



UMEZ MERTZ GILMORE SEED FUND FOR DANCE

2023 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

As of February 19, 2023

Full Application Available Here: [Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone Applications Manager \(submittable.com\)](#)

If your question is not answered in the application guidelines or listed below, send your questions to the Cultural Investments team at culture@umez.org. You can expect a response within two (2) business days. As appropriate, UMEZ's responses to questions received will be added to this FAQ page.

APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

Q: What if I am not headquartered in Upper Manhattan?

A: To be eligible, you must be an Upper Manhattan individual dancemaker, member of a collective, or nonprofit dance organization. Upper Manhattan is defined as north of 98th Street on the east side of Fifth Avenue; and north of 110th Street on the west side. If you are based in another geographic region of New York City, we recommend you contact your borough's arts council to find out more about their programs.

Manhattan: Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (LMCC) lmcc.net

Bronx: Bronx Council for the Arts (BCA) bronxarts.org

Brooklyn: Brooklyn Arts Council (BAC) brooklynartscouncil.org

Queens: Queens Council on the Arts (QCA) queenscouncilarts.org

Staten Island: Staten Island Arts statenislandarts.org

Q: What if my organization is not strictly a dance-making organization?

A: Organizations who do not identify as dance makers, with dance making as their primary focus, are not eligible. Organizations must have a principal mission that promotes the knowledge, appreciation, practice, and/or performance of dance with a history of at least two years of local dance-making activity in the last five years. In addition, organizations must have operating budgets of \$250,000 or below for two of the last three completed fiscal years. Organizations incorporated less than three years ago with a current budget of \$250,000 or below are also eligible to apply.

Q: Is a Limited Liability Company (LLC) an eligible applicant type?

A: The Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone Development Corporation is only able to provide support to Upper Manhattan nonprofit entities that have received 501(c)(3) status directly from the IRS (Internal Revenue Service). As such, for profit entities including LLCs are ineligible for support at this time. If you are an applicant who is an Upper Manhattan resident, we do encourage you to apply as an individual dancemaker or unincorporated collective, as appropriate.

PROJECT CONSIDERATIONS

Q: What do you mean by a public-facing dance project or program?

A: The Seed Fund for Dance will support a wide range of dance events and programming that provide an opportunity for audiences to view, access, experience, and engage with the art-form. Projects may include more traditional forms of engagement, such as the opportunity to attend a dance performance, as well as more innovative forms, such as participatory or socially engaged practices. For individual artists, this may also include participating in publicized open studio events, such as the Uptown Arts Stroll open studios.

Q: Can I submit two separate proposals for two different projects?

A: No. You may only submit ONE proposal for ONE project per application cycle.

Q: Can I apply with a series of events?

A: Projects including multiple events/presentations under a single programming series may apply to the Seed Fund for Dance with the events included as a single project. This is most common with festivals or other series with a clear artistic thread and vision connecting the different events. Since Seed Fund for Dance grants are project-specific, an individual artist's entire practice or an organization's entire year's worth of multiple projects are not eligible.

Q: Can I apply for a Work in Progress showing?

A: Seed Fund for Dance grants will support projects at the stage in which they are ready to be encountered and experienced by the public. Support of work in progress showings solely for the development of new work is not available through this program.

Q: Can I apply for a project that includes an artist commission?

A: Yes, if the commission is related to the public presentation of the project. The execution of the commission and the public component must fall within the grant period. Stand-alone commissioning projects without a public component will not be considered.

Q: I plan to present my event(s) at Upper Manhattan venue(s). Do the venues need to be confirmed for me to apply?

A: No. We understand venues for 2023 may all be tentative at the time of the application deadline. Provide the most likely and intended venue in the application form. If the venue changes after you submit the application, inform the Cultural Investments team. The venue must remain in Upper Manhattan for the project to remain eligible for the program and the grant if awarded.

Q: My project events take place in many neighborhoods, including Upper Manhattan. Can I apply for support for the entire project?

A: No. You can only apply for support of the project events in Upper Manhattan. Public in-person activities must be in Upper Manhattan. Projects experienced solely online are eligible if they are designed for active, synchronous engagement of Upper Manhattan audiences. You can provide contextual information around other events in your application narrative but focus your request on the Upper Manhattan public component and make sure your Project Budget only reflects the Upper Manhattan activities.

APPLICATION FORM & SUBMITTABLE

Q: I am new to Submittable. How do I create and manage a Submittable account?

A: We recommend watching this [Quick Video Tutorial](#) for an overview of how to create an account, start your application, and manage your submissions. [Submittable's Help Articles](#) also have quick tutorials on topics such as how to sign into your Submittable account, how to download a copy of your submission, and how to change the email associated with your Submittable account. We encourage using these resources to become more comfortable with the Submittable platform.

If you run into issues with Submittable, email them using the contact form at www.submittable.com/contact.

Q: Does UMEZ have any advice on preparing an application for Submittable?

