

# Strategic Plan 2025-2029

MUTUAL  
DANCE  
THEATRE  
AND  
ARTS  
CENTERS

DRAFT



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DANCE  
THEATRE  
AND  
ARTS  
CENTERS

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# MAMLUFT&CO. DANCE

Original MamLuft&Co. Dance logo

Original Contemporary Dance Theater logo



Early Contemporary Dance Theater photograph, FRONT: Jefferson James. By Sandy Underwood.



First season: MamLuft&Co. Dance 2007, LEFT TO RIGHT: Jacquelyn Corcoran, Julie Mullins, Ashley Powell, BACK: Kira Zimmerly (née Kelley).

## Mutual Dance Theatre and Arts Centers History

Mutual Dance Theatre and Arts Centers is the result of a merger between Contemporary Dance Theater (founded in 1972 by Jefferson James) and MamLuft&Co. Dance (founded in 2007 by Jeanne MamLuft).

CDT was founded in 1972 by Jefferson James, a former student of the very founders of Modern Dance itself. CDT was Cincinnati's first contemporary troupe until the resident company dissolved in the '90s, after which CDT focused on presenting national companies here. CDT also became known for bringing disparate dance community subsets together by providing numerous resources and producing group concerts.

ML&Co. was founded in 2007 by Cambodian refugee, Jeanne Sopanha Mam-Luft. The company then became the only self-described Modern Dance troupe, decades after CDT's had disbanded; it has since attracted over 50 artists to join.

Today, Mutual Arts operates in two facilities in College Hill and Hartwell, combining the two founding organizations' programs with greater capacity. MDTAC is both a producer and a presenter: it not only has a resident company producing original work and restagings, but it also presents other companies from across the nation, while providing education programs across the city.

# Historical Timeline

- 
- 1972** — **Jefferson James founds Contemporary Dance Theater**
- 1975 — CDT receives non-profit status
- 1984** — **CDT becomes founding partner of the National Performance Network under the leadership of Dance Theatre Workshop's David White**
- 1993** — **CDT disbands repertory company**  
The organization turns to focusing on presenting in its Guest Artist Series, as well as continuing to support local artists.

2001

**CDT responsible for creation of the inter-disciplinary Inside/Outside arts project for incarcerated women**

“ISOS” developed from a series of workshops from the famed Seattle-based choreographer Pat Graney at CDT’s studio. The program continued for more than 12 years.

**Jeanne Mam-Luft founds MamLuft&Co. Dance**

First season recruits 6 Company Members, produces 7 performances, and garners 7 mentions in the press. Rehearsals take place at Contemporary Dance Theater. CDT also provides mentorship, marketing and grant-writing resources.

2007

2010

**Jeanne Mam-Luft works for both ML&Co. and CDT**

CDT’s former part-time Assistant Director Laura Stewart leaves CDT; Jefferson James hires Jeanne Mam-Luft as her replacement.

**ML&Co. receives retroactive 501(c)(3) status, grows**

Establishes first after school dance program at North Avondale Montessori. The 2010-2011 brings enormous growth (348% up from first season).

2010

**ML&Co. Aronoff residency, awards, AED salary**

Resident status at Aronoff Center is obtained. Artistic & Executive Director begins to receive \$5,000 annual salary. Awards: “Best Design Concept” in Cincinnati Fringe Festival from the League of Cincinnati Theatres, “Best Summer Dance Camp for Kids” by Cincinnati Magazine, and “Best Dance Company Pushing the Envelope” by CityBeat staff.

2011-2012

2014 | Jefferson James sets out to retire: CDT seeks new Artistic Director  
Season is reduced from 5 shows to 4.

**2014  
Jeanne Mam-Luft leaves CDT**

Contemporary Dance Theater chooses a new successor, prompting Jeanne Mam-Luft to resign and ML&Co. to find new residency at the Clifton Cultural Arts Center with assumption that CDT's support (including prime rehearsal times) would be lost. The successor ultimately backs out for financial reasons.

