



DC COMMISSION ON THE ARTS & HUMANITIES

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**  
SUBMITTED BY HERAN SEREKE-BRHAN, PhD  
OCTOBER 18, 2021  
FISCAL YEAR 2021 IN REVIEW: AGENCY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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

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## **FY 2021 HIGHLIGHTS**

- **Agency Developments**

- Creating a management and reporting structure
- Creating and distributing an agency employee handbook
- Organizational development sessions on Mindful Communication, Myers Briggs Type Indicator, Strength Finder, Equity and Unpacking Bias in the Workplace, Coaching Readiness and Organizational Development; peer, team and individual leadership coaching with National Art Strategies.
- Final Report of Task Force on Equity, Inclusion and Belonging delivered
- Completed CAH Strategic Plan 2021-2023
- Completed Public Art Master Plan 2021-2023
- Completed CAH Gallery ceiling and lighting repairs

- **Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access (IDEA) and Improved Grantmaking**

- FY22 General Operating Support grant: weighted review criteria on IDEA ranging in weight from 15-40%.
- Grant windows open for up to seven weeks, extended till after work hours.
- Additional (new) workshops after award notifications and before payment process.
- Collection of demographic data on panelists and grant applicants.
- FY21 CAH Relief and Recovery grant providing \$5,500 for individuals. Funded 94% of applicants (266 individuals) for a total of \$1.4m.
- FY21 Organizational enhancements for 199 organizations for a total of \$4.1m.

- **Community Engagement**

From January-May, agency-wide effort to launch a new series of virtual community engagement programs with the goal of providing resources and professional learning and networking opportunities for District artists and arts and humanities organizations.

Conducted:

- Tele-Townhalls: 2
- Business of the Arts: 8
- Artists Showcase: 4
- CAH in the Community: 6
- DC Arts Beat Podcasts: 4
- Other Community Engagement: 2
  - Total attendance: 2,107

- **CAH Beyond Grantmaking**
  - 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.
  - Increased access to Commission meetings through YouTube channel transmission.
  - New agency website – user-friendly design.
  - Create and Thrive! Serving the District’s older adult community through arts learning experiences. New agency initiative funded by the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies and Aroha Philanthropies’ Leveraging State Investments in Creative Aging (LISCA) grant. Program launch September-October, 2021 (see updates below).
  - FY2021-2023 NEA Folk/Traditional Arts Partnership (part of the National Endowment of the Arts State Partnership Agreement): CAH’s is partnering with Howard University, the first historically Black college or University to partner in this program, on a three-year project that focuses on Go-Go and the District’s cultural history.

## **FY 2022 UPDATES**

- **FY22 Grants and Public Art**  
To date in FY22, CAH has awarded a total of 675 grants to artists and arts and humanities organizations through its Arts and Humanities Program (AHEP); Arts and Humanities Fellowship (AHFP); Field Trip Experiences (FTE); Projects, Events and Festivals (Individuals) and (Organizations); East of the River (EOR); Art Exhibition (Curatorial) Grant (AEG) and Public Art building Communities (PABC).
- **Public Art: FY22 Art Bank**  
The DC Art Now 2021 exhibition of finalists for the FY22 Art Bank grant program. The exhibition features 131 works by 87 District artists is open for viewing at CAH Gallery (October 11-November 19, 2021). The CAH virtual gallery also features unframed works and works on paper.
- **Arts Education: Words on Fire/Poetry Out Loud**  
Through generous support from the National Endowment on the Arts and the Poetry Foundation, CAH hosts the District’s Poetry Out Loud competition. The program encourages the nation’s high school students to learn about great poetry through memorization and performance, helping them to internalize and perpetuate the country’s rich literary heritage while mastering public speaking skills and building self-confidence. The content structure is similar to a spelling bee, with classroom, school-wide and state-level competitions. Each school may have one student participant in the state finals.

This year, CAH is expanding Poetry Out Loud into a two-day festival program, titled *Words on Fire: A Poetry and Performance Festival*. It will include the Annual Poetry Out Loud competition, a poetry slam, and a written poetry contest for District high school students.

- **Arts Education: Create and Thrive!**

CAH has applied for and received a “Leveraging State Investments in Creative Aging” grant award from the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, in partnership with Aroha Philanthropies. With the support, CAH is launching *Create and Thrive!* a pilot program that will provide professional development to local teaching artists who are interested in learning more about effectively engaging the District’s Senior community.

In partnership with Arts for the Aging (AFTA), CAH is offering this training opportunity to ten (10) teaching artists in DC from Fall 2021—Spring 2022. Teaching artists have been paired to create curriculum for a new interdisciplinary residency program, that will offer three (3) consecutive workshops to the same group of participants at local senior centers.