

PLEASE NOTE: DDCF is not accepting new applications for core support grants in 2007 or 2008. This RFP is provided for informational purposes only.



D O R I S D U K E
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

SUPPORT FOR NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS INITIATIVE

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS, June 2007

The Arts Program at the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation supports artists working in the modern dance, jazz and theatre fields, and nonprofit professional arts organizations who nurture, produce and/or present them.

In the wake of a comprehensive review of its strategies and initiatives in late 2006, the program announced a new set of strategic priorities to guide its grantmaking for the next five years. While the program will continue to focus the bulk of its grantmaking on individual artists and individual producing and/or presenting organizations, these priorities include new initiatives designed to support national organizations who play a critical role in the dance, jazz, presenting and/or theatre fields.

The Support for National Organizations Initiative offers up to four years of either general operating support to national organizations serving the dance, jazz, presenting or theatre fields; or of multi-year program support to organizations with broader missions and constituencies but who have important activities and programs impacting those same dance, jazz, presenting and theatre fields. Up to 50% of DDCF grant funds may be designated to create or amplify cash and/or capital reserves.

TIMELINE

Due Date: Applications are due no later than 5:00 p.m. ET on Friday, July 27, 2007.
Award Notification: October 31, 2007
Grant start date: Grantees may use funds to support work, beginning in the organization's FY08 and beyond; costs and activities incurred in FY07 will not be supported.

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Beginning in its first year of grantmaking in 1997-98, the Arts Program at the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation has worked with national organizations in the arts. The Foundation has supported field conversations and convenings, occasional projects or memberships, and (most significantly) re-granting programs, relying on national organizations as intermediaries. National organization grantees have been chosen specifically for a variety of strengths, including an ability to conceive and administer well-structured programs, a deep knowledge of their fields, the quality of their services, an ability to gather data, and the strength of relationships with their constituents.

At a comprehensive assessment of past arts program initiatives, a panel of outside experts commended the program for its past work, even as they challenged the foundation to expand its work, i.e. to help promote the health, not just of individual arts organizations and artists, but of the entire core discipline fields (dance, jazz, presenting and theatre). The panel specifically cited the value of national arts service organizations in this work and urged the foundation to create initiatives to support them. This Support for National Organizations initiative is a direct outgrowth of that recommendation.

ELIGIBILITY

Applications are by invitation only and are restricted to national organizations previously funded by DDCF in the past.

DESCRIPTION OF FUNDING OFFERED

This initiative offers up to four years of support to national arts organizations:

- Category A: Organizations whose entire mission and service focuses on the national dance, jazz, presenting and/or theatre fields may apply for general operating support.
- Category B: Organizations whose constituency and mission extend beyond the dance, jazz, presenting and/or theatre fields may apply for support for those programs, activities and related infrastructure costs that provide service to the dance, jazz, presenting and/or theatre fields.

Organizations may request from \$25,000-\$350,000 per year but the annual request cannot exceed 10% of the operating budget (excluding re-granting dollars) for the most recently completed fiscal year (at the time of application).

Each applicant must specify its organizational objectives for the next four years and benchmarks against which progress towards those objectives can be measured. Applicants may request up to 50% of grant funds each year for strengthening long-term infrastructural health, e.g. creating or amplifying cash or capital reserves.

REVIEW PROCESS/SELECTION CRITERIA

Completed applications are due to DDCF by 5:00 ET on July 27, 2007. All applications will be reviewed by an advisory panel composed of arts professionals, who in turn will make recommendations for funding to DDCF President Joan Spero. DDCF staff will not participate in discussions or influence the outcomes of deliberations.

Panels will consider the following general topics in their deliberations:

- Quality of programs and impact on the dance, jazz, presenting and/or theatre fields
- Quality of vision, strategic thinking and responsiveness to the larger environment
- Financial health and practices
- Strength of board, staff and governance practices
- Quality of adaptability to and use of technology in services

The panel may choose to recommend funding for successful applicants at a level lower than the requested amount. Applicants will be notified about the outcome of the selection process no later than October 31, 2007.

GRANT REQUIREMENTS

Identification of mutually agreeable benchmarks: Applicants are asked to propose specific objectives for the next four years and a range of benchmarks to measure their progress towards these goals. Final benchmarks will be agreed upon in conjunction with DDCF staff in meetings to be held in October and November 2007.

Grant Payment: Each grantee will receive funding for two years (Fiscal Years 2008 and 2009) upon execution of a grant agreement with DDCF. Payment of an additional two years of support (Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011) will be contingent upon satisfactory progress toward the mutually agreed upon goals and continued programmatic and financial organizational health.

Reporting: Grantees will submit annual reports following the close of each fiscal year, and a cumulative interim progress report documenting progress towards defined goals no later than July 1, 2009. A final report will be due upon completion of the grant and must include an assessment of the value of DDCF's funding to the organization.

Mid-Term Assessment: An advisory panel will convene in the summer of 2009 to review each grantee's progress, based on the interim report described above. Additionally, the panel will review the organization's financial and programmatic health, consider the implications of any leadership changes, and review any requested change in goals or objectives. Funding for 2010 and 2011 will be contingent on a positive review by the panel; significant panel concerns may lead us to reconsider or restructure our support.

Grantees may also be asked to participate in meetings convened by DDCF and spend one day with a site visitor assigned by DDCF per year. Additionally, grantees will participate in a programmatic assessment using external evaluators in 2010, funded by DDCF.

