



DC COMMISSION ON ARTS & HUMANITIES

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT
SUBMITTED BY HERAN SEREKE-BRHAN, PhD
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* 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:

COVID-19 Public Health Emergency

The Council of the District of Columbia recently extended its COVID emergency authorization, which allows the Mayor to extend the current public health emergency until May 20, 2021. The current expiration date for the health emergency is March 31. We will not know until the Mayor puts out an eventual Mayor's Order if she will extend the emergency until the new maximum allowable date, or until an interim date.

The District continues to be in Phase Two of re-opening. CAH offices remain closed to the public as they have since March 16, 2020; the majority of staff continues to work remotely with some limited in-office time.

The District has launched a pre-registration system for making vaccination appointments for eligible populations; information is available at coronavirus.dc.gov/vaccinatedc

Performance Oversight Hearing

CAH will have its annual agency performance oversight hearing before the Committee of the Whole, Council of the District of Columbia at 12 noon, Wednesday, March 17, 2021. The hearing can be viewed live at www.ChairmanMendelson.com/live.

Agency Development

CAH's internal organizational development sessions to 'Cultivate a Collaborative Culture of Trust and Belonging' began in January 2021. DCHR's Center for Learning and Development has conducted three sessions on Emotional Intelligence, Mindful Communication and Myers Briggs Type Indicator-Strength Finder with CAH staff. Facilitators and coaches from National Arts Strategies will also be working one-on-one with department heads to support the agency's efforts to cultivate a leadership core and foster a cohesive and values-driven work environment.

Personnel

Departures: Human Resource Specialist Angel Terry; Grants Manager Benjamin Douglas
Open Positions: Arts Education Specialist; Senior Grants Officer; Human Resource Specialist.

Poetry Out Loud

On March 9, 2021, CAH presented the Poetry Out Loud District of Columbia Finals in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation. Students from six DC public, charter and private high schools competed at the finals, which were held via Zoom and livestreamed to CAH's Facebook page. Commission Chair Kendall and Executive Director Sereke-Brhan shared welcome remarks in a pre-taped video that was aired during the event. Saquoya Gorham, a 9th grade student at Duke Ellington School for the Arts, took first place and will represent DC at the National Finals later this spring.

Grants and Public Art

The FY22 General Operating Support (GOS) grant program closed on February 26, 2021 with an increased number of 148 organizational applicants. Changes to this year's application questions include a weighted Review Criteria on Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access (I.D.E.A.) requesting example on how applicant organizations work with intentionality in the planning and implementation of its programming and services to promote I.D.E.A. values.

Applicants are also required to fill an additional questionnaire on demographics. This questionnaire and its analysis will support the Commission's efforts of collecting baseline data on grantee organizations, their staff, board and audiences, with the goal of assessing CAH's funding impact on I.D.E.A. values. In FY22, similar changes to grants and public art Review Criteria and request for demographics will be implemented throughout CAH's grants and public art programs for organizations.

Upcoming:

- 4/6–20/21 FY22 General Operating Support (GOS) panel review
- 3/12/21 FY21 MuralsDC RFQ opens
- 3/19/21 FY22 Public Art Building Communities (PABC) RFA opens

Community Engagement

Since January 2021, CAH has launched a series of community engagement programs with the goal of providing resources and professional learning and networking opportunities for District artists and arts and humanities organizations. Thus far, we have conducted one Tele Townhall, five Business of the Arts; three CAH in the Community; and three DC Arts Beat podcast interviews. At the invitation of Council Member Trayon White's invitation, Director Sereke-Brhan and Grant Manager Khalid Randolph also participated in two separate community budget sessions to present agency resources and grants overviews. Thus far, a total of 1,334 participants have attended the sessions. Community engagement programs will continue through March and April 2021.

New Initiative: CAH's Create and Thrive! Creative Aging Program

In a new effort to expand the scope of agency activities and increase access to the arts, CAH had applied for a small funding opportunity announced by the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies and Aroha Philanthropies' Leveraging State Investments in Creative Aging (LISCA) designed to support meaningful arts learning experiences for older adults. In February, CAH was awarded \$23,000 for our Create and Thrive! project proposal to implement a professional development program with teaching artists and foster partnerships with District government agencies and service providers. The broader aim is to address the effects of pandemic isolation experienced by adults through arts learning, thereby extending the social, educational and health benefits of the arts to District residents.

Other Updates and Announcements

- **FY2020 Black History Month Launch:** Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the agency's collaboration with the Black History Committee occurred virtually. Executive Director Sereke-Brhan shared welcome remarks on behalf of the agency on Monday, February 1, 2021 and CAH collaborated in designing and distributing the annual Black History Month calendar.
- **CAH Website:** In February 2021, CAH launched its new agency website now featuring a clean and user-friendly design aimed to create better structural hierarchy to access information. The site is still undergoing improvements and edits to update content are ongoing.
- **CAH Strategic Plan:** As part of its partnership agreement with the National Endowment for the Arts and with the goal of making use of a critical management tool, CAH began its planning process to develop its three-year strategic plan in February 2021. The consultant facilitating the planning process, David Galligan, is a longtime practitioner in the arts and culture field. A draft of the 2021-23 plan will be issued for public comment in May and finalized by July 2021.