

2026 Cultural STAR Applicant Workshop



Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
 - Please introduce yourselves in the chat!
- Overview of Program
 - History
 - Program Timeline
 - Program Goals
 - Project Types
 - Cultural District
 - Guideline Summary
 - CSTAR Advisory Board
 - Evaluation Criteria
- Contract Compliance and Insurance Requirements
- ZoomGrants!
- Next steps
- Q & A



History - Cultural STAR Program

- In 1993, the Minnesota State Legislature authorized the City of Saint Paul to levy a half-cent sales tax to improve the Saint Paul RiverCentre complex and create the Sales Tax Revitalization (STAR) Program.
- **STAR funds support:**
 - Capital activities of the RiverCentre and economic needs in Saint Paul (40%)
 - Neighborhood STAR program: grants for capital projects to further residential, cultural, commercial, and economic development in downtown Saint Paul and Saint Paul Neighborhoods (50%)
 - Cultural STAR program: grants to arts and cultural organizations in Saint Paul (10%).
 - Targets nonprofit arts and cultural organizations
 - 80% goes to the "Cultural District of downtown Saint Paul"
 - Programming, operating, and capital expenses

2026 Cultural STAR Program Timeline

There continues to be just one round of Cultural STAR

Application Deadline	Applicant Interviews	Mayor & City Council Approval	Earliest Project Start Date	Latest Project End Date
Friday, March 13, 2026 at 4pm	Apr/May 2026	Summer 2026 (tentative)	August 1st, 2026	Special Projects/ Capacity Building Projects: July 31, 2027



Timing Considerations

- Be planful. The past several years, it's been Nov/Dec before the final recommendations were voted on by city council. We are anticipating a faster process this year but even so, if you have a project during the first few months of the eligibility period, your event may have already taken place before you get under contract.
- 2026 Eligibility Period:
 - 8/1/26-7/31/27 special projects & capacity building
 - 8/1/26-7/31/28 capital projects

Cultural STAR Program Goals: Strengthen the arts and cultural sector to promote economic vitality in Saint Paul, and support Downtown as a vital cultural center.

