



Dance Consortia North West

DCNW RESEARCH PROGRAMME

GUIDANCE NOTES

and

PROPOSAL TEMPLATE

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These guidance notes are to help you understand the DCNW Research Programme Commissions, what kind of commissions are possible and how to apply.

They will not answer every question and may not be in a format that helps you to apply. If this is the case, please contact us at DCNW@cheshiredance.org with any questions.

If you require guidance information or a copy of this guidance and proposal template in an alternative format, please contact us at the same email address. Programme updates, including deadlines, can be found at <https://danceconsortianorthwest.org/research-programme>.

Dance Consortia works for equity and equal opportunities for all people. We welcome proposals from people from every circumstance, including those who identify as deaf or disabled, or who identify as members of underrepresented communities. If you identify as such, you can choose whether to let us know in your application.

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1. ABOUT DANCE CONSORTIA NORTH WEST

Dance Consortia North West (DCNW) is a powerful consortia of dance artists, companies and venues that respond collectively to the strengths, needs and specialisms of the region's artists and organisations whilst also learning from and collaborating with the wider dance and cultural sector.

DCNW works to identify and deliver collective actions that produce change which is greater than artists and individual organisations could produce by themselves. We work together to make small changes with big impact.

The ethos of DCNW is democratic and transparent and membership is drawn from and reflects different parts of the dance ecology. Our primary task is to fulfil the NW Dance Plan which plans how the North West dance sector will grow from 2020 to 2026.

DCNW aims to:

- Grow the quality and range of dance created in, performed in and toured from the North West
- Nurture regional talent and raise artistic ambition, production and presentation
- Develop audiences, engagement and sector knowledge
- Attract regional, national and international attention for dance in the North West

2. THE DCNW RESEARCH PROGRAMME COMMISSIONS

Dance Consortia North West's two-year programme of research is to commission artists and organisations who want to re-imagine dance, be more creative and work with artists and creators from many different backgrounds and styles of dance.

The commissions will explore new ways of:

- Making work
- Engaging people
- Showcasing artists
- Generating employment in dance
- Teaching, learning and doing
- Reducing inequalities
- Bringing different all kinds of dance to all kinds of spaces

The aim is to create and share exciting dance programmes, which creates stronger dance professionals, organisations and audiences. We are seeking proposals from a rich mix of experienced and emerging artists and organisations who will propose a question or issue they will explore through dance.

The Research Programme will commission artists, companies, academics, venues and others to make work in one of three strands:

DANCE LABS: Commissions that experiment through artistic practice including choreography, performance, workshops, academic, or other relevant methodologies

PLATFORMS: Performances, scratch nights and showcases to present work and artists at formal and informal venues to engage colleagues, audiences and programmers

IMPLEMENTING CHANGE: Sharing and using research for sustainable change in practice, engagement and dance infrastructure.

Each commission will work within the project's priorities:

ADAPTING TO LIFE BEYOND COVID

Commissions will help recover lost audiences and engage with artists and audiences who are adapting to post Covid times. The commissions will develop new ways of creating and performing dance while experimenting to create the future of dance.

REDUCING INEQUALITIES

Project commissions will target communities of lower engagement, including artists and audiences from Black and Asian diasporas, from lower socio-economic backgrounds, in geographic cold spots, or those who encounter disadvantage because they are younger or older.

INCREASING RESILIENCE

Artists will discover new tools to make work and attract audiences and will be a more diverse workforce. They will explore new markets, products and practice and might address issues such as professional development, environmental sustainability, touring, employment, diversity and others.

The commissions will emerge from the dancers, creatives, teachers and organisations of the North West and the proposals will be flexible, open and accessible.

3. WHO CAN APPLY

Professional and non-professional individuals (over the ages of 18) and companies that are dancers, practitioners, venues, teachers, individuals or others that are connected with and/or working within the dance sector in the North West of England.

We want the people and organisations who make and share dance to identify the issues and opportunities that are important to them with 'research questions' that are clear and specific. You could ask them yourself or you could work with others.

We will look at the need for your question, how it meets the priorities of dance in the North West, and whether it meets our ambitions for inclusion and diversity.

4. WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH A COMMISSION?

The DCNW Research Programme is created from the needs of the North West dance sector and the commissions will be led by the sector, so the opportunities are endless. The proposal process is deliberately open and flexible and we insist that it is responsive rather than restrictive.

Most importantly, commissions should make a positive impact on the sector, experiment to resolve issues or create knowledge, and take account of the priorities of the programme.

