have sustained relationships through our community events- open rehearsals, workshops, panel discussion and summer dance camp (2014, 2015). Now, we have a permanent home that can support programming consistently and regularly. This project will procure technology needed to connect virtually; enabling us to expand/sustain our community connections despite the current pandemic.

3. Based on a programming survey we conducted in 2019, our community has been especially interested in a space representative of our mission - welcoming and open to the exploration of the intersectionality of race, gender, class, age, sexuality and other components of our HUMAN JUSTICE efforts. The Dance Nexus allows us to realize the model of our mission through sustained activities. We will now be able to reach and teach our community via a grant to procure the technology for us to connect and safely provide classes and workshops.

4. For years we have tried to consistently provide community programming, but due to lack of our own space this has been challenging. We now have our own space which will be complete Fall 2020. This space will allow us to be relevant and present in our community by providing educational and community building activities regularly. In 2019 we surveyed our community to determine how we could provide additional support via our programming, this resulted designing community programming for movement and social justice events indicated via the survey. We can be responsive to community led conversations and activities in both physical and virtual spaces via offerings in our space. Procuring the technological tools to connect with our community when we cannot commune in person enables us to provide sustained programming to remain relevant for our community. We will implement programming and continually survey our community to enhance and revise our programming offerings.

Proposed Project

1. The largest challenge for Threads, is adapting our creative content and offering relevant outreach. In the past, we have rented space in Lundstrum Performing Arts and local theaters, neither of which is an option for the foreseeable future. Many schools we partner with are virtual and/or will not allow outside organizations into their buildings and shared spaces such as libraries and community centers are limiting access. Much of our outreach and performances was dictated by where and when we could find space.

2. We have the opportunity to move into a new space we're calling The Dance Nexus; a company home and studio space located in the Focus Arts building in the Seward/Longfellow neighborhood. We need to pay facilities & rental cost for the first year of operation in the space. Coverage of this cost assures we can consistently operate for our community despite the pandemic and social distancing.

3. Timeline:

January 2021- Moving into the Dance Nexus and begin paying rent and facility costs. Begin virtual and small in-person outreach and community classes.

January 2021- Begin company rehearsals both virtually and in-person.

4. Based on neighborhood surveys and conversations with nearby communities, the survey results coupled with the recent events of George Floyd's murder and the civil unrest, we are planning the following outreach:

- Youth ensemble: Youth from varying socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds will come together giving voice to their generation, developing skills as dance artists and storytellers in a focused and caring environment. This can be done virtually and in small numbers in person, in the studio space.

- Our K-12 dance and identity outreach classes: Teaching students how to use movement and dance to express their emotions, their self identity and self worth, all while creating healthier habits through exercise. Previous outreach has proven successful in providing dance education to students at Dowling Elementary, Hazel Park Preparatory Academy, WISE Charter School and North High School, reaching over 200 students, 70% receiving free/reduced lunch and at or below the poverty line.

- Free and reduced cost adult movement classes to help people reconnect with their bodies and use movement for therapy.

- Monthly "open house" gatherings, an open forum on topics such as racial tension, neighborhood revitalization, impact of art, and more.

The Focus Arts building is ADA compliant, free parking, close to public transportation, and supports community diversity; city demographics show residents 36% White, 57% Black, 15 American Indian (not Hispanic or Latino), 2.5% Asian or Pacific Islander, 2% Hispanic or Latino, 1.1% Other/multiple races; 32% households without a vehicle, 59% <200% of poverty level.

Only one mile north from the third precinct and the neighborhood directly impacted by the murder of George Floyd, Threads is determined to establish commitment and trust in the neighborhood as it moves towards restoration and healing. Threads' performance work is

rooted in HUMAN JUSTICE- exploring social topics through the lens of human stories and experiences. Threads will have the space to begin rehearsals for the work *Out of the Ashes*, as we deem fit and safe to do so. Performances may be filmed/virtual or small showings to start, but the company is focused on creating relevant and creative dance work. Threads has begun conversations with Mizna, Islamic Center of Minnesota, and the Iranian Cultural Society of Minnesota, of which a large percentage of their communities live within walking distance of the Dance Nexus. These residents and communities are interested to share their personal stories and memories of 9/11, and amplify their voices.

