

City of La Crosse Arts Board

2. Creative Development Grants

I&E Dance Studio, Malone, Michelle
1232 Caledonia Street
La Crosse, WI 54603, US
6087690167
arthouselacrosse@gmail.com

Submitted: Sep 30 2025 9:43PM

Evaluations

Overall Rating

72.88

Rating Method: Cumulative
Range: 0 - 125

75

Andrew Sherman
Oct 17 2025 4:00PM

Public Access: 17, Demonstrated Project Planning & Feasibility: 20, Community Importance: 20, Vision, Artistic Goals, & Educational Merit: 18, Do you support moving this application forward?: Yes

"I think that this project touches on an important topic, particularly in todays world. I think that the studio offers great commentary on the creative development of this performance. I feel as though there is a little bit of uncertainty present within the budget - I would like to see a more precise breakdown of where the grant funding will go. Additionally, I recognize the intentionality for subsidizing the dancer fees and I greatly appreciate that, but if the ticket price is high then this event could be prohibitive for some members of the public to attend. Overall, I am for moving this grant forward."

77

Zachary Stensen
Oct 19 2025 10:40PM

Public Access: 18, Demonstrated Project Planning & Feasibility: 15, Community Importance: 19, Vision, Artistic Goals, & Educational Merit: 25, Do you support moving this application forward?: No

"I like the intention behind this project and the philosophy of making dance accessible. The proposal has a strong artistic vision and speaks thoughtfully about resilience and hope. That said, this proposal reads more like a creative statement than a project plan. The logistics, budget, and outreach components aren't as clearly developed, and it's not clear how the full \$7,500 production will be funded with only \$2,500 requested.

Overall, I think the proposal concept is meaningful and aligns well with the Arts Board's goals, but it would benefit from stronger clarity around production planning, access (is admission free?), and how the community will be engaged."

74

Maureen Freedland
Oct 24 2025 12:35PM

Public Access: 15, Demonstrated Project Planning & Feasibility: 20,
Community Importance: 15, Vision, Artistic Goals, & Educational
Merit: 24, Do you support moving this application forward?: Yes

"The dance project is creative, unique, engaging and has much artistic merit. Hats off to the creators. My reservation is that with our limited funds, I feel we might need to concentrate on projects that will have lasting presence in La Crosse or reach larger audiences. It appears there will only be one performance (the theater rental is expensive!). On the other hand, I want new artists to develop and for our producers to be able to get to the point where they can pay performers. I support a limited grant."

76

Mary Cate Wesling
Oct 23 2025 5:31PM

Public Access: 13, Demonstrated Project Planning & Feasibility: 25,
Community Importance: 13, Vision, Artistic Goals, & Educational
Merit: 25, Do you support moving this application forward?: Yes

"This is a project that speaks loudly to me, as I am a massive fan of The Hunger Game series. I support removing the cost for the dancers to participate. I worry about the cost for the performance itself, that it will inhibit attendance."

88

Paige Shafrath
Oct 26 2025 1:40PM

Public Access: 19, Demonstrated Project Planning & Feasibility: 22,
Community Importance: 24, Vision, Artistic Goals, & Educational
Merit: 23, Do you support moving this application forward?: Yes

*"VISION, ARTISTIC GOALS, &
EDUCATIONAL MERIT*

5, 5, 5, 5, 3 (recruitment starting late October - if the deadline pushes is that okay? Is there a set "show date"?) = 23

*DEMONSTRATED PROJECT
PLANNING & FEASIBILITY*

*4, 5, 4, 4 (not clearly outlined in budget but the resume indicates that marketing the event will happen),
5 = 22*

COMMUNITY IMPORTANCE

5, 4, 5 (love that it's an adult dance studio and encourages all ages/races/demographics), 5, 5 = 24

PUBLIC ACCESS

5, 3, 3, 3, 5 = 19"

53

Christine Kahlow
Oct 26 2025 2:50PM

Public Access: 9, Demonstrated Project Planning & Feasibility: 13,
Community Importance: 9, Vision, Artistic Goals, & Educational
Merit: 22

Eva Black

Public Access: 20, Demonstrated Project Planning & Feasibility: 8,

75

Oct 27 2025 11:32AM

Community Importance: 22, Vision, Artistic Goals, & Educational Merit: 25, Do you support moving this application forward?: No

"Clearly the project and it's opportunity to be able to allow the dancers to not pay fees is a great way to support our community, the planning on this project is lacking.