The projects that are commissioned are likely to share certain characteristics. We expect most to be:

- An artistic development, production or presentation
- Rooted in the real world – the real world that is relevant to your practice, community or audience
- Created in partnership or collaboration where this makes a stronger project
- Set up to learn something new and also to share what is learned

As examples, commissions could look like, but not be limited to:

- creative collaborations leading to platforming works and eventual regional touring
- working with emerging or recently graduated artists
- strengthening the dance education pipeline

- experimenting with multi-disciplinary work
- increasing longevity in dance careers through multigenerational research
- exploring and adapting dance programmes to be more sustainable
- developing methods to uncover and promote artists who have not come through formal training
- experimenting with new revenue structures

They may include theatre and non-traditional theatre spaces, outdoor work, digital, small audience work, Q&A or development conversations, commissioning outside dance (e.g. health, sport, communities, with underrepresented groups, etc...).

The best ideas won't be ideas listed in this guidance. That's not a problem because your proposal can tell us what you would like to do to look at your research question.

There are certain things we are likely to avoid funding including:

- Core costs or general revenue
- Salary costs or overheads which are not directly related to the commission
- Courses of study (although shorter term professional development can be considered)
- General appeals

The commissions cannot cover costs that you have already incurred or to which you have committed. If your proposal relates to an existing project, you should show how a commission clearly expands the project to the benefit of the sector, uncovers new knowledge and/or benefits the sector by sharing the outcomes of you project.

5. EQUITY AND DIVERSITY

DCNW believes that diversity is a benefit for its members and the dance sector. Diversity is not a descriptor of our workforce or our audience, but rather the optimal situation in which to operate because a diverse environment and working practice provides choice, creativity, resilience and better artistic output.

Everyone should have the right to equal access to our work and to be free of any direct or indirect discrimination and harassment or bullying. Consortia members will provide equal opportunities and access for people regardless of race, religion, colour, age, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, neurodiversity, disability or any protected category or other aspect which makes them unique.

Equity, inclusion and diversity depends upon the right culture, actions and behaviours. To be engaged, people must feel included and valued. We will build our inclusive culture to encourage, support and celebrate the diverse voices of our artists, audiences, partners and staff. Everyone should be empowered to be their full, authentic selves.

There are several core principles which this programme supports:

- Everyone is welcome, uniqueness is powerful
- We are active about confronting discrimination
- Shared action is cumulative: we will achieve more by acting together
- Our resting point should be inclusive, fair and transparent
- We are better when all people's voices are equal to our voices
- Opening cultural spaces to everyone requires cultivating financial, social or cultural capital
- We are accountable for our actions and our inaction

6. YOUR TARGET AUDIENCES

The commissions will create new routes to engage with people and artists which can be used by NW dance companies in the future. They will build better relationships with new and existing audiences, especially those excluded because of the pandemic or with low engagement.

Successful proposals will identify target audiences and routes to engage people. This includes public and professional audiences as some may be focussed on professional practice and may have public performances.

Projects should identify their core audiences and at least one priority audiences from the Research Programme priority target list: Black, Asian or other lower engaged ethnic groups, those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, those living with disabilities, younger people, and/or older people.

Each project will define its individual targets, marketing/communications channels and messages to reach the people that the project aims to engage.

7. FINANCE

You should attach a budget that is relevant to the size of your project and proposal. Your proposal will be stronger if you show how you are seeking funding from other sources, generating income or benefiting from in-kind contributions, but these are not required from every project.

You must show that your project will pay fair rates for artists, creatives, staff and others employed.

You should demonstrate that you will be financially viable for the duration of your project and that you are able to deliver the commission. There is no fixed amount for the commissions but we expect most will be in the range of £2-4,000.

The commissions will be for the benefit of the sector and/or you and not for the direct of benefit DCNW and will be paid as a grant. You should take steps to understand the tax implications for you or your organisation.

8. HOW DOES THE PROGRAMME WORK?

You are encouraged to have early conversations about potential projects with the project manager so that we can help you develop your ideas and provide support.

Proposals are welcomed at various stages. Check the following webpage for deadlines for submitting proposals. <https://danceconsortianorthwest.org/research-programme>.

Your proposal will be considered with other eligible proposals at a commission meeting shortly after the proposal deadlines. We will inform you of the outcome of the meeting and may provide advice about next steps, which may include further refining your project.

As part of the commissioning process, agreements and terms will be prepared and signed. These will include how we will work together to market, evaluate and share your project.

Please note that we expect competition for funding to be intense and that we will receive many more applications than we are able to fund.

9. HOW WILL WE MAKE DECISIONS?

The commissions will be chosen by a panel of dance and cultural professionals with different experience, backgrounds and expertise. They will be joined from time to time by people from our sector to keep decision making focused on the sector, accountable and transparent. With transparency in mind, we are telling you what the panel will consider when awarding the commissions.

