



# Chicago Poet Laureate

## Program Overview

In 2023, Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot, in coordination with the Chicago Public Library, Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, and Poetry Foundation, will publicly announce the creation of the Chicago Poet Laureate program. The program comes from the advocacy of the city's creative and civic communities. It aims to increase awareness of Chicago's historic contributions to the literary arts while celebrating and honoring the efforts of Chicago's working artists.

The Chicago Poet Laureate will serve a two-year term and be awarded a grant of \$50,000 for the commissioning of new poems, the creation of a public program series, and for serving as an ambassador for the city's literary and creative communities.

The program's launch in 2023 aligns with the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Chicago Public Library.

## Program Objectives

- Enhance the creation and appreciation of poetry and the literary arts.
- Raise awareness of the civic importance of literature, poetry, and spoken word.
- Inspire an emerging generation of critical thinkers, writers, storytellers, and literary artists.
- Support opportunities to celebrate the expression of culture through the literary arts.
- Bring literary arts classes and/or events to people in Chicago in community contexts.
- Commission two new works and a public program series in conjunction with the Poet Laureate's tenure.



## Selection Process

The inaugural Poet Laureate will be selected as follows:

- A Nominating Committee composed of individuals with significant experience and knowledge of Chicago's literary community will nominate individuals who will be invited to apply. Nominating Committee members may not put forward their names for application/consideration.
- A public call for nominees will be launched concurrently with the announcement of the program in January.
- All nominees will be reviewed for eligibility and invited to apply.
- Nominees interested in applying will submit their application materials (materials listed below).
- A Review Committee of experts, writers, educators, and advocates from Chicago's creative community will score applications, conduct interviews, and prepare their recommendation of three (3) ranked finalists to the Mayor for final review and appointment. Reviewers will be asked to evaluate applications based on artistic merit, role approach, and community commitment.
- The Chicago Poet Laureate will be named in Spring 2023.

## Eligibility Criteria

To be Poet Laureate, the individual must:

- Be a current resident of the City of Chicago.
- Be at least 21 years of age.
- Have a demonstrated connection and/or commitment to the literary community in Chicago.
- Have at least four published works and/or performances in established publications (print, online, poetry journals, magazines, websites, or video) over the past three years that are not predominantly self-curated, personal websites, or personal blogs (not published in a vanity press).
- Have received critical acclaim as demonstrated by special honors, awards, and/or other recognition.
- Have a strong interest in serving the city and comfort with being a representative of the City of Chicago.
- Have a history of working with people of all ages and strong communication skills.
- Be able to develop and deliver public programming; and
- Be willing and able to travel between locations around Chicago.

## Scope of Work

Throughout the two-year appointment, the Poet Laureate will carry out the following duties during each year:

- Act as a liaison, advocate, and leader who will utilize their talents to inspire the residents of Chicago to read, write, perform, and appreciate the written and spoken word.
- Inspire emerging generations of critical thinkers, writers, storytellers, and literary artists, by encouraging both the reading and writing of literature.
- Develop a public program series (minimum of six (6) programs per year) to take place across the city with diverse audiences, including programs for young people. CPL and DCASE will support the Poet Laureate with partnerships that may be necessary to implement the Laureate's public programming ideas. Existing opportunities include:
  - A mainstage event at the Harold Washington Library Center during Poetry Fest
  - Workshops in CPL neighborhood library branches
  - Invitations to CPL and DCASE special events throughout the year with the potential to present the commissioned poem
- Work with City staff to develop and produce online and social media communications and other content (poster/bookmark) featuring the Laureate's commissioned work.
- Participate in an annual conversation with the Poet Laureate partners to recap the year's public events, special presentations, and works created by the Poet during the previous year.

## Poet Laureate Honorarium

The Chicago Poet Laureate will be contracted by DCASE and receive a \$25,000 award for each year in the role. After the first year is completed, a review of the Poet Laureate's service will be conducted to determine any contracting updates that may be required for the second year.

## Timeline

**\*\*\* All dates are subject to change**

Nomination Period	December 2, 2022 - January 18, 2023
Invitations Shared, Application Available	February 1, 2023
Information Session for Applicants	TBD
Application Deadline	<b>February 28, 2023, at 5 pm</b>
Review Period	March 2023

Interviews	TBD
Final Announcement	Spring 2023; <b>applicants should hold the date of April 29, 2023.</b>
Year 1	May 1, 2023 - April 30, 2024
Year 2	May 1, 2024 - April 30, 2025

## For Nominees

Once nominated, staff from the City will review all nominees for eligibility. Eligible nominees will then be invited to apply.

An optional, virtual information session will be held for nominees to learn more about the program and ask questions at a date and time to be determined. This will be recorded and shared with all applicants.

## Application Elements + Submission Details

Nominees interested in applying to be Poet Laureate will have to submit an application through DCASE's CyberGrants portal.

- General application information will include:
  - Full name
  - Professional name (if different)
  - Address
  - Contact phone number
  - Contact email address
  - Website (optional)
  - Social media handles (optional)
  - Short bio (150-word max)
  - Optional DCASE demographic questions
  
- Additional materials, to be submitted as uploads, will include:
  - Proof of residency (PDF/JPG/PNG of a driver's license, state ID, or Chicago CityKey showing Chicago address must be provided)
  - Professional resume or curriculum vitae (max. two pages, PDF format)
  - Personal statement addressing why the applicant would be a good choice for the role and how the applicant would approach the Scope of Work (max. two pages, PDF format)

- Four PDF copies or weblinks to demonstrate four published poems or four performed poems (or a combination of published/performed poems totaling four), originated during the past 3 years. If submitting written samples, the complete PDF should not exceed 10 pages in length. The total time of videos of performed poems should not exceed 15 minutes in length.

All materials should be submitted through DCASE's CyberGrants portal **by 11:59 pm on Tuesday, February 28, 2023**. Incomplete submissions will not be reviewed.

**Note:** CyberGrants, like many submission platforms, can be challenging to navigate. Please preview the platform and application well in advance of the deadline.

## Review Process

During March, a separate Review Committee made up of experts, writers, educators, and advocates from Chicago's creative community will score applications, conduct interviews, and prepare their recommendation of three (3) ranked finalists to the Mayor for final review and appointment.

Interviews will take place during March.

Reviewers will evaluate applications based on artistic merit, applicant's approach to the role, and commitment to the community.

## Announcement

The final selection of the Poet Laureate will take place in Spring 2023.