1

Promote a broad range of cultural offerings

2

Build and diversify audiences

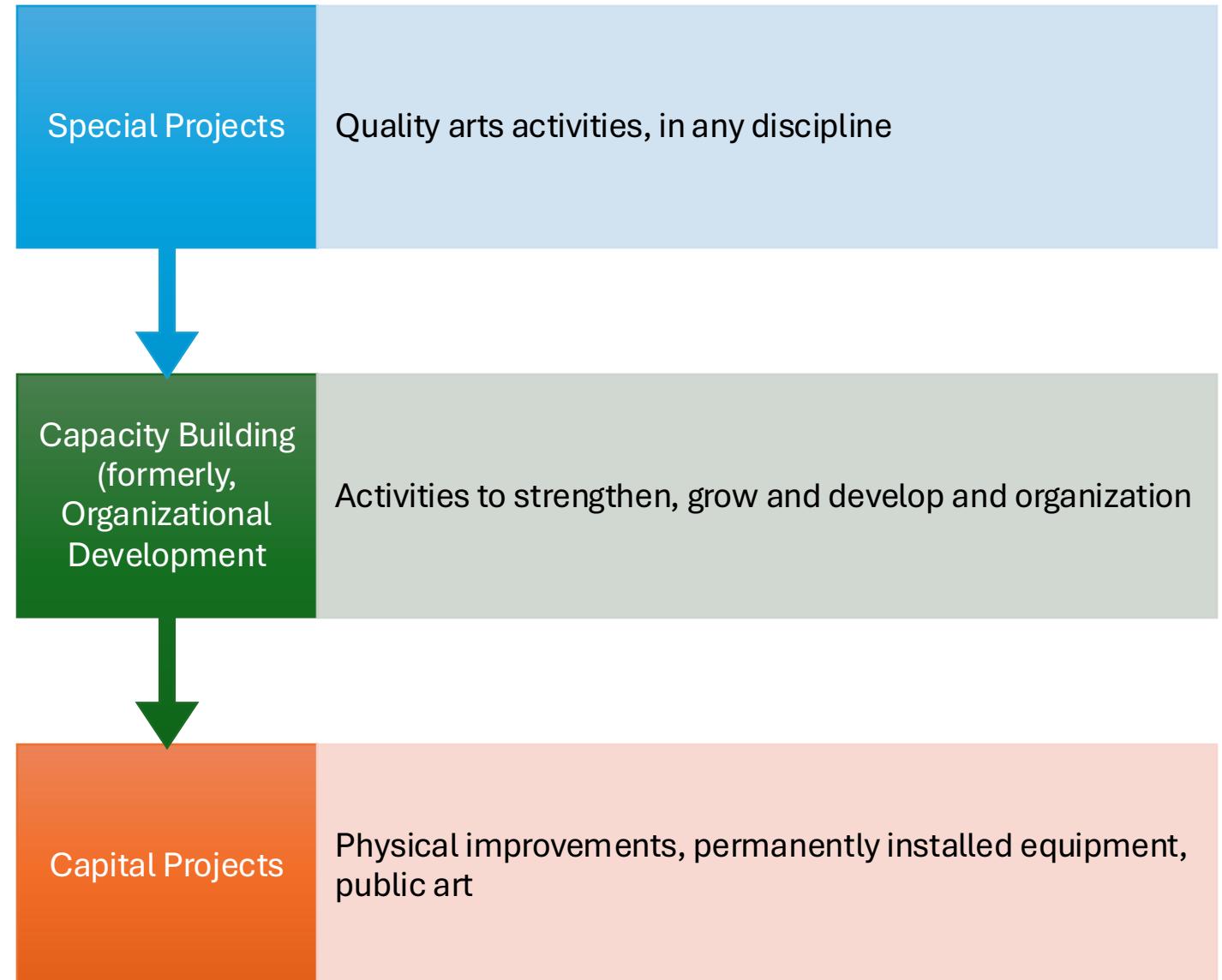
3

Produce a long-term impact

4

Leverage additional financial support

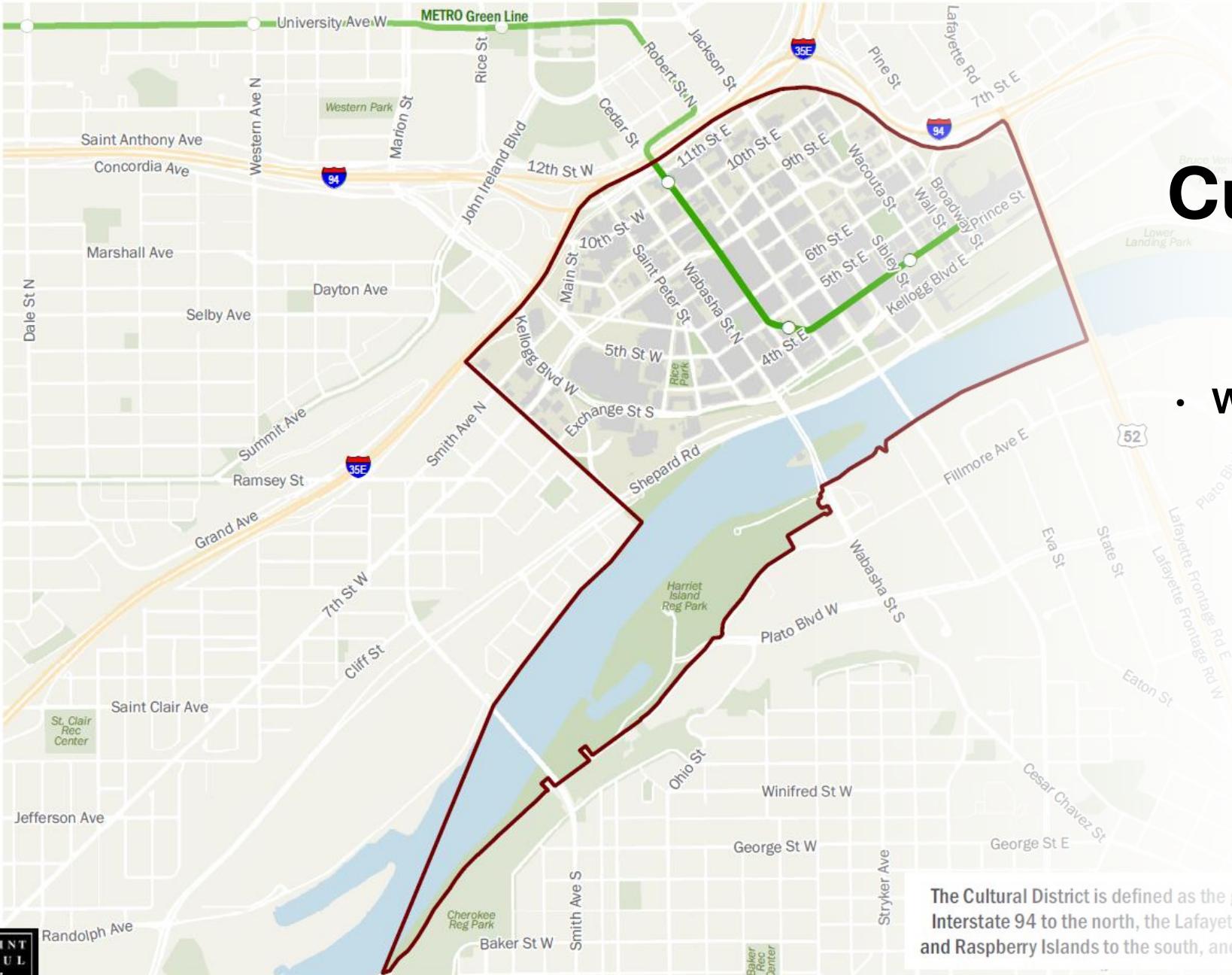
Three Project Types



Cultural District

- **What is the Cultural District?**
- **The Cultural District is defined as the geographic area bordered by Interstate 94 to the north, the Lafayette Bridge to the east, Harriet and Raspberry Islands to the south, and Chestnut Road to the west.**

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Downtown Cultural District
Cultural STAR Program - July 2018

This document was prepared by the Saint Paul Planning and Economic Development Department for reference and illustrative purposes only. This drawing is not a legally defined map and is schematic and is not intended to be used as such. Data sources: 2010 Census, 2010 ACS.

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Cultural District

- **80% of funds:**
 - Nonprofits and unincorporated groups in and/or with projects in the **Cultural District of downtown**
 - The State Capital building and the Minnesota History Center are NOT in the cultural district
 - [Cultural District Locator Map](#)
- **Remaining 20%:**
 - Businesses in the Cultural District enhancing visitor enjoyment of the Cultural District
 - Nonprofits with projects in Saint Paul, but outside of the Cultural District



Guideline Summary



Guideline Summary

- **Special Projects / Capacity Building funds:**
 - 80% advanced once contract signed
 - 20% after project and reporting complete
 - Exception: If the project is completed prior to execution of a contract, then at the sole discretion of the Grantor, Grantor may elect to pay out 100% of the STAR funds at one time; provided that, Grantee must submit and comply with all requirements for both the initial 80% disbursement and the final 20% disbursement.