We will consider the following prompts when deciding on what proposals to commission. You should consider what you tell us about your project in relation to these questions. We will consider the size and scope of your proposal and your experience when we look at applications, so you do not have to speak to all of these questions, but if your project is strong in these areas, tell us. It will help us to make good decisions.

The quality of your idea and its potential impact will be the overriding concerns. Tell us how your proposal can improve dance.

10. SELECTION CRITERIA

YOUR RESEARCH QUESTION

- Is your research question clear and specific?
- To what extent is it needed by the sector and by you?
- How does it meet the Research Programme aims and priorities (Post COVID, diversity and inclusion, or other priorities such as sustainability, internationalism or climate change)?
- How much is your proposal led by art? What is the artistic output? Is it of high quality?

METHODOLOGY

- Who will the project engage?
- How will those people engage with the project?
- To what extent will the project reach lower engaged or priority audiences? *See section 6
- Is the project clear and targeted regarding core and priority audiences? *See section 6
- Is the methodology and plan likely to answer your research question?
- What is the plan for sharing the knowledge, learning or artistic output uncovered by the research?
- Who will gain from the project and how will it improve the sector?

DELIVERY

- Is there a strong case that the proposer's capability matches the ambition of the project? Is the proposal likely to create positive impact even if the project "fails"?
- What kind of partnership is involved? Partnership isn't required, but it can boost reach, engagement, impact, resources and the profile of the programme.
- Is the proposal proportional to the experience and capacity of the proposer and the size of the ask?
- Does the project meet the DCNW Equity, Inclusion and Diversity ambitions? *See section 5
- Is the budget rational and reasonable? Does it draw in more resources including money, time and talent?

PROGRAMME

- Will the project contribute to the programme's aims, objectives and outcomes?
- How does the project fit with the other commissions?
- Is the project enough of an experiment? What are the risks? Do the risks balance with other commissions so the Research Programme is innovative and risky enough?
- Does the project blend with other commissions to demonstrate the North West's strengths, especially working together, representation and artistic excellence?
- Are we (artists, dance in the NW, DCNW members and the selection panel) challenged and inspired by the project and/or the proposer?

11. HOW TO APPLY AND THE PROPOSAL TEMPLATE

To apply for a commission grant, you should submit a proposal using the template below. The length, detail and complexity of your proposal should be proportional to the size and complexity of your project. There are some prompts below to help you think about your answers. We'll need less information for smaller project and will want to know more about larger projects, but we want to keep the application process as compact as possible.

Research Question

What do you want to explore? What question/idea/issue do you want to look at? Why do you want to look at this? What effect will it have on NW dance and on you?

Methodology

How will you answer your research question? What will you do? Who will you work with? How will you share the knowledge, work or other outputs of your project? How will you measure the impact of your project?

Demonstrate your potential as an artist or organisation

Why are you the right artist/organisation/venue/partnership to undertake your research question? How can you demonstrate your suitability to make this work? You might want to comment on artistic or production capability, project management skills, financial factors, background or experience which will help reach priority audiences, etc... Also, tell us what impact your project will have.

Engagement and audiences

Describe your core audience.

Which priority audience/audiences will you target? How the project will reach out – consider race, age, socio-economic background, dance practice?

What support do you need to deliver this research project?

Make sure you include your contact details and CVs, if appropriate.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

You may wish to include some or all the following information with your proposal, depending on the extent of your project. If we need something else to help make a good decision and you haven't attached it, we will contact you.

- Information or links to your past work. Please be aware that we are unlikely to view all the material that is submitted, so share with us only enough to give a flavour of

your work. Include extra links or material that we can explore if we want to find out more.

- Accounts: Latest signed accounts. Also include income and expenditure figures for the last financial year if your accounts for the last completed financial year have not yet been finalised and signed.
- Annual Budgets: Current annual budget and for the year ahead if your project will span two financial years.
- Permission of the Chair, board or senior management if required to submit the proposal on behalf of your organisation.

If you prefer you may submit a video application or use another format, keeping to the same guidance regarding length and content. Please contact DCNW@cheshiredance.org to discuss how to best submit your application or to talk about other ways to make a proposal.

SUBMISSION DEADLINES:

Deadlines can be found at: www.danceconsortianorthwest.org/research-programme

If you have any further questions, please get in touch with the DCNW Partnerships Director: Paul Smith at: paul@cheshiredance.org.

Personal Information:

Dance Consortia North West is committed to protecting all personal information you provide to us. We will only use contact information you provide for administration, evaluation and research purposes to facilitate our grant making. Personal contact information will remain confidential without your agreement.

If you require guidance information or a copy of this guidance or the proposal template in an alternative format please email DCNW@cheshiredance.org.