

Included here are various ways that several applicants who were ultimately funded in 2020 responded to the narrative questions in the LAB application. Though their answers vary in length and tone, each provided enough information to successfully convey their vision to reviewers and make clear how their proposed projects aligned with LAB's guidelines and priorities. The questions they responded to are the same in the 2021 application.

Project descriptions

QUESTION FROM THE APPLICATION:

Project description instructions

In the field below, please describe in detail the project for which funding is requested. Address as many of these questions as will help reviewers gain the strongest sense of your project.

- What are your goals for the project and what specifically will you create/present/produce?
- What is the inspiration for the project? What makes it new work?
- How is the project stretching your creative muscle or presenting an opportunity for growth or learning? Are there elements of risk or experimentation in the work or the process? What makes it exciting or important?
- Describe key aspects of your creative practice, process, and methods to develop and implement the work.
- How does the creation of this work relate to your artistic and career/organizational goals?
- Who are intended audiences for this work?

Applicant 1 response

The Human Rights Campaign reports only four percent of the US population identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT), with Massachusetts containing the highest percentage of any other state, coming in at 5 percent. Yet, “on a per capita basis, LGBT people are more likely to be targets of hate crimes than any other group in America,” according to The Fenway Institute and The Boston Foundation’s 2018 Equity and Equality Report, with more than a fifth reporting hate crimes perpetrated based on the victim’s sexual orientation or gender identity.

Many advances in LGBTQ rights have been made in recent years, but anti-LGBTQ legislation continues to be filed. On January 24, 2020, Tennessee signed into law the first anti-LGBTQ bill of 2020 allowing foster-care agencies to operate according to their moral or religious beliefs. Discriminatory practices such as these have an adverse effect on the LGBTQ community, which is disproportionately affected by depression and anxiety. “Among a sample of LGBTQ youth of color in Greater Boston, 40 percent reported symptoms of depression/anxiety and 20 percent reported having attempted suicide,” the Equity and Equality Report states.

My project will be a socially-conscious Afro-Latin dance project that seeks to draw attention to discrimination faced by the LGBTQ community and the adverse effects it can have on mental health. In a coordinated public effort, the aim is to foster social acceptance of the queer community, educate the public on discriminatory practices and mobilize efforts to improve mental health in the community. The proposed plan is as follows:

1. A public, online page will be developed with educational content on anti-LGBTQ discrimination and mental health as well as information to local resources.
2. A series of ten impromptu Afro-Latin social dance videos will be filmed in public spaces throughout Greater Boston prior to the month of October to attract initial attention to the initiative. These will be performed in front of unsuspecting audiences in collaboration with different artists for each filming.
3. A series of flash mobs of Afro-Latin dance will be carried out on Mental Health Day, at key public and commercial spaces throughout Greater Boston to unsuspecting audiences. They will feature same-sex dance partners and allies who will assemble at the locations, dance to a song for five minutes, and quickly disperse.
4. Organization for the flash mobs will be coordinated via the internet and local dance instructors. I will be creating choreography for members of the LGBTQ Afro-Latin dance community and allies to perform.
5. An intensive media/press outreach will be made for the project, and the flash mobs will be

filmed to be released via social media for a wider audience reach.

6. Partnerships will be coordinated with businesses to provide opportunities and mental health resources for the community.

This project will highlight current cultural stereotypes and challenge gender norms through the lens of Afro-Latin dance. The international reach of this dance/music industry presents a significant opportunity for exposure. In particular, salsa and bachata are some of the most popular and sought after social dances worldwide, yet they are also often regarded as some of the most gender-binary examples of partner dancing. A google search of “Latin dancers” will pop up pages of images of straight males and females with Eurocentric features. Presenting same-sex partner dances within the context of such traditionally gender-binary dances is likely to receive public push back, but it is also an accessible way to stimulate conversation that can shift social perspectives and inspire action for change.

Although I will be planning and managing the organization of this multi-dimensional project, I will be collaborating with other artists in Greater Boston for marketing, community outreach, graphic work, and videography. This allows me to both highlight the importance of my work while pushing my artistry on a more scalable level. Through it, I hope to increase LGBTQ visibility in mainstream culture by transporting audiences into a world of queer bodies in public spaces and inviting them to process what it means to be inclusive in today’s society.