**Significant press accolades for ML&Co.**

David Lyman of Cincinnati Enquirer names ML&Co. amongst only the Cincinnati Ballet and Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre as "exceptional moments" in dance that year and calls ML&Co.'s first repertory performance "enlightening."

2015

2016 | **CDT season reduced from 4 to 2 shows**

**First full-time hire of second staff person for ML&Co.**

\$30,000 grant from the Stillson Foundation allows ML&Co. to hire a full-time staff person, the first in addition to the founder/AED, as an Education and Outreach Director. As a result, reach of BIPOC children in education increases by 58%.

2016

2017 | **CDT restores 1 show, making 3 total in season**

**ML&Co. receives first National Endowment for the Arts Grant**

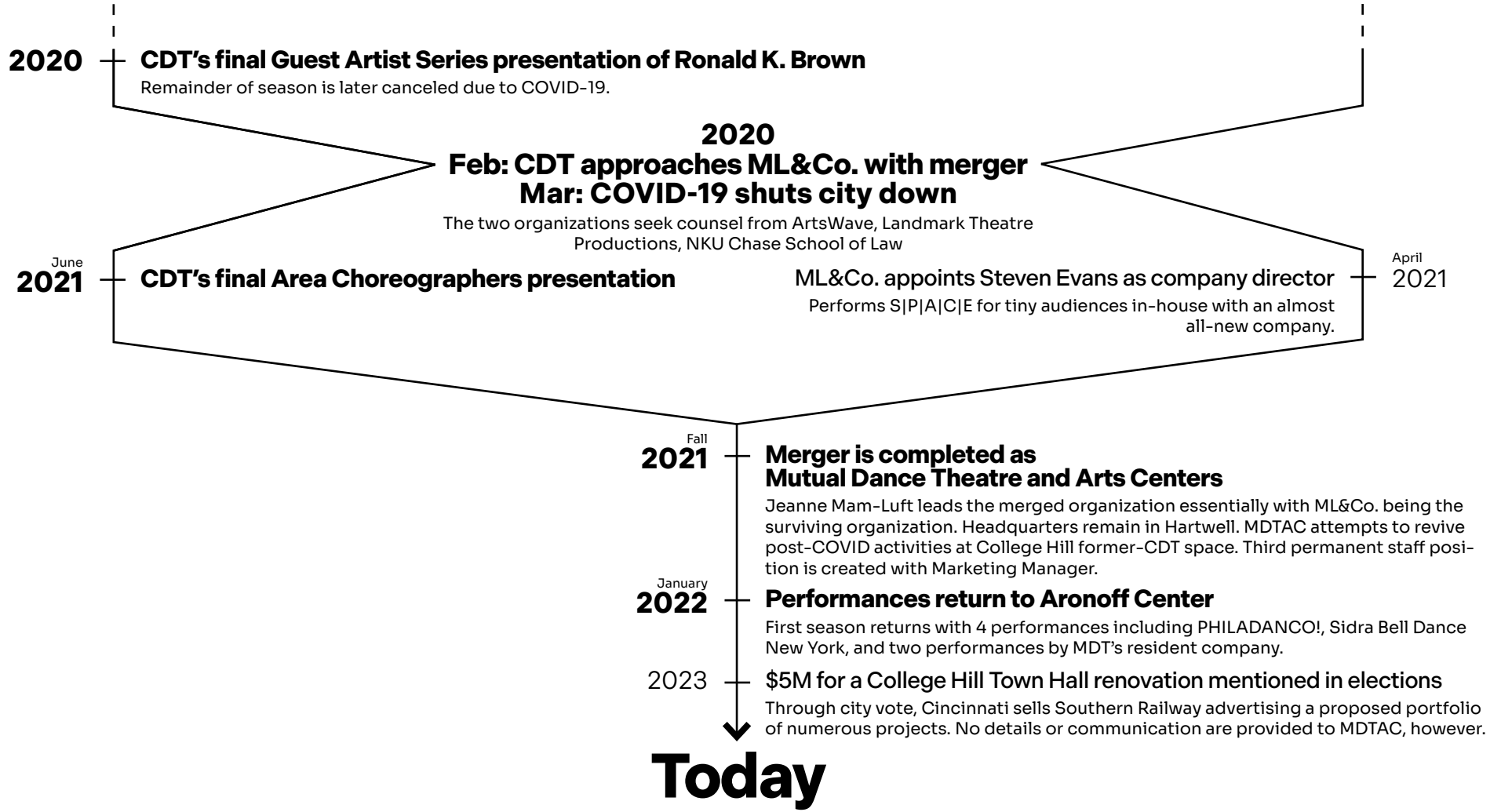
The only grant to a Cincinnati company to create Modern Dance in Cincinnati (so as far back as the NEA database goes into the 90s).

