



Minnesota
Humanities
Center

April 1, 2025

Via E-Mail Delivery

Representative Joe McDonald, Chair
House Legacy Finance
2nd Floor Centennial Office Building
658 Cedar Street
St. Paul, MN 55155

Representative Samantha Vang, Chair
House Legacy Finance
5th Floor Centennial Office Building
658 Cedar Street
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs McDonald and Vang:

Thank you for the opportunity for the Minnesota Humanities Center (MHC) to submit this letter of support of the legislative bill introduced by Representative Samakab Hussein, seeking to provide funding for community festivals in Minnesota (HF1559).

One of the great opportunities for Minnesotans to learn about the rich cultural heritage of the people that live within our wonderful state is to enjoy the many vibrant community festivals in the place we call home. Festivals can be excellent vehicles to highlight the unique dances, music, food, community practices, and stories of a community.

Additionally, we have many community festivals that provide opportunities for attendees to learn more about the history of the United States and Minnesota. We take pride in being a civic-minded state in which we honor our past by recognizing the contributions and ideals of our past leaders. Festivals can be vehicles that allow us to celebrate our history and help the next generation of leaders strive toward our highest aspirations.

MHC appreciates the clarity that the Legislature is providing in identifying items that may receive funding as well as organizations whose requests should receive priority by MHC. As to the former, MHC understands that the list of activities for funding is not exhaustive, provided that the activity falls within the purpose of Legacy. As to the latter, MHC understands that the process will be competitive and that funding should be provided to organizations beyond those identified within the bill.

Thank you for your consideration of HF 1559.

Sincerely,

Kevin Lindsey
CEO
Minnesota Humanities Center

C: Members of the House Legacy Finance Committee

March 31, 2025



RE: Support for Community Festival Grant Funding | HF1559

Co-chair Rep. Samantha Vang, Rep. Joe McDonald, and House Legacy Finance Committee members:

On behalf of Visit Saint Paul, I am writing to express full support for the proposed Community Festival Grant Funding. This type of investment is critical to sustain our beloved community festivals that provide benefit to our communities – to residents, businesses, non-profit organizations and cities.

Saint Paul is proud of the festivals that celebrate our culture and communities. Many are produced by a staff of one to two people – some entirely by volunteers – that put their blood, sweat and tears into putting on these impactful events. Most of which are free to attend.

It's no secret that producing a free festival with quality programming has become increasingly challenging. The pandemic was devastating to events, and costs for everything have increased. Consequently, it is harder and harder to provide entertainment and activities that make these events so special.

Investing in community festivals enables them to continue, and the benefits are many:

- the opportunity to celebrate our cities and state
- introducing people to experience our cultures
- an invitation to visit our communities
- connections – between attendees, city and state leaders, artists and businesses
- activity and vitality

To reinforce the importance of community festivals, think back to the last event you heard about getting cancelled – or organization who can no longer produce their time-honored celebration. It is a heart-breaking loss, and we are supportive of this funding to prevent that from happening.

Thank you for recognizing the role that these events play in the lives of Minnesotans and for helping to continue providing reasons to celebrate!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jaimee Lucke Hendrikson".

Jaimee Lucke Hendrikson
President & CEO, Visit Saint Paul

South Robert Street Business Association Safe Summer Nights – Letter of Inquiry

Dear Mr. Hanzal:

My name is Tom Campion, and I am the Founder and Executive Director of Safe Summer Nights. I am pleased to submit a formal proposal for a \$10,000 grant from the South Robert Street Business Association.

Safe Summer Nights (SSN) is a decade-long community-driven initiative that aims to strengthen relationships between Saint Paul neighborhoods and the police department through a series of outdoor summer events. **Our vision is to foster positive community-police relations by bringing together neighbors, public safety officers, and myriad community resources at engaging gatherings across Saint Paul.**

SSN's mission is to bring together Saint Paul residents and police officers at classic barbecues in a fun outdoor setting, promoting community cohesion, connecting youth with public safety officers, and providing access to educational and employment opportunities and community services and resources.

About Our Program

Safe Summers Nights is an all-volunteer community effort to offer a summer event series in Saint Paul's neighborhoods, with the goal of enhancing relationships with the Saint Paul Police Department and improving access to opportunities for our young people. Our program hosts large-scale, free community barbecues, where volunteers and police officers cook and serve a full meal to all attendees. Prior to events, police officers distribute fliers and knock on doors to invite neighbors to attend. Each community gathering typically attracts around 2,000 young people and families. Saint Paul Police officers volunteer at these events in uniform, interacting with attendees to build trust and understanding. A wide range of service organizations and employers also participate, offering information on local resources. This is Saint Paul – where community leaders, public safety officers, and neighbors work together improve overall outcomes for community health and safety, and provide multiple opportunities for our youth.

