



# Chicago Poet Laureate – Application Guidelines

**Submission Deadline: Thursday, May 29, 2025 at 5 pm Central**

[Link to CyberGrants Application](#)

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## DCASE Contact Information

Please direct all inquiries to Amanda Carlson at [CulturalResources@CityofChicago.org](mailto:CulturalResources@CityofChicago.org).



## Program Overview

This National Poetry Month, Mayor Brandon Johnson, the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE), the Chicago Public Library (CPL), and the Poetry Foundation are pleased to announce that the City of Chicago will select its next Poet Laureate for a two-year term beginning in 2026. Inaugural Poet Laureate, Avery R. Young's term ends in December 2025.

DCASE, CPL, and the Poetry Foundation are Chicago's preeminent presenters of cultural and literary programs. The Chicago Poet Laureate program, which they began in 2023, 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 Poet Laureate serves as an ambassador for the city's literary and creative communities.

The Chicago Poet Laureate is awarded an honorarium of \$70,000 (\$35,000/year) for the commissioning of new poems and for attendance at public events and presentations. In collaboration with DCASE and CPL, the Poet Laureate develops and implements a work plan for their time in the role, which includes a public program series. Additional programming monies are allocated to the Laureate upon approval of the work plan.

## 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.

## Eligibility Criteria

To be Poet Laureate, an applicant must:

- Be a current resident of the City of Chicago and remain a resident during the term of the laureateship.

- Be at least 21 years of age.
- Be able to demonstrate at least ten (10) years of commitment and connection to Chicago's literary community.
- Have at least four (4) published works and/or performances in established publications (print, online, poetry journals, magazines, websites, or video) over the past three (3) years that are not 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 strong communication skills and a history of working with people of all ages.
- Be able to develop and deliver public programming in collaboration with Chicago Public Library and DCASE.
- Be willing and able to travel between locations around Chicago.

Current City of Chicago employees and Poetry Foundation staff are not eligible to be Poet Laureate. Employees of sister agencies are eligible, but must comply with their own agency's ethics policies.

## Scope of Work

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

- Act as a liaison, advocate, and leader who will utilize their talents to encourage 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.
- Develop at least one (1) new work per year (totaling two [2] commissioned works) in connection with the role.
- Participate in five (5) CPL, DCASE, and/or City special events per year to act as an ambassador and perform their work. This may include, but is not limited to, a mainstage event at Poetry Fest, CPL-led programming, DCASE events and festivals, and invitations from the Mayor's Office, City departments, and/or sister agencies, e.g. performing at City

Colleges of Chicago Commencement, Mayor's Office special events, and appearing on City of Chicago social media accounts.

- Coordinate with the Poetry Foundation to be in attendance at, and develop programming for, one (1) Poetry Foundation program per year.
- Develop a work plan and budget for the two years, which includes any public programming that the Laureate will develop and lead. The work plan and budget will be reviewed and approved by CPL and DCASE staff.
  - The work plan should include at a minimum:
    - 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, e.g. workshops with CPL writing groups, and/or stand alone workshops in branch libraries.

NOTE: 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:

- Workshops in CPL neighborhood library branches.
- Invitations to CPL and DCASE special events throughout the year with the potential to present the commissioned poem.
- Remain in regular correspondence with City staff regarding meetings, opportunities and implementation of the work plan, e.g arranging bi-weekly or standing meetings depending on the cadence of work and need for coordination and collaboration.
- Work with City staff to develop and produce online and social media communications and other content (poster/bookmark) featuring the Laureate's commissioned work.
- Attend media interviews and other public events.
- 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 Laureate during the previous year.

## Poet Laureate Honorarium & Programming Budget

The Chicago Poet Laureate will be contracted by DCASE and receive a \$35,000 honorarium for each year in the role (\$70,000 total). A separate budget for programming will be defined and allocated according to the following process.

At the start of the Laureate’s tenure, the Laureate will develop a work plan and budget for approval by CPL and DCASE staff. This work plan will set the course for the two-year tenure. The Laureate should expect close collaboration with City staff to ensure that their practice and vision for their time in the role are appropriately supported, and that relationships with City and external partners can be activated. The budget will be tailored to the poet’s unique practice and proposal.

After the first year of the Laureate’s tenure is complete, a review of the Poet Laureate’s service will be conducted by CPL and DCASE staff to determine any contracting or budget updates that may be required for the second year.

## Timeline

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

<b>Application Available</b>	<b>Thursday, April 17, 2025</b>
Virtual Information Session for Applicants	<b>Thursday, April 24, 2025 – 12 pm to 1 pm</b> This session will be recorded and posted to <a href="https://chicago.gov/PoetLaureate">Chicago.gov/PoetLaureate</a> <a href="#">Register here.</a>
In-Person Information Session for Applicants at Poetry Fest	<b>Saturday, April 26, 2025 – 1 pm to 2 pm</b> Harold Washington Library Center, Video Theater (Lower Level)
<b>Application Deadline</b>	<b>Thursday, May 29, 2025 – 5 pm</b>
Application Review Period	June 2025
Finalist Interviews	July 21 and/or July 22, 2025
Internal Approvals and Background Check	August-September 2025
<b>Public Announcement</b>	<b>October 2025</b>
City Contracting	October-December 2025
Year 1	2026 – Payment of the first year honorarium will be made in Q1 2026.
Year 2	2027 – Payment of the second year honorarium will be made in Q1 2027.

