

ASSISTHUB, OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

MISSION: To advance educational equity and transform systems so they work better for our students, families, and educators, by leveraging our unique position in the Mayor's Office to transform systems that have traditionally underserved certain populations to advance educational equity across Oakland.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: We created AssistHub to ensure that everyone can easily discover and obtain the public benefits available to them. AssistHub is a technology product that unlocks economic opportunity by making it easier for families to find and claim public assistance online.

The pandemic has shown that in moments of crisis, public benefits like the child tax credit and SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as food stamps) can be a lifeline for people in need. However, several challenges—including the stigma of accessing benefits and systemic barriers for poor and Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) communities—can make it difficult to access the support they need. As a result, an estimated \$60 billion in public assistance benefits goes unclaimed every year. AssistHub is determined to change this through a three-pronged approach: 1) raising awareness of resources, 2) clarifying confusing processes, and 3) overcoming stigmas and prior negative experiences. We welcome the opportunity to work with a cultural strategist to conduct research (e.g., examine how organizations like UpTogether, Upsolve.org and ImmigrationHelp.org communicate similar concepts), develop messages or storytelling campaigns that will be empowering to individuals and families, and/or create approaches that will make our tools more inviting and accessible to under-served communities.

ISSUE/OPPORTUNITY: Individuals can feel ashamed or judged for accessing public benefits. Some feel distrustful of sharing sensitive information with the government. Others still don't know what resources are available to them or how to access them. We know that reducing these barriers can lead to more people getting the resources they need—for example, through a platform like AssistHub. What might be the best strategies to break down these barriers—whether they are ones in the minds or capacities of community members or those of us in City government? How can these stakeholders work together to eliminate access barriers? What modes or messages would help individuals feel empowered by their decisions to access benefits? How can digital mediums like social media, newsletters, and the website be used more effectively?

DESIRED SKILLS/QUALIFICATIONS: Ideally a cultural strategist will have:

- knowledge and fluency in racial equity and social justice approaches
- experience working with communities historically underserved by the public sector
- skills in crafting resonant stories, messages, images, etc. for these communities
- interest in/understanding of public service and some of the pros and cons of public sector work

TIMEFRAME: The AssistHub site launched in March 2020 and has delivered personalized checklists to over 23,000 Californians across the state. There is an urgent need to connect Oaklanders to needed services. We hope to find a cultural strategist as soon as possible and work through 2022.

To learn more about AssistHub, visit: <https://www.assisthub.org/> and by

- watching [our 1-minute commercial](#)
- listening to [our 3-minute call to action](#); and
- listening to [this 30-minute podcast](#) episode covering AssistHub.

COMMUNITY HOMELESS SERVICES, HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT

MISSION STATEMENT: The Human Services Department (HSD) promotes the health, education and well-being of Oakland families and adults by providing free programs and building strong communities through grassroots leadership and civic engagement. We collaborate with a diverse group of local organizations to eliminate racial disparities and to address the emerging needs of the community.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Serving and supporting our unhoused neighbors is a key area of work for HSD. Unhoused Oaklanders come from a variety of backgrounds and circumstances, but over 70% of the unhoused households are Black, and seniors are the most rapidly growing segment of the homeless population. All too often the trauma of being unhoused is compounded by community ignorance that can dismiss, judge, or simply ignore those living on the streets.

The goal of this project is to support resilience and promote healing for unhoused families and individuals who are experiencing the trauma of living without a permanent home. Each household has its own unique story and history. We know that being able to tell these stories and have them understood can be a basis for healing and helping families build resilience. We seek to work with a cultural strategist who can work with unsheltered households—with a focus on families and/or seniors—in some of our programs and to help us design cultural programming that can promote healing and resilience in conjunction with program services. We are open to programming in a variety of mediums, for example, visual art, music, writing, film, heritage practices such as foodways, etc. HSD is seeking a Cultural Strategist who can help inform, guide, and pilot the program design for this project. (The [100 Families Project](#) and the inspiration behind [the Lullaby Project](#) sparked the idea for this CSIG project.)

