

# All Bodies Dance Project: *Exploring Inclusivity in Dance*

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## Executive Summary

This project explores how **All Bodies Dance Project (ABDP)** can enhance inclusivity in its community-engaged and professional dance practices. It reflects on its alignment with Disability Justice (DJ) principles and Community Cultural Development (CCD) methodologies. Through this reflection, the research seeks to address barriers, celebrate diverse abilities, and foster equitable participation in dance, ensuring that all individuals, regardless of ability, can fully engage in artistic expression.

## Objectives

The primary aim of this research is to develop actionable strategies that enhance accessibility and inclusivity within ABDP's programs. The project focuses on:

-  Identifying strengths and gaps in ABDP's current practices.
-  Developing strategies and methodologies that foster greater inclusivity in all aspects of programming.
-  Increasing engagement with underrepresented participants and collaborators to reflect the diversity of the communities ABDP serves.
-  Contributing to broader conversations on equity and inclusion in dance, positioning ABDP as a model for best practices in the arts sector.

## Methodology

A qualitative approach was employed, incorporating multiple methods to ensure a holistic understanding of inclusivity:

-  **Structured Interviews**  
Engaged participants, instructors, staff, and board members to gather insights on their experiences with inclusivity and accessibility.
-  **Participant Observation**  
Observed ABDP programming (classes and performance) to witness how programming functions in terms of inclusivity.
-  **Arts-Based Reflection**  
Allowed participants to express their experiences through creative mediums (dance, drawing, creative writing), enriching the depth of collected data.
-  **Literature Review**  
Examined key works in disability arts, community development, and inclusive dance to provide a theoretical foundation.

## Key Findings



### Strong Culture of Inclusivity

ABDP creates welcoming, nonjudgmental spaces that prioritize accessibility and celebrate individual contributions, fostering a sense of belonging and community among participants of all abilities.



### Transformative Impact of Dance

Participants report significant personal growth, including increased self-confidence, emotional well-being, and developing self-advocacy skills.



### Deep Community Engagement

ABDP's focus on mutual respect and shared humanity strengthens connections among participants, with moments like warm welcomes and celebratory performances solidifying these bonds.



### Artistic Freedom and Exploration

The program's emphasis on improvisation encourages authentic self-expression and challenges traditional notions of choreography, allowing participants to transform perceived limitations into creative strengths.



### Opportunities for Growth

Accessibility barriers, such as physical infrastructure and transportation challenges, restrict full participation. Additionally, underrepresentation of individuals with disabilities in leadership roles highlights the need for increased inclusivity within the organization.

## Recommendations

To advance inclusivity and accessibility, the following strategies are recommended:

### 1 Enhance Accessibility

- Address physical barriers by conducting a site-audit for classes, rehearsals and performances
- Improve transportation support

### 3 Increase Representation

- Create leadership pathways for individuals with disabilities.
- Prioritize individuals with disabilities in recruitment practices.

### 2 Expand Community Reach

- Expand community programming to different geographic areas and/or offer more online classes.
- Partner with underrepresented groups
- Foster visibility through collaborations, partnerships and events

### 4 Maintain Artistic Freedom

- Ensure open-ended exploration (improvisation) in classes
- Encourage ongoing instructor re-training to refine inclusive facilitation practices.

By integrating these recommendations, ABDP can lead the way in creating transformative, inclusive dance environments that challenge systemic inequities and celebrate the diverse possibilities of human movement. The findings of this research not only serve ABDP but also contribute to the broader discourse on equity, accessibility, and representation in the dance sector.

## Conclusion

ABDP is a pioneering model for inclusive dance, but opportunities remain to deepen accessibility, broaden community engagement, and strengthen leadership representation. By addressing these areas, ABDP can continue fostering a more diverse, accessible, and equitable dance environment for all.