

## Dance for All Bodies

**Summary:** The mission of Dance for All Bodies (DfAB) is to empower communities with limb differences to feel more self-confident, united, and dynamic through the medium of dance and to make dance a more inclusive art form for people with disabilities. The program achieves this mission by organizing monthly adaptive (interpretive, adapted to their own physical abilities) dance classes for people with limb differences in the Bay Area.

### **Problem Statement:**

Losing a limb can be an incredibly traumatic event. One of the biggest post-surgery challenges for amputees is finding and keeping motivation to get back to a pre-trauma routine. Having a body part amputated is something that can “change your self identity”<sup>12</sup>, according to an amputee who shares his story in a video series about post-surgery recovery. Yagmur, one of the co-founders of Dance for All Bodies, noticed these challenges during her weekly volunteer work in the Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital (ZSFGH) as a member of the Functional Limb Service (FLS) team. As a volunteer, Yagmur is responsible for organizing monthly support groups where amputees at all life stages come together for discussion and activities. Support groups have been crucial in building a space for amputees and their caregivers to connect and socialize so that they don’t have to endure post-surgery challenges without support and guidance.



Photo 1.1 : Two participants dancing together in December class

### **Collecting User Feedback and Surveys**

Last summer (2018), support group participants requested to have an adaptive dance class. As organized this first class, Yagmur noticed there were not any adaptive dance classes offered specifically for people with limb differences (also known as PWLD), which include those born with limb differences (congenital) and those who acquired them through amputations. Since that summer, the DfAB team has organized three adaptive dance classes at ZSFGH, which have been financially supported by FLS. The team designed surveys to ask PWLD whether they would be interested in ongoing adaptive dance classes. The surveys (see Appendix 2) asked questions about general interest in dance, how often dance classes will take place, and other qualitative questions. Survey responses from 23 individuals, who have limb differences, and their families, reveal that they would like to have these classes to socialize, feel more confident in themselves, and benefit from the physical aspect of dance.

### **Why Dance?**

Dance is a powerful tool that can influence three factors that impact the lives of PWLD by addressing **social isolation, overall emotional wellbeing, and physical or functional abilities.**

#### **1. Building Community**

Research shows that social isolation is a significant issue for amputees<sup>10</sup>. One of the participants we interviewed shared that dancing made them feel, “a strong connection to everyone in the class”. Based on our discussions with participants, the team noticed that dance helps create an inclusive community for

the participants. Another participant stated that they like interacting with “able-bodied and adaptive friends” in the class.

Dance promotes community building because it brings someone out of isolation and puts them in a community of like-minded individuals<sup>1</sup>. As humans, we all want to feel a sense of belonging. Based on one interview with Alex Hetherington, a prosthetist employee at UCSF who organizes many recreational activities for amputees, we learned that adaptive recreational events are valuable because “they take the minds of amputees from their limb and bring their attention to working in a group and having fun”. Hetherington believes a similar experience is possible with dance. He also stated that amputees have specifically requested dance events and that their team at UCSF supports this opportunity and wants to help it scale.

## **2. Emotional Wellness**

Dance is a very powerful source for improving the emotional wellbeing of individuals, especially for those dealing with post-trauma affects related to limb loss. Dance has been proven to increase serotonin release — the happiness hormone — which creates a state of well-being and enhances motivation<sup>4</sup>. This is important for amputees as research shows that 30-35% of amputees experience clinical depression and many others face high levels of anxiety and emotional stress<sup>6</sup>. Additionally, studies have shown that physical activities have a positive impact on body image perception, which can help PWLD feel more positive about their bodies<sup>9</sup>. This was validated by many survey respondents, who mentioned that dance classes help them build self-confidence.