ISSUE/OPPORTUNITY: The Human Services Department serves communities that face a variety of challenges every day. The global pandemic has added additional stress and trauma for the more vulnerable members of our community—for example, ones who have lost family members or jobs, are recent immigrants, or are undocumented. We seek a Cultural Strategist who can help us incorporate relevant cultural practices into our work in order to deepen the support provided to the households we serve and help to lift up the internal strengths that keep them going.

DESIRED SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS:

- Be knowledgeable and empathic to homelessness and challenges of low income communities
- Have culturally affirmative arts and/or facilitation practices
- Knowledge of racial equity and trauma-informed systems work
- Have expertise in storytelling and communication/engagement strategies
- Demonstrate patience, encouragement, and support to guide discussion and reflection

TIMEFRAME: The initial project will start at the beginning of 2022 and work will run through the end of the year.

For more information about HSD's Community Homeless Services, visit:

<https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/community-housing-services>

DEPARTMENT OF VIOLENCE PREVENTION

MISSION: The Department of Violence Prevention (DVP) was created by City Council legislation in 2017 with a mandate to use a public health, community-driven approach to achieve significant reductions in the following five areas: gun violence; intimate partner violence; commercial sex trafficking; trauma associated with cold cases; and community-level trauma.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: *Putting out Fires and Fireproofing:* The DVP has the responsibility of “putting out fires” by reducing the number of homicides and other violent acts in Oakland. This is done using intervention activities that interrupt the violence being committed by the small percentage of the population in DVP’s priority geographic areas. Simultaneously, DVP has the responsibility for “fireproofing” by using prevention activities that build community cohesion and a sense of belonging as a protective factor against violence. The cultural strategist will be a key collaborator in the development of preventive activities in Community Healing and Town Nights programs.

Oakland is one of the most diverse places in the world with rich cultural practices and traditions. Town Nights creates a multi-generational space to explore and share such practices with the neighborhood residents where they take place. DVP will engage a cultural strategist as a thought partner and collaborator in the development and implementation of culturally-competent art forms including but not limited to drumming, singing, and dancing as a vehicle to promote community cohesion, belonging, and connections to ancestral traditions.

ISSUE/OPPORTUNITY: *The Public Health Lens:* The DVP views violence as a communicable disease that disproportionately infects individuals and families living in communities with underlying conditions that include, but are not limited to: historical structural racism; chronic economic disparities; absence of quality health care; scarce educational opportunities; and early and pervasive contact with the criminal justice system, including police. However, domestic and international communities with high levels of vulnerabilities confirm that the violence in those communities is committed by a small percentage of the population. This is the case in cities like Oakland, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Baltimore as well as in municipalities of Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador.

DESIRED SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS:

Desired Qualifications:

- Able to work effectively in multicultural Black and Brown communities
- Proven ability to develop and implement cultural strategies as a vehicle for social change
- Proven ability to work as part of a multi-disciplinary team that includes artists and policy makers
- Proven ability to communicate effectively

Highly Desired Qualifications (any one of the three):

- Expertise in culturally-specific traditional drumming styles
- Expertise in culturally-specific traditional dancing styles
- Expertise in culturally-specific traditional singing styles
- Expertise in culturally-specific art forms other than drumming, singing, and dancing.

TIMEFRAME: The work with the cultural strategist will run during FY 2022-2023 (perhaps sooner) and possibly into 2023-2024.

For more information about the DVP’s strategic plan and funded activities, visit:

<https://www.oaklandca.gov/departments/violence-prevention>

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DIVISION, OAKLAND PUBLIC WORKS