PROPOSAL PREPARATION

Applications must be clearly typed using a font no smaller than 12 point Times New Roman. All pages (with the exception of preprinted attachments) must be 8.5 x 11" and printed double-sided on plain white paper with three-hole punch. Do not exceed page limits indicated.

Multiple copies of various elements must be provided as indicated on the application forms: please note the instructions and provide the correct number of copies indicated. Applications submitted by fax or email will not be accepted.

Applications should be sent to: **Doris Duke Charitable Foundation**
650 Fifth Avenue- 19th Floor
New York, NY 10019
ATTN: Lillian Osei-Boateng

READING BETWEEN THE LINES

In the spirit of helping applicants understand our program more fully, we'd like to offer some "straight talk" to look beyond the application forms and articulate a bit more clearly some of the assumptions of this program.

Most of the criteria will be familiar from other grants programs. The inclusion of technology as a criterion grows out of larger discussions with service organizations. Especially for national organizations, technology affords new ways of convening members, distributing information and expanding services; additionally, websites are expanding audiences, and interactive databases are allowing members to access new information. The panel will be interested in how your organization is currently using such technology and what plans you have for the future in this regard.

As the application notes, the panel will consider five areas:

- Quality of programs and impact on the dance, jazz, presenting and/or theatre fields
- Quality of vision, future plans and rigor of thinking
- Financial health and practices
- Strength of board, staff and governance practices
- Use of technology

The first two criteria are by far the most important. Any organization who cannot demonstrate strength in current programs, a strong vision for the future, strong self-understanding and rigorous thinking will not be considered further for funding. As a result of this emphasis, we urge you to pay most careful attention to the sections of the application addressing these criteria: the Executive Director statement will in particular be a critical piece of the application and must be written personally by the leader of the organization. The Executive Director needs to speak candidly, personally and searchingly.

The remaining three criteria are designed to measure the ability of the organization to move forward. An organization must be able to demonstrate that it has the financial strength to move forward, and significant accumulated deficits (especially in the absence of a concrete plan to retire the deficit), going concern status in audits and/or disproportionate debt may be sufficient reason to reject the application.

The final two criteria will be judged, both in terms of current status and in terms of future plans. Applicants should feel free to acknowledge weaknesses in these two criteria (as requested in the Executive Director statement) and may well propose objectives and benchmarks to improve them.

We ask each organization to propose specific objectives to be achieved over the life of the grant and specific benchmarks to measure progress. In essence, we are asking, "What plans do you have to strengthen the organization? How will you know you are getting stronger? And how will we know that our money has made a difference?" We will ask the panel to review your objectives and benchmarks and may "press back" at a post-panel meeting we plan with each grantee. We may ask you to be more specific, to think a bit more rigorously, or to be more precise about your methodology in measuring progress. We do not wish to impose benchmarks on grantees: at the same time, we want to make sure that we're in accord about how we'll know whether you did indeed grow stronger and whether our funds were important to you in your work.

As you complete your applications, please bear in mind the following:

- Given the composition of the panel, “grantsmanship” and “hard sell” are discouraged. The panel will be far more interested in the quality of your thinking, the depth of your self-understanding, your ability to perceive and learn from failure and the creativity/ responsiveness in your thinking about the future than they will be in an inflated parade of accomplishments.
- Comparisons between your organization and others are strongly discouraged. Speak for what you know to be true for yourself, not for what you perceive about other organizations, their motives or their practices.
- Benchmarks for future evaluation should be specific—how will you know you are achieving success? Goals should demonstrate your own understanding of your capacity and of your energy—in a sense, they should be potentially achievable but not “slam dunk” doable. At the same time, they should stretch the organization and grow from ambition, rather than from complacency.
- In calculating a grant amount request, applicants should think about their needs and capacity. The panel will not be bound by an “all or nothing” response to a requested amount; they will be able to make recommendations to DDCF President Joan Spero for full funding, partial funding or no funding. That said, excessive requests might provoke other questions about capacity and planning ability that might reflect negatively on the organization.

Participation in this initiative will not affect the ability of a national organization to also work with DDCF as an intermediary for a national grants program. This initiative is designed to support **other** annual infrastructure and organizational needs of the organization (beyond re-granting), which is why we ask you to isolate those re-granting monies (both in income and expense) in the budget forms.

All grant programs at DDCF undergo a comprehensive assessment and review before possible renewal. Such a review of this initiative—scheduled for 2010-11—will determine whether we renew the program for 2012 and beyond. We urge organizations to think strategically about use of funds and to assume that this four-year support will not be offered again as they draw up their requests. Recognizing the destabilizing impact that changes in funder initiatives can have, we have decided to allow groups to apply for up to 50% of grant funds to create or amplify program or capital reserves.

In addition to the Support for National Organizations Initiative, the DDCF Board has also approved a Support for National Projects Fund to support a variety of national projects, including research, convenings, and audience development initiatives. Grants in that program will be for smaller amounts, will be restricted for specified project activities, and will not be renewable. We assume that organizations funded in the Support for Organizations Initiative can and will use funds as appropriate for many of these same ends and will therefore not be eligible for additional funds in the National Projects category, unless they are part (but not the lead applicant) of a consortium of organizations whose ranks extend beyond the funded National Organizations grantees.

This is clearly a new direction for DDCF, and we look forward to learning more about—and with—all applicants, as well as about the merits and flaws of this program. We wish you all the best, as always.