



DC COMMISSION ON THE ARTS & HUMANITIES

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT  
SUBMITTED BY HERAN SEREKE-BRHAN, PhD  
JULY 19, 2021

\* Agency Development \*Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Access \*Improved Grantmaking\* Community Engagement\* CAH Beyond Grants\*

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

**Return to Work**

As of July 12, 2021, all District government have returned to their official in-person duty stations. Based on DCHR regulations, CAH staff have been offered the option of teleworking for two days a week until the end of this fiscal year. We continue to follow guidance from DCHR, DC Health, OCA, and EOM to provide for the health and safety of our staff and visitors.

**Grants and Public Art**

The FY22 Grants and Public Art grant cycle launched on May 3, 2021 and closed on July 16, 2021. Staff hosted a total of 38 grants workshops and ten live chats. Applications are now being vetted for eligibility and prepared for panel reviews. Submissions numbers are as follows:

Grant Program Name	Submission Numbers
FY22 Arts and Humanities Program (AHEP)	35
FY22 Arts and Humanities Fellowship (AHFP)	467*
FY22 Field Trip Experiences (FTE)	21
FY22 Projects, Events and Festivals (Individuals) - PEFi	54
FY22 Projects, Events and Festivals (Organizations) - PEFo	58
FY22 East of the River (EOR)	32
FY22 Facilities and Buildings (FAB)	61
FY22 LiftOff (LFT)	16
FY22 Art Bank Program (ABP)	139
FY22 Art Exhibition (Curatorial) Grant (AEG)	4
FY21 Relief and Recovery Fund	283 (Subtotal: 1,170)
FY22 Public Art Building Communities (PABC)**	

\* Includes 8 GoGo and (new) 26 Interdisciplinary cohort applicants

\*\* Public Art Building Communities closes on Friday, July 16, 2021.

The current application subtotal of 1,170 already has exceeded the total number of applications received for FY21 of 1,028.

## **Other Updates and Announcements**

### **CROWN Act Mural**

As part of its ongoing MuralsDC partnership with the Department of Public Works, CAH sponsored the installment of a new mural to highlight the Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair (CROWN) Act, which seeks to prohibit race-based hair discrimination. The project was conceived by and additionally sponsored by the JOY Collective, a Black and women-owned cultural insights, marketing and advertising firm. CAH's Legal and Public Art teams were instrumental in soliciting and securing the artist, Candice Taylor, and facilitating completion of the work.

The CROWN Act Mural is located on the 2000 block of MLK Avenue in Southeast DC. A public unveiling was held on July 8, 2021. Speakers included Executive Director Heran Sereke-Brhan and other District agency directors, with media coverage by NBC4, WTOP and WUSA9.

### **CAH Visit**

On Friday, July 9, 2021, Deputy Director David Markey and Executive Director Heran Sereke-Brhan welcomed Council Member At-Large Robert White and his colleagues when they visited CAH to select artwork for their offices. Art Bank Collection Registrar Ron Humbertson was on-hand to facilitate.

**IMPLEMENTATION STATUS OF TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS**

**AS OF 19 JULY 2021**

# COMPLETED: 6      # ONGOING: 2      # IN PROCESS: 11      # NOT STARTED: 24  
 % OF RECS COMPLETED/ONGOING/IN PROCESS: 44%