MISSION: The mission of Oakland Public Works is to maintain, improve, and preserve Oakland’s infrastructure and environment for the residents, businesses, visitors, and future generations of every neighborhood in our diverse city. Within OPW, the Environmental Services Division (ESD) leads Oakland’s efforts on climate, sustainability, energy, environmental remediation and stewardship, and zero waste.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The cultural strategist will support one or both of two critical efforts at the crossroads of climate, resilience, and environmental justice: **building electrification** and **waste sorting/reducing single-use plastics**. Oakland’s [2030 Equitable Climate Action Plan](#) (ECAP) and the companion [Racial Equity Impact Assessment](#) (REIA) identify specific frontline communities for these and other climate equity initiatives. Frontline communities are geographies or demographics that face intersecting vulnerabilities to the impacts of climate change, new policies, and shifting economies. They are disproportionately Black, Latinx, Indigenous, immigrant and refugee, disabled, housing-insecure, and/or facing other barriers. With existing climate equity work as a starting point—including the ECAP, REIA, and 2018 [Equity Indicators Report](#)—the cultural strategist will:

- Provide guidance about cultural norms and touchpoints that should anchor outreach in frontline and harder-to-reach communities, including BIPOC, immigrants, and linguistically-isolated communities;
- Identify key messages, framing, and effective communication strategies for each target community, attending to key concerns, barriers, cultural needs, ways of understanding, and optimal platforms;
- Create template messages, engaging information campaigns, and other innovative outreach approaches for the initiative(s) in two or more frontline communities.

ISSUE/OPPORTUNITY: ESD’s initiatives and Oakland’s ECAP stand at the intersection of culture, technology, and economy. While we work to attack the causes and ameliorate the impacts of the climate crisis through a justice lens, we do so within the constraints of public awareness and behavior, product affordability, and competing needs. Our staff understand the intersectional nature of the work; however, generating key messages and behavior change campaigns that resonate with frontline communities remains a monumental challenge.

The two initiatives with the greatest need for culturally-sensitive messaging are:

1. **Building Electrification:** Efficient, all-electric buildings, powered by a clean electric grid, reduce emissions and are a top ECAP priority. Using natural gas in buildings increases likelihood of asthma and other diseases, and increases risk of fire and explosions. Oakland is pursuing a methodical transition away from gas for all existing buildings in Oakland by 2040, with “guardrails” to ensure that families and small businesses avoid cost increases, displacement, or insurmountable disruptions. The work will involve replacing gas appliances with efficient electric alternatives in all homes and buildings, upgrading electrical systems, increasing efficiency, and installing solar and energy storage.
2. **Waste Reduction and Appropriate Sorting:** A new statewide law mandates correct sorting of solid waste and requires local government to impose fines on residents and businesses for incorrect sorting. The goal is to eliminate disposal of organic waste in the landfill to reduce acute climate pollutants. All Oaklanders need to be motivated to shift behavior toward correct waste sorting and reduction of single-use plastics.

DESIRED SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS: The ideal CSIG will have some awareness of and passion for sustainability, climate change, and/or zero waste principles. They will have experience designing effective campaigns for awareness of complex topics and/or behavior change. They will have at least some knowledge of two or more of the most disproportionately impacted communities in Oakland (Black, Latinx, Immigrant/Refugee, extremely low income, etc.).

ESTIMATED TIME FRAME: The efforts described have launched, community outreach is ongoing, and locally-targeted outreach needs to ramp up quickly. This position can start ASAP, and last for a year or more.

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF CITY COUNCIL

MISSION: Oakland's Office of the President of City Council leads administrative functions of the City Council, including chairing Council meetings, appointing chairs and members to committees, overseeing the Council's role in city budgeting, and serving as the Council's primary liaison with the City Administration.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: With the passing of the city's historic budget of FY 2021-23, Oakland City Council committed to working for clean, healthy, and sustainable neighborhoods. Part of that work is to ensure that outdoor public spaces citywide can enhance the social, cultural, and economic well-being of all who live, work, and play in Oakland. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has caused disconnection and challenges for civic programming, it is more critical than ever that city agencies make permitting processes for the creative arts & events community more accessible to support joyous and responsible activation of our outdoor public spaces. Learning from successful cultural events such as the Malcolm X Jazz Festival, Life is Living, Art & Soul, Oakland Black Cowboy Parade, First Fridays, and more, we have an opportunity to expand and support entrepreneurial activities currently taking place at Lake Merritt by identifying improvements needed to the city's existing permitting and outreach/compliance processes. This should include a more comprehensive understanding of how the city is supporting ongoing outdoor public programming with city-supported outreach and promotion, what barriers to entry exist for BIPOC and low-income event organizers, and what specific locations (e.g. public streets, plazas) and event organizers could be engaged to create new or ongoing events and markets in Oakland.

