



DORIS DUKE  
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

**For Immediate Release**

## **Partnership Between The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and The New York Community Trust Awards \$3 Million to Performing Artists in Need**

*Funding effort reveals the degree of continuing financial hardship experienced by performing artists during the COVID-19 pandemic and provides pivotal support so they can focus on their craft*

NEW YORK, Oct. 12, 2021—A \$3 million national grantmaking effort to provide financial support to 300 performing artists impacted by COVID-19 reveals the pain faced by performers who are now 18 months into a pandemic that continues to disrupt their livelihoods and health.

Through applications for the Doris Duke Foundation Performing Artist Recovery Fund, artists painted a dire picture of their life during COVID-19. More than half of all applicants reported that they needed support to cover basic living expenses and a significant number say they have been forced to take jobs outside of their chosen profession to make ends meet.

“Making a living as a performing artist in the U.S. during the pandemic has been nearly impossible for too many—and the challenges have been especially difficult for those who are Black, Indigenous and people of color, immigrants, older adults, LGBTQ+, identify as women, or have disabilities,” said Maurine Knighton, program director for the arts for the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. “This program provides a critical lifeline to these artists—providing them with unrestricted funding to help them pay their bills, get back on their feet, and continue to create.”

The grant program, administered through a fund the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation created at [The New York Community Trust](#), aims to help performing artists in contemporary dance, jazz, and theater who are struggling to support themselves in the face of COVID-19. Three-hundred

artists are receiving awards of \$10,000, which can be used to cover living expenses, rent, health care and medical needs, debt relief, transportation, childcare, and other urgent financial needs.

The hundreds of applications received from across the nation offer a window into the struggles of working as a performing artist during a pandemic. Among the findings from the applications:

- Sixty-one percent of the artists who applied said they needed funds to cover basic living expenses, while 55 percent needed housing assistance, and 34 percent could not cover the cost of basic healthcare in the midst of a pandemic.
- Since the start of the pandemic, 83 percent of applicants lost significant income due to cancelled performances, and 35 percent lost salaried positions and are collecting unemployment benefits.
- Nearly 10 percent of applicants whose incomes were derived from careers as generative artists have been forced to take jobs outside of their professional creative fields, highlighting the need for support for individual artists to prevent the loss of talent from the sector.
- For an additional large number of professional artists—especially those who are parents, caretakers, or immuno-compromised—alternate employment was not an option, leaving them particularly vulnerable to gaps in the social safety net.

“Many performing artists are facing crushing debt, possible evictions when the moratoriums end, or serious health issues, particularly with no insurance to help,” said Kerry McCarthy, vice president for philanthropic initiatives at The New York Community Trust. “They are concerned that they will have difficulty restarting their careers and finding performance venues—and it seems there will be an ongoing need for assistance to get them back on their feet.”

This program shows the benefits of strategic philanthropic collaboration, particularly in times of crisis. A national foundation constructed a strategy for supporting the performing arts communities most deeply affected by the pandemic and then turned to a community foundation ideally situated to work with and get dollars quickly distributed to artists in need. Together, they identified the application pool, encouraged artists to apply, held informational webinars, and made sure artists got the help they needed writing or submitting their applications.

The partnership helped ensure the grants reached a diverse group of artists. Of the 300 artists who received grants, 70 percent identified as African American/Black, Arab, Asian, Hispanic/Latinx, or Native American. Less than half of the grantees identified as male, 41 percent identified as female, and 5 percent identified as transgender or gender non-conforming. Nine percent of the grantees were people with disabilities.

“This program offers a powerful example of how foundations can work together to help address the urgent needs facing the communities that have been most adversely impacted by COVID-19,” McCarthy said. “As a community foundation, The Trust can serve as a partner to private,

family, and corporate foundations that are looking to carry out their vision and deploy their funding in targeted ways.”

### **About the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation**

The mission of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation (DDCF) is to improve the quality of people's lives through grants supporting the performing arts, environmental conservation, medical research and child well-being, and through preservation of the cultural and environmental legacy of Doris Duke’s properties. The foundation’s mission, grantmaking programs, museums and centers are guided by Doris Duke’s will and operated through five related philanthropies: the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art, the Duke Farms Foundation and the Doris Duke Management Foundation. Together, the Doris Duke philanthropies support the well-being of people and the planet for a more creative, equitable and sustainable future. The mission of DDCF’s Arts Program is to support artists with the creation and public performance of their work. The program’s holistic funding approach is grounded in equity and informed by the belief that artists add value to society and should be supported to live dignified lives while pursuing their creative expression. For more information, please visit [www.ddcf.org](http://www.ddcf.org).

### **About The New York Community Trust**

The New York Community Trust connects past, present, and future generous New Yorkers with vital nonprofits working to make a healthy, equitable, and thriving community for all. It is a public grantmaking foundation dedicated to improving the lives of residents of New York City, Westchester, and Long Island. Its Philanthropic Advising program provides customized philanthropic planning and personal service to foundations, corporations, and individual donors. For more information, visit [nycommunitytrust.org](http://nycommunitytrust.org).

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### **Contacts:**

Marty Lipp  
[mbl@nyct-cfi.org](mailto:mbl@nyct-cfi.org); (917) 774-8159

Kristin Roth-Schrefer  
[kschrefer@ddcf.org](mailto:kschrefer@ddcf.org); (212) 974-7003