



DC COMMISSION_{ON THE} ARTS & HUMANITIES

Draft Strategic Plan | Commission Meeting

July 20, 2026

Today's Presentation

- Summarize key findings from the needs assessment and visioning sessions
- Share a draft strategic plan for Commission and public feedback

- Strategic Planning Process & Findings – Brief Overview
- Presentation of Draft Strategic Plan
- Commissioner Discussion
- What's Next – Public Feedback Period

Strategic Plan *Refresher*



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Strategic Planning Process



Key upcoming dates

7/20: Public Meeting - Presentation of Draft Plan
 7/21 - 7/31: Public Comment Period
 8/12: Executive Session - Review Final Plan
 8/17: Public Meeting - Presentation of Final Plan, Vote to Approve

Strategic Plan Structure

- **Four-year plan**, aligned to CAH's fiscal year.
- Plan will include both **existing and new** strategies and activities
- **Activities will be distributed** over a four-year period - not everything will be undertaken at once.

Mission * Vision * Core Values				Commissioners will vote to approve at August meeting
Guiding Principles				
Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3	Goal 4	CAH Staff to Co-Develop and Refine
Strategies A B C	Strategies A B C	Strategies A B C	Strategies A B C	
Under each strategy, Key Activities • • • •	Under each strategy, Key Activities • • • •	Under each strategy, Key Activities • • • •	Under each strategy, Key Activities • • • •	

DC Commission on Arts & Humanities | Draft Strategic Plan | Opportunity Consulting

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Implementation **Support Documents** (post-plan approval)

IMPLEMENTATION MEMO

Observations and recommendations to support transition to implementation.

KPI DASHBOARD

Tracks progress, performance, and impact on a set of key performance indicators that monitor implementation, organizational performance, grantmaking, and community outcomes.

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Actual

ANNUAL IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Translates the strategic plan into specific actions, milestones, and resources for each year to advance the strategic goals.

Use as foundation of progress monitoring routines.

Date	Action	Milestone	Roles	Status

Needs Assessment Findings & Emerging Themes



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Strategic Framework

Draft for feedback



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About CAH

- Through its **core authority established by DC City Council**, CAH is an independent agency charged to “assess and respond to the arts and humanities needs of District residents and strengthen the city’s cultural ecosystem.”
- CAH’s funding** comes primarily from local funds as well as an annual grant of ~\$1 million from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), which is used to partially underwrite grants in the Arts Education, East Arts, Field Trip Experiences, and Projects, Events, or Festivals (Organizations) grants.
- Given DC’s identity as a city-state, CAH is **unique** among state-level public arts agencies that operates at a city level.

DC Council establishes:

- CAH’s annual appropriation,
- Caps on use of funding for administrative costs,
- The overall distribution of grants, and
- In recent years, specific allocations for specific institutions.

Percent	Allocation
<20%	Administrative Costs
>80%	Grants
	50% General Operating Support grants - Reviewed in budget size cohorts - Tiered awarding relative to budget size - Awards of organizations with budgets \$115k+ may not exceed 50% of annual operating budget
	12% Large Capital Projects grants
	12% Small Capital Projects grants
	4% Humanities DC grant
	22% Neighborhood and Public Art grants (includes all project-based grants and Fellowship grant)

CAH's Roles

CAH's primary role, as authorized by DC code §39–204, is as a grantmaking agency.

Funder
CAH provides financial resources to support artists, organizations, and initiatives, enabling creative work to be produced, sustained, and expanded.

CAH is perceived by the community to serve important additional community leadership roles that support its grantmaking function and expand its impact.

Capacity Builder	Broker/Connector	Convenor	Champion	Curator
CAH strengthens skills, infrastructure, and community among art /humanities professionals and organizations through training, strategic support, and community-building opportunities.	CAH facilitates purposeful relationships between artists and opportunity holders to help work reach new contexts and audiences.	CAH leads cross-sector dialogue and collective problem-solving to address systemic challenges in the arts and humanities.	CAH advocates for the creative ecosystem, the value of arts and humanities, and the needs of art/humanities professionals – elevating visibility, influencing policy, and mobilizing support for the field.	CAH elevates, presents, and stewards artistic work through its public art and art bank.

