
INCLUSION, DIVERSITY AND EQUITY COMMITTEE REPORT FEBRUARY 28, 2024

DEIA Committee

- Commissioners: Reggie Van Lee – CAH Chairperson, Cora Barry – Commissioner, Cecily Habimana – Commissioner; Kymber Menkiti – Commissioner; Aaron Myers – CAH Executive Director
- **Staff Leads:** Claradith E. Landry – Chief Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Officer; Logan X. Brown – IDEA Department Program Assistant
- **CAH Staff** – Andrew Jacobson – Special Assistant to the CAH Executive Director; Christopher Naoum – CAH Events Coordinator

DEIA Committee Description and Background

The IDEA Task Force and Committee was formed from the direct actions intent upon making changes to **benefit the greater GOOD**. As a result of intentional advocacy for the Black and Brown arts community, the IDEA Task Force and Committee was formed to ensure that the commission was supporting artists and organizations that are often looked over and left behind by the traditional funding structures. This is critical work brought more equity to the Commission and also supports the Mayor's and city's commitment to racial equity. The commission started the IDEA task force and developed 44 recommendations for the commission to more equitably distribute grant funding. In addition to the 44 recommendations, the commission passed an equitable funding model to support small and mid-sized organizations.

This work was in direct response to the advocacy and leadership of Commissioners Dr. Hopkinson and Mrs. Barry.

On Friday, February 9th, the DEIA committee convened to discuss setting a regular meeting time, understanding DEIA (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility), reviewing Task Force Recommendations, and defining the committee's purpose, objectives, and accountability measures. As a result of the Committee's Meeting, the members will continue to work toward a path to executing the 44 recommendations as described and needed; as well as exploring other best practices to integrate into its operations.

Since its inception, the IDEA office has been pivotal in ensuring that our operations are guided by these core principles. Through its initiatives and interventions, we have made significant strides towards achieving a more equitable distribution of resources. Currently, 16 out of 44 recommendations outlined to enhance equity and inclusion within our practices are either complete or in progress. This represents 36% of the total recommendations, signifying a substantial commitment to advancing these objectives.

Feb. 28, 2024: Recent Actions Since the Last Meeting

Cecily's Comments:

- Since its inception, the IDEA office has been pivotal in ensuring that our operations are guided by these core principles. Through its initiatives and interventions, we have made significant strides towards achieving a more equitable distribution of resources.
- Currently, 16 out of 44 recommendations outlined to enhance equity and inclusion within our practices are either complete or in progress. This represents 36% of the total recommendations, signifying a substantial commitment to advancing these objectives.
 - Of the 7 completed Recommendations, the IDEA Committee would like to highlight 2 in particular:
 - CAH created an IDEA Standing Committee and we have held two monthly meetings to date; we will continue meeting monthly to create a more equitable and resource rich organization positioned to support the DC-based artistic-landscape
 - As a **Call to Action**: I'd like to remind our virtual audience of the opportunity to serve as a panelist for our grant reviews. Since September 2022, panelists have been approved to receive a \$250 gift card for Grant Reviews. We provide a \$250 gift card as an extension of our appreciation for your time – and this is in alignment with NEA guidelines.
 - We would like to make sure that the panelists mirror the community that we serve across the 8 wards and the artists, galleries and artisans we support. And we need your help to do that.
 - Visit the CAH website [read as dcarts.dc.gov forward slash, page, forward slash, apply, dash, be, dah, CAH, dash panelist]
<https://dcarts.dc.gov/page/apply-be-cah-panelist>
 - We have 60 panels, and 6-7 panelists are needed per panel
 - 2-3 weeks are given to each panelist to review 25 applications.
 - Please consider signing up to become a panelist

Claradith's Comments:

- The Chief Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Officer joined ED Myers, who provided this year's Statement of Occasion at the Annual Association of the Studies of African American Life and History luncheon on 24 February 2024. Director Myers spoke fervently about the opportunity to express gratitude to a community that has ensured that we continue to address injustices that are around us. He emphasized the importance of uplifting and providing the tools and resources for generations to come. It was such an appropriate time for Director Myers to speak as he as the Association of the Studies of African American Life and History declared the theme for this Black History Month as "African Americans and the Arts." As the Executive Director of the DC CAH, Director Myers, was positioned to share insights on the work of the Commission and speak the many contributions of African Americans to the Arts while also expressing his thanks he used the opportunity to thank those who support, amplify and protect Arts within the African American community while protecting our narratives and other mediums for cultural expression.
- Additionally, Black History Month is coming to an end as far as the Gregorian calendar – where we might be relegated to 28 or 29 days to acknowledge, however, please note that the celebration of Black-American, African American and we must acknowledge the immense economic potential within the \$700 billion art industry. For African Americans, this represents more than just financial opportunity; it's a chance to reclaim, to be credited and to own our narrative and ensure equitable representation within mainstream galleries and outlets, free from

discriminatory barriers. Art serves as a powerful medium for commemorating social justice and civil rights struggles, reflecting the trauma, perseverance, and resilience of African Americans throughout history.

Yet, amidst the struggle, art also encapsulates the joy, community, and humanity that binds us all together. It's crucial for us to uplift and celebrate not only the renowned Black artists across various mediums but also highlight the traditional yet expansive opportunities for other art disciplines that have historically been safe-havens and modes of survival for African Americans, such as, culinary artists, fashion designers, and performers who enrich our cultural tapestry.

As the nation's creative capital, we have a responsibility to ensure that diverse voices are not only heard but also amplified within our artistic landscape.

At the Commission, we advocate for and support DC-based artists while continuing to work towards a future where art is truly inclusive, reflective of our collective experiences, and a catalyst for positive change – 365 days of the year.