Doris Duke Foundation: Performing Arts Technologies Lab

Request for Applications (2024)

The Performing Arts Technologies Lab is both a grant and a support system designed to expand access to and nurture new methods for creating, sharing and experiencing the performing arts. The Doris Duke Foundation (DDF) is looking for innovative ideas in jazz, contemporary dance and theater that make use of new digital tools and production methods.

Whether you are just starting to explore these ideas or have been working with emerging stage technologies and new digital tools for a long time, we're interested in your unique artistic and technical proposals. DDF welcomes all performing arts perspectives and technical approaches from individuals, partnerships and organizations.

Selected projects will proceed through a series of development phases, beginning with the articulation of a basic concept and culminating, for some proposals, in a fully funded implementation. Support will combine financial resources with technical assistance.

Participants will be expected to participate in a series of virtual and in-person meetings that will be programmed to facilitate shared learning and exchange.

Background

The history of the performing arts is also a history of technology. From theater design, lighting, rigging and sound to the integration of digital processes on stage, these innovations continually provide artists with new forms of expression and audiences with new forms of experience.

COVID-19 fundamentally accelerated the role of digital technology in the arts. In forcing the closure of in-person venues and experiences, many artists and presenting organizations developed creative ways to reconceive their craft and engage audiences from their homes. Some of these improvisations powerfully and compellingly opened new, previously unexplored pathways to reach and move audiences. In other cases, the dizzying pace of change led to unprepared or poorly implemented projects due to lack of access and resources. For some, the options for remote engagement were altogether impossible.

DDF hopes that support from the Performing Arts Technologies Lab will help to generate the conditions necessary for the fields of theater, contemporary dance and jazz to sustainably and effectively leverage the complete capabilities of digital technology in instances where it is artistically beneficial and creatively productive.

Opportunity

At the Doris Duke Foundation, we are dedicated to supporting the growth of performing artists and innovators, whether working independently, within institutions and nonprofits, or through partnerships and collaborations. We believe that advancements in digital technology and production methods can greatly enhance creativity in the performing arts and deepen audience experience.

In the realm of performing arts and technology, there are many questions to explore. Some are technical:

- What new tools are emerging in the performing arts, and how are artists using them?

- What skills and support do artists and arts professionals need to effectively use these tools?

- What kind of setup is needed to integrate new digital and production technologies with performances, whether in-person, online or in hybrid settings?

- How is digital technology changing the roles and requirements of those supporting arts production and administration?

- Are the resources needed for the integration of new production technologies in the performing arts different from traditional methods, and how can we learn from one another's experiences to enhance the creative process?

On a more fundamental level:

- What creative possibilities does emerging digital technology unlock, and what are the limitations?

- How can technology alter the dynamic between artists and their audiences, and what are the implications of such alterations?

- Does technology align with or compete with the ways in which artists pursue their work and engage with the communities that assemble around it?

- What does digital technology mean for the accessibility of performing arts for both artists and audiences?

To explore these questions, the Doris Duke Foundation is establishing the Performing Arts Technologies Lab. This initiative aims to support and nurture expansive ideas that seek to experiment with the potential of digital tools in the creation, presentation and distribution of performing arts. The lab is a space for individuals and organizations at all levels of technical expertise who seek to experiment at the intersection of technology and the performing arts.

Recognizing that emerging technologies can reshape the ways in which the performing arts are produced and presented, we welcome a broad range of approaches. This includes projects led by artists, organizations or creative partnerships, but also seeks to extend to those beyond the typical boundaries of the performing arts sector, and we encourage those who see new possibilities for technological advancements in the field to apply. DDF is eager to explore the power and potential of a diverse grantee cohort.

We will assess applications based on a few key questions:

- Does the project creatively explore how new production technologies can benefit performing artists, presenting organizations, producers or audiences?
- Does the project have the potential to challenge or expand existing presentation formats?
- Do the project's ideas and concepts hold the potential to shed light on what it takes to use technology effectively in the performing arts?

The remainder of this document includes additional detail on eligible projects and the process for submitting proposals.

Program Design

The Performing Arts Technologies Lab will consist of two phases and will include the following principal components:

- **Project Development:** A series of successive stages that will fund the development of a range of projects from feasibility and prototype to proof-of-concept.
- **Technical Assistance:** Production advising and programming intended to enable and advance project development.
- **Network:** Opportunity for peer-to-peer connection, exchange, learning and potential collaboration.

Project Development	Technical Assistance	Network
Application (spring 2024) A series of projects will be selected for inclusion in the lab. The selection will focus on projects at a conceptual stage and center on the project's artistic potential rather than questions of feasibility and implementation. Webinars and short one-on-one meetings with DDF staff and consultants will be available for potential applicants to support the application process. *Phase 1: Project Planning (summer/fall 2024)*	*(Ongoing)* - Facilitated support with ideation and design. - Technical consultation with experts. - Production support to translate concepts to presentation formats. - "Demo days" and other programs intended to foster discussion,	*(Ongoing)* - Virtual and in-person meetings to share projects and concepts. - Programs to broaden access to new trends in technology and in the performing arts. - Opportunities for networking and community-building. **Note: Some applicants whose projects are not selected for funding may still be invited to**

Phase 1 projects will receive financial support and production/technical advising to assess how projects might be implemented. At this stage, some projects are likely to begin exploring additional partners to meet technical or presentation requirements.	exploration and feedback. • Consultation on partnerships or other structural considerations to realize projects.	**join the network portion of the lab. These individuals and teams would join the network portion with support from DDF.** **Applicants that receive funding for Phase 1 project development but do not progress to Phase 2 will continue to be invited to participate in the network.**
Phase 2: Implementation (potential—2025 and beyond) DDF may select several projects for implementation, such as through an inaugural performance, launch or presentation. Funding will vary according to the scope and scale of selected projects.		