There's depth to the artists plan for the show, but I'm left wondering where other income sources are coming from? How much are tickets sales? Where is the location? If you're selling tickets, what does that mean for community members that cannot afford attending?

Again, while the concept of the project is great, the application needs more planning figured out."

65

Jennifer Morris

Oct 27 2025 1:31PM

Public Access: 15, Demonstrated Project Planning & Feasibility: 15, Community Importance: 15, Vision, Artistic Goals, & Educational Merit: 20, Do you support moving this application forward?: No

"We were presented with a number of interesting projects and thoughtful proposals this round. I sympathize entirely with her desire to cover the cost of production for her dancers. There are few details that I would like to see fleshed out; however, such as the \$4,800 choreographer's stipend - does this go to the two assistant choreographers or the applicant or all three? As the largest line item in their budget, there is perhaps some room to reassess there."

Section 1 (CDG) - Contact & Project Information

1. Name(s)/Organization

I&E Dance Studio
Owner: Michelle Malone

2. Mailing address

1232 Caledonia Street La Crosse, WI 54603

3. Email address

iandedancestudio@gmail.com

4. Phone number

(608) 769-0167

5. Website (optional)

www.arthouselacrosse.com/dance

6. Biography

At I&E Dance Studio, our mission is to create a welcoming, uplifting space where adults can rediscover the joy of movement. We believe dance is for everyone, no matter your background, age, or experience level. Through classes like hip hop, dance fitness, and contemporary jazz, we focus on building confidence, fostering

community, and celebrating self-expression. Our studio is non-competitive by design, encouraging students to move for joy, health, and connection rather than comparison. We are committed to offering fun, supportive, and creative experiences that inspire growth!

7. 1-2 Page Resume or CV



8. Project Title

Survival: A dance story of struggle, endurance, and the spark of hope.

9. Brief Project Description

This original dance production, inspired by The Hunger Games, reimagines the story of survival, struggle, and resilience. Blending movement, narrative poetry, and powerful visuals, it explores what it means to endure hardship and emerge as a beacon of hope.

10. Project Start and End Dates

Rehearsals ideally begin in November 2025 on Sundays. Performance would occur near the end of February or early March 2026.

11. Requested Funding Amount

2500

12. List of Participants

Michelle Malone: Main Choreographer, 2 Assistant Choreographers, 15-20 dancers as the cast.

13. Conflicts of Interest

NA

14. Previous Funded Projects

N

15. Are you a non-profit that is registered in the City of La Crosse?

No

16. Federal Tax-Exempt Status

Section 2 (CDG) - Project Description

1. Project Location

University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. Bluffs Ballroom Stage

2. Project Description

Project Description – “Survival”
Overview

Survival is an original, evening-length dance production that brings together 15–20 dancers to embody the universal human experience of struggle, resilience, and transformation. While inspired by The Hunger Games, this production is not a retelling of a franchise but a visceral, movement-based exploration of what it means to live in survival mode as a human being—and how, through endurance, we can rise as a source of hope for others.

Through contemporary choreography, narrative poetry, and striking visual design, Survival will take audiences on an emotional journey: from fear and scarcity, to resilience and self-discovery, to the emergence of strength and community. The performance is designed to resonate deeply with anyone who has ever felt overwhelmed, hopeless, or stuck in the dark—and to remind them of the power we carry inside to endure and rise again.

Artistic Vision

At its core, Survival is about the human condition. It asks:

What does it feel like to fight for your existence, whether physically, mentally, or emotionally?

How do individuals carry themselves through fear, stress, and anxiety when the odds are against them?

How does resilience turn into strength, and strength into hope?

Movement becomes the language of these questions. The choreography blends contemporary dance, athletic partnering, and ensemble-driven sequences to represent the intensity of survival and the tenderness of transformation. Abstracted gestures—such as reaching, resisting, collapsing, and rising—symbolize the universality of these struggles. Dynamic shifts in tempo, weight, and energy reflect the chaotic push-and-pull of the survival state.

