OPEN CALL GUIDELINES
2023 Lab Artists Program

CHICAGO DANCE MAKERS FORUM

2022 Lab Artist, Kinnari Vora, Photo by Michelle Reidl
About the Program

The Chicago Dancemakers Forum Lab Artists Program is the most substantial source of support for individual dancemakers working in Chicago with an open call process. In 2023, four Chicago-based dancemakers will each receive a grant of $25,000 USD along with a year of tailored support to aid in their research, development, and potential presentation of new dance work.

This 20th anniversary year of the program is open to all eligible dancemakers but will prioritize artists that we recognize have historically been underrepresented in the program – Indigenous, Immigrant, Trans/Non-Binary, Parent/Caregiver, and/or Disabled Artists, or those with a creative practice that directly benefits these communities.

Past Chicago Dancemakers Forum Lab Artists are diverse in age, gender, race, local geography, and dance discipline, working in Tap, Bharatanatyam, Chicago Footwork, dance for the camera, Voguing, contemporary, modern dance, and more. Many of these artists have built national audiences and international recognition since receiving support from Chicago Dancemakers Forum and, collectively, represent the distinct character and power of dance made in Chicago.
About the Program

The Lab Artists Program is tailored to each participant and fosters growth and artistic fulfillment while also building relationships among dancemakers, presenters, audiences, and supporters. During the Lab Year (January to December 2023), the $25K grant can be spent fully at the discretion of each grantee, with funds covering rent or other living expenses, mentorship, research, collaborator fees, and other expenses that support the artist while continuing their creative practice or making new dance work. For the 2023 Lab Artists Program, the grant amount has been increased to help cover support services such as childcare, translation, personal assistant, audio description, ASL interpretation, captioning, specialized equipment, therapy, etc. throughout the Lab Year.

PROGRAM GOALS
The Lab Artist Program is designed to provide financial support that is significant enough to invest in the creative process and to minimize some of life's day-to-day stressors so that artists have the time and capacity to invest in their artistic practice with greater depth or scale. The Program also provides professional development and cohort support to help strengthen, expand, and develop long-lasting professional relationships in the field.

Long-term goals for participants:
- Dancemakers continue to make work that they want to make.
- Dancemakers stay engaged in the Chicago Dancemakers Forum network and broader dance community.
- Dancemakers understand the importance of their artistic voice.
Eligibility

Chicago Dancemakers Forum invites dancemakers (working in either improvised or choreographed forms) who identify with the following statements to apply:

- The majority of my dancemaking practice happens in the Chicago Metropolitan Area (Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, or Will County). Note: Lab Artists may be asked to travel into the city for the quarterly gatherings.
- I have developed a distinctive trajectory in my dancemaking and am ready to take my practice to the next level, making work of greater depth or scale.
- I can manage a budget of $25K to support my dancemaking and to work with collaborators in an environment of fairness, transparency, consent, and open communication.
- I am able to effectively make use of my time for artistic research, experimentation, and development.
- I have the capacity and the time to benefit from, and contribute to, an environment of artistic interchange with a cohort of Lab Artists, and I am in position to make this a priority in 2023.

Restrictions

- Lab Artists must reside in the Chicago Metropolitan Area (Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, or Will County) during the duration of the calendar year of 2023. Applicants with dual-residency will not be considered.
- Students enrolled in degree programs at the time of application are not eligible for the Lab Artists program.
- Artists previously funded through the Lab Artists Program are not eligible to apply.
- Staff/contractors who have received >$5,000 from Chicago Dancemakers Forum in the 12 months prior to application are not eligible to apply.
Application Timeline

[Notice: Significant change from past years]

June - July 2022: Optional Info Sessions

August 1, 2022 at 8pm CT: Applications Due

August/September 2022: Approximately 8-10 applicants will be selected as Finalists. Each will receive a cash stipend of $350 along with a personalized consultation session and the option of public recognition.

September/October 2022: Four names will be drawn randomly from the pool of Finalists to be the 2023 Lab Artists.

October 16, 2022: The four 2023 Lab Artists will be celebrated during the Elevate Chicago Dance festival.

January 2023: Launch of the Lab Year

2022 Lab Artist, Starinah Dixon | Photo by William Frederking
A competitive application for the Lab Artists program demonstrates the following:

- **BODY OF WORK (40%)**: Applicant provides evidence of an established body of work as a dancemaker, as demonstrated in their resume/bio and work sample(s). The submitted video(s) and optional supplemental files (such as articles, process materials, letters of recommendation, reviews) showcase the dancemaker’s strong demonstration of the use of dancemaking elements: time, space, and energy in concert with clear and distinct conceptual content. Improvised, communal, and choreographed dance forms are equally evaluated.

- **DISTINCTION (30%)**: Application demonstrates a clear artistic vision, distinctive artistic voice, and compelling area of artistic inquiry.

- **TIMING (30%)**: Artist demonstrates readiness for the program and shows that they are at an important juncture in their career and/or artistic trajectory, actively taking risks or experimenting, poised to invest in their artistic practice with greater depth or scale.
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE READY?
Applicants decide their individual readiness for this program. For Chicago Dancemakers Forum, applicant readiness is based on a self-identified point in the applicant's career/practice and could be defined in a number of ways based on dance form, career and artistic goals, and industry. All applicants should have an established body of work, a distinct voice as a dancemaker, and now be in a position to invest in their artistic practice with greater depth or scale.

