



# Sweet Potato Comfort Pie®

A Catalyst for Caring and Building Community



Sweet Potato Comfort Pie (SPCP) is a community-building organization that uses food traditions, the arts, and other creative forms of culture-sharing to spark connection, healing, and change.

Sweet Potato Comfort Pie obtained its official 501(3)(c) status in 2020.

## HISTORY, FOUNDING AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

After the 2014 events in Ferguson, MO, founder Rose McGee sought to bring healing. She drew on her roots in southern Black food tradition, packed 30 sweet potato pies and drove to Ferguson. There she discovered the "power of the pie" to spark transformation, catharsis and human connection.

This discovery led her to the model of forging community connections in creative ways to help heal and connect people of all backgrounds. She returned from Ferguson, and SPCP produced the first Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday of Service (January 2015). This event draws more than 400 people together each year to create an affirming and joyful space for the life-affirming work of racial healing. The organization's 10th annual MLK event occurred on January 19, 2025, drawing more than 550 people.

## “IN RESPONSE TO” EVENTS

**RESPONSIVE EVENTS LET US PROVIDE SPACE TO PROCESS AND DISCUSS CURRENT EVENTS AS THEY HAPPEN.**

SPCP offers standard annual programming, as seen on page two.

- Hosted more than 40 responsive/pop-up events throughout the years and worked collaboratively with organizations and businesses to create community engagement
- **St. Peter High School's Black Joy Day (Feb. 2024)**, during which we brought actors from the play to perform an excerpt and lead facilitated discussions about racial healing.
- **Robbinsdale Area School District (Feb. 2024)** for Black History Month events, Rose McGee baked the sweet potato comfort pie with the students and discussed the cultural history and power of this cultural food. Pie was served to all students in the district, providing a slice of representation and cultural celebration.

**Other responsive events include:**

- 50+ group sweet potato comfort pie bakes (generally in response to racial violence or traumatic events),
- 60+ Story circles
- 20+ “Tea parties” Tea parties honor the Black tradition of tea houses and ceremonies, which were safe places for African Americans in the early 1900s and throughout our country’s history



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# PROGRAMS

## HEALING & EMPOWERING

Healing retreats. Story circles.

The Black Women's Healing Retreat and other healing retreats for renewal and reflection and to process racial trauma.

Original Theater Arts and Visual Arts. We have produced a play and photography exhibit. Arts are integral to all our programs.

## ARTS & CULTURE

Original, community-based arts productions.

## ALLIANCE BUILDING

Forging communities of care for racial healing, education and action.

Live Community-Building Events, Speaker Series. The annual MLK Holiday of Service. Educational series.

Culturally relevant "Pie Response" to current events. Group bakes and reflection. "Tea Parties" honoring the Black tea house tradition. Annual Sweet Potato Pie Showcase.

## CONVENING

We gather our community to empower, uplift and honor each other.

Rose Service Scholar Cohort. An intergenerational, arts-based mutual mentoring program for Black youth and elders.

## MUTUAL MENTORING

Intergenerational mentoring for youth and elders that heals generational divides.

Our programming both strengthens communities and furthers intercultural caring, empathy, and understanding. We do this with large, arts-centered events, healing retreats, intergenerational mentoring, and community arts productions.

The cultural food tradition of sweet potato comfort pie is part of many of our programs and exemplifies our "secret ingredients" of joyful, nourishing, celebratory connections to arts, culture, and community.