## Selection Process

The Poet Laureate will be selected as follows:

- Applicants will submit their materials (materials listed below).
- City staff conduct an eligibility check.
- A Review Committee of experts, writers, educators, and advocates from Chicago's creative community will score applications, conduct interviews with finalists, and prepare their recommendations for presentation and approval by City of Chicago leadership. The names of Reviewers will be released after the Poet Laureate is announced to ensure that there is no inappropriate communication, nor conflicts of interest that arise during the selection process.
- Reviewers will be asked to evaluate applications based on artistic merit, role approach, and community commitment.
  - **Artistic merit:** The applicant effectively communicates and shares their work through representative work samples, awards, and other accolades.
  - **Role approach:** The proposed approach to the role of Chicago Poet Laureate possesses vision, quality, and meaningful opportunities to engage within and across Chicago's diverse communities, especially youth, in activities related to the Poet Laureate's service and in service of Chicago's literary future.
  - **Community commitment:** The applicant demonstrates more than a decade of experience, relationships, and engagement with Chicago's literary community. The applicant demonstrates experience working in, on behalf of, and leading diverse communities (age, ethnicity, income, disability, immigration status, justice-impacted communities, among others), and demonstrates experience with community outreach, strong listening skills, and attention to detail.
- The names of the top three (3) candidates will be presented to the Mayor for review, vetting, and final appointment.
  - The selected Laureate will be expected to complete a rigorous vetting process consistent with the City's vetting process for other appointments. This includes sharing information on education, employment, awards, social media, and finances, among other categories of information. The City will also conduct an indebtedness check to see if the selected poet owes money to the City of Chicago. If the selected poet does, the poet will need to pay off all debt or enter into a payment plan before contracting begins.
- The Chicago Poet Laureate will be named in October 2025.

## Application Elements + Submission Details

Nominees interested in applying to be Poet Laureate will have to submit an application through DCASE's CyberGrants portal. [Click here to apply](#).

**Note:** If you have used CyberGrants previously to review and/or submit an application, you may be prompted upon reopening the portal with program information for a prior grant program. If this happens, please follow the instructions to clear your cache.

Once in CyberGrants, you will be asked to provide:

- **General application information:**

- Full name
- Professional name (if different)
- Address
- Contact phone number
- Contact email address
- Website (optional)
- Social media handles (optional)
- Short bio [1000 character max]
- DCASE demographic questions

- **Materials:**

- **Proof of City of Chicago residency** (PDF/JPG/PNG of a current driver's license, state ID, or Chicago CityKey showing Chicago address must be provided. Expired licenses will not be accepted).
  - If your current address is not on your government issued I.D., you may provide a scanned PDF of your CURRENT lease agreement or a CURRENT utility bill showing Chicago residency, in addition to your current license, state ID, or Chicago CityKey.
  - If you are submitting multiple documents, please upload them into the application in a single PDF.
- Professional **resume or curriculum vitae** (max. two [2] pages, PDF format).
- **Long-form Responses** addressing the following questions (character limits are in place for each question). Please be sure to review the selection process criteria above to understand how reviewers will be assessing these personal statements.

- Why are you interested in the role of Poet Laureate at this time? [1250 character maximum]
- Describe your current artistic practice in the field of poetry. What have you accomplished through this work that you are proud of? [1250 character maximum]
- What are some of your individual artistic goals for the near future and how can they be served if you are named Chicago Poet Laureate? [1250 character maximum]
- What civic goal/s do you wish to have accomplished by the end of your tenure? [1250 character maximum]
- Narrative information on **awards, honors, or recognition** (bullet point or list format preferred). [1000 character maximum]
- **Four (4) work samples (must be individual works of poetry):**
  - Uploads or URL web links sharing **four works of poetry/poems that were first published or performed between 2022 and 2025 (in the last three years)**. Applicants will be asked to provide each work's:
    - Title.
    - Year published/performed.
    - Name of the platform/presenter/organization where the work was published/performed (print, online, poetry journals, magazines, websites, or video).
  - If submitting a written sample, the work sample should be **no longer than three (3) pages** in length, and should be uploaded as a PDF.
  - If submitting a performed work sample (audio/video), the work sample should be **no longer than three (3) minutes in length**.
    - URL web links for the work sample are required for any video samples, and are preferred for audio.
    - If the performed work sample is part of a longer audio/video piece, please include in the "Additional Details" section of the application a time stamp where reviewers should start listening/watching.

An **optional, virtual information session** will be held on **Thursday, April 24, 2025, from 12:00 - 1:00 pm**. [Register here](#). This webinar will be recorded. The recording will be posted to [Chicago.gov/PoetLaureate](https://chicago.gov/PoetLaureate).



An **optional, in-person information session** will be held on **Saturday, April 26, 2025, from 1:00 - 1:55 pm** at the Harold Washington Library Center as a part of Poetry Fest. The session will be held in the Video Theater on the Lower Level.

All materials should be submitted through DCASE's CyberGrants portal **by 5:00 pm on Thursday, May 29, 2025**. Incomplete submissions will not be reviewed.

### **Accessibility**

If you have questions, need assistance in another language, and/or if you are an individual with a disability and need accommodation to apply via CyberGrants, please contact [CulturalResources@CityofChicago.org](mailto:CulturalResources@CityofChicago.org) for assistance. Requests must be made at least 14 business days before the application is due.

**Please try to submit your application earlier than the stated deadline. Late submissions will not be accepted.**

**Note:** CyberGrants, like many submission platforms, can be challenging to navigate. Please preview the platform and application well in advance of the deadline. Use CyberGrants' internal support functions, and reach out to [CulturalResources@CityofChicago.org](mailto:CulturalResources@CityofChicago.org) if you have any trouble.

### **Announcement**

The final selection of the Poet Laureate will be announced in October 2025. The selected Poet Laureate will be asked to be available in September for limited preparations for the announcement, including media training.

After the announcement, the selected Poet Laureate will work with City staff and the current Laureate to complete the City contracting process, get familiar with the role, and prepare for the start of the new Laureate's tenure in 2026.