A: UMEZ encourages interested applicants to save their responses to narrative questions in an external document (e.g., Google Doc or Word document) so that you can easily populate the Submittable form by copy/paste, and so that you do not lose your work should Submittable experience an error. Within Submittable, save draft content often by scrolling to the bottom of the application form and clicking "Save Draft." Do not wait until the last minute to submit your application, as the platform could become overloaded if many applicants submit simultaneously.

Q: How can I prepare a competitive application for the Seed Fund for Dance?

UMEZ encourages applicants to make a compelling case in their applications for how the award will impact and further their artistic visions. With each element of your application, describe how the award will help you reach the next level in terms of your dance-making, your audience engagement, your visibility, your security, and the sustainability of your dance practice. As competitive projects will include clear plans to engage a specific audience, please be explicit in naming the community you intend to serve throughout your application.

REVIEW PROCESS

Q: Who makes funding decisions for the Seed Fund for Dance?

A: Recommendations for awards are made through a juried selection process designed to ensure projects are funded based on their ability to address the program's four points of criteria. UMEZ is committed to convening jurors whose expertise and backgrounds reflect the cultural and creative diversity of the applicant pool. The jury will be comprised of dancers, choreographers, and cultural workers with knowledge and familiarity of Upper Manhattan's neighborhoods and communities. The jury members will change in each cycle.

Q: How does UMEZ define artistic vision and artistic excellence?

A: UMEZ will use Animating Democracy's *Aesthetic Perspectives: Attributes of Excellence in Arts for Change* as a foundational resource for reviewers to assess artistic vision. Artistic excellence is defined by each applicant as a part of their application. For Animating Democracy's framework, visit [Aesthetics Short Take.pdf](#) (animatingdemocracy.org)

PROJECT BUDGET

Q: What kind of costs should I include in my budget?

A: Your project budget should reflect all income and expenses related to the proposed project. Project expenses may include administrative and artistic expenses related to planning, producing, and delivering the proposed public activities in-person or online. Funds can be used to support artist fees, administrative or technical personnel fees, space or equipment rental, costumes and set design, and marketing costs related to the project. The Project Budget template provides common categories and further explanation of expense categories.

Q: I want to include research in advance of executing my project. Can I pay for that research before the grant's starting date?

A: No. All project expenses must take place within the grant period.

Q: Do I have to fill out the Income section of the project budget?

A: Only if the total expenses for the project exceed \$5,000.00. It is important to present a balanced budget (income equals expenses) to show that you have a plan to secure the necessary funds to cover your project's costs.

WORK SAMPLES

Q: I am applying for a project I am still developing. What samples should I submit?

A: Well-documented samples of past, completed work that is relevant to the proposed project are often the most compelling presentation during the jury meetings. Samples can be relevant in scale, topic, dance technique, approach, or vision. Here are a few specific recommendations:

- **Projects featuring a commissioned artist:** Include a work sample from the commissioned artist.
- **New dance productions:** Include work samples of the choreographer's work or samples from the artists involved if a new collaboration.
- **Group shows or festivals:** Include work samples from the proposed artists if already selected. Include samples from past presenting projects or festivals if the artists have not yet been selected.
- **Dance workshops, trainings, arts education activities:** Include work samples from past training activities from the proposed activity leader.

If the proposed project is a significant departure from past projects or contains elements hard to understand without a visual representation, we recommend submitting work-in-progress samples alongside a sample of a past, completed work.

Q: What work samples formats can I submit?

A: You may submit either 2 video recordings or 1 video recording and 5 still images. We encourage you to choose samples of completed dance projects from within the last five years that best represent your artistic practice or project. The aim of the work sample is to bring the jury as close as possible to an actual experience of your work in dance. Do not submit edited promotional or interview materials including recordings with voice over narration or multiple dance works compiled into a single recording or image.

Q: May I submit samples that were not professionally documented?

A: Yes, though it is important that the quality of the sample be high enough so that the jury is not distracted by the documentation itself. Very pixelated or blurry samples, those with dark lighting, a shaky camera, or showing audience members leaving early are not suitable work samples.

Q: How do I submit my video samples? Can I password protect my video samples?

A: You may submit your video samples by providing links to video samples hosted on one of these external sites: YouTube.com, Vimeo.com or via cloud storage platforms including Dropbox or Google Drive. On Vimeo, you may make the recording “private.” On YouTube, you may make the recording “unlisted.” Be sure to provide any necessary passwords in the application form and keep your online samples accessible with the same password through June 30, 2023.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS?

Q: If I have more questions or would like to schedule a one-on-one meeting, who can I contact?

A: Please send all inquiries to culture@umez.org. You can expect a response to e-mail inquiries within two (2) business days. Questions will be answered in the order in which they are received.

Q: Can UMEZ review a draft of my application?

A: Due to capacity, UMEZ cannot review application drafts outside of scheduled virtual one-on-one sessions. Please send specific questions to culture@umez.org.