

Introduction

Established in 2020, the AIR team program was created to provide early career dance professionals an opportunity to travel the country as Assistants-In-Residence for the West Coast Dance Explosion faculty and administrative staff over the course of one season. AIR Team members gain unique insights through self-driven mentorship, networking opportunities, and job responsibilities while on tour; honing their artistic, technical, and administrative skills from some of the industries finest. WCDE company directors seek to understand the short & long term goals of the program's participants in an effort to guide them to resources that can help fuel their momentum.

Following the 2022-2023 season, WCDE staff re-imagined portions of the AIR Team program to help better support the programmatic needs of West Coast Dance Explosion events and improve the schedules of participating AIR Team members!

We are looking for three (3) Assistants-in-Residence to join us on tour this season. AIR Team is compensated with a per event stipend*. AIR Team members receive additional perks offered by our event sponsors -- not to mention the frequent flyer points!

**In addition to the weekend stipend, WCDE will book and pay for all airfare and lodging; along with ground transportation to and from the airport. All AIR Team members will receive a per diem at the rate of \$65 per day. All WCDE staff, faculty, and assistants are responsible for getting themselves to and from the airport at their home base.*

Compensation

Regional Event Rate: \$900.00 (per event)

National Event Rate: \$1,400.00 (if invitation is received - Please see 'AIR Scheduling')

Per Diem Rate: \$65.00 (per day present)

Program Eligibility

The AIR Team program is open to dancers ages 20 to 25 years old who excel in multiple dance genres/styles. Applicants must be 20 years of age by January 1st, 2026 in order to be considered. Any opportunities for previous AIR Team members are offered via invitation, subject to availability.

All applicants should also have a willingness and ability to:

- Be available for the majority of the dates on this season's tour schedule.
- Bring an energetic and positive attitude to back-to-back convention events.
- Be a responsible and dependable professional who runs on time and communicates transparently.
- Act as an ambassador of WCDE and its programming in all interactions with young dancers, their families, and their teachers.
- Support competition events as a Dressing Room Runner, Backstage Check-In Manager, or Awards Table Manager.
- Recognize appropriate boundaries with both youth and professional faculty & staff.
- Communicate any "new" arising conflicts four to six (4 to 6) weeks in advance of an event.

(WCDE will do its best to accommodate and support AIR Team members accepting opportunities and gigs that may arise on a West Coast weekend they have been scheduled for. Conflicts should be communicated directly to WCDE who will pursue all avenues for coverage. If a solution can not be found, the AIR Team member will be responsible to work the WCDE event. It is extremely difficult to consider any scheduling shifts less than 21 days prior to an event or if the AIR Team member has been booked on a non-refundable plane ticket.)

Timeline

The dates below are to demonstrate the time frames and windows when each portion of the process will take place, along with any pre-event virtual trainings. Any approximate dates are indicated as such below.

Application Opens: Monday, December 29th, 2025

Application Closes: Monday, January 12th, 2026 at 11:59pm CST (*phone interviews to follow*)

All applicants will receive a final decision either way by Friday, January 23rd, 2026.

General Regional Event Tasks Overview

This is a general overview to help demonstrate the kinds of things an AIR Team member might be responsible for over the course of any given regional event. At WCDE, we believe that “teamwork makes the dreamwork” and on occasion, you may be asked to participate in tasks that are closely related to the programming you regularly work on. These tasks reflect the 2025-2026 approach to the AIR Team program.

Thursday (Participation: Always)

AIR Team will typically travel to an event on a Thursday, assist with general event set-up in anticipation of the next day/evening’s competition. Upon arriving at an event, AIR Team members will be responsible for checking-in with the Event Directors to assist in event preparation tasks. This could include: folding merchandise, stuffing folders, applying labels, moving boxes, hanging up signs, setting up displays, etc.

Following the completion of all event preparation tasks, AIR Team is able to enjoy the hotel amenities, grocery shop, etc.

Friday (Participation: Always)

Based on the size of the event, Competition can begin as early as 7:00am on a Friday morning (with job tasks starting around 6:30am.) During the competition portions of the event, AIR Team will function in two primary positions: Dressing Room Runners and Backstage Check-In Managers.

Dressing Room Runners are responsible for visiting dressing rooms and checking in to ensure that all studios are safe and supported. When a routine has not checked in with sufficient time prior to their performance, it’s the responsibility of the Dressing Room Runners to find a studio representative and help get the routine backstage in time. When there are quick costume changes or a costume break is utilized, Dressing Room Runners are responsible for monitoring how much time is needed without having studios or dancers feel rushed, while also keeping the event running on time. Dressing Room Runners actively report to the Backstage Awards Manager during competition and provide additional support as needed.

Backstage Check-In Managers are responsible for welcoming each routine backstage, confirm whether or not they are starting on or off stage, and coordinating with individuals who are assisting in the movement of props backstage. As the competition progresses, the Backstage Check-In Manager will maintain the roster of routines, ensuring that the next 3 routines are ready at all times. Should a routine not check-in with an adequate amount of time prior to when they perform, the Backstage Check-In Manager will work with the Dressing Room Runners to get the routine backstage on time. The Backstage Check-In Manager also is WCDE’s “Eyes and Ears” on one side of the backstage area. Both Backstage Managers (Awards and Check-In) are responsible to keep backstage spaces safe and help provide or find the support individuals may need backstage; this includes things like: providing band-aids & ice packs, sending out a search for studio representatives, requesting for a WCDE Staff Member, reporting an injury, sweeping the stage clear as necessary, etc. Backstage Check-In Managers actively report to the Backstage Awards Manager during competition and provide additional support as needed.