The City Council President seeks a Cultural Strategist to explore opportunities in partnership with event organizers, culture-keepers, entrepreneurs, and residents to: 1) support event organizers in Oakland to navigate current permitting pathways, 2) lower existing barriers to permitted events, and 3) develop a program for ongoing events in public spaces with outreach and promotions (building off of programming that currently exist in our city).

ISSUE/OPPORTUNITY: During the pandemic, Lake Merritt has seen an uptick in activities, as entrepreneurs and event organizers utilize the space as a vital resource and central outdoor space to rebuild community, connection, and economic stability. Meanwhile, the Lake has also experienced overcrowding, presenting challenges to public health and safety. Seeing the need for cultural events, public spaces that can be equitably utilized by BIPOC entrepreneurs, and expansion of outdoor programming citywide, we also see the opportunity to build more equity and inclusion in the use of our civic commons, while integrating diverse historical and cultural knowledge and skill sets.

DESIRED SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS: The Cultural Strategist should: have familiarity with public sector/government operations and Oakland's arts & culture landscape; have or be able to develop strong connections with neighborhood and community leaders and organizations; have skills in creative problem-solving that can be articulated and shared with others; have a demonstrated commitment to cultural and racial equity and sensitivity to power dynamics.

TIMEFRAME: This project will begin as soon as possible and likely last 12 months.

**PUBLIC ART PROGRAM-CULTURAL AFFAIRS DIVISION,
ECONOMIC & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

MISSION: The City of Oakland's Public Art Program commissions original works of art for public spaces throughout Oakland. The program enriches the City's visual environment, integrates the creative thinking of artists into new construction projects, and provides a means for residents and visitors to enjoy and experience the cultural diversity of Oakland. Public Art projects are funded through a 1.5% allocation from all eligible City of Oakland capital improvement projects, eligible grant revenue as well as private contributions. Additionally, the Public Art Program oversees compliance with the Oakland requirements for Public Art on Private Development.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: To work with the Public Art Program to creatively enhance its outreach, recruitment, and professional development activities for emerging and established Oakland BIPOC artists in order to grow the range of eligible artists for public art projects and build a broader sense of belonging among diverse communities in the public landscape. The project may include study and analysis of past artists' trainings, tools, and resources in order to develop new, artist-centered resources—such as documents, online and social media-friendly road maps, mentorships, trainings on how to submit competitive applications or work with contractors, insurance brokers, City officials, and others typically involved in public art projects. Examples of existing resources include the [Oakland Public Art ordinances and program guidelines related to artist-initiated, public works and private development projects; previous project case studies and City's past Public Art how-to-apply resources; Oakland Public Art Advisory Committee \(PAAC\) minutes and agendas; 2021 NorCal PAAN Public Art Webinars;](#) and the [Americans for the Arts Public Art Network resources](#).

ISSUE/OPPORTUNITY: The Cultural Affairs Division has an ongoing need to enhance the racial and cultural range of the pool of Oakland artists with the skills to tackle public art projects—ones that often have complex skill and knowledge requirements (for example, experience working with engineers, fabricators, public agencies, and in processes with community input).

DESIRED SKILLS/KNOWLEDGE: Knowledge of the public art field and a general understanding of how City-funded public art projects are implemented are desirable. Solid ties to Oakland BIPOC communities and strong communications skills are critical for this work.

TIMEFRAME: Approximately one year. The program will issue a new call for artists for a pre-qualified public arts pool in 2022. Ideally, workshops or other artists' training and communications tools could be utilized during artist recruitment. Alternatively, professional development tools could be shared with artists once shortlisted for upcoming opportunities.

For more information on current Oakland Public Art projects, visit: <https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/current-public-art-projects>