



The City of Worcester

Worcester Poet Laureate • 2026 Program Guidelines

Introduction and Program Overview

Worcester City Manager Eric D. Batista, in collaboration with the Worcester City Council and Cultural Development Division, is pleased to announce the nomination process for the City's next Poet Laureate and Youth Poet Laureate. The Poet Laureate will serve a three-year term, from January 2026 through December 2028, and the Youth Poet Laureate will serve a two-year term, from January 2026 through December 2027.

The City of Worcester Poet Laureate and Youth Poet Laureate serve as official ambassadors to Worcester's historic and vibrant cultures of poetry and literary arts. Both Poets Laureate use their positions to share the transformative qualities of poetry and the written word with the community, to celebrate and amplify the city's great writers, and to help shape the next generation of literary enthusiasts.

City of Worcester Poet Laureate Program Objectives

The Worcester Poet Laureate Program is designed to promote appreciation of the diverse spirits, backgrounds, and voices of Worcester's multicultural communities.

The objectives of the City of Worcester's Poet Laureate Programs are to:

- Enhance the presence and appreciation of poetry and literary arts in Greater Worcester
- Celebrate the spirit of the people and special qualities of Worcester, the Creative City
- Raise awareness of the power of literature, poetry, and the spoken word
- Provide a forum for collaborative art forms
- Engage and support an emerging generation of poets and spoken word artists
- Provide access to poetry and literary arts to all sectors of the community
- Encourage the reading and writing of both poetry and the written word

Nomination Process

The Poets Laureate will have significant connection to the Worcester community and will foster deeper roots throughout their terms. Candidates should demonstrate excellence in their artistic work and poetic craft. The Youth Poet Laureate must be between 13 and 19 years of age on January 1, 2026 and be able to demonstrate an interest in the creative arts. Applicants for Poet Laureate should have received wide recognition in the professional community and with readers alike for their poetic work.

The City of Worcester's Cultural Development Division will administer the nomination process for the Poet Laureate Programs through a Poet Laureate Selection Committee. The Selection Committee will establish a fair and inclusive selection process to ensure the most qualified candidate is appointed.

To be considered, candidates must either apply or be nominated. The Selection Committee will seek nominations from an array of literary sources and individuals including, but not limited to: college and university literature and poetry departments; libraries, literary organizations, societies, and centers; poetry book organizations, publishers, and editors; faculty and staff; directors of literary and poetry



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reading series; and non-literary members of the community. The Selection Committee will review nominations and make their recommendation to the Cultural Development Division, who will forward to the City Manager's Office for consideration.

All interested in applying or nominating a qualified candidate are encouraged to join the **Poet Laureate Application Writing Workshop at 5:30pm Wednesday, October 8, 2025**, through Zoom. In addition to a walkthrough of the application process, attendees will be able to ask questions of Cultural Development staff and current Worcester Poet Laureate Oliver de la Paz and Youth Poet Laureate Serenity Jackson.

Registration for the Workshop:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/m31a2r0OQ1C8GrXl1hQEEg>

Deadline for Nominations: Nominations and applications must be submitted electronically or postmarked by **5:00pm Monday, October 27, 2025**.

Selection Criteria

Only writers with deep connections to the cultural life of Worcester will be considered for the Poet Laureate appointment. Additional selection criteria include:

- The literary merit of the writer's work
- The impact of the writers on other writers and the community, for example through writing clubs, social media, teaching, programs, or community organizations
- Contributions to the literature of Worcester and its diverse voices, for example through local events, community initiatives, or creative projects
- The ability and willingness to conduct required public engagement duties; and
- The local, regional, national, and international reputation of the author and their work (as applicable)
- Worcester resident preferred, though all applicants with strong ties to Worcester are eligible

Scoring

- 80 percent: quality of artistic work samples, curriculum vitae or resume, and related accomplishments (press coverage, exhibitions, programs, works published, etc.);
- 20 percent: quality of the proposed project, such as new work ideas, community presentations and workshops, and ideas for collaboration outside the literary world.

Responsibilities – Scope of Work

Each year, the Poets Laureate appointees will be expected to communicate their experience widely to peers and city communities. Over the course of their multi-year appointments, renewable after the first year, the City of Worcester Poets Laureate will:

- Embark on opportunities as an ambassador to literacy, arts, and creative expression.
- Represent the City of Worcester in the public realm as deemed appropriate.
- Create at least one commemorative poem annually about Worcester, MA.



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- Activate the City of Worcester Poet Laureate social media channels, work with City staff to prepare social media communications that encourage excitement about poetry, literacy and literary events, and related issues.
- Meet seasonally with Cultural Development Division staff and poetry community organizations.
- Participate in the selection process of future Worcester Poets Laureate.

The adult Worcester Poet Laureate will also be responsible to:

- Mentor the Worcester Youth Poet Laureate.
- Present 4 or more public readings in Worcester annually. Readings must be appropriate to the occasion and audience, and may include historical works or original works, whether created for the specific event or created previously. Examples of public reading occasions include, but are not limited to: community events, dedications, flag raisings, public art installations, etc.
- Create or participate in no fewer than 2 workshops in Worcester annually. The audience for these workshops could vary widely; programs which serve under-served populations encouraged (for example teens, the elderly, immigrants, non-native English speakers, etc.)

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Honorarium & Term

The Worcester Poet Laureate is eligible to receive a \$1,500 annual honorarium (\$4,500 for a 3-year appointment), to be contributed from public and private sources.

The Worcester Youth Poet Laureate is eligible to receive a \$2,500 one-time honorarium, as well as a \$500 annual stipend (\$1,000 for a 2-year appointment), to be contributed from public and private sources.

Poets Laureate may receive stipends from outside sources as additional compensation for participating in events. Following selection and acceptance of the City's next Poet Laureate, performance benchmarks for the incoming Poets Laureate will be established as part of their contract with the City of Worcester. At the conclusion of each year of service, the City will review the Poet Laureate's accomplishments.

Instruction for Submitting Applications

For consideration, a completed Application Cover Sheet and all required materials can be submitted online at www.worcesterma.gov/cultural-development/poet. Online application is preferred, though items may also be mailed to:

Cultural Development Division
Attn: Worcester Poet Laureate Program
455 Main Street, Room 409
Worcester, MA 01608

All nominations and applications must be submitted electronically or postmarked by **5:00pm on October 27, 2025**. For questions and concerns, please contact the Cultural Development Division at 508.799.1400, or email Culture@WorcesterMA.gov.