Impact

.1. As a Black-led organization with a diverse Board and company (31% Black, 47% White, 10% Asian, 6% Native American/American, 6% Middle Eastern/North African) we are rooted in connecting with communities we directly and indirectly identify with. In Winter 2019, Seward Redesign, Inc. approached Threads' Artistic/Executive Director about renting space in the newly formed Focus Arts building. As an organization built on celebrating the threads that connect us, everything from social distancing to civil unrest rebuked what we as an organization are working towards. These events further amplified our mission to connect and celebrate all voices and our work in HUMAN JUSTICE. With the funding landscape and current uncertainty, there are not a lot of opportunities and funding sources, support with facility and rest costs for this transitional year will enable Threads to focus more intently on the programming and physically be present for our neighbors and communities.

2. For the past 10 years, Threads has been renting rehearsal and performance space. We've adjusted rehearsal schedules and performance opportunities to accommodate other organizations and theater calendars. Our outreach has been done in schools, libraries, community centers with limitations on capacity and availability. With increasing rent on spaces, we often broke even or lost income on outreach activities, or had to significantly reduce access. The Dance Nexus' location in Minneapolis, near public transportation with rent frozen at a reduced rate for the first few years, we are able to provide sustainable outreach based on our organization's schedule, the needs of the communities we serve, and hold all activities in an accessible and consistent location. Company members will have free access to studio space for their own needs and projects while earning a living wage with more opportunities to teach classes and lead outreach activities.

3. We will continue to survey residents, businesses and fellow community organizations to determine what programming, classes, and events are desired and then determine how we as a Black-led and diverse organization with strong networking ties to other diverse groups and individuals can implement programming that serves as a vehicle for healing and conversations. For youth, we can be a safe space for them to get physical exercise, to learn skills to build confidence, self-esteem and self expression. We will be offering a hybrid format for classes and events- both in-person and virtual, so to remain as accessible as possible. As the Dance Nexus space will also be the rehearsal space of the company, being able to provide consistent rehearsals and teaching opportunities to the company means, they as employees, can continue to earn a living wage. The Dance Nexus space will be cost effective for the company, with lower

rental expenses, the company can retain general operating funds and use the additional income to employ more dancers and artists of color.

Board of Directors / Advisory Committee

Amanda Norman, President, NGE Holdings Inc.
Christine Clifford, Vice Pres , SVP Compliance & Risk Mgmt- US Bank
Tricia Kaufman, Secretary, Lawyer - Stinson LLP
W. Todd Ackerman, Treasurer, EVP - Risk Trans - US Bank
Omarra Alexander, Comm. Mem
Kenneth Charles, Chief D & I Officer - American Airlines
Marcus Buggs, Dir. Implementation Svcs - Billboard Planet
Zachary Clifton, Sr. Compliance Lead - CVS Health
Scott Kriedeman, Guest Svcs - Town Hall Station
Amanda Thor, Supply Chain Dir. - Ecolab

Amount Requested

\$15,000.00

Project Budget Expense

\$16,626 facility and rental costs (\$1,385.50/month for first 12 months of rent)

Total Project Cash Expenses

\$16,626.00

Project Income Budget

\$1,626- Carolyn Foundation general operating support
\$15,000 MRAC

Total Project Cash Income

\$16,626.00

***(Important!)* Additional Fields Required**

Please note that in the full application there are additional fields that will need to be completed and are not shown to panelists:

- Type of group
- Legislative MN House District

- Legal Status
- Type of institution
- Organization's arts discipline
- ADA Plan status
- Individuals in leadership (for help filling out this section, please download the [FS21 Organizational Leadership Worksheet](#) on the [Flexible Support grant program page](#) [<https://mrac.org/grants/flexible-support>])
- Annual participants in the organization's activities
- Project's arts discipline
- Populations benefiting from the project

Depending on your organization and/or project, you may also need to upload:

- Fiscal sponsor letter
- Property owner permission letter