

**Dances For A Variable Population
Proposal to the Friends Foundation for the Aging
March 15, 2023**

I. Executive Summary

Dances For A Variable Population (DVP) requests a grant in the amount of \$30,000 towards the expansion of our Movement Speaks® dance education program for older adults.

DVP's Movement Speaks® serves a diverse population of older adults in New York City, who face a range of physical, mental, and emotional risk factors and issues, and often lack access to engaging programming. Movement Speaks® is uniquely suited to addressing multiple needs and challenges of older adults, developing physical strength, providing opportunities for creativity and learning, enhancing social networks, and celebrating achievements. Other offerings may address one aspect of these challenges, but few address all of these diverse, critical needs at once. Post-pandemic, these needs are even greater and the opportunities to respond are significant.

With Friends Foundation for the Aging support, along with other funders, we propose to expand Movement Speaks® to serve an additional 150-200 additional older adult participants at 8-10 additional sites. We will partner with existing and new older adult centers and other community partners to build this program. The program will also feature new programs that link our Movement Speaks® pedagogy, rooted in modern dance, to a number of culturally relevant dance genres, including Hip Hop, Flamenco, and Salsa. The program will culminate in public performances at each participating site, highlighting the creative accomplishments of older adults and creating joyous community gatherings.

II. Project Details

1. Amount of grant request.

Dances For A Variable Population requests a grant in the amount of \$30,000 towards the expansion of our Movement Speaks® dance education program for older adults to 8-10 additional sites.

2. Problem Addressed and Population Served

New York City's growing population of older adults face significant physical, mental and emotional risk factors and issues, including high rates of obesity, diabetes, hypertension, social isolation, and depression; and low rates of more than moderate exercise. These challenges are even more extreme among low-income senior populations (23% of New Yorkers live at or near the poverty line), which have higher rates of obesity, hypertension, and diabetes. (NYC DOHMH Community Health Survey and Brookdale Health Indicators Project referenced in NYC Senior Centers, Visioning the Future, New York Academy of Medicine 2010) Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, loneliness was at epidemic levels affecting 60-80% of the population, decreasing life span by 26%, and COVID has only increased isolation.

Dances For A Variable Population's programs serve older adults in Manhattan, Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Queens. Our participants are 95% female; majority low-income; all fixed-income; and 80% of limited mobility. We estimate that our participants and audience are 40% African-American, 25% Latino, 25% White, and 10% Asian-American.

3. Proposed Solution

Dances For A Variable Population's solution to the challenges outlined above is our Movement Speaks® program. Older adults need programming that will develop physical strength, provide opportunities for

creativity and learning, enhance social networks, and celebrate achievements. Current offerings may address one aspect of these needs (e.g. exercise programs promote fitness, shared meals provide social interaction, visual art programs may offer experiences of mastery), but few programs address all of these diverse, critical needs at once, as Movement Speaks® does.

Movement Speaks® is distinctive as a sequential weekly year-round dance instruction that focuses on the creation and performance of original dances. The course sequence progresses through 75-minute sessions designed to increase participants' understanding of their bodies, to explorations of dynamics and spatial relationships, to studies of themes that give dances their meaning. From the first class, participants create. At the end of the term, participants perform for the public with DVP dancers, premiering original dances that engage their lived experience and movement vocabulary. Movement Speaks® has a documented positive impact on older adults' physical and mental health, social networks, and sense of personal capability.

We seek support for our current expansion initiative, to bring Dances For A Variable Population's Movement Speaks® dance programs to ten additional sites across New York City reaching an additional 200 participants. This program expansion will provide vital, joyful dance programming that leads to critical health and social benefits for an additional 150-200 older adults in multiple NYC neighborhoods across four boroughs. It will also add new programs that highlight Hip Hop, Salsa, and Flamenco, and offer enhanced support for mental health through sharing circles at the beginning and end of class.

4. Action Plan

To implement this proposed expansion, we propose the following activities towards the program's two goals.