## **3. Physical Health and Functional Benefits**

The physical benefits of dance are valuable in helping amputees adjust to their new physical situation. Research shows that 50% of amputees fall within the first year after their amputation and 40% of these falls result in injuries<sup>7</sup>. Research and our discussions with students and physical therapists have shown that dance can improve balance<sup>14</sup>. 10 respondents for the surveys stated that dance will let them work on their balance. During these classes amputees get to work on balance because they do moves standing up, close to the ground, with or without a prosthesis. This gives them a wide range of motions to experience and allows them to move in ways that would otherwise be inaccessible to them.

## **Target Community: People with Limb Differences**

After conducting surveys, getting advice from experts in the field, and discussing this project in the community, we came across two fundamental questions: **Who is the target audience for these classes? Who identifies themselves as amputees?**

We found answers to these questions by consulting advisors with differently abled bodies, discussing with orthopedic healthcare providers, and surveying attendees at adaptive recreational events. At an adaptive basketball event, we learned that in addition to the amputee community we currently work with, individuals born with limb differences (missing limb) are also interested in this type of dance program. These individuals might not have gone through a traumatic limb-loss event like many amputees, nevertheless they face similar experiences. People with congenital limb differences may have to adapt to using a prosthesis, an artificial limb, or going to physical therapy. Consequently, the team decided to expand the definition of our target community to people with limb differences or PWLD, which felt very natural as it aligns with DfAB’s goal to use dance to enable individuals to feel dynamic, self-confident, and connected with others facing similar challenges. DfAB is an easily replicable and scalable model for

dance classes that is inclusive to those with physical disabilities. We believe that this model is flexible to be recreated in other communities who feel unrepresented in conventional dance programs.

**Existing Solutions**

**1.Target community, regularly scheduled classes, and cost of program**

DfAB brings something new into the community because it provides a creative, social, and inclusive dance space specifically for PWLD. AXIS, based in Oakland, is a dance company that mainly focuses on dance performances, but also holds monthly improvisational dance classes for people of all abilities. These classes cost money and are not regularly offered to the public. AXIS classes target people of all physical abilities and are not specifically designed for the PWLD community. DfAB does provide a customized class tailored to the PWLD community, our target market. We prioritize creating a space for people with limb differences to connect with each other. Additionally, DfAB offers these classes free of charge, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> weekend of the month.

**2. Athletic opportunities**

Even though dance classes are not available to our target community (PWLD), there are other recreational activities such as crossfit, swimming, rock-climbing or running offered through various organizations. However, based on our qualitative interviews with experts working in this field, these classes are only attractive to those already interested in sports, and in many cases these offerings exclude women, who might not be interested in these activities. Two prosthetists at Bay Area hospitals, Nicole Henry and Alex Hetherington, also highlighted that there is more stigma towards women amputees showing their prostheses in public than there is towards men, and engaging in sports might increase this possibility, making women feel more uncomfortable. An interview we had with an adaptive woman athlete, who helps run a Bay Area adaptive women’s support group, revealed that lots of women with limb differences have interest in taking these dance classes. DfAB is specifically designed to address this demand, therefore targeting a market that would otherwise be excluded from dance.



Photo 1.2: Participants dancing together in February class

**3. Age-specific programs**

Dance for All Bodies stands out also because it offers age-specific dance classes. For the past three pilot classes, the average age group has been middle aged adults (35-45 yrs) and after conducting surveys, we noticed a demand for classes intended for a younger demographic, which led the team to incorporate additional classes for youth into the DfAB model. Some of the respondents, who were families of children with limb differences, stated that they want their children to learn how to dance, feel more confident, and meet others who have limb differences. Thus, by adding age-specific programs, we are cognizant of being inclusive to participants at different ages or who are in different stages of healing.