CAH's **Mission and Vision**

The following mission and vision statements were established in the prior strategic plan. No edits were recommended by the Governance Committee.

Mission

The mission defines why the organization exists and what it does to achieve its purpose.

Our mission is to serve and advance the diverse cultural interests of the residents and workers of the District of Columbia. We believe in the power of the arts, humanities and the entire creative sector of the economy to enliven and strengthen our communities. We focus our efforts on the nonprofits arts community, individual artists and creative entrepreneurs, the humanities field, and decision-makers. We provide support through funding, programs that address gaps, and educational opportunities and we provide leadership through policy, innovation initiatives, knowledge and connections.

Vision

The vision articulates the desired future state — what success looks like if the mission is fulfilled.

The Commission enhances the quality of life and economic well being of DC residents by nurturing DC's artists and cultural institutions and by fostering the conditions where creative enterprises can prosper.

Guiding Principles

Guiding principles serve as the **throughline** across the strategic plan, ensuring goals, strategies, and actions reflect a common set of values and expectations.

These guiding principles reflect themes about challenges, strengths, and needs.



Goals



GOAL 1 Awareness

Increase understanding of the essential role arts and humanities play in Washington, DC's social, civic, cultural, educational, and economic vitality.



GOAL 2 Impact

Invest strategically in artists, organizations, and communities through equitable, transparent, and outcomes-driven grantmaking that maximizes public impact.



GOAL 3 Leadership

Bolster DC's creative ecosystem by serving as a trusted convener, connector, and catalyst for collaboration, innovation, and collective impact.



GOAL 4 Excellence

Strengthen the people, systems, governance, and culture needed to deliver exceptional public service and maximize CAH's impact.

Strategies

GOAL 1 Awareness	GOAL 2 Impact	GOAL 3 Leadership	GOAL 4 Excellence
STRATEGIES			
1A Build public awareness of DC's arts and humanities ecosystem	2A Establish, communicate, and consistently apply a clear, outcome-driven grantmaking framework .	3A Support opportunities to build the capacity of art/humanities professionals to build relationships and share resources.	4A Strengthen planning, performance management , and data use.
1B Increase visibility of artists, organizations, and arts opportunities	2B Improve the accessibility, transparency, and effectiveness of the grantmaking process for applicants, grantees, and staff.	3B Strengthen collaboration among community organizations, agencies, and community partners around shared priorities	4B Enhance operational systems , processes, and organizational effectiveness
1C Elevate stories of artistic excellence and community impact	2C Strengthen grantmaking data, measurement, and accountability.	3C Expand local, national, and international partnerships that amplify DC's creative reputation and CAH's impact.	4C Support a positive, inclusive workplace that enables staff to succeed, grow, and stay
			4D Equip Commissioners with timely and updated tools, information, and training needed to lead effectively.

Awareness

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Strategies

Activities

1A Build public awareness of DC's arts and humanities ecosystem

- i. Develop a consistent public narrative about the value and impact of arts and humanities
- ii. Establish shared ecosystem indicators
- iii. Publish regular information about the State of the Arts and Humanities

1B Increase visibility of artists, organizations, and arts opportunities

- i. Expand the eMuseum and digital public art map
- ii. Collaborate with partners to provide publicly-accessible information such as, centralized events calendars and directories of arts/humanities professionals and organizations.

1C Elevate stories of artistic excellence and community impact

- i. Promote grantee accomplishments, activities, and impact
- ii. Feature and recognized diverse arts/humanities professionals through CAH's communications and events
- iii. Expand opportunities for diverse arts/humanities professionals to participate in the grantmaking process, including as panelists and ambassadors.

Strategies

Activities

2A Build understanding about the Commission's grantmaking philosophy, guidelines, process, and intended outcomes.

