

# MN Biz Vision: Asian Kaleidoscope



## Features:

**Tory Envy's  
Impact on  
Representation  
in Children's  
Books**

Community  
Feedback and  
Insights from  
the Sears Survey

**This monthly E-Magazine is published by the Asian American Business Resilience Network to highlight Asian American small businesses' accomplishments.**

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## Asian American Business Resilience Network

### VISION

Envision a new reality that addressing historic inequities, and enhancing culturally/linguistically appropriate ways to thrive through resilience, sustainability, and inclusive growth for all members and the communities where they learn, live, play, and work.

### MISSION

AABRN radically accelerates the pace of change by disrupting the status quo; providing resources, training, and support; building bridges across diverse ecosystems; and bringing together public health and business networks, in order to achieve sustainable growth along with an equitable future.

### PROGRAMS

- Community Engagement and Translation Assistance, especially public health in nature
- Navigate local, state and national resources
- Access digital tools in advancing members' wellbeing
- Provide training to retain a healthy workforce
- Provide technical assistance in business operation and IT needs





## SHAPING FUTURE GENERATIONS: TORY ENVY'S IMPACT ON REPRESENTATION IN CHILDREN'S BOOKS

*Interviewed By Meejoo Choi*



Victoria Lee, professionally known as Tory Envy, is a Hmong-American children's book author and artist. Tory shared a heartfelt story rooted in family and cultural heritage. Shortly after the birth of her first daughter, she was captivated by the idea of documenting their early years and nurturing a connection to the Hmong language and culture. Recognizing that it might be increasingly challenging for the next generation to maintain

these traditions, she decided to write a bilingual children's book, *I Am A Big Sister - Kuv Yog Ib Tug Niam Laus*, to help her family and others learn Hmong together.

### Receiving Positive Response from the Community

Her books quickly garnered attention, including a feature on Fox 9 News, and earned a spot within the top 20 on Amazon.com for Asian American literature. The book resonated with readers, drawing enthusiastic feedback and requests for more stories, including one with a "big brother" perspective. This experience highlighted for Tory the importance of cultural representation in children's literature—a presence she had found lacking in her own upbringing—and reinforced her commitment to bridging this gap for today's young readers.

## The Power of Representation: Tory Envy's Journey to Empower Hmong Youth

Hmong culture has profoundly influenced Tory's journey, shaping her mission to bring greater visibility to her heritage. As a first-generation Hmong American raised by immigrant parents, she grew up in an environment where cultural representation was limited. Reflecting on her childhood, she recalled a lack of resources—no programs, books, or media that reflected Hmong culture. Feeling distanced from her own heritage, she often found herself thinking that everything 'cool' seemed to be outside her culture. But as she matured, she began to ask herself, "Why can't I be the one to create that (cultural representation)?" This question inspired her to write books that would empower Hmong children to see themselves reflected in literature. For her, one of the rewarding moments comes when young readers recognize themselves in her stories, excitedly pointing out, "That's me!"



## Finding Opportunity in the Unexpected: The Start of the Journey

Her journey into publishing was fueled by her natural creativity and a desire to create meaningful stories for her children. Writing came easily to her, as she had previously written music, and the idea of crafting a book felt like a natural extension of her talents. During the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, she explored Amazon's Fulfillment by Amazon (FBA) program, attempting to sell potty training seats. While that venture didn't pan out, it introduced her to Amazon's book publishing program. With no prior experience or connections in publishing, she leaned on her resourcefulness, watching countless YouTube tutorials, learning through trial and error, and drawing on entrepreneurial tips from her parents. She also sought advice from other authors, building connections that helped her navigate the process. This

combination of creativity, persistence, and community support laid the foundation for her successful publishing journey.

### **Overcoming Obstacles: Trial-and-Error Journey**

One of the biggest challenges Tory faced in starting her business was navigating the trial-and-error nature of the publishing process. Most of her knowledge came from watching YouTube tutorials, which provided a wealth of information but required her to experiment to determine what worked best—everything from selecting dimensions that looked good to managing production details. Mistakes were inevitable, such as ordering books with incorrect dimensions, receiving misprinted artwork, or encountering distributor errors. These setbacks made the journey particularly challenging, but she didn't navigate them alone. She sought advice from her sister, who ran a food truck, and relied on her parents' entrepreneurial wisdom to handle various situations. She also reached out to others for tips on communicating effectively with partners, publishers, and distributors. These experiences taught her resilience and problem-solving, essential skills that helped her overcome obstacles and refine her business.

### **From Idea to Reality: Advice for Writers Looking to Publish**

For those interested in writing and publishing their own books, Tory offers thoughtful advice based on her experience. She encourages aspiring authors to start by clearly identifying their goals and deciding on the right publishing path. Working with a larger company provides funding and resources but often comes with trade-offs, such as smaller profit margins, longer timelines, and less creative flexibility. Self-publishing, by contrast, offers complete creative control, allowing you to publish on your own schedule and retain a larger share of earnings. Tory also advises writers to draw inspiration from their personal lives, as she did with her children, or to tap into their imagination to create stories about magic, superheroes, or other creative ideas. Her key message: don't hold back. Be fearless, embrace your creativity, and commit fully to bringing your story to life.