- **Capital Project funds:**
 - Disbursed as project expenses incurred
- **Complete program guidelines and information: www.stpaul.gov/cultural-star**



Guideline Summary

- **Eligible Project Dates:** August 1, 2026 - July 31, 2027
(July 31, 2028, for Capital Projects)
- **Minimum request:** \$5,000
- **Matching grant program for large requests**
 - Grant requests of over \$50,000 will require one-to-one matching funds
 - Example: Request of \$50,500 must have a funds from other sources adding at least \$50,500 to project, for a total budget of at least \$101,000



Guideline Summary

- **St. Paul-based nonprofits based OUTSIDE the Cultural District** – eligible to receive two awards per year
 - One project in the Cultural District; One project outside of the Cultural District
- Only allowed **3 consecutive years of Special Projects/ Capacity Building** in a row, then take a “year off”
 - Eligible for Capital Project in that “year off”
- **Unincorporated art groups and individual artists**
 - Use a fiscal sponsor organization that is a 501c3 nonprofit **arts** organization located in Saint Paul
 - 100% of project must take place in Cultural District



Guideline Summary – Common Question

- My organization is based outside the cultural district, but my project has several events, one of which will occur within the cultural district. What do I apply for?
 - Two options:
 - **Apply for in district funding:** With one event occurring within the cultural district, you could apply for in district funding (80% pool), however, only the expenses from this event will be eligible. Any other events associated with your project outside the CD, would not be eligible.
 - **Apply for out of district funding:** You may decide that you want all events associated with your project to be covered, in that case you would apply for out of district funding (20% pool).