Table 1.1 Existing Solutions

Companies →		Amputee Comprehensive Training (ACT) Program	FLS Support Group	Bay Area Outreach Program (BORP)	San Francisco CrossFit	All Bodies Dance
Indicators (below)	AXIS Dance Jams	Amputees but inclusive to all limb differences.	Amputees	People with differently abled bodies.	People with differently abled bodies.	People with limb differences.
Target Community	People with and without physical disabilities.	Amputees but inclusive to all limb differences.	Amputees	People with differently abled bodies.	People with differently abled bodies.	People with limb differences.
Physical Accessibility	Accessible for people in the	Accessible by public	Accessible by public	Accessible by public	Not very accessible by	Accessible by public

	East Bay.	transport.	transport.	transport.	public transport.	transport
Cost	Not free	Free	Free	Not free	Free	Free
Activity	Improvisational dance	Rock climbing, running, basketball, etc.	Discussion, presentations and activities.	Adaptive sports and recreation	CrossFit	Dance
Schedule	Not regular, but monthly.	Not regular, hosts 3-4 different events in 1 year.	Regular, 3rd Tuesdays of the month.	Regular - weekly schedules.	Regular - every Saturday.	Regular - every Saturday.
Age Group	All ages	All ages	All ages	Age specific	Adults	Youth and adults

We have already established a connection with **Amputee Coalition**, a non-profit organization that organizes national conferences and partners with hospitals that provide services to amputees. We plan to host another adaptive dance class in Berkeley on March 30th, for a conference on Limb Loss Education hosted by Amputee Coalition. Yagmur, who shares updates on DfAB classes on monthly conference calls with Amputee Coalition partners in different states, is working on scaling up the project to other locations.

Connections with BORP, AXIS, and UC Berkeley’s Dance Department as well as the directors of AXIS and Joe Goode Performance Company, have already enabled the DfAB team to form connections with potential dance instructors and dance spaces in the Bay Area. Our team also plans to reach out to two adaptive performing arts groups: All Bodies Dance, based in Canada, and Kinetic Light, based in Cleveland Ohio, for choreographic collaboration and expanding the program to these new locations.

**Proposed Innovation:**

Dance for All Bodies is a viable, scalable solution for connecting art to social change through dance classes. DfAB coordinates the disparate administrative, financial, and scheduling aspects of a dance class, so that all participants need to do is simply come to a class to reap the emotional, physical, and psychological benefits of dance. A DfAB class satisfies all of the major concerns stated by the survey respondents by ensuring ADA accessible dance spaces, experienced dance teachers, and facilitating a creative and therapeutic shared experience.

Based on our survey responses, classes will be 1 hour long and will occur midday on a Saturday at an ADA accessible venue that is reachable by public transit. The team has already identified appropriate San Francisco locations for these classes and BORP and AXIS have offered DfAB space to pilot the East Bay classes for free. Here is an outline of a typical class agenda:

- Teacher: Stephanie Bastos, past member of AXIS Dance Company
- Location: Joe Goode Annex. Accessible by public transport
- 11:00 - 11:15AM: Adult class participants arrive, greet each other, and teacher introduces class
- 11:15AM - 11:30PM: Group warm up
- 11:30AM - 12:30PM: Teacher leads movement exercises, choreography, and other activities
- 12:30PM - 1:00PM: Participants, teachers, and class organizers socialize over light snacks
- 1:00PM - 2:00PM: Class for youth, age 7-17, which follows the same format as adult class.

The content of the class is designed by the class's teacher, but we are constantly asking for input from the participants to design the classes according to their needs and to create a variety of options for different dance styles (see appendix 3). Most teachers devise their own disability-inclusive methods and some have used methodologies that integrate disability accommodations into dance education.

For lots of people in the limb difference community, leaving the comfort of home for an outside event is not simple or without obstacles. Based on discussions and past experiences from classes we have organized, the DfAB teams expects that physical accessibility, one-on-one physical support during class, and emotional accessibility will be important factors to consider in crafting these classes. We have developed solutions to these challenges that improve the viability and impact of this project.

### **1. Transportation & Physical Accessibility of Venue**

Challenge: ParaTransit services are challenging for individuals with physical disabilities. Our surveys have shown that public transport is the most common way PWLD get to events according to our surveys.

Solutions:

- Offering pre-filled subway tickets for BART, the Bay Area's rail transit system, which can be used to cover transportation costs to the event.
- Hosting classes that are accessible by public transportation and are ADA accessible. We are already in contact with dance spaces that fit this criteria such as the Joe Goode Annex and BORP in Berkeley.

