

Alabama Dance Council Strategic Plan 2022-2026

Executive Summary

DRAFT 4-4-22



The Alabama Dance Council is inspired by what dance can do: move people and ideas, build awareness of culture and community, connect our state to itself in ways we may never have imagined before. We believe that all roads that lead to dance have value, that movement holds the potential for change, and change holds the potential for movement. We want everyone to experience the joy, challenge, and exhilaration of dance. In short: #DanceTheTruth

We have crafted a strategic plan for the next five years that is fueled by this inspiration, and powered by our determination to become more equitable in our practices and more anti-racist in our ethos. In addition to securing the future of ADC as an organization, this plan is focused on changing our assumptions about dance – what it is, who does it, where it happens, and why it matters.

We have identified a long-range vision for the Alabama Dance Council, and for the dance field in our region. We believe that if we do our work well and thoroughly, in the future we will all see that:

Alabama uses dance to transform the human experience and our connections with one another.

To reach that vision, we have identified an ambitious aim for the period covered by this plan:

Building the visibility of dance in Alabama and broadening who gets to do it by valuing multiple truths and forms.

This aim is powered by the **values** we hold as an organization, which were articulated during this planning process:

Equity

- We embody multicultural, equitable practices and embrace diverse voices in order to make dance a more just art form

Community

- We are creating a sense of community that breaks isolation and builds belonging

Connection

- We inspire, embolden and cultivate the making, teaching, experiencing and sharing of dance in Alabama, with courage and commitment
- We are dismantling hierarchies and addressing inequities through inclusive networking in order to co-create an equitable organization

Integrity

- We are building a culture of organizational transparency - inclusive of people, operations, programs, and services

The **mission** of ADC has shifted to reflect the organization's new priorities:

The Alabama Dance Council is a statewide network of people who are inspired to make, teach, share and experience all forms of dance as a powerful way to move toward a more just society. We believe that dance emboldens every body to connect, build community, and transform the experience of being human.

Plan Overview

This strategic plan is built around six pillars, each of which contains a set of goals, key strategies, and first-year actions for implementation. The detailed plans can be found [here](#).

Leadership Strategy: Assembling a forward-thinking, dedicated leadership team that is committed to the health of the Alabama Dance community.

Goals

- **Staffing:** A cohesive team with complementary skills
- **Board:** An engaged and active board that is results-oriented
- **Accountability:** Be transparent and accountable to the dance community
- **Representation:** More equitable representation statewide

Membership Strategy: Expanding opportunities to engage a diversified and active membership

Goals

- **Dance Census:** Complete a Dance Census to garner a comprehensive list of dance practitioners from across the state.
- **Diversify the Membership: Use Dance Census information to identify and remedy inequities in representation**

Finance Strategy: Establishing strong relationships that increase our financial resources

Goals

- **Earned Revenue:** Memberships increased by 35%
- **Program Revenue:** Mini-regional festivals
- **Contributed Revenue:** Secure 1-3 individual donors with potential for significant giving
- **New Sources:** Secure non-governmental funding

Programming Strategy: Advancing equitable and accessible programs that welcome all forms of dance

Goals

- **ADF:** Advance an equitable Alabama Dance Festival
- **Access:** Increasing accessibility to dance by reducing barriers to participation in ADC and its programs

Communications Strategy: Providing a compelling and reciprocal communications network for the Alabama Dance Community and ADC's stakeholders

Goals

- **Plan:** Create a comprehensive external communications plan that will build relationships throughout the world of Dance in Alabama
- **Engage:** Create comprehensive two-way communication between Board & Membership to produce engagement

Systems Strategy: Evolving our infrastructure to support effective operations

Goals

- **Processes:** Efficient and Cost-Effective Operations
- **Tools:** Effective Use of Technology

Priorities

As we crafted the plan, we paid special attention to what to do first. After testing our ideas with a variety of stakeholders, it became clear that two areas of focus demand to be at the top of the organizational to-do list:

- Ensuring an elegant and thoughtful leadership transition, to ensure that a new staff leader is in place and fully equipped to manage the operations of the organization
- Conducting the Alabama Dance Census, to identify all the ways that dance is being made throughout the state so that we can all connect with each other

Both of these priorities offer significant opportunities for major gifts to ensure their achievement, which is supported by new thinking about finances and fundraising.

