

**Redistricting Commission
Applicant Profile**

Applicant #	11282523037
First Name	Tracy
Last Name	McKnight
District	District 1
Time living in District	Five to 10 years
Time living in Oakland	More than 20 years
Education	Doctoral or Professional degree
Income	\$125,000 - \$250,000
Voting history	2018 & 2016 elections
Gender	Female
Race/Ethncity	Black or African American
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Supplemental Questionnaire

Your response to each of the mandatory following questions is limited to no more than 500 words. Please type in the space provided for each question.

*1. Why do you wish to serve on the Commission and why do you think the work of the Commission is important?

I would like to play a more active role in the service of the City of Oakland, which has been my home since 1991. The decisions that the redistricting commission makes regarding the definition of the City Council and School Board districts impact critical issues for Oakland residents such as education, housing, and business development. The fact that Oakland takes an objective and non-partisan approach to making decisions around how district boundaries are defined is extremely important to me and represents the citizen-forward thinking that makes me proud to call Oakland my home. This approach is one of the best ways to avoid the racial and economic injustice that can arise by districting decisions being influenced by special interest groups or other political factions. Over the 30 years that I have lived in Oakland, I have been a voter, renter, homeowner, godparent of an Oakland public school student, and board member of an Oakland public charter school. I am also a longtime employee of the University of California and currently hold a leadership position at the UC Office of the President in downtown Oakland that requires me to interact with the CA Department of Education, CA Department of Public Health, and the CA State Legislature on a regular basis. I believe my background, experience, and genuine interest fostering social justice in Oakland makes me an ideal candidate for the Redistricting Commission.

*2. Explain what it means to be impartial and describe your ability to exercise impartiality.

Impartiality means to avoid bias or subjective personal preference in one's decision making. In my 20+ years of professional experience as a scientist and more recently as the director of a funding organization for research on tobacco-related diseases, I have consistently practiced impartiality in my work. Scientific investigation is data-driven, meaning that decisions are made on the information gleaned from the experiments rather than from subjective expectations or assumptions. Similarly, as a funder of research, it is critical that the review and selection of research proposals for funding be performed in a manner that is free from bias and that is based solely on the necessity of the research and the soundness of the research plan. This experience has taught me how to avoid bias in my decision-making from the outset but also how to reflect on my initial thoughts and recognize any unintended bias. These skills were reinforced in the summer of 2019 when I completed a six-part online course on recognizing and avoiding implicit bias in my hiring and management practices.

*3. The Commissioners will need to work collaboratively in redrawing district boundaries. Provide an example from when you had to set aside your own self-interest to achieve a common goal.

I direct one of four grantmaking programs housed in the Research Grants Program Office (RGPO) of the UC Office of the President. We consistently need to balance the needs of the entire office (RGPO) with the needs of the four individual programs. The four programs share the services of a single operations unit and, as such, adhere to a structured 2-year calendar for our grantmaking activities that require the services of the operations unit. One cycle of grantmaking activities can span 9 – 12 months so insuring that operational resources are available when the programs need them is critical to the success of each program's

grantmaking goals. The development of the 2 year calendar requires negotiation and the relaxing of preferences (and sometimes the needs) of individual programs to arrive at a schedule that effectively – but often not optimally – addresses the needs of the four programs as well as the operations unit.

Another very recent example of these 5 units setting aside program interests for the common good was in the rapid deployment of emergency funding for COVID-19-related research. The five units relaxed many of their administrative policies and contributed funds to develop and release a Request for Applications within 10 days of the state-mandated shelter in place – a process that typically takes 3 - 4 months for a single program. We then had the proposals reviewed and funded within two weeks while maintaining impartiality, which is a dramatically shorter timeline than the typical 6 – 9 months for this process. We could not have achieved this by holding tight to the needs of our individual programs.

*4. All Commissioners must demonstrate an understanding of and appreciation for Oakland's diversity. Describe your knowledge of and appreciation for Oakland's people and places, and how this will enhance your work as a commissioner.