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# THE BUDGET

FY 26 - FY 27

## CATEGORY AMOUNT FOR SWEET POTATO COMFORT PIE (SPCP)

<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>
<b>“Bridging Community Divides for Healing” Events</b>	<b>\$270,000</b>
Potential Locations: Minneapolis, Robbinsdale, St. Paul, Duluth, St. Peter, Mankato, Winona (communities, schools, community ed, higher ed, faith-based)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Production Team Honorariums (project manager, facilitators, lead bakers) <span style="float: right;">\$178,000</span></li> <li>◦ Equipment/Supplies/Ingredients <span style="float: right;">\$25,000</span></li> <li>◦ Training (statewide facilitators, lead bakers) <span style="float: right;">\$25,000</span></li> <li>◦ Printing (Curriculum Enhancement Guides) <span style="float: right;">\$15,000</span></li> <li>◦ Administrative and Financial Oversight <span style="float: right;">\$27,000</span></li> </ul>	
<b>Building Youth Leadership and Community through the Arts</b>	<b>\$170,000</b>
Locations: Rochester, Twin Cities, St. Cloud	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Production Team Honorariums (project manager, cast, directors, musicians, artists) <span style="float: right;">\$100,000</span></li> <li>◦ Research and new Program(s) Development <span style="float: right;">\$10,000</span></li> <li>◦ Marketing costs (graphics, printing, curriculums, media) <span style="float: right;">\$20,000</span></li> <li>◦ Production costs (venue, wardrobe, set design, transportation, fuel, catering) <span style="float: right;">\$23,000</span></li> <li>◦ Administrative and Financial Oversight <span style="float: right;">\$17,000</span></li> </ul>	
<b>Community Service Recognition Events</b>	<b>\$60,000</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Winter: Annual MLK Weekend of Service <span style="float: right;">\$40,000</span> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Recognizing community servants across the Twin Cities.</li> <li>◦ Location: Hosted in Golden Valley</li> <li>◦ Production Team Honorariums (project manager, volunteer coordinator, venue, presenters, musicians, lead baker)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Summer: SPCP Annual Pie Showcase Celebrating community across the Twin Cities. <span style="float: right;">\$14,000</span> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Location: Hosted in St. Louis Park</li> <li>◦ Production Team Honorarium (project manager, volunteer coordinator, venue, celebrity pie judges, celebrity guest emcee)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Administrative and Financial Oversight <span style="float: right;">\$6,000</span></li> </ul>	



April 2, 2025

Chair and Representatives Samantha Vang  
House Legacy Finance Committee  
Room G3, Minnesota State Capitol  
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

**Re: Support for HF 1721 - Funding for Sweet Potato Comfort Pie**

Dear Rep. Vang,

The League of Women Voters of Minnesota (LWVMN) is proud to be nonpartisan, neither supporting nor opposing candidates or political parties at any level of government, but always working on vital issues of concern to members and the public since 1919. With our statewide membership and local Leagues across urban, suburban, and rural communities, we envision a democracy where every person has the desire, the right, the knowledge and the confidence to participate.

**LWVMN believes that Sweet Potato Comfort Pie (SPCP) should receive an appropriation of \$500,000 to continue its vital work building and caring for the community.** We have partnered with SPCP for the past five years in their extraordinary Juneteenth and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr events, and have been a witness to their unique ability to engage community and promote racial healing. Their work is needed more than ever, to educate people about our history, to honor and support diverse leaders so their voices are at the table, to encourage multi-generational and multi-racial cooperation, and to provide meaningful opportunities for all people to come together and build strategies that help to create communities where everyone belongs!

**We urge your support for HF 1721 and look forward to seeing the benefits that this funding provides.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle Witte". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Michelle Witte, Executive Director  
League of Women Voters of Minnesota

[mwitte@lwvmn.org](mailto:mwitte@lwvmn.org) - Landmark Center, 75 W Fifth Street, Suite 315, St. Paul MN 55102



# Sweet Potato Comfort Pie

Sweet Potato Comfort Pie (SPCP) is a community-building organization that uses food traditions, the arts and other creative forms of culture-sharing to spark connection, healing and change.

**Established 2014**





# Who we are

The events in Ferguson, MO, were the beginning of Rose McGee’s special brand of “baketivism” – using food culture and other creative forms of connection-building to create change. Since 2015, Sweet Potato Comfort Pie has continued to deliver much-needed connection, conversation, and catalytic action. The organization received official 501(c)(3) status in 2020.

# Who we serve

We achieve our mission by sharing the sweet potato comfort pie tradition, storytelling, convening, special retreats, original community-based artistic productions, and additional live events and connection-building activities that deepen racial healing, empathy, and understanding. Each event and program we produce is welcome to be attended by all walks within each community.

# How we serve



At Sweet Potato Comfort Pie, we foster healing and connection by hosting story circles, group bakes, and retreats that honor community heroes and celebrate Black cultural traditions. Each year, we bring people together through live events like our Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday of Service and Juneteenth Jubilee to advance Dr. King's vision of a Beloved Community. Through our speaker series and story circles, we amplify diverse voices, deepen understanding of the Black experience, and engage policymakers, educators, and community members. Our arts initiatives include a photo exhibit honoring racial justice heroes and an original play about Juneteenth, both of which we proudly share throughout the state. Through the Rose Service Scholar Cohort, we connect Black youth and elders in mutual mentorship, focusing on resilience, healing, and creativity.



**Healing &  
Empowering**



**Alliance Building**



**Arts & Culture**



**Convening**



**Mutual  
Mentoring**



MLK





Community



Juneteenth



Elders



Support

**“More than a pretty pie”**

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**“It’s whats in the batter that matters”**

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