Measures of readiness could include:
- 2+ years out from a dance degree program and its artistic influences
- 5+ years of participation in battles, festivals, etc.
- Successful management of 2 or more funded dance projects
- Have an active area of artistic inquiry

HOW DOES THE PRIORITIZATION WORK?
The 2023 Lab Artists Program is open to all eligible dancemakers but the selection process will prioritize artists that we recognize have historically been underrepresented in the program – Indigenous, Immigrant, Trans/Non-Binary, Parent/Caregiver, and/or Disabled Artists, or those with a creative practice that directly benefits these communities. There will be checkboxes on the application in order for artists to self-identify. Prioritized artists will receive a set number of additive points in the panel voting process, and in cases where two or more applicants receive similar scores, the prioritized artists will be selected.
WHAT IS MEANT BY "INDIVIDUAL DANCEMAKER"?
The Lab Artists Program is designed to support an individual person no matter the context in which they make dance: as an independent artist, as part of an unincorporated collective or partnership, as artistic director of a company, as a freelance commissioned choreographer, etc. We fully understand that most body-based performance is created in close, murky collaboration with multiple people. With that understanding, this program is intentionally designed to uplift individual practitioners within Chicago's dance communities. If you feel strongly that applying separately from your collective or crew would be problematic for the ecosystem of your practice, you can choose to apply as an artistic collective. However, the grant funds and programming are NOT designed to directly support the general operations of dance companies or nonprofit organizations.

HOW WILL THE RANDOM DRAW WORK?
In August/September, approximately 8-10 applicants will be selected as Finalists. Each will receive a cash stipend along with a personalized consultation session. Then in mid/late September, four names will be drawn randomly from that pool of Finalists to be the 2023 Lab Artists. The random draw will be through a computerized platform and will be witnessed by panelists and Board members to ensure integrity of the process. Finalists will be welcome to observe the drawing but we acknowledge that this experience may have an emotional toll worth consideration.
WHAT DO ARTISTS RECEIVE?

- $25,000 USD (distributed in three or more installments). These funds can be paid to an individual, business, fiscal sponsor, or non-profit organization through paper check or ACH wire transfer/direct deposit. The disbursement schedule is set by the grantee and can take public benefits into account. Chicago Dancemakers Forum staff are available to discuss options and taxation implications.
- Support in finding free or discounted rehearsal space and/or residency opportunities. Although not guaranteed for all Lab Artists, most Lab Artists receive rehearsal space support.
- Access to invitation-only events for dancemakers.
- A Retreat and Quarterly gatherings for dialogue, feedback and peer support. These may be held in-person in Chicago; if you prefer to participate virtually, please notify staff.
- A shared works-in-progress / studio critique session (if desired)
- Regular one-on-one check-ins with Staff.
- Professional/Artistic development support tailored to each individual artist
- Promotion throughout the year on ChicagoDancemakers.org, social media, monthly newsletter, and media releases.

WHO DO I CONTACT IF I NEED HELP APPLYING?

If you have questions about the Lab Artist Program, please contact Shawn Lent, Programs and Communications Director, via email at shawn@chicagodancemakers.org.
WHAT ARE LAB ARTISTS ASKED TO DO?
The Lab Artists Program is a one year commitment – January to December 2023.
- Sign a program contract and completion of Quickbooks online form including a up-to-date signed IRS W-9 form.
- Attend the 2023 Lab Artists celebration on October 16, 2022 during the Elevate Chicago Dance festival.
- Engage in an extended period of research, experimentation, and development of new dance work of greater depth or scale.
- If applicable, make plans to self-produce the new work or to collaborate with a presenting partner to premiere the dance work.
- Meet quarterly with fellow Lab Artists
- Adhere to any City of Chicago COVID-19 safety mandates and Chicago Dancemakers Forum's recommendations.
- Submit a mid-Lab reflection in June 2023.
- Report grant to the IRS during tax filing.
- Participate in program evaluation.
- Acknowledge Chicago Dancemakers Forum per the language in the program agreement.

WHO SELECTS THE LAB ARTISTS?
Voting panelists change each year. In 2023, the 8-10 Finalists will be selected by a panel composed of representatives from Chicago Dancemakers Forum staff, Board, Consortium, past Lab Artists, and/or leaders in the field, on the basis of the criteria listed above. From that pool of Finalists, four names will be drawn randomly to be the 2023 Lab Artists.
How to Apply

1. Create or update your Submittable account.
2. Prepare your application materials including resume/bio, proposed Lab Year budget, and up to 10min of work samples. In addition, you will need to address the questions below within a single written narrative (approximately 500-750 words in length), OR a video (approximately 3-4 minutes in duration).
3. Complete the online form in Submittable and upload and/or link your application materials.
4. Submit your application no later than August 1, 2022, 8PM CT. Late submissions will not be accepted; we encourage artists to apply early in case of technology hiccups or personal emergencies.

NARRATIVE QUESTIONS

- How do you describe the dance you make and/or your processes for making dance?
- How has the work you’ve done thus far impacted your development or current momentum as a dancemaker?
- What do you want to do during your 2023 Lab Year with tailored support and $25K? How will you spend your time? What do you need in order to grow, experiment, and deepen your practice as a dancemaker?

2022 Lab Artist, Fabulous Freddie Prodigy, photo by EL La Katrina
About the Organization

Chicago Dancemakers Forum catalyzes the growth and artistic fulfillment of Chicago's dancemakers by providing time and resources for in-depth exploration and creation. It builds broad support for the field of dance in Chicago by facilitating robust interaction among dancemakers and with the public.

We believe...

- Dance matters.
- Artists are the heart of a thriving society.
- Dance in Chicago merits broad recognition.
- Dancemakers need support structures that are tailored specifically to them.
- Artistic process is as valuable as artistic product.
- Advancing a multitude of voices and genres gives dance its fullest expression.
- Connectivity and collaboration are key to growth and progress.

2022 Lab Artists: Starinah Dixon, Diamond Hardiman, Marcela E Torres, Kia S. Smith, Fabulous Freddie Prodigy, and Kinnari Vora | Photo by Matt Marion