



DC COMMISSION ON THE ARTS & HUMANITIES

## DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Aaron L. Myers II, Executive Director

January 22, 2024

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The following is a summary of the agency's activities and operations.

### 1. Staff Updates

Let's begin with some important staff/commission updates. Earlier this morning, Chairman Mendelson appointed and swore in Jack Evans onto the Arts Commission. This appointment was done through an appointment from the Chair of the Committee of the Whole, Chairman Mendelson; not by the Mayor. We welcome him today to his first meeting with the commission. Brian Allende has transitioned to the Department of Health. Congratulations to him for his valuable contributions. We've conducted interviews for a new Resource Allocation officer and a decision is imminent. Additionally, a warm welcome to Program Analyst Martin Fernandez, the latest addition our Finance Department. Welcome also to Program Support Assistant Logan X. Brown. We want to take this opportunity to thank Natalie Hopkins for the work toward diversity, equity and inclusion while on the Commission. We, as a commission, look forward to working with her as she continues to make an impact on the community now that she is no longer on the Commission.

### 2. Grants

As I start out with my Grants update, we have noticed that some of our grantees are not registered in DIFS and/or that their mailing addresses are not updated in DIFS. I would like to remind our grantees to a.) Sign up for DIFS so that we can move your paperwork along b.) Please update your mailing address if it has changed (or ensure all necessary contact information is correct). As of now we have 801 executed & 404 purchase orders. I would like to take this time to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of our staff. It is our hope that the Council will grant us more FTE's to help us accomplish this work in a way that would minimize the wait time for our grantees to receive their awards. We thank you for your patience, and we are working presently to improve our processes and systems.

I want to strongly encourage people to reach out to the Commission or your program's grant managers. Every FY 2024 grantee will be receiving an update from yours by the end of the week. But please don't hesitate to follow up and reach out with any question you have, particularly about where you are in the timeline for disbursement, and if you're having any issues. I also strongly encourage you to utilize

The DIFS helpline. That number is (202) 422-6870. You can also email them with questions at [suppliers@dc.gov](mailto:suppliers@dc.gov).

### **3. Strategic plan**

Regarding strategic plans, I've reached out to fellow state art agency directors for suggestions on whom to share our RFP with. Exciting developments are on the horizon.

### **4. NEA hosting an event on the 30<sup>th</sup>.**

CAH will be hosting a pre convening event on January 29<sup>th</sup>.

### **5. Space Needs Survey**

In preparation for our upcoming space needs survey, we urge all recipients to promptly respond upon receipt. This initiative is a direct response to the expressed needs of our grantees who have indicated a requirement for additional space.

Collaborating closely with DMPED, we've worked on determining the optimal structure for the survey. It's worth noting that the survey has also been dispatched to DSLBD.

Upon completion, this survey will provide us with our initial dataset outlining the diverse space needs within the arts ecosystem. We will ensure transparency and accessibility by notifying individuals through both email and social media channels when the survey is open. Links will be conveniently shared across multiple platforms for easy access.

Furthermore, we are currently in the process of developing the public-facing component of this initiative with OCTO. Stay tuned for more updates as we strive to gather comprehensive insights into the space requirements of our grantees and the broader arts community.

### **6. Legacy: Civil Rights at 60 Exhibition**

Last Friday we had a press conference and opening reception for our Legacy: Civil Rights at 60 Exhibition. One of many highlights including having Dr. Terrance J. Roberts, a member of the Little Rock 9, join us that morning and share some words of wisdom. We are truly honored and humbled to have had him participate in our program.

We extend our gratitude to all team members, artists, and jurors who collaborated to bring this impactful exhibit to fruition. The Public Arts Team played a pivotal role, taking the lead in making this endeavor a reality. Special congratulations to Michelle for curating her inaugural exhibit, marking the beginning of what will now be an annual event featuring a lecture.

The lecture on Saturday was given by Dr. Pace, providing insights into the historical context of Dr. Prathia Hall, a contemporary and colleague of Dr. King. Dr. Hall, who first utilized the phrase that inspired "I have a Dream," serves as a profound inspiration. Further details about this exhibit and its significance will be elaborated upon by the Public Art Team in the upcoming discussions. And thank you again to the entire Public Art team for their dedicated efforts in making this impactful project a reality, as well as our Communications and Events team who provided critical support in the events of the day.

## **7. Grants Update**

The Grants Team will be providing an update soon about possible changes regarding RFA openings. These timelines may look different for some programs than what they've been before. And we will be communicating any updates across all our communication channels.

## **8. Art Week 2025 Stakeholder meeting**

We will be having another stakeholder meeting on February 1<sup>st</sup>, at the Thurgood Marshall Center. We encourage everyone in the community to participate because it's our goal to fulfill the need that has been expressed in these meetings. We don't want to just put on an event in 2025, we want it to be community led. And our Events Team will share more about this.

## **9. Jazz Congress New York Visit**

I visited Jazz Congress at Lincoln Center; an award-winning performance meets civic space in Brooklyn. I gained valuable insights into multisensory performances and the crucial support required for artists and venues aiming to offer such immersive experiences. We are considering potential collaboration with venues willing to provide residencies for artists exploring and refining this new realm of accessibility and inclusion.

While in New York, I witnessed remarkable instances of artists using various sensory elements, including light to create sound, engaging the audience through smells, videos, and vibrations. This innovative approach is still in its experimental phase, representing a new medium and language in the arts. Artists in this field express the need for more than just a few days in a space; they seek extended opportunities, ideally a month or two, to fine-tune their work. The goal is to have dedicated time with an audience, allowing for the perfection and refinement of their creations. Although this concept is more established in Europe, it remains experimental, and the hope is for it to become a norm in the coming years, with Washington DC potentially being at the forefront of this groundbreaking work.