2017

**ML&Co. purchases building in Hartwell**

6000 SF + 1200 SF duplex, 1.25 acres

2019



# Strategic Planning Process

Throughout the decades, Contemporary Dance Theater's Board of Directors created several simple strategic plans. Varying in depth, the plans were minimal.

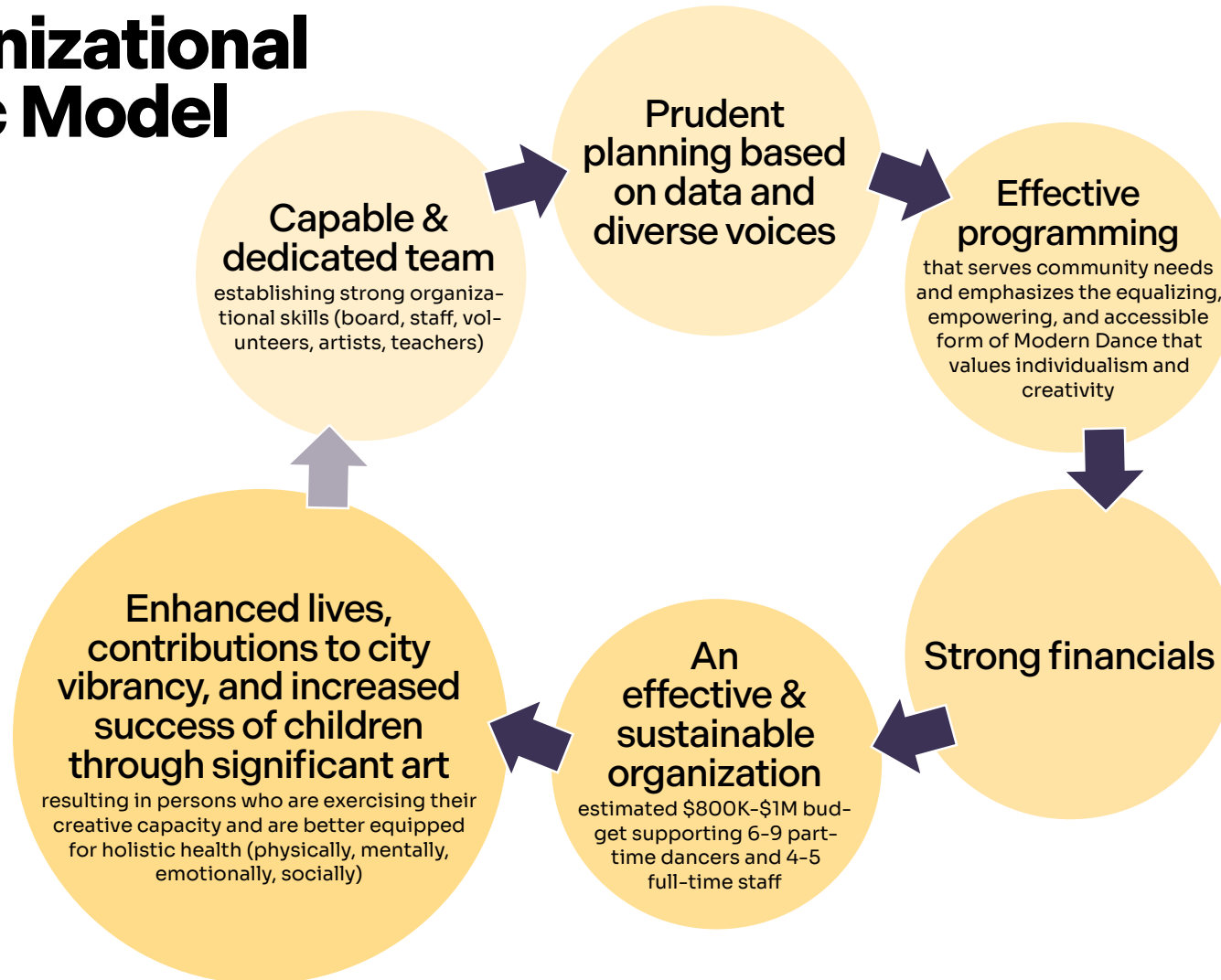
Most of the process in updating the Mutual Dance Theatre and Arts Centers strategic plan comes from an analysis of Contemporary Dance Theater's operations and the foundation MamLuft&Co. Dance laid during its strategic planning process, which set out to create a road map for its 25-year vision. During and following the Contemporary Dance Theater / MamLuft&Co. Dance merger in the fall of 2021, the Board of Directors (a combination of the two previous organizations' boards) analyzed the organization's purpose, mission, and core beliefs; its vision for its future; its current situation and challenges; and its resources. Also studied were a number of other organizations' financial reports, considered because of their similarity to Mutual Dance Theatre and Arts Centers in terms of locality, services offered, age, or likeness to its visionary model. MDTAC aggregated data on the organizations' annual growth, their composition of income (contributed vs. earned), as well as the percentage of pay for personnel in relation to their total budget. Also considered were the gross receipts from hundreds of member organizations of Dance/USA, in addition to a comparison of salaries noted in audition notices and American Guild of Musical Artists contracts.