### **2. In Class Physical Support**

Challenge: In-class physical support is very important as we want to make sure every attendee feels safe to move their body in new ways, which requires having people who can provide immediate physical support in case of sudden falls or other emergencies.

Solutions:

- Recruit volunteers who have a dance background, physical therapy experience, and experience working with people who have an amputation, by reaching out to local hospitals and universities with dance therapy programs.

### **3. Inclusive and Adaptive Space**

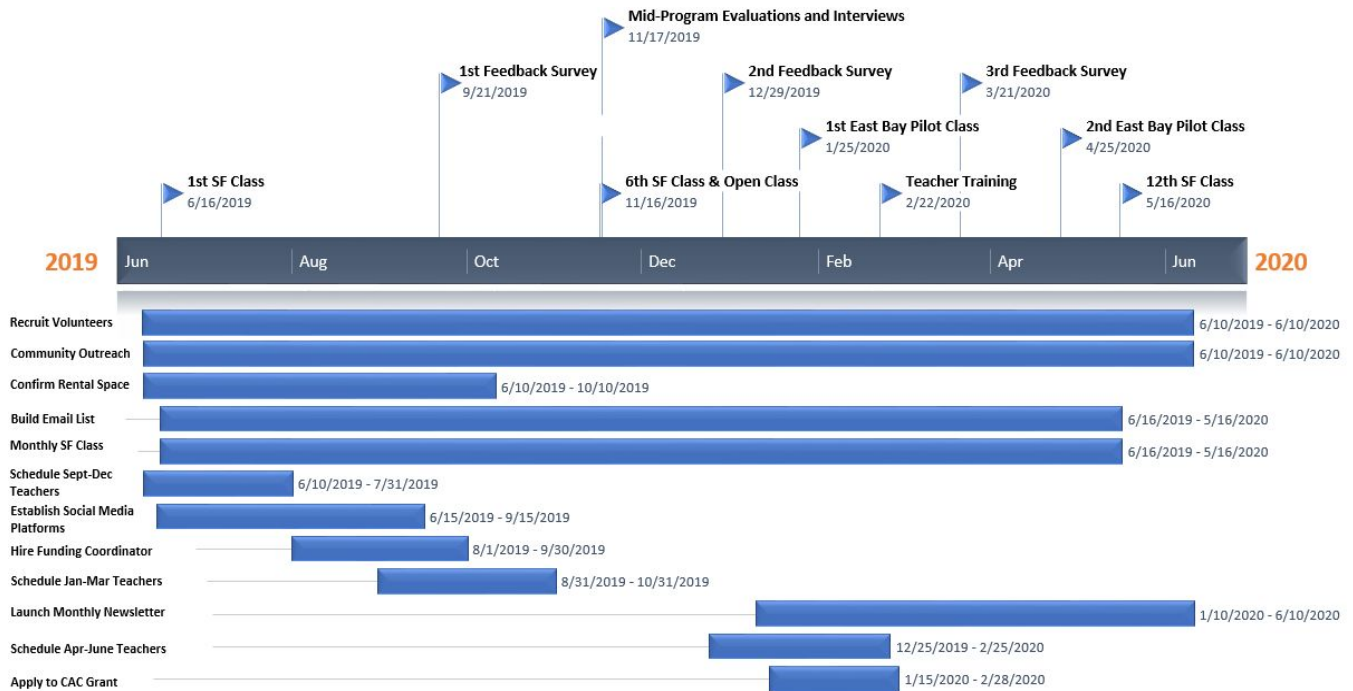
Challenge: Many participants don't have previous experience dancing or moving in expressive ways that can be adapted to their bodies, which can make dance an emotionally and physically inaccessible activity.

Solutions:

- Recruit teachers with experience leading adaptive dance classes, who know how to use interpretive language to create an inclusive class environment. Outreach is directed towards AXIS artists, BORP teachers, and faculty from the Department of Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies at UC Berkeley.
- Organize teacher trainings on teaching adaptive dance classes to encourage more dancers to learn how to make their classes more inclusive.