Safe Summer Nights is a true catalyst for community connections. Supporting Saint Paul's young people and families, it **enhances community safety by building relationships among community members and Saint Paul police officers.** Through events held adjacent to Saint Paul recreation centers, SSN effectively **connects our kids and families to local resources that support student growth and development.**

By providing a platform for community engagement, resource sharing, and relationship building, Safe Summer Nights promotes a sense of connection, belonging, and opportunity, aligning with the Ciresi Walburn Foundation's mission to promote education and equitable opportunities for Minnesota's children and youth.

Expanding Our Reach: Serving More Neighborhoods and Engaging New Community Partners

SSN is one of the largest community-based efforts of its kind, modeled on the idea that food and fun activities bring us together. With Saint Paul Police officers directly engaged, and community partnerships offering a continuum of resources, our goal of enhanced relationships among those in our community becomes a reality. Imagine uniformed officers playing basketball with young neighbors, parents speaking with labor leaders, kids finding their next story adventure in the Bookmobile, and connections being made during a community meal. As the coals dim, what remains is trust and opportunity.

In 2024, we hosted 8 events across Saint Paul, serving over 25,000 meals. For 2025, we plan to host a minimum of eight events, with additional events contingent on funding. Event locations are strategically chosen based on community need and impact. SSN collaborates with numerous community partners, including Saint Paul Parks and Recreation, the Library, Port Authority, and labor unions. These partnerships enhance the events through information booths, services like the Bookmobile, and job fairs. City and community leaders are always in attendance and support delivery of these events.

Over the coming year we are seeking to grow the number of events offered to reach more Saint Paul neighborhoods. We also aim to expand our community partnerships to include organizations focused on the arts, play, and food insecurity, including seeking to collaborate with organizations such as Springboard for the Arts, East Side Arts Council, Minnesota Children's and Science Museums, Second Harvest, and the Salvation Army's Food Shelf Program, in addition to neighborhood specific programs such as Canasta Familiar, Neighborhood House, Open Hands Midway, Hallie Q. Brown Community Center, and Merrick Community Services.

Financials

Each Safe Summer Nights events costs approximately \$5000 to execute, with our Fall event typically costing approximately \$7000 due to the numbers and different foods for the Halloween event. Below, please find an estimated cost breakout for 2025:

	Event 1	Event 2	Event 3	Event 4	Event 5	Event 6	Event 7	Event 8	Fall Event
Food	2600	3120	2600	3120	2600	3120	3120	3120	5000
Beverage	520	780	520	780	520	780	780	780	1000
Misc	520	780	520	780	520	780	780	780	1000
Total	3640	4680	3640	4680	3640	4680	4680	4680	7000

Total Budget for Nine Events: **\$41,320**

Measuring Success and Tracking Our Progress

To measure success and track our progress, we are taking steps to implement feedback strategies. This will involve collecting input from our community partners, allowing us to gauge the effectiveness of our initiatives from their perspective. Additionally, we'll gather valuable insights from youth and family participants about their experiences and the perceived value of our program. This will be accomplished through a community input display at events and by having community volunteers directly engage with attendees to inquire about their experience at SSN events. We'll also use this opportunity to identify any

additional community resources that participants would find beneficial, ensuring our efforts remain aligned with the evolving needs of those we are serving. This approach to feedback collection will enable us to continually refine and improve our events, ensuring they deliver maximum impact.

Specifically, we deliver unique, community-driven gatherings that:

1. **Bridge the gap between police and community.** SSN provides a unique opportunity for police officers to interact with residents in a positive, relaxed setting rather than during times of crisis. This helps build trust and understanding between law enforcement and the community.
2. **Focus on diverse participation.** Our events attract a wide range of participants, including young people, families, and community leaders. This diverse attendance fosters connections across different segments of the community.
3. **Invest in community partnerships.** SSN collaborates with various city and community organizations, including Saint Paul Parks and Recreation, the Library, and labor unions. These partnerships enhance the impact of SSN events by providing additional resources and opportunities for attendees.
4. **Offer engaging activities.** These family-friendly events feature free food, bike giveaways, first responder vehicles, access to various police specialty units, and activities like basketball games between officers and young residents, which create memorable positive interactions and help change perceptions.

On behalf of Safe Summer Nights and the thousands of Saint Paul youth we serve, thank you for the opportunity to present our program. We believe that our program makes a difference in many ways, and we would look forward to partnering with the South Robert Street Business Association. Please do not hesitate to contact me with thoughts or questions at any time. Thank for the work you do for so many in our community.

Sincerely,

Tom Champion
Founder and Director
Safe Summer Nights
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