This committee analyzed the organization's purpose, mission, and core beliefs; its vision for its future; its current situation and challenges; and its resources.

This Strategic Plan is thus a result of studying the city of Cincinnati's needs, similar organizations, and the founding organizations' operations. The plan was previously updated in 2013, 2016, and 2019 on the MamLuft&Co. Dance side of the two merged organizations. Contemporary Dance Theater's last strategic plan was dated 2014.



# Organizational Logic Model



# Mission

Mutual Dance Theatre and Arts Centers' mission is to bring the globally-significant genre of Modern Dance to more people by generating access and decreasing barriers. Through education, outreach, and performance, MDTAC helps diverse people of all ages exercise their creative capacity and increase their potential for healthy, enriched lives.

# Vision

Mutual Dance Theatre and Arts Centers' vision is that the organization's work will result in enhanced lives, meaningful contributions to the city of Cincinnati's vibrancy, and increased potential for the success of children and youth.

MDTAC's vision is to play a sustainable and significant role in the region. This amounts to being a crucial presence in our local community, while also garnering a national reputation for delivering outstanding dance performance and education. This vision necessitates a dedicated facility that supports rehearsals, small performances, and a full teaching slate; a full-time staff of 4-5; and a full-time company of 6-9 dancers; plus a robust teaching faculty.

We estimate the "visionary budget" to be approximately \$1M in today's dollars, consistent with other organizations whose traits resemble those of our goals.

# Mutual is

coming together

symbiotic

shared / common to

requires partnership

a relationship

give and take

connecting / connected

a feeling or an experience

connotes beneficiality

relates to understanding (as in, mutual respect)

collaborative

equal

supportive

together

centering marginalized experiences, particularly those of BIPOC persons

**Excellence.** In both the theater and the classroom, MDTAC works toward the highest standards of artistic performance and educational practice.