Project Requirements

The Performing Arts Technologies Lab takes an expansive view of the kinds of participants and projects eligible for funding.

Who may apply?

We welcome applications from <u>any individual, organization or partnership interested in the</u> <u>potential of technology to enhance the performing arts in the fields of jazz, contemporary dance</u> <u>and theater</u>. This includes:

- Working performing artists.
- Technologists, technicians, designers or other creative innovators.

- Producers.
- Performing arts presenting organizations or national service organizations.
- Universities.
- Research centers.
- Other entities—including commercial entities—with interest and investment in the program purpose.

What kinds of projects are eligible?

We believe creative and innovative projects could include untested ideas or those we have not imagined. We welcome a wide range of projects, with examples below. Please consider these only as sources of inspiration, rather than restrictive limitations.

- Large-scale, technologically advanced artworks in the performing arts.
- New artistic or audience experiences.
- Creative approaches to distribution, dissemination and audience engagement.
- New approaches to production, including in the recruitment, training and continued education of production staff.
- Experiments in lighting, sound, rigging and creative theater design or its implementation.
- Projects that tackle the structure of artistic production, including residencies or developmental programming.
- Projects that are about the cultural impact that digital technology and popular media have on society, that investigate or explore the social and societal implications of technologies through performance.

Applicants with limited access to technology

Access to technology and art has often been limited to those working in specific technical industries or university settings where such resources are prevalent. DDF seeks to expand access beyond these narrow contexts with the Performing Arts Technologies Lab. For this reason, we strongly encourage individuals and organizations with a vision for the role of technology in the performing arts, but who lack access to such technology, to nonetheless apply.

Application and review process

The application process is intended to welcome and inspire creative individuals and ideas. In the spirit of rapid prototyping, applicants should be bold and creative in their ideas without worrying too much about logistics and implementation at this stage.

Applying for this grant

Potential grantees will be asked to register with our online grants portal and provide answers to short-form questions totaling 1,000 to 2,000 words.

Applicants will also be asked to submit a résumé or one-page organization dossier, as well as two distinct work samples.

Applicants may submit up to five images in PDF form or up to two video samples totaling up to 5 minutes. Video samples should be included in the PDF with a link to each video and a password if required.

1. Project overview. (up to 500 words)
2. How does this project impact the performing arts field? (up to 250 words)
3. Describe a previous project that either demonstrates a new or experimental approach; that engages new digital tools or production methods; and/or that acts as a catalyst for this proposal. (up to 250 words)
4. About you: Please provide a little background on your work. (up to 150 words per person.) If you are applying as part of a group, please do not exceed 750 words in total.
5. Please provide a total cost estimate for your project, covering a 5-month period that includes ideation, research, and concept feasibility (Phase 1 of the Performing Arts Technology Lab). Do not include any expenses related to the project's implementation. In a brief explanation, describe how you arrived at your total cost. (up to 150 words)

All concepts are submitted via our online grants portal. Please reach out to us at artsRFP@dorisduke.org if you would like assistance or disability accommodations as part of the submission process. Questions will be answered within two business days.

Applicants may be interviewed prior to final grant decisions.

A review panel composed of individuals working in and around the intersection of digital technology and the performing arts will advise the foundation on project selection.

Each applicant is allowed to submit only one proposal for the Performing Arts Technologies Lab.

Please note that individuals whose projects are selected based on the selection criteria will need to have fiscal sponsorship in place before a DDF funding can be recommended.

Key Dates
March to July 2024 (all times in ET)

Program Launch	March 13
Information Webinars	March 19, 12.30-1.30 p.m.
	April 11, 1.30-2.30 p.m.
Office Hours	March 22, 3-5 p.m.
	March 29, 3-5 p.m.
	April 5, 3-5 p.m.
	April 12, 3-5 p.m.
	April 19, 3-5 p.m.
	April 26, 3-5 p.m.
Application Deadline	May 6
Phase 1 Grantees Notified	July 1
Phase 1 Convening	Aug. 8-9

*Fall 2024 to spring 2025 dates to be determined.

Questions

If you have any questions concerning this Request for Applications, please consult our Frequently Asked Questions webpage and register for our informational webinar on April 11. For more information, please watch the recording of the first webinar.

For questions by email, please use artsRFP@dorisduke.org with "2024 Phase 1 Lab – [your last name]" as the subject line. Your questions will be answered within two business days.

We also offer weekly slots to talk with a lab adviser. Due to a high volume of inquiries, the weekly slots fill up very quickly. If you cannot book a slot, please check back after the April 11 webinar when more slots will be added.

About the Doris Duke Foundation
The mission of the Doris Duke Foundation (DDF) is to build a more creative, equitable and sustainable future by investing in artists and the performing arts, environmental conservation, medical research, child well-being and greater mutual understanding among diverse communities. DDF focuses its support to the performing arts on contemporary dance, jazz and theater artists, and the organizations that nurture, present and produce them. Visit www.dorisduke.org to learn more.