TOPIC	RECOMMENDATION	UPDATE	STATUS
<b>MULTILINGUALISM</b>			
	Proactively advertise (e.g., website and elsewhere) the existing service around information provided in multiple languages (especially Spanish) upon request- grant applications, all materials, language interpreters	Staff has been actively researching translation services, as well as OHR's requirements regarding language access. A first step is to determine the threshold languages for the agency's constituencies; there is not a standard language set for translation, it is particular to the agency and its services. We are making a commitment to "tagging" certain public opportunities, workshops etc. as ASL interpreted or closed-captioned moving forward.	IN PROCESS
<b>DIVERSITY &amp; EQUITY REPRESENTATION IN GRANTEE ORG's</b>			
	Require diversity data in mid year reports on organizations' boards, staff, constituents. Include questions on next grant cycle applications	CAH has not previously collected diversity data. To remedy this, we conducted research with local, state, and national arts agencies to learn from best practices and have begun collecting demographic data from organizational and individual grant applicants and panelist participants in FY22. Demographic questions will be a standard part of our applications moving forward. This data will be analyzed to provide findings on CAH funding patterns and inform policy changes in grantmaking.	COMPLETED
<b>CLEAN HANDS REQUIREMENT CLARIFICATION</b>			
	Clarify that the current policy allows those on payment plans to apply (Not to be publicized)	The Office of Tax and Revenue (OTR) confirmed that applicants and grantees who work with them to establish a payment plan to resolve any outstanding accounts with OTR may procure clean hands. Councilmember McDuffie proposed legislation to allow individual taxpayers who owe District Government less than \$5,000 to be able to secure clean hands, should they be willing to work with OTR to establish a payment plan. In reviewing other submission materials that might hinder access or create barriers, CAH has removed the requirement to submit a separate Arrest and Conviction Statement as part of our application packet in 2020.	COMPLETED
<b>MATCHING REQUIREMENT ADJUSTMENT</b>			
	Waive the matching requirement for GOS grants for all organizations with budgets of \$500K or below. (The prior threshold was \$250K)	Matching grants were waived for the majority of grant programs for the FY22 cycle.	IN PROCESS
<b>COMMUNICATIONS OUTREACH</b>			
	Explore the possibility of using Instagram/social media for 2-way communication between staff and artists/community.	Social media is used to receive and respond to questions and comments from the public. Commission meetings and agency events are livestreamed to the agency's social media platforms. Grant managers hold online chat sessions to field questions from applicants.	COMPLETED
	Improve visibility of arts, exhibitions, productions, and allow for the community to reach/communicate with artists and organizations (DC Arts in Real Time)	From January 27 – May 26, 2021, CAH community outreach and engagement initiatives have occurred along three tracks: Business of the Arts (existing and expanded); CAH in the Community (new) and Artists Showcase (new).  CAH has conducted 25 virtual community programs and engaged 2,207 participants. These were: 7 Business of the Arts, 6 CAH in the Community, 4 Artists Showcase, and 2 tele townhalls sessions, as well as participating in two other sister agency programs and recording four DC Arts Beat (new podcast) recordings. Community input for programming was sought via a survey of artists with 185 respondents and staff from Grants, Public Art, and Communications departments worked collaboratively to design and implement programs. In Summer/Fall of 2021, staff members will evaluate each program outcome and plan for a new series for 2022.	ONGOING

	Establish a robust outreach plan that includes local print, tv and radio media, partnerships with creative organizations to advertise and make referrals. Develop social media campaign that targets at promise populations		NOT STARTED
	Initiate community-based, art-informed public messaging campaigns using District-based creative agencies representing Black, Brown, and other historically marginalized groups to creatively share information about CAH opportunities for funding and examples of CAH-funded projects.		NOT STARTED
	Proactively widen the audience of people who are notified by communicating with a wide variety of groups and by placing ads in key spots, i.e. DC Council's Communications' offices, to ANCs, community organizations, and neighborhood newspapers. Seek ways to engage broader community in CAH messaging through school and community competitions for CAH poster and public messaging campaigns.		NOT STARTED
	Utilize MWBE classification across the entire ecosystem. Advertise all MWBE programs and targets.		NOT STARTED
	Establish definition of equity and inclusion using Task Force definitions. Publish these definitions on the website and in all grant guidelines.	The definition adopted by the Task Force has been used in all FY22 Grants and Public Art Guidelines and the findings and recommendations of the Task Force are available on the agency's website.	COMPLETED
	Offer convenient times for staff to meet with working community members, including evening hours.	<p>Grant workshops were scheduled in mornings, afternoons, evenings and weekends to accommodate various schedules, and were attended by approximately 300 individuals in total. All grant workshops occurred virtually and are available for review on CAH's YouTube channel and website. The workshops featured closed-captioning options and ASL interpreters when requested.</p> <p>The number of weeks a grant cycle was open was extended when possible to allow more time for completion of applications. Specifically, East of the River and Projects, Events and Festivals were extended from four to six weeks; Field Trip Experiences from four to five weeks; LiftOff and Facilities and Buildings were open for seven weeks.</p> <p>Application deadlines were also extended from 4:00pm to 11:59pm for most grant programs. The efficacy of this will be evaluated in a forthcoming post-application survey.</p> <p>The FY21 Relief and Recovery Fund was open for two weeks. Staff offered four workshops and a two-hour live chat in an effort to provide additional support to first-time applicants. Four e-blasts announcing the grant were sent to 11K+ subscribers in the two-week period, with an average open rate of 22.4%, well above the arts &amp; culture industry average rate of 17.8%. Almost 8,000 impressions were achieved on social media with postings related to the grant. The submission deadline for this program was also extended to 11:59pm on Monday.</p> <p>Closer to deadline time, grant managers have extended courtesy communication to those in Drafting mode in the portal to share relevant information and resources for successful submission.</p>	COMPLETED
	BUDGET: Accommodate within current budget as possible, but revisit overall as necessary.		ONGOING
<b>WEB UPGRADES/UPDATES</b>			

