



ArtsWestchester's Call to Poets Westchester County Poet Laureate

Application Deadline: Monday, October 2, 2023, 11:59pm

The Westchester Poet Laureate Program embraces both written and spoken poetic traditions, and seeks to promote poetry as a medium that defies boundaries and categories, serves as a platform for underrepresented voices, and offers a space for personal reflection and healing. Poetry is one of the pillars of the humanities, and the Westchester Poet Laureate program is a public humanities position.

Through public-facing programming, the Poet Laureate will mobilize poetry to connect with diverse audiences, to address topics of cultural, social, and historical importance, and to show that poetry can bring real meaning and positive social change to people's lives and communities.

In concert with the Westchester County Executive's office, ArtsWestchester will appoint and support an outstanding Westchester poet as Poet Laureate for Westchester County, sponsor public programs that feature local-area poets, and promote poetry as a relevant and accessible art form. This program will be open to poets specializing in spoken and/or written traditions, and languages other than English will be considered.

The Laureate will encourage the community to engage with poetry by creating and leading activities that inspire writing and performances of poetry among all age groups while initiating a dialogue between local poets, cultural organizations, and community institutions. The successful Poet Laureate candidate can creatively use their individual talents and strengths to elevate the stature of poetry in the community for all Westchester residents and visitors.

As the designated arts council of Westchester County, ArtsWestchester administers the Westchester County Poet Laureate program through a selection

process led by an advisory committee, securing the County's approval and administering the program.

Eligibility

The poet Laureate must:

- Be a resident of Westchester County, NY for at least 2 years
- Demonstrate a commitment to poetry writing, spoken word performance, and community involvement and outreach
- Have past work that is of high artistic quality (as demonstrated by the required writing sample) and a record of publication in journals, chapbooks, books (audio or video).
- Demonstrate plans and capacity to engage the public through programming
- Be at least 25 years of age at time of application
- Be able to serve the full three-year term as Laureate and maintain residency in Westchester County throughout the term

Honorarium

The Laureate will receive a stipend of \$30,000 over the three-year term. The honorarium will be distributed biannually in two payments of \$5,000 each year. As needed, there will be additional funds allotted for program costs at the discretion of ArtsWestchester.

Length of Term

The Laureate will be appointed to serve a three-year (36 month) term. The expected term will be from January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2026.

Duties and Requirements of the Poet Laureate

The Poet Laureate duties include:

- A minimum of **two public readings each year**: The Laureate will give a public reading of their work during each year of their tenure. The Laureate will also present an original poem during each year of their tenure at a County event, such as a 9/11 memorial ceremony, a Covid memorial, or similar public function.
- **Three community events each year**: The Laureate will provide opportunities for community members to write and/or share their own poems. The Laureate is encouraged to creatively use their individual

talents and strengths to elevate the stature of poetry in the community for all Westchester residents.

- **Humanities Project** - In addition to the above, the Laureate is expected to develop and carry out a public humanities project that brings poetry into the lives of Westchester County residents and visitors. The Laureate will create and define the civic project's scope, theme, and mode of presentation, enact the project, and curate presentations of its outcomes. The above-listed required readings and events could be in connection to the larger humanities project, but not required to be. ArtsWestchester will provide logistical support for organizing and publicizing the events as well as assist the Laureate to work with cultural organizations, educational institutions, business owners and other agencies.

Preferably the Poet Laureate would engage the public through a project-based activity that the Laureate candidate proposes and enacts. The Laureate would also be encouraged to work with Westchester's Youth Poet Laureate. Ultimately the Laureate should be an ambassador for poetry by spreading the "word". At the end of each year, the Laureate will submit a brief report on recent accomplishments and plans for the following year.

When possible, Poet Laureate will assist ArtsWestchester staff with research and development of proposals for additional funding to support the Laureate's humanities-based work.

For detailed examples of programs led by other Poets Laureate around the country, click [here](#).

Application Requirements

ArtsWestchester requires that there be one application per poet and all submissions be provided in electronic format only, via Submittable.

The applicant will need to provide (within Submittable application form)

- Applicant information (Name, address, etc.)
- Proof of residency
- Curriculum Vitae or Resume
- Letter of Interest: In 500 words or fewer, discussing your background in writing and performing poetry; your involvement in community organizations and activities.

- Description of the public humanities project that you would develop and lead, including how this project fits into your overall vision for the laureateship you'd create if selected as the County's poet Laureate, and how you might create impact through your craft.
- Examples of Original Work: Upload 10 pages of published poetry writing or 3-5 minutes of audio/video.
- References: Two personal or professional references. Include their name, title, email address and phone number, including area code.

Selection Process

A selection panel will make a recommendation to the County based on the applications and interviews. The selection of the Poet Laureate will be approved by the County. The selection panel will evaluate the candidate's submissions and make its recommendation based on the proposal submission materials and interviews with short-listed applicants. If necessary, a more detailed proposal may be requested from the candidates. The panel may include professional poets, County representatives, ArtsWestchester Staff or Board.

Selection criteria include:

- Literary and artistic merit as evidenced by the submitted poetry
- Proven ability to plan and execute successful creative, innovative, and effective approaches in comparable projects
- Overall strength, cohesion and viability of proposed public humanities project
- Demonstrated ability to work creatively with groups of different ages and backgrounds
- Experience with speaking in public venues
- Ability to understand a locale's sense of place and inspire its residents in written and personal expression
- Demonstrated interest in and commitment to community outreach
- Conformance with ArtsWestchester's guidelines for public art including but not limited to quality, nature of work, originality, and diversity

ArtsWestchester reserves the right to reject any and all applications.

Estimated Timeline

The schedule is contingent upon ArtsWestchester's schedule and may be changed at any time.

Tuesday, August 1, 2023: Call for Poets Released

Monday, October 2, 2023, 11:59pm: Applications Due via Submittable

Early November 2023: Interviews with selected applicants

Mid- December: Selection of Poet Laureate announced (note – all applicants will be notified of the outcome)

January 2024 – December 2026: Expected Term of Poet Laureate

Questions regarding this Request for Proposals should be submitted in writing to:
poetry@artswestchester.org