**Integrity.** Both our artistic work, as well as our operational practices, follow moral, ethical, and artistic principles.

**Education.** We conduct our programs and our own internal development on the foundational belief that empowerment and opportunities are made possible through the attainment of knowledge.

**Well-being is both physical and mental health.** Internally as a team of workers, as well as externally as an organization providing programs, we respect that people are the best contributors to society when they are healthy.

**Protection of children/minors.** We are vigilant and stalwart in ensuring that our children are protected from inappropriate costuming, music, and choreography, and predators.

**Teamwork and collaboration.** We instill in our staff and students the importance of cooperating to accomplish big goals.

**Diversity.** We value multiple perspectives, cultures, and backgrounds.

**Community involvement.** We act as servants of the community, prioritizing the community's needs through our programming choices.

**Access and inclusivity.** We never turn anyone away for lack of funds. As servants of the community, we believe everyone deserves the transformative power of the arts.

**Adaptability.** Our practices and organizational structure should always allow for thoughtful and wise adaptations in the face of emergencies or disasters.

# Values

# Theory of Change

In the following pages, MDTAC lays out its theory of change.

A theory of change is a comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context. A theory of change is in many ways an action plan, as it details the various outcomes that non-profits seek to bring about (the social change, that is), and illustrates the steps that are taken (programs) to achieve those outcomes.

A theory of change is a useful tool on which to base decisions and form priorities.

# Strategic Plan Goal 1: Access

GOALS	OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES	INDICATORS
<p><b>I</b></p> <p><b>Create access to Modern and Contemporary Dance</b></p>	<p>a) Serve diverse audiences.</p> <p>b) Facilitate better understanding of Modern Dance.</p> <p>c) Provide opportunities for audiences to have a stake in the arts.</p>	<p>Reflect the community we serve in the diversity of voices at each level and branch of the organization.</p> <p>Create environments of inclusivity.</p> <p>Strive to make activities more affordable.</p> <p>Strive to serve a broad range of ages, national origins, race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, social class, income levels, and religious beliefs.</p> <p>Target young professionals, in alignment with Cincinnati Agenda 360 and ArtsWave Blueprint priorities.</p> <p>Locate programs across the city.</p> <p>Partner with other organizations.</p> <p>Promote conversations and activities around Modern Dance.</p> <p>Educate children and youth.</p> <p>Create, disseminate, and/or contribute to materials that lead to deeper understanding.</p> <p>Create opportunities for audience interaction.</p> <p>Create participatory programs.</p> <p>Collaborate with community members, allowing their creative and expressive voices to be important parts of our work.</p>	<p>BIPOCs are in positions of influence in the organization, from the performing company to the board to faculty.</p> <p>Art works with content that bridges social and economic barriers (i.e., universal themes).</p> <p>Content in classrooms and on stage that have minimized culturally-specific foci or that focus on non-white, non-European cultures.</p> <p>Ticket prices that are comparably low/lower than peer organizations.</p> <p>Free or discounted access to under-served and underprivileged groups.</p> <p>Financial aid for fee-based programs.</p> <p>Interviews across a variety of media outlets.</p> <p>Written interpretative learning guides.</p> <p>Materials accessible via the internet and on paper.</p> <p>Opportunities for audience interaction, time spent with artists.</p> <p>Educational opportunities.</p> <p>Focus groups.</p> <p>Open supernumerary auditions.</p> <p>Volunteer opportunities.</p>	<p>Cultural offerings draw attendees from different ages, backgrounds, locations, and socioeconomic status.</p> <p>Diverse visitors and residents have interactions with one another.</p> <p>People are newly introduced to Modern Dance or other dance forms.</p> <p>BIPOCs are increasingly engaged with the organization.</p> <p>Cultural offerings are more affordable and accessible.</p> <p>Opportunities exist for audiences to interact with artists.</p> <p>Residents feel more connected with local arts.</p> <p>Residents improve their understanding of the arts and Modern Dance.</p> <p>People of all backgrounds are less intimidated by Modern Dance, more knowledgeable of the art form, and more likely to engage again and/or take "risks" in future consumption of art.</p> <p>Residents feel increased empathy and trust toward one another.</p>	<p>Diversity measures of participant/audience gender, income, location base, race, marital status, age, etc.</p> <p>Percentages of audiences that are new to Modern Dance and/or new to MamLuft&amp;Co. Dance.</p> <p>Contingency of ML&amp;Co. audiences who do not attend any other Cincinnati arts programming.</p> <p>Percentages of audiences seeing friends or meeting new people they would not have otherwise interacted with if it were not for ML&amp;Co. event.</p> <p>Numbers of persons served.</p> <p>Percentages reporting increase of understanding or interest in Modern Dance.</p> <p>Anecdotes of participants who have forged new friendships or relationships due to ML&amp;Co. participation.</p> <p>Percentage of BIPOCs at different levels of leadership, as well as audienceship.</p> <p>Growth or loss of engaged BIPOCs from period to period.</p>