While The Hunger Games offers inspiration for structure and imagery—such as the reaping, the spectacle of power, the struggle of the arena—the production reframes those elements to speak to broader, timeless human themes. The names of characters will not be used in performance; instead, dancers embody archetypes and collective energies: the Innocent, the Fighter, the Companion, the Oppressor, the Hope. This allows the story to be rooted not in one fictional world, but in the shared human journey.

Narrative Structure

Survival is a two-act production (two 45-minute halves with a 10-minute intermission) that blends dance with spoken narrative interludes. The narrative poetry serves as connective tissue, guiding the audience’s emotional understanding and making the themes relatable to everyday life. For example, before a scene representing fear and scarcity, a spoken voice may share:

“When I was in survival mode, I thought I wouldn’t get through it.
It was heavy, suffocating, and unrelenting.
But even in that place, something inside kept me moving—
one step, one breath, one heartbeat closer to hope.”

This integration of text and movement helps audiences connect their personal experiences of struggle, anxiety, and resilience with the story being told on stage.

Act I focuses on scarcity, oppression, and the raw state of survival. Scenes move from community hardship to being thrust into survival situations, to the spectacle of being judged, displayed, and tested. Act II shifts into resilience, unity, and transformation. Partnerships and alliances grow. Struggles are faced and overcome. The production ends not in despair, but in a shared rising—an ensemble-driven finale that embodies hope and possibility.

Choreographic Approach

The choreography of Survival will draw from several dance vocabularies to highlight contrast and character:

Grounded Contemporary Movement: to reflect struggle, pain, and raw endurance. Heavy, weighted movements like falls, contractions, and floor work emphasize the gravity of survival.

Athletic Partnering: to symbolize dependence, support, and conflict. Lifts, counterbalances, and resist/release phrases embody both the difficulty of carrying others and the beauty of finding strength together.

Stylized Ensemble Work: to highlight systems of power and spectacle. For example, “Capitol-inspired” characters may move in exaggerated, artificial, or stylized gestures, contrasting with the authentic, raw movement of those in survival.

Gesture-Based Storytelling: motifs like reaching, shielding, striking, and rising recur throughout to give the piece a physical language of struggle and hope.

Music will range from cinematic soundscapes to rhythmic, percussive beats and moments of silence—allowing breath and heartbeat to become part of the score.

Costume and Design

Costumes will help communicate the contrast between survival and spectacle:

Survival Characters (Districts/Tributes): muted, earth-toned costumes—distressed fabrics, simple silhouettes, practical and raw.

Spectacle Characters (Capitol/Figures of Power): stylized costumes with exaggerated shapes, textures, and colors to show artificiality and excess.

Transformation: as the production progresses, costumes may subtly shift—dancers shedding, layering, or altering their looks to represent resilience and change.

Lighting will emphasize mood shifts: harsh, angular light for moments of oppression; shadow play for fear and secrecy; warm and expansive washes for unity and hope. Minimal but symbolic props (such as fabric strips, ropes, or natural elements like branches and stones) may be incorporated to represent barriers, tools, and transformation.

Community and Cast

The cast of Survival will consist of 15–20 dancers. This size allows for large ensemble moments that embody collective struggle and resistance, while also providing opportunities for duets, trios, and solos to highlight individual journeys.

The diversity of dancers—across age, background, and training—will be embraced as part of the storytelling. Each dancer will embody an archetype that reflects different facets of survival: innocence, resistance, strength, fragility, endurance, hope. This layered casting ensures that audiences see themselves reflected in the performance.

Audience Impact

The audience experience is at the heart of Survival. While inspired by a popular cultural story (The Hunger Games), the production transcends that reference to speak to universal human truths.

Audience members will leave not only entertained but also moved and reflective. The narrative poetry and visceral movement are designed to spark conversations around:

How do we, as individuals, survive difficult seasons?

How do we carry trauma, stress, and fear?

How do we emerge stronger, and how do we inspire others in their journeys?

