

How does this work?

- The first round of judging will be anonymous, based solely on the content, craft, and voice of your written poems.
- The poets who score the highest will move to the interview round where you will be judged on performance and leadership based on your letter of recommendation, artist statement, any awards or community service, as well as your performance in the virtual reading and interview panel before the judges on June 5, 2021.
- The 2021 Youth Poet Laureate will be the poet who scores the highest total on both rounds. The Vice Laureate will have the second highest score. Both will be announced at a virtual event held on August 6 at the public event with the four other finalists.

What does it mean to be asked to the second round?

- All the applicants with the highest scores from the first round will be asked to the second round. The judges will interview you virtually and you will present one of your poems on June 5.
- Notifications will go out mid May 2021, at which time the applicants moving to the second round will be asked to provide a letter of support from an adult sponsor.
- During the panel interview, everyone will be judged on performance and leadership. Finalists will have opportunities to meet experienced writers and perform at public events throughout the year and beyond.

What does it mean to be a finalist?

- The top six applicants, those who earn the highest total scores in content, craft, voice, performance, and leadership will be this year's finalists! The Laureate and Vice Laureate will be selected from these six poets.

What if I know one of the judges?

- To be fair, we cannot consider applications from family members of current judges, funders and program sponsors who have significant influence over the contest criteria or outcome.
- If someone in your family is actively working on this year's contest, you are not eligible. This "conflict of interest" policy applies only to those partners who are "coordinating, influencing or judging" the 2021 competition.

I know a young person; can I nominate them for this program?

- Yes! You can submit the application on behalf of a young person as long as you can provide complete information for the nominee(s), including 3 poems, name of an Adult Sponsor and accurate contact information.

- Please confirm their ability to complete the program year (August 6, 2021 to August 5, 2022) should they be selected as the Laureate.

What if the Youth Poet Laureate does not complete the full program year?

- The Vice Laureate will step into the role of Laureate if the Laureate is unable to complete the year.

Judges will use the following criteria to evaluate applicants:

Content - The poet's ability to examine their personal truths and make connections to a larger community.

Content Qualities:

- The poems engage in the process of sharing the poet's personal truths and resonate a sincere expression of their ambitions and beliefs.
- The poet critically investigates the status quo, societal norms, assumptions, and/or dominant beliefs.
- The poet is able to recognize themselves as a valuable member of their community and brings up issues or questions that concern that community, particularly other young people.
- The poet reflects an awareness of their ongoing responsibilities as a citizen of the world.
- The poet's work serves as a call to action for any issue(s) impacting Alameda County and/or Alameda County youth today.

Craft - The poet's command of poetic craft and purposeful breaks with convention.

Craft Qualities:

- The poet shows a command of language, rhythm, symbolism, metaphor, form, and other poetic devices as creative tools.
- The poet intentionally plays with or manipulates traditional literary convention (i.e. spelling, grammar, verb tense) to highlight lines or ideas.
- The poet's voice is consistent throughout each individual poem.

Voice - The poet's ability to write both honestly and authentically.

Voice Qualities:

- The poet's work evokes emotion.
- The poet conveys a strong viewpoint or a deep consideration of the subject matter.
- The poems could inspire young people across boundaries of race, class, gender, religion, geography, etc.
- The poet risks something; tackles personally difficult or controversial subjects with boldness and insight.

- The poet conveys their experience in an honest, original way.
- The poet gives proper credit to the source if another artist's work is sampled in a poem and/or uses quotation marks to indicate borrowed text.

Leadership (final round only) - The poet's potential for leading, inspiring, mentoring and representing the county of Alameda and its youth.

Leadership Qualities:

- The poet has experience or potential to inspire others to write, read, and listen to poetry.
- The poet uses their art to foster a culture that celebrates voice and empowers creative expression.
- The poet has the ability or the potential to speak for and about the County of Alameda and its youth in front of a variety of audiences.
- The poet has an interest in community service, education and improvement, and an ability to represent a collective and speak beyond their own self-interest to include the interests, struggles, and concerns of their community and the world.

Performance (final round only) - How the poet breathes life into a poem.

Performance Qualities:

- The performance of the poem elicits an emotional response.
- The poet's presence is made strong by their use of eye contact, confidence, and ability to engage with the audience.
- The poet's voice is clear and easy to understand. The poet utilizes the microphone adequately to project their voice.
- The poet uses their body and movement to fortify the poem.
- The poet's language is fluid and fluent.