	Ensure that the website currently being re-done includes additional interactive capabilities--perhaps through social media and mobile applications. List resources using clear, attractive and accessible presentation.	The new agency website layout was launched on February 22, 2021. CAH is currently doing a thorough review of the site to plan for additional updates following the close of all grant applications. The website connects to CAH's social media accounts, allowing for multi-platform content engagement. CAH is in discussions with OCTO to add additional features, such as interactive components; this will likely require the execution of a new MOU at a cost TBD.	IN PROCESS
	Customize portal to make it more user-friendly. Make uploading data for applications easier. Find a better portal that is interactive and user friendly; simplify the process. Assign/hire a person (or persons) to specialize on Jungle Laser or train a current grants manager to be the point person. Research the possibility of a private/public partnership that would assess our data architecture pro bono.		NOT STARTED
<b>FINANCIAL UPDATES FOR PANELS</b>			
	Call applicants for updates on financials before panels. Add to grant managers' responsibilities if deemed necessary. Review annually.		NOT STARTED
<b>GRANTEE DEBRIEFS</b>			
	Require grant managers to let all applicants who fail to get a grant know that they have a 30-day window for debriefings. Require a second email to ensure the communication. Give direct info on how to communicate with grant managers so that there is no slippage in receiving messages. At the time grant winners are announced, set up definite meeting dates and times with those who did not succeed. If they do not want to attend, it is up to artist/organization to let the staff know. Responsibility of the Commission to initiate concrete steps to offer positive feedback and assistance. Do not wait. Be proactive. Publicize on the website and other media that we offer this to those who did not receive a grant.	Will start after October 1 when grant announcements are made	NOT STARTED
	CAH will establish a process that all unsuccessful applicants shall receive scoring notes and rubrics automatically. Publicize that we offer this to those who did not receive a grant.	Will start after October 1 when grant announcements are made	NOT STARTED
<b>COMMUNITY INTERACTION</b>			
	Interact more with community and answer questions related to grants, grant writing as well as provide information about the Commission, its budget and operations i.e., Dir. and Commissioners dialogue/facetime with Councilmembers.	CAH has conducted two successful tele townhalls to introduce staff roles and agency programs and share an overview of FY22 Grant and Public Art programs on January 28 and May 7, 2021. There were 308 and 335 participants, respectively, larger groups than ever attended similar in-person sessions.   To support grantees through the payment and reporting processes, the Grants and Public Art teams will provide additional post-award workshops on specific themes, including Reporting (for FY2021 grantees); New Grantee Workshop (to cover registration systems in procurement and invoicing); Returning Grantee Workshop (for important updates on systems and processes); Field Trip Experience Workshops (to assist grantees in navigating DC Public School post-pandemic safety and academic learning policies.	ONGOING