Outcomes

This plan is designed with change in mind. As we work on it over the next five years, here are the results we expect to see:

- New staff leadership
- A stronger, more active board
- A comprehensive understanding of who makes, teaches and participates in dance in Alabama
- Building blocks for a more connected, diverse organizational membership
- Increased earned revenue from memberships and new, non-governmental, sources of contributions
- More accessible and equitable programs

- Communications that build relationships
- Stronger systems supporting sustainable operations

Organizational Snapshot

The Alabama Dance Council was founded in 1974 by Laura T. Knox of Birmingham, President; Barbara C. Miller of Huntsville, Vice-President; and Lou Wall of Tuscaloosa, Treasurer/Secretary. Over time the membership has expanded to encompass organizations of many kinds and sizes, as well as individual dance artists and patrons, located throughout the state, from the bluffs to the bays. The current (FY 2022) budget is \$338,400, supporting one full-time staff member, two part-time staffers, contract personnel and artist fees. The board of 24 members represents academic institutions, private studios, professional dance companies and individual artists. ADC is a partner organization with the Alabama State Council on the Arts, receiving significant annual support.

The major program event on the annual calendar is the Alabama Dance Festival, held in January of each year in Birmingham, encompassing at least five performances and 66 workshops. ADF includes Dance Across Birmingham, a free community celebration that offers a day of free dance classes, open to all regardless of experience. Styles range from hip-hop, belly dance, and praise dance to African dance, Latin dance and more, taught by local instructors and artistic directors of local dance companies. Featured guest companies-in-residence have included Donald Byrd/The Group, Dayton Contemporary Dance Company, North Carolina Dance Theatre, Philadanco, Rennie Harris Puremovement, River North Chicago, Bridgman|Packer Dance, Complexions Contemporary Ballet, Battleworks Dance Company, Merce Cunningham Dance Company on their Legacy Tour, Ronald K. Brown's EVIDENCE, Brazz Dance Theater, A.I.M by Kyle Abraham, Koresh Dance Company, Jessica Lang Dance, CONTRA-TIEMPO Urban Latin Dance, Ballet Memphis, Rosie Herrera Dance Theatre, Rosy Simas Danse and Wideman Davis Dance, with BODYTRAFFIC and staibdance presented in 2022 in celebration of the Festival's 25th year.

Special initiatives have allowed ADC to expand presenting partnerships across the state, bringing companies such as Wideman Davis Dance, Rosie Herrera Dance Theatre, Rosy Simas Danse, zoe | juniper creations and the uh oh trio to Birmingham, Montgomery, Atmore, Mobile, Tuscaloosa and one native nation, the Poarch Band of Creek Indians, connecting with over 3,000 audience members. ADC is proud to have been a recipient of national funding and programming support from Dance/USA's Engaging Dance Audiences project, which supported many of these presenting partnerships. ADC and Wideman Davis Dance were recently awarded a national *ArtsForward* grant by the Association of Performing Arts Professionals to premiere Wideman Davis Dance's *Migratuse Reimagined*, a walking tour of spaces that journey from enslavement to Black liberation in Selma. In 2020, ADC premiered the original work *Migratuse Ataraxia* in Harpersville at the Klein-Wallace Plantation House, in partnership with Klein Arts and Culture.

ADC offers services to its members and the broader dance community that include information resources, technical assistance, fiscal sponsorship, convenings, a portable dance floor rental program and other special initiatives, ensuring that we are building the capacity of dancers and dance organizations throughout the state.

How and Why We Planned

Recognizing that “what got us here will not get us there,” in 2019 the Alabama Dance Council began this planning process. Financial resources for this endeavor were provided in part by a grant from [SouthArts](#), supported by the [Mellon Foundation](#).

