



City of
OAKLAND
California

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News from: **Economic & Workforce
Development Department**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Cultural Strategists In Government Cohort Announced,
Applications Still Accepted Through February 28**

Oakland, CA – Following a call for qualifications in November, the Cultural Strategists-in-Government (CSIG) Program has announced the initial cohort of artists and cultural practitioners who will bring new perspectives and creative thinking to help City staff address some of Oakland’s greatest problems together with the City’s diverse communities. Four Strategists have been selected, and the application deadline for six additional project slots has been extended to Monday, February 28, at 5 p.m. Interested individuals can apply at: <https://bit.ly/3F1H5wH>

“The new perspectives these cultural strategists bring to City government will lead to creative solutions to pressing challenges throughout Oakland,” said Oakland **Mayor Libby Schaaf**. “Engaging these creative thinkers who are rooted in a broad range of communities will help us build the sense of belonging among all Oaklanders.”

Continuing to advance its Cultural Development Plan “Belonging in Oakland,” the City’s Cultural Affairs Division partnered with The Oakland Fund for Public Innovation to secure a multi-year grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to promote equity, belonging, and well-being for all communities of Oakland. These grant funds will support the Cultural Strategist-in-Government (CSIG) Program. The CSIG Program seeks to discover new ways of fulfilling the City’s aspirations by working with strategists from communities most impacted by inequities and who can bring a new lens to the work of building a just city.

Four Cultural Strategists Selected

Key Choice and Citywide Communications/Office of the City Administrator
A classically trained, Hip-Hop musician with wide-ranging skills and tastes, [Key Choice](#) has shared the stage with the likes of Michael Franti and Michael Morgan. He is at home in the studio as well as the opera house. An educator, activist, and advocate for young people and artistry as a vehicle for social justice, Choice will partner with the [Citywide Communications Team](#) to expand understanding of the [City’s motto, “Love Life,”](#) adopted in 2016 in memory of 16-year-old Lo’Eshé Lacy as a mantra against violence and an affirmation of the value of life. Given that the motto needs to be grounded in the community to be embraced and have meaning, those who are familiar with Choice and his heart-filled music know that it would be hard to find a better person to animate Oakland’s motto.

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Celia C. Peters and AAMLO

[Celia C. Peters](#) is a filmmaker and storyteller who works within a range of audiovisual media to create compelling narrative experiences. She has created installations and taught filmmaking and screenwriting and is committed to communities having access to new technologies, such as immersive media (virtual and augmented reality). An experienced educator and teaching artist, Peters will

**Cultural Strategists In
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February 28**

partner with the [African American Museum and Library at Oakland](#) (AAMLO), a branch of the Oakland Public Library, to refresh and animate its presence in the community through re-conceptualizing its long-term exhibition, *Visions Toward Tomorrow: The African American Community in Oakland, 1890-1990*, and developing new curricular materials to enhance it – lifting up the role of Black Americans in the building of Oakland.

David Peters and Planning & Building Department

A third-generation Hoover-Foster resident with a passion for the stories and histories of Oakland, **David Peters** launched the [Black Liberation Walking Tour](#), a nationally recognized community-led and self-guided virtual DIY walking tour using oral histories to tell the story of the neighborhood. Peters is highly engaged civically in other ways as well – regularly participating in meetings of the City Council, Council committees, Planning Commission, Redistricting Commission, and other City agencies. Through the CSIG program, the [Planning & Building Department](#) will partner with Peters to gain deeper knowledge of the history, environment, and people in the diverse communities they serve to advance equity and to build stronger relationships across Oakland through the city-wide [General Plan Update process](#).

Candice Wicks-Davis and Department of Race and Equity

Artist, entrepreneur, and activist [Candice Wicks-Davis](#) combines song, performance, and media as a catalyst for social transformation and believes the intersection of art, humility, strategy, and policy is an effective way to transform systems of inequality. In the pilot phase of the Cultural Strategists-in-Government program in 2019-20, the [Department of Race and Equity](#) (DRE) began a collaboration with Wicks-Davis to create programming and inclusive processes to further understanding of and address anti-Black bias in the City of Oakland. Interrupted by the pandemic lockdown, DRE’s project will be completed in this new iteration of the CSIG program as Wicks-Davis creates a song cycle based on themes that emerged from [DRE’s racial equity report](#) of 2018 that will be performed and recorded.

Cultural strategists are meant to play roles different from typical artists-in-residence. There is no expectation that CSIGs will create an artistic product. CSIGs can be artists, or people who consider themselves cultural workers, creative entrepreneurs, traditional culture bearers, community historians or others who are knowledgeable of culturally specific practices, history, or heritage relevant to communities in Oakland. CSIGs should be interested in serving the community and believe that City government can and should work effectively for all Oaklanders.

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Application Deadline Extended

The deadline to apply for six additional City CSIG projects is **Monday, February 28, 2022, at 5 p.m.** The six Strategist opportunities are:

- AssistHub, Office of the Mayor
- Community Homeless Services, Human Services Department
- Department of Violence Prevention
- Environmental Services Division, Oakland Public Works Department
- Public Art Program-Cultural Affairs Division, Economic & Workforce Development Department
- The Office of the President of City Council

**Cultural Strategists In
Government Cohort
Announced, Applications
Still Accepted Through
February 28**

February 18, 2022
Page Three

Interested individuals may access the guidelines, project case statements and the application at: <https://bit.ly/3F1H5wH>

Applicants to this program must be Oakland residents.

Candidates who previously submitted applications to the listed City entities are welcome to revise their application or withdraw it and submit a new application to a different City project.

New and revised Cultural Strategist applications received by 5 p.m. on February 28 will be reviewed by City and CSIG Program staff and finalists will be interviewed in late March 2022. Up to six professional service contracts, not to exceed \$48,000 each, will be awarded. Notification of awards is anticipated in early April 2022. Most of the CSIG placements are anticipated to last for 12 months, however, applicants can suggest different timing in their RFQ responses.

For more information about this opportunity, visit <https://bit.ly/3F1H5wH> or contact Vanessa Whang at csigprogram@gmail.com.

About the Cultural Affairs Division

The Cultural Affairs Division is housed in the City's Economic & Workforce Development Department. The division includes the City's cultural funding program, which provides approximately \$1.5 million in grants to support the arts in Oakland; the public art program, which has more than \$1 million in funds currently dedicated for public art installations across Oakland and staff working on special events and film production permitting.

The Cultural Funding Program relies on a competitive panel process to determine award recipients and funding allocations. Grant recommendations must be approved by the Funding Advisory Committee and City Council before contracts are awarded.

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**Cultural Strategists In
Government Cohort
Announced, Applications
Still Accepted Through
February 28**

February 18, 2022
Page Four

About the Oakland Fund for Public Innovation

The Oakland Fund for Public Innovation reaches across the city, engaging private partners to innovate, test, and scale ideas that enhance Oakland. The Fund strives to improve the prosperity, safety, and quality of life for all Oaklanders with projects that:

- Build a more trustworthy and responsive government
- Allow Oaklanders to stay rooted and thrive in our city
- Create a more vibrant and connected Oakland for all who live, work and play here.

About The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation is the nation's largest supporter of the arts and humanities. Since 1969, the Foundation has been guided by its core belief that the humanities and arts are essential to human understanding. The Foundation believes that the arts and humanities are where we express our complex humanity, and that everyone deserves the beauty, transcendence, and freedom that can be found there. Through their grants, they seek to build just communities enriched by meaning and empowered by critical thinking, where ideas and imagination can thrive.

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