Prior to each WCDE regional event, AIR Team members will receive a schedule, laying out their competition shift times and event wide call times. This helps ensure sufficient breaks for AIR Team members during long convention weekends. After the last routine dances, AIR Team will check with the Backstage Awards Manager for their dismissal after changing over signage and laying out red carpets for awards. Saturday morning comes early!

Saturday (Participation: Always)

Saturday mornings are an early one for AIR Team. Call times on this day usually are between 7:00am and 7:30am. AIR Team joins the WCDE Faculty for a weekend kick-off event called "Wake Up With West Coast". This is an opportunity to hype the students up at the top of the event and get excited for the weekend ahead. Following "Wake Up", AIR Team members will go to their assigned classes as indicated in their initial schedule. As the season progresses, AIR Team members will learn a multitude of combinations from the WCDE faculty to assist in a variety of classes. Sometimes, this learning is able to take place in advance, while other times AIR Team members may learn the combos alongside the students. The job of the AIR Team during class is to support the faculty member in the execution of great class in an inspiring environment. This could include: demonstrating skills, helping maintain or assign groups moving across the floor, cueing/playing music, supporting students who might have difficulty executing choreography, etc. During all workshop class functions, AIR Team reports directly to the AIR Team Captain and Convention Director; providing additional support as needed.

Following Saturday classes, AIR Team will have a break leading into the evening's competition. AIR Team will serve the same functions as they did during Friday's competition.

Sunday (Participation: Always)

Sundays start a little later than Saturdays, but not by much! Sometimes, we must be out of our hotel rooms prior to the end of Sunday's programming, so it's usually best to pack Sunday morning and bring your belongings to the office for the day. AIR Team will support workshop classes as they did on Saturday, in addition to supporting the Scholarship Audition. Supporting the audition is very similar to workshop classes, with the primary difference being that AIR Team members do not demonstrate the combination once the learning portion is completed with the exception of the Mini Ballroom.

Following the audition, AIR Team members will join the WCDE Faculty for a faculty number rehearsal. This routine will be performed at the conclusion of the event during "The Weekend Wrap-Up"; our scholarship and studio showcase presentation. After this rehearsal, AIR Team will complete their workshop class assignments before doing a whirlwind costume change and launching into "The Weekend Wrap-Up".

The faculty number is the first thing to be performed during "The Weekend Wrap-Up", followed immediately by routines representing the highest scoring studios. Depending on AIR Team member flight departure times, AIR Team will start getting dismissed during or after "The Weekend Wrap-Up". For any AIR Team members that are present for the entirety of the scholarship presentation, they may be asked to help distribute materials, help direct students where to sit on stage, aid in traffic patterns, etc.

In almost all circumstances, AIR Team will travel to the airport immediately following "The Weekend Wrap-Up" to catch their flights home.

Monday (Participation: Extremely Rare)

Depending on the location, sometimes it becomes impossible to get home following an event in what our staff refers to as a "Human Way". Non-Human Ways of getting home would be excessive or fast connections resulting in an extremely odd arrival time, extended layovers that leave you at airports overnight to only fly the next morning, etc.

In the case of no "Human Way" to get you home on a Sunday, WCDE will explore with the AIR Team member all available options that may include traveling on Monday.

About AIR Scheduling

The Assistants-In-Residence program is comprised of a small cohort of dancers who will assist workshop classes, competitive programming, and administrative needs. Upon hiring, selected AIR Team members are contracted and scheduled for all WCDE Regional Events. Based on performance, selected AIR Team members may receive invitations to assist at WCDE National Finals.

Selection Process

WCDE staff will review applications on a rolling basis.

Application

All interested applicants must submit a formal application that includes: an online form with two short writing prompts along with uploading a current resume, a dance reel showcasing your movement versatility, and a letter of recommendation.

Phone Interview

From the applicant pool, WCDE staff will select a group of dancers for a phone interview.

Contract Offers

Following the phone interview, WCDE staff will offer AIR Team contracts for the 2025-2026 season based on their applications, interviews, and dance reels. **All applicants will receive a final decision either way by Friday, January 23rd, 2026.**

Application Materials

All interested applicants must submit a formal application that includes the following materials:

Online Form Submission - Available at www.gowcde.com/airteam

The online form gives us some basic information about you including your name address, hometown airport, any conflicts you might have, contact information for two references, etc. There are also two writing prompts to help us get to know you a little better as an artist, a dancer, and person. Don't worry! There are no wrong answers. **Through the online form, you will also submit the files listed below. All materials must be submitted at the same time in order to be considered.**

Resume

Submit a current copy of your resume as a PDF file. If you don't currently have a resume, [click here to read an article to help you get started.](#)

Dance Reel

Submit a video that showcases your breadth of technical capacity and artistry across multiple dance styles. Videos should be less than three minutes and thirty seconds (3:30) and include your name and headshot at the beginning and end of the video. [If you've never made a Dance Reel before, check out this great first dance reel by former AIR Team Captain Emily Jordan!](#) **All Dance Reels should be submitted as a .mov or .mp4 file.**

Letter of Recommendation

Please ask a dance teacher/educator who has been an integral part of your core training to write a letter of recommendation for you. This letter doesn't need to be long. However, it should outline why they feel being an assistant on our tour would be a good fit for you at this point in your career. Please submit this file as a PDF. **Letters of recommendation can not come from a WCDE faculty member.** *If a WCDE faculty member has been an integral part of your training and they are willing to speak on behalf of your work, please list them as one of your two references on the application.*