



City of
OAKLAND
California

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News from: **Economic & Workforce
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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City Launches New Poet Laureate Program

Application Launch Coincides with National Poetry Month

Oakland, CA – On Monday, April 19, the City of Oakland’s Cultural Affairs Division will begin accepting nominations for the new Oakland Poet Laureate Program. The program’s primary goal is to make poetry more accessible across Oakland, while promoting an understanding of the transformative power of this art form. Nominations are being accepted online at: <https://bit.ly/2Q98ZT9> through Wednesday, May 19.

“The new Poet Laureate Program will harness the power of storytelling through poetry,” said Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf. “The Poet Laureate will help bring recognition of Oakland as a nexus of cutting-edge creativity to the national stage.”

During the two-year term that starts June 2021, the Oakland Poet Laureate will deliver an inaugural address, partner with the [Oakland Public Library’s Oakland Youth Poet Laureate](#) on a collaborative reading series, deliver four readings at City-owned locations throughout Oakland, and write one poem that commemorates our city. An honorarium of \$5,000 will be awarded to the individual selected.

Eligibility Criteria

- Must be a current Oakland resident who has lived in Oakland consistently for a minimum of five years.
- Must be 18 years of age or older
- Must have at least two previous works published. This may include publications in journals, online, a full-length or chapbook collection of poetry, or self-published chap/books.
- Must have a proven track record of community engagement and collaboration, including previous experience hosting events, organizing, teaching and/or leading workshops, and/or creative outreach to community members.

When submitting a nomination, you will be asked to provide the nominee’s:

- Resume
- Writing sample (up to 5 pages). Previously published work is okay.
- Demographics (race/ethnicity, gender, language spoken/written).

In reviewing nominations, the Oakland Poet Laureate Oversight Committee (OPLOC) consider the following criteria:

- Understanding of the multiplicity of the aesthetic speeches of the city and consideration of the ways literature, heritage practices, film, arts practices, etc. illuminate how Oaklanders express their poetic souls.
- Command of poetry as a craft

(more)

**City Launches New Poet
Laureate Program**

April 13, 2021
Page Two

- Affirmation of a poetic voice that expresses Oakland’s diversity, beauty, and distinctions.
- Community engagement experience and ability to communicate well across a diverse range of communities
- Understanding of civic narratives around equity, culture, and belonging

To learn more about the program, please visit oaklandca.gov/poetlaureate or email OakPoetLaureate@oaklandca.gov.

Following concept approval by the Cultural Affairs Commission at its meeting on January 25, 2021, the details of the Oakland Laureate Program were crafted by Cultural Affairs Manager Roberto Bedoya and Cultural Affairs Commissioner J. K. Fowler, a worker/publisher in the field of literary arts. It is modeled after similar programs across the state. The Commission’s action is in response to a long-held community desire for a program to celebrate the beauty, diversity, resilience, and brilliance of Oakland and its residents.

The work of the Oakland Poet Laureate will advance the value of “belonging” as articulated in Oakland’s Cultural Plan, [*Belonging in Oakland: A Cultural Development Plan*](#), the tagline of which is “Equity is the Driving Force, Culture is the Frame, Belonging is the Goal.”

Poetry can help with rebirth/reinvigorate, help situate ourselves in space and place, and assist us in future casting/visioning for more embodied ways of moving forward, together, in our amazing city.

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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 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, film production permitting and a walking tours program.