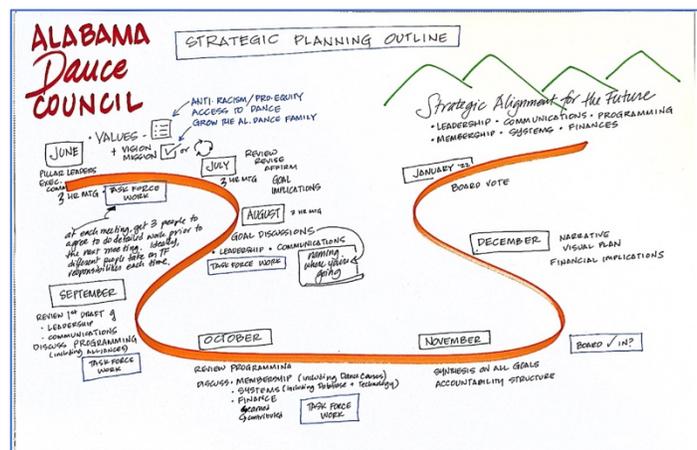
Building on our strong history and the many lessons learned – particularly in the Engaging Dance Audiences program of [Dance/USA](#) – we chose to begin our work with deeper learning for the staff and board about addressing systemic inequities in American society that find particular manifestations in the dance field.

We contracted to host a set of Dismantling Racism Learning Labs with Keryl McCord of [Equity Quotient](#) and Lisa Mount of [Artistic Logistics](#), as a pre-cursor to planning. These workshops enabled the board and staff to build a shared vocabulary about what it means to become an antiracist organization, and fueled our plans to become a more equitable organization.

The initial ideas generated during the Learning Labs were translated into planning ideas, which were tested at a virtual Town Hall meeting during the 2021 Alabama Dance Festival. The response was strong and positive, affirming our direction to become an organization for all who dance, in every form and genre. We assembled a planning team of board and dance community members, who met monthly with Keryl and Lisa. From June through November, 2021, we crafted a long-range vision, named our values and constructed actionable strategies for each of the six pillars that are named above.

A Town Hall discussion at the 2022 Alabama Dance Festival affirmed the overall direction of the plan, and participants named the ways in which they could see this plan enhancing their work.

The plan was forwarded to the board for approval in May 2022.



Financial Overview

The two priority areas identified above will have significant expense ramifications, and offer an excellent opportunity for foundation and individual support, as well as the kind of creative organizational partnerships that first brought professional staff to the ADC. Ensuring an elegant leadership transition means funding staff positions and strengthening the board's connectivity. Staffing expenses by year two of the plan are anticipated to cost \$120,000; revenue of \$55,000 has been identified as of spring 2022, and negotiations are underway for an additional \$40,000 in revenue. ADC staff are negotiating with a consultant to support technology and communications that will increase the frequency and depth of relationships among the board and staff, with an initial estimated cost of \$12,000 per year.

The Dance Census is a significant program focus for ADC during the initial part of the plan, and we are not the first to attempt this kind of counting and connection. Modeling our work on what has been done in Chicago and other cities, we are currently investigating how to support the estimated \$20,000 price tag for doing this work. We know the outcomes of the Census hold the potential for increased membership revenue in the future, and increased connection with potential individual donors throughout the state; foundation funding is a likely source for revenue to support this work. The Census is a key component of ADC's commitment to equitable practices, as it will be designed to bring a greater diversity of dance forms and business models to the forefront – a key component of valuing multiple truths and forms – as we map the real landscape of dance in Alabama.

Conclusion

"A goal should scare you a little and excite you A LOT." Joe Vitale

The goals in this plan are truly exciting, and the support expressed for them in town halls and board conversations and check-ins with members will help to motivate all who are stewards of this organization to push forward toward a brighter future.

The co-chairs of the planning process, Lawrence Jackson and Diane Litsey, offered their heartfelt thanks to all who participated in the creation of this plan, and crafted these words to sum up the process:

While this strategic plan advances us on our journey, we still have further work to do. The plan is a collaborative guide for our work, which will remain centered on being an organization that honors diversity of knowledge and perspectives that different groups bring to the organization. This ongoing commitment shapes our culture, strategy, work, management, and operating systems, and our core values and norms for success. We will make a practice of routinely evaluating our progress along the journey. Join us in the continued journey to move dance in Alabama forward.

We will #DanceTheTruth together.

PLANNING PARTICIPANTS

ADC Strategic Planning Task Force

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Other Strategic Planning Participants

(These individuals participated in the Dismantling Racism Learning Labs, seven pillars discussion groups, and/or town hall meetings)

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