



DC COMMISSION ON THE ARTS & HUMANITIES

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

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.

Beginning April 19, 2021, all DC residents ages 16 and older are eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Additional information is available at: coronavirus.dc.gov/vaccinatedc.

Agency Development

CAH's staff have completed nine internal organizational development sessions to 'Cultivate a Collaborative Culture of Trust and Belonging' which began in January 2021. DCHR's Center for Learning and Development (CLD) will focus the remaining training sessions on equity and unpacking bias in the workplace and organizational development. From April until June 2021, CLD will oversee an internal 360-degree evaluation of department heads to better identify areas of strength and improvement. The National Arts Strategies has also begun coaching sessions with department heads to support the agency's efforts to cultivate a leadership core.

Grants and Public Art

The FY22 Grants and Public Art cycle is scheduled to open in May with a tele townhall of all program overviews scheduled for Friday, May 7, 2021 from 10:00am to 12:00pm. The following grant programs will open: Arts and Humanities Education Program (AHFP); Arts and Humanities Fellowship Program (AHEP); East of the River (EOR); Facilities and Buildings; Field Trip Experiences (FTE); LiftOff; and Projects, Events and Festivals (PEF). In addition to the Public Art Building Communities (PABC) grant which is currently accepting applications, two additional Public Art programs will launch in May: Art Bank Program (ABP) and Art Exhibition (Curatorial) Grant Program (AEG).

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; seven Business of the Arts; five CAH in the Community; two Artist Showcase and five DC Arts Beat podcast interviews. Session topics include: Access and Inclusion, Building Access to Public Art Placemaking, Developing Grant Applications, Organizations and Resilience: Sustaining Staff in Times of Crisis as well as networking opportunities in Arts Education and presentations on the history and maintenance of the District's Art Bank collection.

CAH has also sought opportunities to feature individual artists through the Artist Showcase series which has presented an opening panel discussion of women photographers for the current exhibition *Our City, Ourselves: Women Photograph Washington*. On April 22, 2021, from 6:00pm-7:30pm, CAH will celebrate National Jazz and Poetry month featuring poets and jazz musicians who have paired together for the first time through the Artists Showcase series. The program will take place virtually and guests can register on our website. Past programs are also available for view there. Thus far, a total of 1,623 participants have attended these virtual community engagement programs.

Other Updates and Announcements

- Executive Director Sereke-Brhan attended an introductory meeting organized by the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA) to meet with President Biden's newly appointed National Endowment of the Arts (NEA) officials. Discussions centered on rollout and distribution experiences of the CARES Act funding in 2020 in preparation for similar funding for the arts and culture sector through American Recovery Plan in 2021. The NEA and NASAA will be sharing more information on this relief funding with State Arts Agencies in coming months.
- CAH Public Art Master and Strategic Plans: Both Plans have completed their stakeholder discussions and analyses and are preparing to begin their public comment period in late April/early May 2021. Final Plans will be ready for discussion in June.