	Set up 'Commission Stations' for staff and community interaction- virtually now, and post-COVID in public facilities such as schools, museums and libraries. Establish a consistent dialogue (e.g., quarterly town halls) between Executive Director, Commissioners and City Council members. (Commissioner from Councilmember wards) Priority on at promise communities.	CAH is actively planning community outreach and engagement in FY22. After an internal assessment of this year's initiatives, we will craft a comprehensive plan that factors in staff input, agency capacity and community needs will for next year. As the District reopens, CAH staff will continue to identify opportunities for in-person interactions and listening tours. Ideas include setting aside a day in the week for staff to be embedded in locations across the four quadrants of the District to share information and resources, partnering with grantees to host or be included in community events, and seeking partnerships with sister agencies to make use of existing infrastructure and community engagement initiatives.	IN PROCESS
	Develop a plan to conduct a survey of community needs and Commission performance every two years.	In switching the agency strategic plan from a five year cycle to a three year cycle, this provides the perfect opportunity to survey community needs and assess CAH performance. The strategic plan serves as the state arts plan for the NEA, and in accordance with their guidelines, must be developed as the result of robust community engagementment and feedback.	IN PROCESS
<b>PANEL DIVERSITY &amp; MANAGEMENT</b>			
	Enlist and actively seek new panelists that represent the community. Establish pods in communities (PICS) and use the Commission Stations (staff and community interaction venues). Do better outreach. Talk to the churches. Ask Comissioners and the community to provide recommendations. Put panelist application on CAH website and highlight it when grants are announced.	Grant Managers are focused on diversity in panelist recruitment. The application for panelists is available as an online form and invitations for participation have been attached to every Grant Request for Application notification. Panelists are requested to submit demographic information to help retain data on diversity.	IN PROCESS
	Choose a diverse group of panelists who best reflect the composition and demographics of our city and who are advocates for the arts community. Keep a rubric of qualifications for ideal demographics of panelists. Set equity and inclusion targets for the pool of grant reviewers. Ensure that wards have adequate and equitable representation on grant panels, with a focus on Black, Brown, and other historically excluded groups.		NOT STARTED
	Submit legislation to the Council for payment of panelists. This will help secure working people on the panels and shows respect for their time. Follow NEA guidelines for panelist payment amount.	The ED made the case for panelists payments at the FY22 Budget Oversight Hearing on June 4, 2021. CAH followed up with proposed legislative language, which Council has included in the draft Budget Support Act to be voted on in August 2021.	IN PROCESS
	Create Panelist Committee as a standing committee		NOT STARTED
<b>PANELIST PREPARATION</b>			
	Spend more time with panelists before the panels. Reinforce and standardize current training with 'How To' video as part of their prep	Staff revised the panelist orientation materials starting with the January 2021 launch of FY22 General Operating Support (GOS) to include more information on, and discussion of I.D.E.A. and implicit and explicit biases in particular. A video is being planned by staff.	IN PROCESS
<b>COMMISSIONER TERM LIMITS</b>			
	Consider Commissioner term limits to bring fresh perspectives, drive accountability and ensure equity. Potentially two consecutive three-year terms and rotating off for one year before consideration of reappointment.		NOT STARTED
<b>COMMITTEE CHAIR DECISION MAKING</b>			

	Ensure that an IDEA lens is applied in the new by-laws to the selection of the Committee Chairs, Committee membership assignments and decisions		NOT STARTED
<b>COMMISSIONER/STAFF TEAM BUILDING</b>			
	Plan a retreat for team building amongst Commissioners, amongst Staff, and between Commissioners and Staff.		NOT STARTED
<b>DIRECT FINANCIAL SUPPORT</b>			
	Create a category of grants/direct financial support for disabled, BIPOC, LGBTQ+ arts administrators and organizations	As part of CAH's State Arts Agency submission to the National Endowment for the Arts in 2020, we included a proposal to launch a traditional arts program in partnership with Commissioner Natalie Hopkinson and the Department of Communication, Culture and Media Studies at Howard University with Go-Go being a key focus of the program. The proposal received \$17,500 in NEA funding and CAH will contribute matching funds for the project for an initial total of \$35,000. Howard University will be the first historically Black college or university (HBCU) to serve in this role for a state arts agency. This partnership represents a unique opportunity to reflect on the District's singular cultural history and current population demographics. This project is mentioned here because, although it may or may not be a source of direct financial support, it speaks to a broader theme of cultural/community preservation and celebration.	IN PROCESS
<b>HELPING SMALLER ORGANIZATIONS GROW</b>			
	Help smaller organizations grow by evaluating the feasibility of using different formulas than are currently being used. Using the same selection criteria, consider increasing the cohort size mix by adding 15 qualified new grantees with annual budgets of \$500K or less.		NOT STARTED
	Consider multi-year funding		NOT STARTED
	Consider mechanisms for providing grant writing support		NOT STARTED
<b>GEOGRAPHIC EQUITY</b>			
	Create equity throughout the wards by ensuring that geography is an important consideration in IDEA. Using the same selection criteria, consider adding at least 10 qualified new grantees from EOTR		NOT STARTED
<b>EXPANDING SPECIAL GRANT CATEGORIES</b>			
	Based on findings of the baseline data, consider establishing an open applications period for "special projects" for emerging and expanding artists and organizations.		NOT STARTED
	Based on findings of the baseline data, consider establishing different grant categories within various grant venues (e.g., for emerging and established artists and organizations, as well as Black, Brown and historically excluded groups.)		NOT STARTED
<b>EQUITY TRAINING FOR COMMISSIONERS AND STAFF</b>			