# Strategic Plan 2: Cincinnati

GOALS	OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES	INDICATORS
<p><b>II</b></p> <p><b>Contribute to the vibrancy of Cincinnati</b></p>	<p>a) Cultivate Modern Dance in Cincinnati.</p>	<p>Provide a variety of activities specifically focused on Modern Dance in performance, education, and outreach.</p> <p>Provide activities that lead people to Modern Dance, but may not be Modern Dance in and of itself.</p> <p>Create transformative experiences that are palpable and thought-provoking.</p>	<p>Performances and other events that engage the public.</p> <p>The creation of original works.</p> <p>Re-staging of other works.</p> <p>Art-making that any background can relate to.</p> <p>On-going classes and special workshops.</p> <p>Presentations for groups.</p> <p>Participatory activities.</p> <p>Forums or discussions.</p> <p>Rehearsals.</p>	<p>Extraordinary cultural experiences are available.</p> <p>Participation in the arts increases.</p> <p>Cultural experiences are unique and contribute to the variety in Cincinnati.</p> <p>Cultural experiences in Modern Dance expand the thinking in community members, changing their perspective or understanding.</p>	<p>Press coverage and honors.</p> <p>Numbers and types of Modern Dance activities made available through ML&amp;Co.</p> <p>Numbers served.</p> <p>Numbers of and types of collaborations.</p> <p>Demographics of income, age, race, sex, and home location.</p>
	<p>b) Utilize collaborations to increase engagement and awareness.</p>	<p>Form partnerships in producing arts events.</p> <p>Form partnerships to promote arts events.</p> <p>Represent diverse interests.</p> <p>Represent the diversity of our community at all levels of the organization by putting BIPOCs in positions of influence.</p>	<p>Partnerships with exposure to new audiences.</p> <p>Discount offers.</p> <p>Marketing/PR exchanges.</p> <p>Relationships resulting in increased diversity.</p> <p>Consultation and inclusion of diverse groups of people.</p>	<p>Children are provided with experiences that research shows increase their chances for success in school and after school.</p> <p>Cincinnati is put on the map for Modern Dance activities, attracting the attention and visitation of persons from outside the area.</p>	<p>Number of special of minority-focused partnerships.</p> <p>Number of persons reached as a result of partnerships.</p> <p>Anecdotes from participants.</p> <p>Number of participants from outside the area.</p>
	<p>c) Contribute to economic stimulus.</p>	<p>Create opportunities that attract and retain artists to this region.</p> <p>Create opportunities for monetary transactions.</p> <p>Create opportunities for longer-term business relationships.</p> <p>Use data-driven decision-making.</p> <p>Target young professionals, in alignment with Cincinnati Agenda 360 and ArtsWave Blueprint priorities.</p>	<p>Significant and on-going activities.</p> <p>Activities in cultural clusters where other economic activity and networking easily occurs, such as parking, restaurants, etc.</p> <p>Fee-based activities.</p> <p>Free activities that contribute to economic stimulus by transactions for occupancy, supplies, wages.</p>	<p>Cultural offerings available in cultural clusters, drawing both attendees and businesses.</p> <p>Business is generated in multiple venues, driving improvement of physical spaces.</p> <p>Artists become residents, taxpayers, patrons, and workers.</p> <p>Neighborhoods where activities take place and the region as a whole become destinations for living and for activity.</p>	<p>Number of persons reached by other organizations as a result of our business or activities in cultural clusters.</p> <p>Number of artists moving to or remaining in the region to work with ML&amp;Co.</p> <p>Dollars spent.</p> <p>Numbers patronizing other businesses in association with organization events.</p>