Cultural STAR Board (Advisory)

- **9 members of the community, appointed by the Mayor, make up the Cultural STAR board.**
- **2 representatives from large cultural organizations**
- **2 representatives from mid-sized cultural organizations**
- **1 representative from a small cultural organization**
- **1 representative from a philanthropic organization**
- **1 representative from the Saint Paul business community**
- **2 at large representatives**
- **At least five of the board members must be residents of Saint Paul. The remaining four board members must work or live in Saint Paul. At least one of the board members must represent a neighborhood organization.**



Evaluation Criteria

Each criteria is worth up to 5 points, for a total max score of 20 points

Impact

Ability

Quality

Diversity

- **IMPACT**

Excellent proposals will convey how the project will benefit Saint Paul – increasing access to different art forms and cultural offerings, addressing cultural needs, and reaching audiences.

- **QUALITY**

Excellent proposals will describe strong goals and a plan to achieve them to have a successful project.

- **ABILITY**

Excellent proposals will describe projects that are clearly defined with a realistic plan that could include timeline, personnel, publicity and financial support that demonstrates that the project will be implemented successfully.

- **DIVERSITY**

Excellent proposals will describe a project that will be accessible to and inclusive of audiences and add to the artistic and cultural diversity of offerings in Saint Paul or increase the ability of the organization to be accessible and inclusive and diversify cultural offerings.

Insurance & Compliance



Insurance Requirements

- Carrying general or business liability insurance that insures the City of Saint Paul as an additional insured with the following coverage minimums:

Special Projects/Capacity Building	Capital Projects
\$1,000,000 per occurrence \$2,000,000 aggregate per project \$2,000,000 products/completed operations total limit \$1,000,000 personal injury and advertising	\$1,500,000 per occurrence \$2,000,000 aggregate per project \$2,000,000 products/completed operations total limit \$1,500,000 personal injury and advertising

- Auto insurance for vehicles used for the project beyond commuting to and from the project
Coverage minimums will depend on the type of vehicle coverage (commercial, personal, or rental).
- Verification of Workers Compensation and Employers' Liability coverage, or a form indicating why the organization is exempt
- It's important to make sure your insurance covers **ALL** dates within your project scope.

If you have questions about the City's insurance requirements, contact Michael Cowell at Michael.Cowell@ci.stpaul.mn.us or 651-266-6501.



Compliance Requirements

- Federal, state and local regulations and policies pertaining to the use of funds, such as prevailing wage standards, affirmative action, and targeted vendor programs may apply to your project.
- The amount of the award and the nature of the project (capital, special project, or capacity building) determine which regulations apply. For example:
 - **Vendor Outreach Program (VOP)**
 - Grant awards of over \$50,000
 - Maximizing contracting opportunities for Minority-Owned, Women-Owned and Small Business Enterprises
 - **Labor Standards**
 - Capital projects with total project budgets over \$25,000
 - Contractors required to pay union-level wages

Organizations receiving grants must comply with all federal, state, and local laws, rules, and regulations in connection with the project, including but not limited to, the Saint Paul Vendor Outreach Program (VOP). **It is important to understand that compliance requirements may affect hiring practices and wage rates. Cultural STAR applicants are strongly cautioned to not make any commitments until compliance requirements and funding regulations are fully understood.**

***please note:** Compliance obligations may apply when an organization or business receives multiple grants across programs, funding sources, or funding periods.



Contract Compliance Contacts

contractcompliance@ci.stpaul.mn.us

Vendor Outreach Program

Bret Bicoy

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651-266-8897

Affirmative Action & Equal Employment Opportunity (AA/EEO)