The team will continue to create an inclusive and non-judgmental space for PWLD to dance, express themselves, and find community in shared experience, through continuous discussions with the community. Though there are challenges to making this goal a reality, the team has devised ways around these challenges, as a result of conversations with PWLD, parents, and caregivers, to make our program viable.

## Implementation Timeline



We will start by establishing monthly adaptive dance classes in SF on the 3rd Saturdays of the month as we already have connections with the SF PWLD community from pilot classes. Then, we plan to scale up the program to the East Bay. We will recruit volunteer students, dancers, dance therapists, and physical therapy practitioners to provide physical assistance in class through connections with local dance organizations and hospitals. An Open Class, where participants will bring their family and friends to dance with them or be active observers, will occur about six months into the program in late November. We envision this class to be an opportunity for families to meet each other and enjoy dancing together! Ultimately, we envision bimonthly adaptive dance classes — one in San Francisco and one in the East Bay — for adults and youth with limb differences that will create community, encourage creative personal expression, and a sense of joy for people regardless of shape, size, or ability.

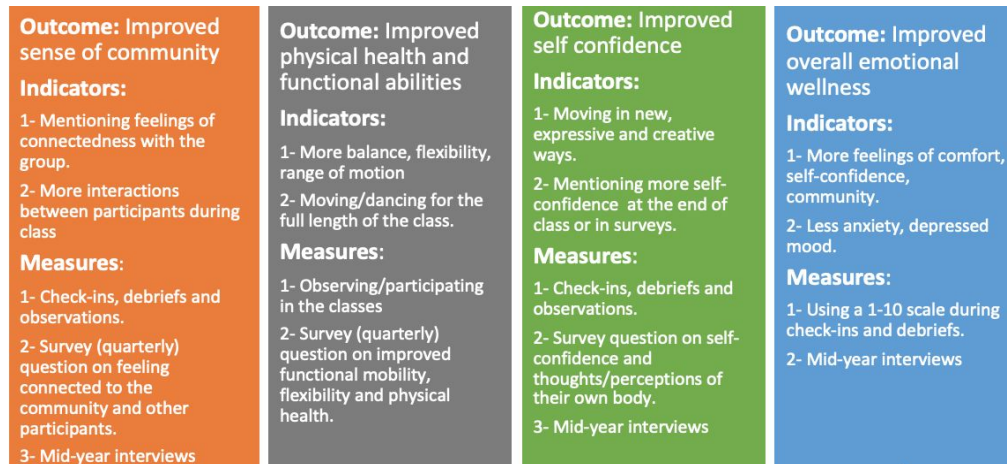
In early 2020, we will:

- Organize a workshop on teaching adaptive dance classes to train more teachers in inclusive dance practices, aiming to expand our pool of qualified teachers. We plan to collaborate with the co-founders of AXIS, Bonnie Lewkowicz and Judith Smith, who have been advising us and helping us reach out to disability organizations and communities in the Bay Area.
- Establish social media platforms to share photos, videos, and updates about our classes.
- Launch a monthly newsletter in 2020, which will be shared with our stakeholders.

## Measuring Success

All Bodies Dance has four key outcomes, all of which are interconnected, which will be measured both qualitatively and quantitatively through a mixed methods approach.

Diagram 1.1 Key Outcomes, Indicators and Measures



For our methods of measurement, we plan to conduct **surveys** (see Appendix 1) on a quarterly basis at the end of a class to get feedback about the program and learn how these classes have impacted participants. These surveys will include questions where individuals can rank their **physical, functional, emotional wellbeing** before and after the dance class. In addition, we plan to have comment cards available at all classes which will allow individuals to give anonymous feedback on the classes.