# Strategic Plan 3: Engagement

GOALS	OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES	INDICATORS
<p><b>III</b></p> <p><b>Support opportunities to participate in the making of Modern and Contemporary Dance</b></p>	<p>a) Provide significant, regular, and paid opportunities for dance artists.</p>	<p>Cultivate a company structure that attracts and retains Company Members.</p> <p>Provide teaching and outreach opportunities for dancers to lead.</p>	<p>Full season of artistic engagements for Company Members.</p> <p>Classroom and outreach activities that put dancers to work.</p>	<p>Artists feel a strong connection to the city and each other.</p> <p>Artists make a living.</p> <p>Artists create and contribute to the city.</p> <p>Artists and novices are engaging in creative activity together.</p>	<p>Number and types of programs, as well as dollar expenditures, in activities where dancers play a role.</p>
	<p>b) Provide paying opportunities for others (non-dancers).</p>	<p>Engage non-dancers in the creation and presentation of Modern Dance experiences.</p>	<p>Other non-dancer, paid roles include stagehands, hospitality, and other support staff.</p>	<p>People are brought closer together due to the creation of Modern Dance.</p> <p>The economic effect of programs reach beyond the resident company itself.</p>	<p>Number and types of programs, types of roles, as well as dollar expenditures, in activities where non-dancers play a role.</p> <p>Number of board members, scope of board member responsibility.</p> <p>Number of volunteers and types of service to the organization.</p>
	<p>c) Provide opportunities for audiences to have a stake in art-making.</p>	<p>Recruit volunteers promote, contribute to, and execute programming.</p> <p>Recruit volunteers to perform as supernumeraries.</p> <p>Utilize volunteer board in decision-making capacity.</p> <p>Provide creative activities.</p>	<p>Volunteers assist on daily and occasional bases.</p> <p>Volunteer board oversees and governs.</p>	<p>Community members have a stake in arts and culture in Cincinnati.</p> <p>Residents understand each other better.</p>	<p>Anecdotes from volunteers.</p> <p>Diversity and other demographics of involved persons.</p> <p>Retention of participants.</p>



# Past Benchmarking

Benchmark goals stated in previous strategic plans of the two founding organizations and their results or statuses.

## CDT: Pre-Merger: 2014 Strategic Plan

1. Present concert season of guest artists each year. *Result: seasons continued until COVID-19 shut-down.*
2. Foster participation and interaction with guest artists via residency programs and master classes. *Result: continued until COVID-19 shut-down.*
3. Increase audience attendance. *Result:*
4. Become financially sustainable. *Result: finances in positive standing at time of merger in 2021; however, AED was almost never compensated.*
5. Provide a venue for on-going education. *Result:*

## MamLuft&Co. Dance: 2013-2016 Strat. Plan

1. Reach 5000+ persons in live settings. *Result:*
2. Pay AED part-time salary. *Result: accomplished in 12-13.*
3. Reach \$88K budget by end of 15-16. *Result:*
4. Board to play major role in fundraising and strengthening other revenue streams. *Result: Board conducted 2 fundraisers.*