Yia Thao

yia.thao@ci.stpaul.mn.us

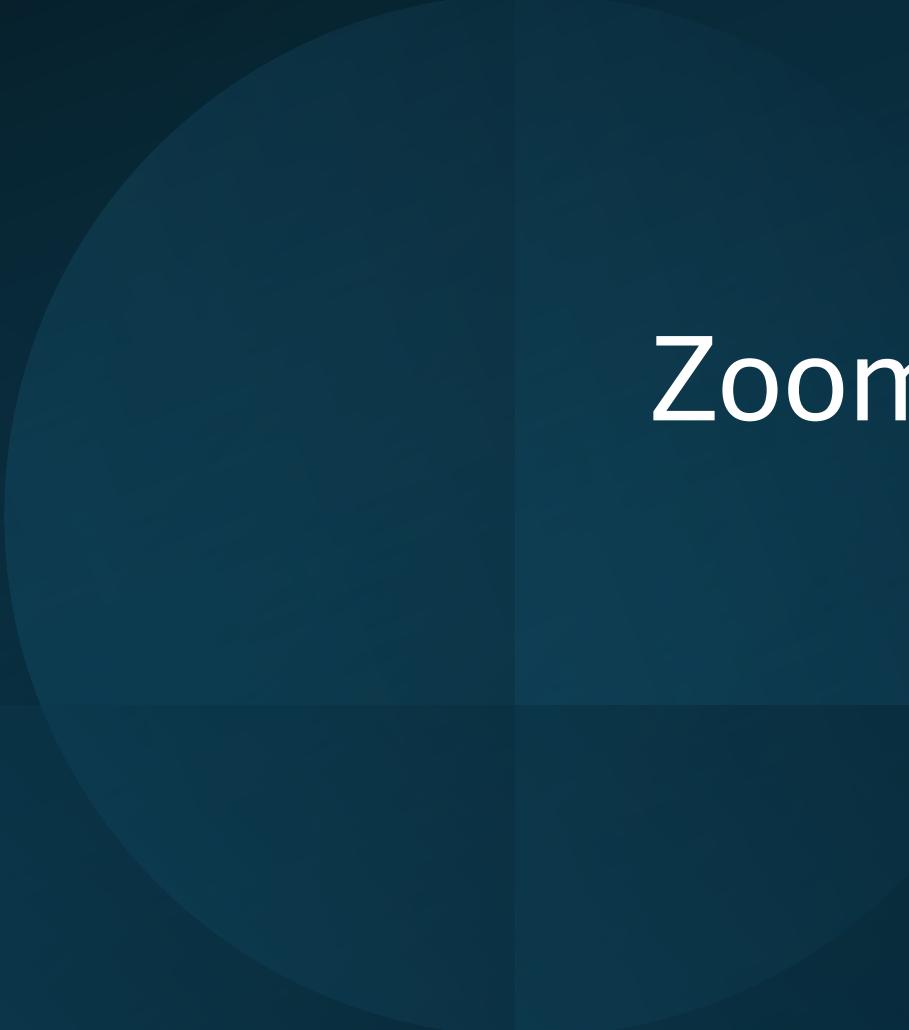
651-266-8928

Prevailing Wage

Ethan Hansing

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651-266-8921



ZoomGrants



Applying to the 2026 Cultural STAR Program

Cultural STAR applications open Friday, February 2, 2026

- The Cultural STAR Program currently only accepts online applications submitted through ZoomGrants.
- Go to the Cultural STAR website at www.stpaul.gov/cstar and click on "Start your application now".
- Login to your ZoomGrants account or create an account to start an application.
- Your answers will auto-save as you move through the application.
- Be sure to attach all required documents.
- Give yourself ample time to complete and submit your application.



Applying to the 2026 Cultural STAR Program

Before you submit your application

- Double check your responses and documents.
- Make sure you:
 - Answered all questions and filled out all form fields
 - Uploaded all required documents
 - Removed all special formatting from your responses (i.e. bullet points, special characters, bold text, italics, underlines, etc.)

**The application deadline is 4 p.m. on Friday, March 13.
Late applications will not be accepted.**



Applying to the 2026 Cultural STAR Program

Resources for ZoomGrants Tech Support

- ZoomGrants University: help.zoomgrants.com
- Email: questions@zoomgrants.com
- Phone: 866-323-5404, Ext. 2

Please allow 24-48 hours for a response. Applicants are encouraged to contact tech support well in advance of submission deadlines.



IMPORTANT!

- Once your application is submitted, there will be no opportunity to go back in and revise your application.
- If you didn't upload all necessary documents, your application will be ineligible
- If you are a previously awarded grantee, and you are not under contract for an existing STAR award, you are ineligible to apply for another STAR award

Next Steps

- **DEADLINE: Friday, March 13 by 4 p.m.**
- Interviews – Apr/May 2026
 - Provide updates
 - Respond to clarifying questions
- Mayor and City Council Decision – Summer 2026



Cultural STAR Staff – Meet our team!

Cultural STAR Coordinator:

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Project Managers:

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Nancy Vang

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nancy.vang@ci.stpaul.mn.us



Neighborhood STAR Coordinator:

Erin Lewis

651-266-6634

Erin.lewis@ci.stpaul.mn.us

Questions?

