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The International Association of Blacks in Dance Receives Funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Ford Foundation To Further Support the COHI | MOVE Program, Will Distribute $2.65 Million to Sixty Member Companies From 2021-24

The International Association of Blacks in Dance (IABD) is pleased to announce the receipt of grants from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Ford Foundation in further support of the Comprehensive Organizational Health Initiative | Managing Organizational Vitality and Endurance (COHI | MOVE). These grants continue relationships that began in 2017 and 2018, respectively.

“On behalf of the IABD Board of Directors, we thank the Mellon and Ford Foundations for their continued commitment to and support of our organization,” said Denise Saunders Thompson, president and CEO of IABD. “The companies who received funding were able to leverage their COHI | MOVE participation grants in trajectory-changing ways. After three years, we saw companies double their operating budgets, launch or successfully complete capital campaigns, expand their brick-and-mortar spaces, extend dancer contracts, and so much more. The renewed grants serve to expand IABD’s footprint within the Black dance community and allow for greater uplift and hope during these times of great strife.”

“COHI is a signature program for the Mellon Foundation that has resulted in enhanced understandings of financial, programmatic, and institutional opportunities and challenges for participating organizations,” said Susan Feder, program officer for Arts and Culture at The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. “These proved to be particularly valuable insights as COHI participants navigated the COVID-19 pandemic and its ensuing challenges. Through continued funding for COHI | MOVE, we hope to alleviate systemic inequities relative to a vitally important but under-resourced sector and help Black dance artists and companies to thrive.”

The $3,138,500 Mellon Foundation grant will permit distribution of $1,775,000 in MOVE grants to 30 member companies beginning in 2021. Five member companies, recognized as the INFLUENCERS Cohort, will each receive $150,000 over the next three years, while the remaining 25 companies, recognized as the COLLECTIVE Cohort, will receive more than $40,000 per company over the next three years.

In partnership with the Nonprofit Finance Fund, IABD will offer access to financial coaching so that companies may receive strategic feedback and guidance as they seek to apply the learnings to their organizations. IABD will also underwrite access to discrete consulting engagements over the course of the three-year period.

Through the Ford Foundation, IABD will facilitate broadened access to the COHI | MOVE program resources through the launch of an extension called Building Up: Integrated Learning and Development (BUILD) and distribute $375,000 to a cohort of 25 additional member companies. The BUILD cohort will have access to the financial and organizational health resources developed during the 2018-2021 COHI | MOVE program. From 2021-2024, the BUILD cohort will engage in virtual and in-person convenings designed to address critical issues and industry-wide concerns; have opportunities for continued professional development, networking opportunities and peer-to-peer engagement; and gain access to vital resources including emergency preparedness planning, emergency relief funding, and fiscal sponsorship. Participating companies will receive $15,000 each over a three-year period.

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Ford Foundation funding will also permit distribution of $100,000 towards the continuation of support to each of IABD’s founding member companies: Cleo Parker Robinson Dance (Denver, CO); Dallas Black Dance Theatre (Dallas, TX); Dayton Contemporary Dance Company (Dayton, OH); Lula Washington Dance Theatre (Los Angeles, CA); and PHILADANCO! The Philadelphia Dance Company (Philadelphia, PA).

“Ford Foundation recognizes IABD’s contributions to the Black dance community and the history, beauty, and excellence of the companies and artists the organization was founded to elevate,” said Lane Harwell, program officer, Creativity and Free Expression at the Ford Foundation. “We are proud to invest in its activities and members at this moment of challenge and transformation for the performing arts field and help confront systemic inequality in the distribution of resources to Black dance. We hope this investment will draw attention and resources to IABD and the Black dance community.”

The application and selection phase for the COHI | MOVE 2021-2024 COLLECTIVE Cohort is slated to launch on April 26. Applications for the BUILD Cohort are set to follow later this summer. For more information about COHI | MOVE, visit iabdassociation.org/page/cohimoveoverview.

About The International Association of Blacks in Dance
For 30 years, The International Association of Blacks in Dance (IABD) has preserved and promoted dance by people of African ancestry or origin and has assisted and increased opportunities for artists in advocacy, audience development, education, funding, networking, performance, philosophical dialogue, and touring. IABD serves a diverse, national and international membership of agents and managers, dance companies and studios, educators and educational institutions, individual artists, researchers, and supporters of the Dance field.

About The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation is the nation’s largest supporter of the arts and humanities. Since 1969, the Foundation has been guided by its core belief that the humanities and arts are essential to human understanding. The Foundation believes that the arts and humanities are where we express our complex humanity, and that everyone deserves the beauty, transcendence, and freedom that can be found there. Through our grants, we seek to build just communities enriched by meaning and empowered by critical thinking, where ideas and imagination can thrive.

About the Ford Foundation
The Ford Foundation is an independent, nonprofit grant-making organization. For more than 80 years it has worked with courageous people on the frontlines of social change worldwide, guided by its mission to strengthen democratic values, reduce poverty and injustice, promote international cooperation, and advance human achievement. With headquarters in New York, the foundation has offices in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.

About Nonprofit Finance Fund (NFF):
Nonprofit Finance Fund advances missions and social progress in underserved communities through financing, consulting, partnerships, and knowledge-sharing that empower leaders, organizations, and ideas. A leading Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), NFF currently manages over $310 million. Since 1980, we have provided almost $700 million in financing and access to additional capital in support of over $2.3 billion in projects for thousands of organizations nationwide. NFF is headquartered in New York City and serves clients from five offices across the country. For more information on NFF visit nff.org.

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