Applicant 2 response

We will present a three-actor, African-American adaptation of "The Tempest" performed in both spoken word and Sign Language. Our production will explore how colonial power and traditions define not only the language we use but our very sense of identity and the way that we look at ourselves. In our production, language serves as both a tool of personal freedom and a weapon of control.

We create Micro-Theatre: fully produced, professional productions of Shakespeare and other great dramas reimagined for no more than three actors. Our productions celebrate language, storytelling and transformation. They travel anywhere there is room for a small stage and an audience. We bring these timeless stories to schools, retirement communities, assisted living facilities, community arts centers, anywhere people gather and live, presented by professional actors performing with clarity and passion.

We believe that constraints breed creativity and invention. By refining great plays like "The Tempest" down to their essence, and using no more than three actors, we highlight the essential features that make live theatre compelling: beautiful language, passionate storytelling, and the remarkable ability of skilled actors to transform before your eyes. Our unique approach makes these texts fresh again, engaging the audience in the active process of creating the story.

Our production of "The Tempest" will use three African-American actors, one to cover Prospero, the magician; one to play the spirit Ariel and Prospero's daughter Miranda; and a third to play Prospero's slave Caliban and Miranda's lover Ferdinand. "The Tempest" arises out of England's colonial ambitions in the Caribbean, and so using three actors of color will illuminate the themes of subjugation and freedom, duty and rebellion, love and vengeance, that run through this great work.

The inspiration for this ambitious adaptation arose organically when a deaf actor and prominent member of the Boston theater community auditioned for the role of Ariel. It was an extraordinary theatrical moment that exposed the different kinds of language that the play uses. Inspired by that actors' performance and Caliban's iconic line "You taught me language and my profit on't is I know how to curse," the idea arose that sign language would be the indigenous language of the magical island.

The script will marry Shakespeare's timeless verse with the vigorous physical poetry of American Sign Language, creating a fresh form of expression that illuminates the story for all viewers in provocative ways. It will give hearing audiences exposure to the expressive power of American Sign Language and will provide access for hearing impaired audiences to share in the community that this production will gather.

This collaboration is an example of how increased accessibility is not only a crucial matter of

equity but a rich source of creative vision. When we remove the boundaries between the hearing and Deaf worlds, we can create work that is truly innovative. Building this bridge is a challenge for everyone involved, be they artists or audience.

Our goal for this production is to create a performance that communicates to both hearing and Deaf audiences. While ASL is the primary communication method for Ariel, we will incorporate projection into our design to display some of the text. Language is magic in "The Tempest", and Ariel can make words appear as he signs, ensuring that audience members who are not ASL-fluent can follow the story. However, not all of the signed text will be captioned, inviting our hearing audiences to experience moments of Language that may not be familiar to them.

Our plan is to present ASL interpreted performances and host conversations with the Deaf community about the issues and themes of the production, as well as providing a platform for our Deaf artists to share their experiences.

To allow this piece to realize its fullest potential, we plan a multi-step process. We presented a single scene at our benefit in October, introducing the performance dynamic of a scene featuring both a signing and a speaking character. Our next step is a spring workshop, to fully develop the language modes of the performance and complete the ASL translation.

After we've documented this work and debriefed on what we've learned, we will prepare a full production that will take place in early fall 2020. This will be fully staged and designed and will run for two weeks open to the general public. Moving forward from that production, "The Tempest" will enter our touring repertoire, traveling to schools, assisted living facilities, libraries, community centers, and more in the Greater Boston Area.

Applicant 3 response

I am a hip-hop artist from Boston, Massachusetts. My sound is heavily based in trap music while presenting themes of sexual empowerment, feminism, grief, domestic and sexual violence, among other topics. I present my albums as conceptually and theme driven bodies of work. My first album _____ was about the stages of being a single woman (freedom, meeting someone new, having your heart broken and then anger). My second album _____ was presented as a conversation between a man and woman about relationship issues, domestic and sexual violence, crushed expectations and empowerment.

_____ will be a visual and concept album and my 3rd complete body of work. Compiled of 12 songs, broken into 4 suites or “colors,” the main concepts of the album will be Black Girl Magic, represented by the color yellow, Grief/Trauma, represented by the color blue, Passion/Sexual Awakening, represented by the color pink and Rage represented by the color red. Each suite will begin with a poetry interlude, each performed by different Boston based poets that will reflect the main themes of the songs to follow. The accompanying visual album will have 4 different Boston based directors, so that each suite has significant visual and stylistic differences, while still following a narrative when compiled together. The narrative of the visual components of the album, as well as the overarching theme, is the complexities and different emotions within a fat Black woman living in America. Each suite will be presented will include the poet that is attached as a character within that vinyet, as well as having the color prominently featured.