Oakland's diversity is the primary reason I have called Oakland my home since arriving in 1991. I have lived and dwelled in the Adams Point, Maxwell Park, and West Oakland neighborhoods and have relished the unique diversity of each of these neighborhoods. The comfort that Oakland residents of various ethnicities, gender identities, physical capabilities, and life experiences have when interacting with each other is truly remarkable and heartwarming. I have learned a tremendous amount about cultures, ideas, and lifestyles that were foreign to me when I arrived in Oakland and revel in the congeniality I have with my rich mixture of friends.

I do recognize, however, that there remains a strong economic divide among Oakland's residents that has changed very little in 30 years. In fact, the recent influx of new residents that can afford the extremely high cost of renting or owning homes in Oakland has increased that economic divide and, quite frankly, reduced the rich diversity that once characterized Oakland's citizenry. This change is one of the primary motivators for my applying for membership on this Commission. It is my hope to strengthen the voice of longtime Oakland residents and to improve the opportunities for economic development in underserved communities and communities primarily comprised of people of color. District boundaries define the population that becomes the constituents for a given City Council member. Similarly, the boundaries of school districts define the communities that will be the constituencies of School Board members. Therefore, the voice of a community becomes stronger when the critical economic and educational issues are similar among the communities within the respective districts.

*5. Provide an example from when you faced a complex question or situation. What problem solving skills did you use to solve it?

As a biomedical researcher, I faced complex scientific questions on a regular basis. In my current role as an program director, I face organizational issues that often have complex political underpinnings quite often. In both situations, I pull upon my training to research the issue as much as possible and look for successful models for potential solutions. Although my initial research often begins with reputable websites (eg federal institutions, reputable organization, academic resources), I also seek the advice of individuals with expertise in the given area.

A personal example of when I have used these problem solving skills was when I serving on the board of my condo homeowner's association. Several units on the top floor had water damage, indicating we needed a new roof although the roof had been repaired a few years earlier. The board members were trying to determine if we should sue the roofing company or just have them repair it again at no charge and have the HOA insurance pay for the water damage in the building. Since no one on the board had any expertise in roofing, construction, engineering, etc, I suggested that we invest in an engineering company to assess the problem and then figure out how to proceed. To help the other members make a decision, I got quotes from several engineering companies, compiled estimates from the owners for the repairs to their units, spoke with attorneys to get an estimate of fees, and projected the increase in HOA dues that would be needed of the insurance company refused to cover the unit repairs (which they did). The engineering company was expensive but in the end their assessment showed major problems with the original repairs and provided the board with the leverage to negotiate with the roofers and avoid litigation.

*6. Describe any professional, social, political, volunteer, community activities, and/or causes in which you have been involved or that you have financially supported. If you do not have any activities to report, type N/A in the space provided.

The activity that I am most proud of is the creation of my consulting firm, TRM Research and Consulting, that supports the mentoring and training of individuals that are underrepresented in the STEM fields.

I donated grant writing services to the San Francisco Bay Area chapter of the National Black MBA Association for two years, in support of their high school mentoring program.

I also served on the board of an Oakland public charter school focused on science and technology that tragically – for the students – closed in its second year. It was a trial by fire for me, teaching me about the politics around public education and the tragic consequences that can result from good intentions that are not reinforced by experience or expertise.

For many years, I took dance classes at the Malonga Casquelourd Center (at the time it was called the Alice Arts Center) and participated in many of the events at the center.

Additional Information (Optional)

If there is any additional information that was not asked in the Supplemental Questionnaire that you believe would help the Screening Panel in making their nominations, you may enter that information here. Your response here is optional.

*I understand that if selected as a Commissioner, I shall be ineligible, for a period of 10 years beginning from the date of appointment, to hold elective public office for the City of Oakland. Additionally, I shall be ineligible, for a period of four years beginning from the date of appointment, to hold appointive public office for the City of Oakland or Oakland Unified School Board, to serve as paid staff for or as a paid consultant to Oakland City Council, or any member of the City Council or Oakland School Board, to receive a non-competitively bid contract with the City of Oakland, or to register as a lobbyist. This four-year ban on having a paid consultancy or entering noncompetitively bid contracts applies to myself individually and all entities for which I am a controlling person. Please enter your initials below to confirm your understanding of these statements.

Initials:	TRM
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*I affirm, by entering my name in the space provided, that the statements contained in this application are true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Name:	Tracy Richmond McKnight
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