Goal 1: Expand Movement Speaks® to serve 150-200 additional older adults citywide

- Strategy: Launch 8-10 new Movement Speaks® programs
- Key activities: Confirm sites, publicize programs, implement programs, evaluate programs. Proposed sites include Highbridge Community Development Corporation sites, the Center at Red Oak in Manhattan, Eileen Dugan Senior Center in Brooklyn, among others. We propose to launch 2-3 new programs each quarter, for a total of 8-10 programs by year-end.
- Outcomes: Improved mental and physical health, increased social connections, improved self-concept for older adult participants.

Goal 2: Develop and pilot new hybrid Movement Speaks® programs, including Movement Speaks®/Hip Hop; Movement Speaks®/Salsa; and Movement Speaks®/Flamenco. Teaching artists who specialize in Hip Hop, Salsa, and Flamenco gain skills to teach Movement Speaks® and incorporating movement invention, improvisation, and dance-making into their teaching.

- Strategy: Partner with teaching artists with expertise in Hip Hop/Salsa/Flamenco to expand Movement Speaks® to these new forms.
- Key activities: Identify teaching artists, identify sites, publicize programs, support partnerships, offer training to new teaching artists with specific genre expertise.
- Outcomes: DVP expands our Movement Speaks® programming to offer opportunities for older adults to create movement in styles that resonate with them, and teaching artists in specific genres gain skills in teaching in the Movement Speaks® methodology.

5. Partnerships

From our base in Harlem, we have built a strong network of partnerships with older adult centers serving immigrants and low-income communities of color, working with 15-20 centers each year. We have a list of centers that have expressed interest in hosting Movement Speaks® programs. Additional recent partners have included BronxCare Hospital, Caring Kind, Riverside Park, Washington Square Park, and New York Public Library. We are developing a new partnership with Highbridge Community Development Corporation to expand Movement Speaks® offerings in the Highbridge section of the Bronx at multiple buildings managed by the organization. Additional partners for funding include the Pasculano Foundation, funding from the New York City Department for the Aging, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. We are also supported by the two-year initiative, Creatives Rebuild New York which is supporting two full-time artists-in-residence, Myna Major and Sandra Rivera, during 2022-23 and 2023-24.

6. Measuring Impact

As outlined above, we have two primary projected outcomes for this work. First, we aim for older adults who participate in Movement Speaks® to experience improved mental and physical health, increased social connections, and improved self-concept as a result of their participation. We will measure success through our end-of-program evaluation surveys which ask students to self-assess improvement in each of those areas, as well as by student qualitative feedback and anecdotes. Second, we aim to pilot and develop new Movement Speaks® models that focus on movement creation in the various dance genres listed above. We will assess our success in this area through student end-of-program surveys that rate students' experience in the program and satisfaction with the instruction. We will also train new Movement Speaks® instructors through this process, by partnering them with experienced Movement Speaks® teaching artists.

7. Organizational History and Competence

Founded in 2005 by Naomi Goldberg Haas, Dances For A Variable Population's mission is to promote strong and creative movement among older adults of all abilities, enabling them to build creativity, improve their mental and physical health, strengthen social connections and enhance quality of life. Our artistic vision is to make participatory dance experiences and professional dance performances accessible to older adults throughout New York City, and to train teaching artists in our method to expand our impact nationwide. DVP brings vital dance programming to thousands of diverse New Yorkers of all ages each year through:

- Free site-related professional dance performances in city parks and transportation hubs. Highlights include the multiyear "Revival Project" in Harlem, Brooklyn, Bronx and Queens from 2017 to 2023; the "LES Citizens Parade" for the 2018 River to River Festival; "Phoenix Project" in New York Botanic Garden in 2016; "Roundup" in Times Square in 2012; and "Autumn Crossing," the first commissioned dance on the High Line in 2010. Partners have included the LMCC, the NYC Parks Dept, and the Times Square Alliance.
- Free, community-based dance programs - MOVEMENT SPEAKS® and Dances for Seniors - for low-income, minority and culturally underserved older adults, held at over 40 senior centers serving over 5,000 seniors since 2008, having grown from four sites in 2014 to over 20 sites in four boroughs in 2023.
- Opportunities for older professionals to perform, choreograph and teach.