This album will be new and stretch me because of the cinematic element that will be the main way to consume the music. While I filmed a short, comedic short film and a separate music video to accompany my second album, this album will be completely presented visually. The narrative will tie together the “colors” and each song, but the visual film is extremely important to the consumption of the work because of things I want to convey that wouldn’t be possible through just the songs themselves or interludes. Upon completion, I would like to present this new body of work in its entirety. The release show will encompass not only the music of the album, some of which will be accompanied by live instrumentation, but also the presentation of the visual film that will accompany the album, dancing and theater pieces presented by actors. The performance piece will present the visual album as if it were happening live in front of the audience. Instead of just showing the film, live actors will present the theater aspects incorporated into the film, the featured poets will also present their pieces. The performance piece will bring the visual album to life so that the viewing audience feels as if they are experiencing it themselves. The intended audience is people that enjoy hip hop and/or poetry but who want to experience both in a new, exciting way. My music heavily relies on my lived experiences as a fat, Black, queer woman, but I feel that the messages are still universal, so that most people can find something that they relate to.

Partners and collaborators

QUESTION FROM THE APPLICATION:

Partners and collaborators instructions

In the field below, please describe any team members, artistic, creative, or technical collaborators, and organizational or community partners.

*If you are applying on behalf of a group of artists or an organization, who are the core artistic members of the team for your project, and what will their roles be? NOTE: Here "core artistic members" are the co-owners of your project and provide creative input. Core members are not people hired to provide a service to the project, such as set-designers, camera operators, lighting designers, etc.

*Who will be involved as collaborators and partners in the creation, presentation, and/or production of the work? What will their contributions be?

Applicant 1 response

██████████ is an award-winning Afro-Latin dance specialist and community advocate who is committed to creating socially-conscious art that stimulates conversation and helps audiences see our world from a different perspective. She will be coordinating logistics, accounting, press outreach, and relevant choreography for this project.

██████████ is the "Queer Eye" for Greater Boston artists. She is a photographer, videographer, and graphic designer who currently resides in Quincy, Massachusetts. As a collaborator, she will be overseeing all filming, video editing, and graphic work. There is nothing she loves more than to promote other artists who are following their true passion in life. Capturing and highlighting people's talents, skills, and their most authentic selves is what she does best.

██████████ is a project kickstarted by ██████████ and friends of the salsa/bachata community to make Afro-Latin dance more accessible to the LGBTQ community. The ██████████ media team will be collaborators and assisting in media outreach.

██████████ will also be collaborating with various queer artists in the Afro-Latin dance community for the performances and community outreach.

Applicant 2 response

Core Artistic Members:

██████████ Director
██████████ ASL Director and Translator
██████████ Actor
██████████, Artistic Director

Director/adaptor ██████████ – a successful local director who has directed at Central Square Theater and many other venues – has already begun work with creative director/translator ██████████ and celebrated local theatre artist ██████████ on the ASL translation. They have created a new interpretive storytelling tool that is both language and dance. It brings the magical spirit Ariel to life in a way that is unique and separate from the human characters in the play. The development of this adaptation has been driven by all of the collaborators supporting each other through this new territory, with consultation from the StageSource A11Y initiative and ██████████ of BU’s Disability and Access Services.

Artistic Director ██████████ – an Elliot Norton Award-winning artist – will provide support and oversight to the process, helping bring together the resources and people that will make this project succeed.

Collaborators and Partners:

Our spring workshop will introduce ASL Interpreters into the mix, including ██████████, an active interpreter and advocate for the Deaf community.

We have received a small grant from Cambridge Arts, and have an established relationship with the Cambridge Multicultural Arts Center, where we hope to produce the initial production in the Fall, before the show begins touring.

Other Partners include:

██████████ Actor
██████████, Actor
██████████, Sound Designer
██████████, Lighting and Projection Designer
██████████, Costume Designer

Applicant 3 response

The poets that I would love to include on this project are [REDACTED]. For the directors of the visual album, I would like to work with [REDACTED]

As this is a work I have not started to work on yet, this may change or fluctuate. However, these would be my dream collaborators.