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HONOREE:

CityDance DREAM

Honoree Proposal Description:

CityDance DC's award-winning DREAM program uses dance as a springboard for low-income youth in Washington, DC, to improve academic performance and increase college readiness.

DREAM's multi-year programming provides out-of-school-time dance classes and performance opportunities, mentoring, tutoring, and college counseling to DC Public School students from underserved neighborhoods.

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Organization Website:

<https://www.citydance.net>

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DREAM BOILERPLATE

CityDance seeks funding to support its award-winning DREAM program, which uses dance as a springboard for low-income youth in Washington, DC, to improve academic performance and increase college readiness. DREAM's multi-year programming provides out-of-school-time dance classes and performance opportunities, mentoring, tutoring, and college counseling to DC Public School students from underserved neighborhoods. The 3rd through 12th graders in our program live in a city - our nation's capital - where one in three high school seniors in 2014 did not graduate. DREAM's mission is to help turn that around. Our goal is for *every one of our participants* to graduate from high school.

DREAM's parent organization, CityDance, is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization recognized as an arts and education leader throughout the DC metropolitan area. Founded in 1996, its mission is to transform lives and communities through dance. Since 2005, DREAM has been taking that mission to a new and crucial population. DREAM began in 2005 with a program serving 15 students in one school in Ward 8, one of the District's poorest areas. By 2012 we were serving 120 youth at six schools, and we undertook a strategic planning initiative. As a result, DREAM is now implementing a three-year program expansion plan so we can help many more DC youth graduate high school and enter college with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed.

CityDance's DREAM philosophy is threefold:

- We believe in dance - that dance has the power to transcend barriers and transform lives
- We believe in equal access - that all youth are capable of living healthy, productive, meaningful lives, and deserve equal opportunities, supports and services, regardless of socio-economic status.
- We believe in taking care of the whole child - the physical, mental, emotional and creative.

Studies have shown that 60 percent of today's jobs require post-secondary education and that workers with a bachelor's degree earn \$36,424 more annually than workers without a high school degree. Students who do not finish high school face grim statistics: High school dropouts are more likely to live in poverty, become incarcerated, rely on welfare, and have children who themselves drop out of high school. Through our expanded DREAM program, we seek to break the dropout cycle and help youth fulfill their full potential.

Our program model (Theory of Change) is like a wheel with multiple spokes: Dance education is at the center, and it is surrounded by critical academic and family service supports. We provide a physically and emotionally safe environment, help students build positive long-term relationships, expose them to new experiences and opportunities, and set high expectations for individual responsibility. This model focuses on the well-being of the whole child because we believe that is the best way to create a successful pathway for our participants.

Our approach has been extraordinarily well-received. In May 2015, CityDance and its development team won a competitive city-wide bid to redevelop the historic Grimke School in the heart of U Street into an arts and cultural center and a permanent home for DREAM. The

DREAM Center for Dance will house a theatre, four dance studios, classrooms for academic services, office suites for family services and counseling, and DREAM administrative offices.

In October 2015, DREAM solidified a formal strategic partnership with California-based nonprofit The Wooden Floor (TWF) to implement its proven model here in DC. Dedicated to using dance to improve education and life outcomes for low-income students, TWF integrates a dance curriculum with comprehensive wrap-around services. The award-winning organization has achieved dramatic results: since 2005, 100 percent of TWF participants have graduated from high school on time and have gone on to pursue higher education - nearly three times the national average for these students' socio-economic peers. DREAM was invited by The Wooden Floor to become its first national partner, enabling us to license and adapt the TWF model.

In November 2015, the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities gave DREAM the prestigious National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award -- the nation's highest honor for after-school arts and humanities programs.

This year, CityDance began Year One of a three-year ramp-up to full implementation of The Wooden Floor model in anticipation of a Fall 2018 opening of our DREAM Center for Dance. During the course of the ramp-up CityDance will incrementally increase the number of students served through DREAM; build the capacity to deepen our engagement with students and families through increased weekly dance activities and increasingly comprehensive academic supports, college readiness, and family support services; and prepare to serve 375 youth at our new site.

In Year One of our three-year ramp up, DREAM has:

- Opened an interim site for the DREAM middle and high school program at Mount Vernon Place United Methodist Church in Northwest DC. The site offers both a formal dance studio and rooms for academic tutoring.
- Hired a part-time Academic Services Manager to manage and further develop academic service offerings.
- Initiated required tutoring for students with grade point averages of 2.5 or below.
- Instituted required data collection of student report cards.
- Formalized a training schedule with TWF to begin adoption of their programming model.
- Increased weekly dance activities with additional ballet, modern dance, and hip hop classes, as well as a monthly master class series with guest artists.
- Formalized a summer DREAM program for middle and high school participants.

In addition, we continued our core curriculum, offering activities aligned with selected youth development outcomes:

- Elementary school DREAM participants (110 youth) continued to receive free dance instruction in their local communities for 4 hours per week for 32 weeks, field trips to professional dance performances, the opportunity to perform in public, conflict resolution activities, a school-to-school pen pal program and a student-led community service project.
- Middle and high school students (50 youth) continued to receive free dance instruction for 5.5 hours each week for 32 weeks a year, master classes led by professional

dancers, tickets to performances by professional dance companies, the opportunity to perform in public, an annual field trip to New York City to take master dance classes, homework assistance, college planning support, family engagement services, and the opportunity to mentor DREAM elementary students.

A highlight of the year for all DREAM students was their annual group performance taking place during half-time at a Washington Wizards game before a crowd of thousands.

During Year Two of our three-year ramp up, we will continue to build on the supports and services established during Year One, expanding academic, college planning and family services. We will enlarge the role of our Academic Services Manager who will engage DREAM parents through academic workshops, increased college planning activities and workshops, and targeted family workshops to holistically engage and support DREAM families.

To measure the success of our DREAM programming, we will conduct yearly formal evaluations using tools developed by a professional external evaluator in 2013. The same evaluator analyzes our data annually, providing recommendations that help inform program modifications and enhancements. We will also assess DREAM based on several other scales:

- academic success measured by a student's GPA prior to and throughout DREAM;
- college readiness measured by student's SAT scores and GPA, conversations with DREAM staff, participation in college tours and college planning workshops;
- family support measured through weekly phone calls with parents, conversations with students, and parent participation in family engagement events; and
- dance skills measured through formal teacher evaluation.

Long-term success will be evaluated through a cumulative comparison of each impact area from one year to the next and by the number of DREAM students graduating from high school and entering college. Our goal is that by year three of full implementation of The Wooden Floor model, every DREAM high school senior will graduate on time and pursue higher education. As TWF's first national partner, in 2021 we will take part in the organization's ten-year longitudinal study to track the effectiveness of the program's model.

For 20 years, CityDance has pursued its vision of a thriving DC arts community where every child has access to the benefits of an arts education and where world-class dance is available to all. For the past 10 years, DREAM has played a major role in the quest to make that vision a reality. As we work implement our DREAM expansion plan, we ask NAME to support our efforts by awarding CityDance a grant of AMOUNT. With your support, DREAM can help DC's most underserved youth to realize their full potential. With your support, dreams can come true.