- i. Define and communicate CAH's overall grantmaking philosophy, requirements, process, and intended outcomes across the grant portfolio.
- ii. Leverage the annual grantmaking process to set priorities and measurable targets for reach, participation, quality, and outcomes across and within the grantmaking portfolio
- iii. Engage all Commissioners and Council members in the annual process in role-appropriate ways to improve alignment and shared understanding.

2B Improve the accessibility, transparency, and effectiveness of the grantmaking process for applicants, grantees, and staff.

- i. Improve planning and timelines to reduce administrative burden and increase lead time for improved planning, outreach, accessibility, and applicant support
- ii. Align outreach strategy to reach prioritized populations
- iii. Right-size application and reporting requirements for applicants/grantees with reduced administrative capacity
- iv. Continue technical assistance options
- v. Increase transparency around payment timeline and status

2C Strengthen grantmaking data, measurement, and accountability.

- i. Regularly communicate funding trends, outcomes, and impact
- ii. Embed meaningful data collection throughout the application and grant lifecycle.
- iii. Publish a dynamic data dashboard on applications, grantees, activities, and outcomes

LEADERSHIP

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Strategies	Activities
3A Support opportunities to build the capacity of individual art /humanities professionals to build relationships and share resources.	i. Promote awareness and access to existing professional development on priority topics related to business development, fundraising, financial management, and marketing ii. Expand peer learning and networking among potential, current, and former grantees iii. Leverage grants to intermediary organizations or artists to provide capacity-building, technical assistance, and connecting activities
3B Strengthen collaboration among cultural organizations, agencies, and community partners around shared priorities	i. Continue convening of Interagency Creative Coalition to support interagency collaboration and coordination ii. Convene stakeholders and decision-makers to develop collaborative solutions for affordability, creative spaces, workforce development, and other ecosystem priorities.
3C Expand local, national, and international partnerships that amplify DC's creative reputation and CAH's impact.	i. Continue CAH's coordinated presence at key city, regional events and opportunities to advance and represent the arts, and promote CAH's programs and District artists ii. Collaborate with existing festivals, cultural institutions, and community events to showcase artists and grantees. iii. Develop partnerships with local, regional, national, and international organizations to expand performance, exchange and promotional opportunities for DC artists

Strategies

Activities

4A Strengthen planning, performance management, and data use

- i. Establish agency KPIs and regularly monitor progress. Develop annual operating plans with priorities, milestones, and responsibilities
- ii. Develop annual operating plans with priorities, milestones, and responsibilities
- iii. Implement continuous improvement through staff and stakeholder feedback.

4B Enhance operational systems, processes, and organizational effectiveness

- i. Address needs for senior operational leadership
- ii. Improve internal workflows to clarify roles, reduce bottlenecks, and increase consistency, transparency, and timeliness
- iii. Strengthen collection and centralized management of shared data across grantmaking, events, partnerships, and stakeholder engagement.
- iv. Leverage shared data to improve reporting, communication, and decision-making.
- v. Develop, train, and reinforce standard operating procedures
- vi. Create regular structures for collaboration, communication, and planning across teams

4C Support a positive, inclusive workplace that enables staff to succeed, grow, and stay

- i. Align organization, department, and employee goal setting processes
- ii. Improve onboarding and training to support shared and role-based needs
- iii. Create meaningful-to-staff opportunities for recognition and celebration

4D Equip Commissioners with timely and updated tools, information, and training needed to lead effectively.

- i. Clarify roles / expectations for consistent engagement between staff and Commissioners.
- ii. Produce, and annually update, a Commissioner Handbook
- iii. Conduct robust annual orientation for all Commissioners (new and returning)

How to Get Involved



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Share Feedback on the Draft Plan: Public Comment Period (July 21 - 31)

Members of the public, CAH stakeholders, partners and grantees, and Commission staff are invited to participate in sharing their comments on the draft Strategic Plan between 7/21-7/31 via:

In-person feedback session	Virtual feedback session	Anonymous comment form	Email feedback
Tuesday, 7/21 at 4 pm at CAH Office	Wednesday, 7/29 at 4 pm on Zoom	Form (Launched tomorrow on CAH website)	Email comments to feedback@opportunityconsulting.com