The intention is for audience members to see parallels between the struggles of survival depicted on stage and their own lived experiences of overcoming hardship—whether through illness, financial struggle, mental health challenges, or societal pressures. The finale positions survival not as the end goal, but as the doorway to transformation and hope.

Relevance and Timeliness

The themes of Survival are especially relevant in today's world. Many individuals and communities have lived through collective survival—global crises, economic hardship, social upheaval. The feelings of anxiety, scarcity, and endurance resonate deeply.

This production offers both reflection and inspiration. By acknowledging the weight of survival while also lifting up the beauty of resilience, Survival creates a space for healing, empathy, and shared hope.

Promotion and Accessibility

For promotional purposes, Survival will be described as:

“An original dance production exploring what it means to endure, struggle, and rise again. Inspired by The Hunger Games, Survival uses movement and narrative to transform hardship into hope.”

Promotions will emphasize the universality of the message rather than focusing solely on the cultural inspiration. Performances will be open to all ages, with talkbacks or community discussions offered afterward to invite dialogue about the themes.

Conclusion

Survival is more than a performance—it is a reflection of the human condition. It honors the darkness of survival while lifting up the light of resilience and hope. With 15–20 dancers embodying the journey through movement and narrative, this production offers a powerful, timely, and transformative artistic experience.

By weaving together dance, poetry, design, and universal storytelling, Survival invites audiences not only to witness but to feel the endurance of the human spirit—and to carry that spark of hope into their own lives and communities.

3. Project Execution & Timeline

Auditions: Mid-late October 2025
Rehearsals start: November 2025
Performance date: End of February 2026

4. Required Materials

Theatre, costuming, dance studio space, 15-20 dancers, props

5. Durability & Maintenance Plan

6. Plans for Removal

7. Target Audience

The performance will offer a community talkback/discussion afterward to invite dialogue about the themes with the choreographers and dancers.

8. Under-Served Audience (optional)**9. Artistic Goals**

Receiving this grant would directly support my vision of making *Survival* not only a meaningful production for the audience but also a deeply enriching and accessible opportunity for the dancers themselves.

As a small business owner, I typically ask performers to contribute a small fee to help cover costumes, rehearsal space, and production costs. While this model has allowed us to create in the past, it can also present a barrier to participation. With this grant, my artistic goal is to remove that barrier entirely—to offer this production as a free opportunity for every dancer involved. I want dancers to feel the freedom of creating and performing without financial pressure, focusing instead on their artistry, growth, and collaboration.

Beyond removing participation fees, the grant would help us cover costume design, staging, and other production costs, ensuring the dancers have the highest-quality experience possible. It would also give us the ability to dream bigger: if ticket sales are successful, I would love to take the next step and actually pay my dancers for their work. That has always been my long-term goal—to value dancers not only artistically but also financially for the time, effort, and heart they pour into their craft.

Ultimately, this grant would allow me to align the production with my deeper artistic mission: to create meaningful, story-driven dance experiences that are both accessible and transformative—for performers and audiences alike. Instead of worrying about costs, dancers can step fully into the work, and audiences can witness the purest expression of movement and story. The grant would not only make *Survival* possible, it would bring us closer to a sustainable model where dancers are honored and supported for the invaluable art they create.

Media**"Int/Adv Contemporary Performance - Heal by Tom Odell"**

Media/Materials: Dance

Size:

(Video)

**"Artspire Performance 2023"**

Media/Materials: Dance

Size:

(Video)

EXPENSES		
Therapy (month)		\$0
Counseling (22 people x \$50)		\$1,100
Chiropractor		\$4,000
Drugs (month) (\$500/mo)		\$500
		\$7,200

Project Budget

151.1 KB

Provided by Applicant

Therapy (month)

Counseling (22 people x \$50)

Chiropractor

Drugs (month) (\$500/mo)

\$0

\$1,100

\$4,000

\$500

\$7,200

EXPENSES	
Theatre Rental	\$200
Catering (20 people x \$50)	\$1,000
Choreographer	\$4,000 Based on 4 hours every Sunday for 4 months (64 hours)
Studio Rental (\$50/day)	\$200 Based on 2 hours every Sunday for 4 months (64 hours)
	\$7,200