To complement the surveys, we will do in-person and informal **mid-year interviews** with participants to get a more personal idea of how dance has impacted them. We will hold short **check-ins** at the beginning and **debriefs** at the end of all classes, so participants can share their thoughts and feelings immediately and organizers can incorporate that feedback into future classes, thus creating an iterative model. During check-ins and debriefs we will ask participants to share how they are feeling on a 1-10 scale, which will allow us to see the impact the classes have on the overall emotional wellbeing of the individual. We also **actively participate** and **observe** the classes as additional ways to measure the effect of dance on improvements of functional abilities, such as balance, flexibility and endurance. To sum up, the qualitative info combined with the quantitative data will play a very important role in giving us a holistic understanding of the impact of these classes.

**Budget**

Section 1. Projected Expenses			
Expenses	Details	Per Use	Yearly
Space Rental	Dance studio estimate from Joe Goode Annex (with ADA accessibility) and other accessible dance spaces (12 sessions/year)	\$200	\$2,400
Teachers	*For a total of two hours of teaching, one hour class for youth and adults each (total yearly cost for 14 sessions a year).	\$200	\$2,800
Light Snacks	Nut bars, small snacks for the classes	\$50	\$600
Transportation	Public transportation (estimate \$8 round trip). Tickets will be offered to class participants, volunteers and teachers.	\$100	\$1,200
Managers	For two managers who will be organizing the classes.	\$100	\$1,200
Promotional Materials	** Printing flyers for promoting these classes and finding volunteers	\$15	\$225
<b>Total Yearly Expenses</b>			<b>\$8,425</b>

Section 2. Projected Revenue		
Source of Revenue	Details	Total
Crowdfunding	*** To cover costs for East Bay classes, teacher training and other accommodations for inclusivity (through Indiegogo, etc.)	\$2,500
Fundraising	Plan to do fundraising during the open class	\$100
California Arts Council Grant	Anticipated, not secured yet.	\$5,000
<b>Total Revenue</b>		<b>\$7,600</b>

### Budget Analysis:

\*Because BORP and AXIS both offered to let DfAB use their space free of charge for two pilot classes, the budget for space rental only includes the 12 dance classes we will have from June 2019 to June 2020. The yearly budget for teachers includes payment for a total of 14 classes; 12 in San Francisco and 2 in East Bay.

\*\* Promotional material will be used to do outreach in university campuses in the Bay Area to find volunteers and a financial manager. Additionally, we will connect with disability service programs and hospitals in the Bay Area through flyers, social media platforms, and newsletters. For additional revenue, we will apply for the California Arts Council (CAC) Grant for arts organizations that serve individuals with disabilities. We will fundraise at the Open Class where participants will be able to bring in friends and family to watch and participate.

\*\*\*The revenue we get through crowdfunding will be used to expand classes to the East Bay, offering language translation/interpreter services, and organizing teacher training. Offering interpreter services aims to make the classes more accessible to non-English speaking participants. The remaining revenue will go towards covering the costs for space rental for the teacher training (see Appendix 4 for a similar training by AXIS) for dancers who are interested in teaching adaptive dance classes.

### Team Members

Yağmur Halezeroğlu, the Executive Director of DfAB, is a dancer who is passionate about community work and bringing dance back to the people. She demonstrates her enthusiasm for this through her volunteer work with Functional Limb Service, where she has started organizing adaptive dance and yoga classes. She also loves teaching and organizing swing dance classes as facilitator of SwingCal, a student run class at UC Berkeley.

Tess Hanson, the Head of Operations of DfAB, has extensive experience building and managing projects from the ground up. She has done this through her work at the Berkeley Student Cooperative and Cal Performances. She loves making organizations that share her love for community, cooperation, and fun, run smoothly and effectively. She is a dancer as well and has plans to never stop.

Michelle Zhang, the Outreach and Design Manager, has already created the logo, event flyers, and outreach materials for the past dance classes. She is a self-taught designer and has experience working for one of Berkeley's largest dance groups, AFX.



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## Appendix

### 1- Adaptive Dance Class Feedback Form: <https://goo.gl/forms/bqjPdEj5Rmy0oT9j2>

We used this feedback form after the three pilot classes we held in ZSFGH. These allowed us to get feedback on the classes and find ways to improve them.