DVP has been a leader in creative aging programs to NYC since our inception. In recent years, as NYC has entered into an Age-Friendly Initiative, DVP has supported training and has been sourced as an

example of strong and successful creative aging programming. The company has stepped into this leadership role in supporting the demand from healthcare, community and arts based organizations to identify how to meet the emotional, physical, and social needs of older adults.

The growth of our programs in response to community demand speaks to their value to communities across New York City. Based in Harlem, as described above, DVP has built a strong network of partnerships with senior centers serving low-income communities of color and immigrant communities. This strong local buy-in is matched by local and national acclaim. DVP has received support from the National Endowment for the Arts since 2013. In 2014, DVP Artistic Director Naomi Goldberg Haas was awarded the LMCC's President's Award for Performing Arts. In 2019, Naomi Goldberg Haas was one of only 31 dance artists nationwide to receive a Dance USA Artist Fellowship for artists addressing social change with funding from the Doris Duke Foundation. She received a 2023 NYSDEA Award for Lifetime Impact in Dance Education.

8. Alignment with DEI and other FFA values

DVP specializes in making dance accessible to racially diverse older adults across NYC who stand to reap significant benefits from involvement with professional dance. Participants in our free dance education programs, aged 65+, reflect a broad range of motor and cognitive skill levels, and include both dance enthusiasts and total newcomers. Based on our work over the past 15+ years, 75% are low-income; all are fixed-income, and 80% have limited mobility. DVP focuses on older adults of color in underresourced NYC neighborhoods in Harlem, Chinatown, the Bronx, and Queens. To reach that population, DVP has cultivated multi-year partnerships with older adult centers citywide serving low-income older adults. Our board is composed primarily of older adults, and we are working to increase its diversity (25% BIPOC). On our staff, we have teaching artists that reflect the communities we serve, including older adults, and Spanish/Mandarin speakers. Founder Naomi Goldberg Haas is an older professional dancer with a chronic autoimmune illness that causes pain, fatigue and inflammation.

We see strong alignment with FFA values, this includes:

- DVP's service to diverse populations;
- Our desire to create change by empowering older adults to be creative performing artists, with high visibility in their communities;
- Our success in bringing together multiple funders – public and private – to support this and other initiatives.
- Our track record of collaboration with older adult centers, parks, libraries and community centers to connect with older adults in multiple venues.
- Movement Speaks® as a model that integrates multiple needs of older adults – for exercise, for skill-building, for creative expression, for social connection, and for community recognition and visibility.

We look forward to collaboration with Friends Foundation to advance this program, including potential connection to organizations with which you partner in New York City.

III. Conclusion

We are grateful for this opportunity to share Dances For A Variable Population's work with the Friends Foundation for the Aging, and hope to have an opportunity to partner with you to create impactful, meaningful, and joyful dance programs with and for diverse older adults in New York City. We look forward to the opportunity to answer any questions or provide any additional information as you consider our request.

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Expenses

Personnel

Personnel -Administrative	\$21,250
Personnel - Artistic Director	\$16,250
Personnel - Teaching Artist Salaries	\$30,720
Payroll Taxes	\$7,505
Total Personnel	\$75,725

Outside Professional Services

Evaluation Consultant	\$2,000
Graphic design/web	\$1,000
Photo	\$3,000
Total Outside Professional	\$6,000

Space Rental/Utilities \$3,000

Equipment Rentals/Supplies \$1,000

Advertising/Promotion/Marketing \$2,500

Total Expenses \$88,225

Income

Pasculano Foundation	\$30,000
New York City Department of Cultural Affairs	\$15,000
Partner Organization Contributions	\$10,000
Individual Donations	\$3,225
Subtotal Income	\$58,225

Request to the Friends Foundation for the Aging \$30,000

Total Income \$88,225

Surplus/Deficit \$0