	List equity training resources on website for the community to easily see and use.		NOT STARTED
	Conduct equity training by a hired outside professional TBD, whether entire commission trains as one group or separate for staff and commissioners.		NOT STARTED
<b>EQUITY &amp; INCLUSION TARGETS</b>			
	Conduct a study to establish baseline data on how grants are currently distributed with the goal of reallocation of funding to align with race and other demographics. Consider increasing the number of African American grantees by at least 10%. Use available tools and resources. Consider outside help for analysis and insight development as required.		NOT STARTED
	Develop and implement a metric system for equity to be included in grant scoring by giving extra points/value/consideration to organizations that employ and execute equity, inclusion in various forms such as programs, events, staff, Board, public communications and other areas. Conduct a thorough review of outcomes after each metric system is added. Suggest implementing a ladder approach to measure outcomes.	In FY22, CAH created a new I.D.E.A. criterion across most of our grant programs as an initial step in developing a metric system for equity. That criterion now represents 30-40% of an applicant's score. Panelists will be scoring with this review criteria in mind when evaluating applications. Current ideas for execution include supporting organizational journeys towards equity in programming, employment, and Board membership, leveraging CAH networks to create a matching mentorship program and cultivating resources through capacity building initiatives. IDEA looks different for each organization. CAH hopes to be able to unpack each component as fully as possible, so a "menu" of options becomes available for applicants to build from.	IN PROCESS
<b>EQUITY LENS AND MATRIX APPLIED TO ALL GRANTS</b>			
	(A) Ensure that the pool of CAH applicants for both individual grants and GOS institutional and project grants shift by at least 5-10% each year to include arts organizations and individual artists who have not received city investments, especially Black, Brown, and other historically excluded groups. (B) Require grant managers to be accountable to equity targets in the pool of applicants each grant cycle (C) Revise language and criteria for grants to include an equity lens according to definitions developed by the Equity Task Force. (D) Require bi-annual reports from CAH Staff on progress toward equity goals.		NOT STARTED
	(A) Analyze grants to define how an equity lens can be applied. (B) Define artistic merit/excellence and publish on website and in grant guidelines. Discuss with grant applicants and include in all grant guidelines. Use Task Force definitions where applicable for grant proposals. (C) Analysis should have input from staff and Commissioners. (D) Develop quarterly progress reports to Commissioners of the revision of grants guidelines and outcomes (goals) regarding equity.		NOT STARTED
<b>APPLY EQUITY LENS TO BUDGET SUPPORT ACT</b>			



	Apply equity lens to the Budget Supports Act and challenge existence of the law and cohorts defined in that law	Since November 2020, CAH staff has worked on an alternative funding approach that addresses equity concerns raised by the National Capital Arts Cohort legislated allocations. Between January and April 2021, CAH staff and Commissioners worked to build consensus around this alternative that would legislate a percentage of grants budget to general operating support. Based on this, the Board of Commissioners agreed to a resolution advocating the replacement of NCAC with increased GOS grants, that was subsequently sent to the Council. Council has included this proposal in the draft BSA to be voted on in August 2021.	IN PROCESS
<b>CREATE IDEA STANDING COMMITTEE</b>			
	Create IDEA Standing Committee	The Commission established an IDEA Standing Committee at the March 15, 2021 regular meeting.	COMPLETED