Questions we included in the form:

1. How accessible was San Francisco General Hospital?
2. Do you have any suggestions for other locations in San Francisco where we can host these events?
3. Was the length of the dance class too short, too long or about right?
4. What other kinds of dance classes would you like to see?
5. How were the sandwiches and snacks?
6. Would you rather have these classes on a weekend or a Friday? How about the time of the event?
7. Any other comments or suggestions about the class or the teacher?

### 2- Adaptive Dance Class Surveys: Below are images of the survey template we used when we reached out to the PWLD community at adaptive recreational events to gauge interest in Dance for All Bodies.

My friend, Tess, and I, Yağmur, are avid dancers who want to make dance, and its mental and emotional health benefits, accessible to everyone regardless of physical condition or functional ability. We hope to build ongoing adaptive dance classes in the Bay Area that offer people with amputations and/or different limb functions/abilities, their respective families, and caregivers an outlet for community, creative expression, and fun.  
To create and implement this project in the best way possible, we need your input! Responses to this survey and community input will help us tailor these classes to communities of folks with amputations/limb losses and other interested folks and, very importantly, help us secure outside funding to make these classes a reality.

Name:

Email address or phone:

Do you identify as an amputee or a friend/family/ caregiver of an amputee?

Have you ever taken an adaptive dance class before? If yes, how was that experience for you? What did you like, what would you like to be changed?

Would you like to take ongoing adaptive dance classes? Yes / No

If yes, how often would you like to have them?

- Once a month
- Once every other month

Would you like to have classes in SF or East Bay?

- SF
- East Bay

What would make these dance classes valuable and exciting to you?

What kind of transportation would help you attend these events?

- Bus to the event and back
- Paratransit
- Carpooling
- Public Transport
- Reimbursement for Uber etc.

What are some things you would like to gain from these dance classes?

What kind of dances would you like to do?

- Improvisational, modern dance (mirroring movements, forming shapes and structures, moving in creative ways)
- Partner dancing (salsa, tango, swing dancing, etc)
- Ethnic, cultural dances (West African, Spanish, Traditional Balkan dances, Folk dances, etc.)

How long should these classes be?

- o 45 minutes
- o 1 hour
- o 1.5 hours
- o 2 hours

How important is it to have a time to socialize before or after the dance event?

- 1 (Not very important)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 (Very important, I would love to get to know other folks!)
- 

What are some things that would incentivize you to attend these events?

- Food/light snacks at the event
- Easy transportation to the venue
- Free event!

3- Different Dance Styles: We hope to shape our classes based on interest from the community. Our surveys indicate there is interest amongst the PWLD community for classes that teach a specific style of dance such as hip hop/urban dance or salsa as opposed to just improvisation/modern dance, which is what the three pilot classes centered on. We are currently collaborating with Orchestra Gold, a local West African dance group, to organize such a class for our project. The team is planning an adaptive salsa workshop for a future class.

#### 4- AXIS Summer Intensive Teacher Training:

Below is more information about the teacher training AXIS provides over the summer, which we plan to use as a template for our training. This is an outline of the curriculum:

- The AXIS Dance Company teacher-training course is designed for teachers of dance and experienced artists interested in developing their teaching skills in leading integrated dance in an inclusive and supportive environment. Students will explore the following areas:
  - Open door policy - Removing any physical and emotional barriers that prevent people with disabilities from attending class
  - Universal language and communication
  - Exploring a variety of dance techniques, disciplines and approaches to teaching dance
  - Stripping away the myths of integrated dance for a realistic approach to teaching inclusivity
  - To challenge and be challenged - a mutual dialogue of respect between teacher and student
  - Body specificity - Working with different bodies to ensure all are challenged and learning
  - Develop useful tools and skills to put into practice
  - Ensuring best practice in integrated dance
  - Build teachers' confidence and set up a teachers' network for future support