## MamLuft&Co. Dance: 2016-2019 Strat. Plan

1. Improve organizational capacity: compensate AED at more reasonable rate, secure funding to retain new Education and Outreach Director, increase dancer stipends, increase overall budget. *Status:*
2. Improve Board capacity: board members take greater stake, produce active efforts to increase revenue, increase network of influence. *Result: unsuccessful.*

3. Increase reach: increase numbers served (overall and in education/outreach), increase BIPOC and under-privileged reach. *Result:*
4. Increase artistic capacity by furthering development of ML&Co. dance artists, securing mainstage presentations, and procuring residencies. *Result: difficult period for the Company during which most of the preceding members experienced life changes and the Company shifted from primarily doing Jeanne Mam-Luft's work to sharing choreographic opportunities, resulting in almost complete turn-over in two different casts. Presentations and residencies were not procured.*

## MamLuft&Co. Dance: 2019-2022 Strat. Plan

1. Increase organizational capacity through higher staff and dancer pay. *Result: AED paid final salary \$35K up from \$25K at end of previous period. Dancer pay increased to \$2000 per half-season show, up from the previous \$500 (however, children's touring performances were ended which amounted to an additional half-season's pay).*
2. Increase reach, particularly through increasing BIPOC representation and securing 1-2 touring or residency engagements per season. *Result: 2 BIPOC dancers lost, 1 BIPOC dancer gained during this period. Only 1 tour during 3-year period.*
3. Secure a stable and permanent home. *Result: accomplished with purchase of Hartwell property.*

This update in 2024 is the first since COVID-19 began in 2020 and Contemporary Dance Theatre and MamLuft&Co. Dance merged to form Mutual Dance Theatre and Arts Centers.

# Current & Future Benchmarking Goals

## This Period, 2025-2029

1. Attract and retain highly talented professional Company Members such that BIPOCs make at least 33% and quality of work continues to improve.
2. Increase persons served, particularly with higher audience numbers for resident company performances and percentages of BIPOC audiences.
3. Stabilize Academy registration.
4. Increase pay of Marketing Manager and potentially others.
5. Increase pay for Company Members.
6. Utilize the College Hill Town Hall facility on a regular basis or otherwise determine its future.
7. Book 2-3 presentations of our company during this timeframe.

Goals from 2025-2029 Racial Equity and Inclusion Action Plan (summarily, 50% BIPOC representation at all levels).

## 10-Year Outlook

1. Reach \$1M or other appropriate budget to support 6-9 dancer salaries (30 hrs/wk, 35 wks/yr) and 4-5 full-time admin staff.
2. Book 2-3 presentations of our company each year as organization is known nationally for its excellence.
3. Attain at least 50% BIPOC representation at all levels of the organization, including resident artists, students, and audiences.
4. Attain average of 650 persons per Aronoff weekend-run, including resident company.
5. Complete renovations on facilities to be current.

# Moving Forward

This Strategic Plan will be assessed at least every 5 seasons (next, by 2029), if not sooner as deemed necessary by the Board or Staff of MDTAC. The plan shall be assessed by a diverse representation of persons — particularly, those who differ from the majority culture — including program providers (staff, artists, faculty), participants, and Board of Trustee members. This plan shall be referenced as a guide for decision-making and setting priorities. In order to promote cohesion amongst organization leadership, the strategic plan shall be reviewed at least once a season with decision-makers in the organization, including upper-level staff and Board Members.

This plan addresses MDTAC's desire to be an equitable and inclusive nonprofit organization and to embody principles of racial equity, inclusiveness, and diversity in its operations, programming, and grant making. Notwithstanding any interpretation to the contrary of the language of the plan, nothing contained herein is meant or intended in any way to direct, mandate, suggest, or advise the organization, its Board, employees, or other constituents to act in a manner inconsistent with the requirements of federal or state non-discrimination laws or other applicable laws or with the MDTAC's status as an equal opportunity employer. The aim of this plan is to create and support the inclusion of BIPOC individuals, businesses, and organizations into all aspects of MDTAC's activities but not to, in any way, promote the exclusion of any person or any exclusionary practice.