Photo Courtesy: <https://toryenvy.com/pages/photos>





**Preface:** The Asian American Business Resilience Network has teamed up with Asian Media Access to co-develop the St. Paul Sears Site, we will publicize a series of articles to highlight our progress.

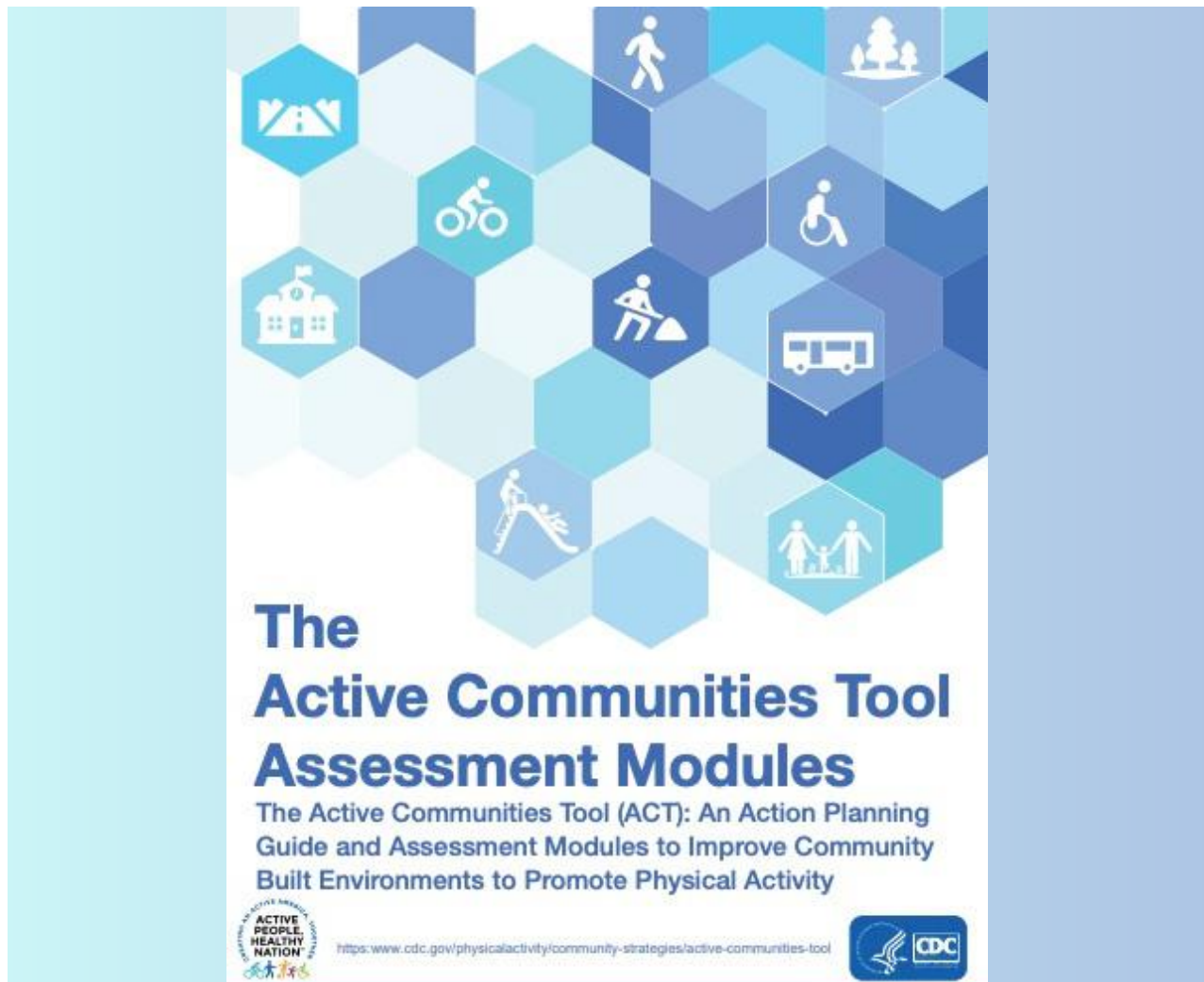
**Series of SEARS Redevelopment - Article #11**

## **UNLOCKING POTENTIAL AT THE SEARS SITE: A PATH TOWARD COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY AND ACTIVE LIVING**

### **Background on the Sears Site**

The historic Sears site at 425 Rice Street in St. Paul, Minnesota, represents both a challenge and an opportunity. The site, dominated by a large retail building and an expansive parking lot that is not being used, lacks the infrastructure and vibrancy needed to support a healthy, connected community. The absence of diverse destinations, such as homes, workplaces, libraries, parks, restaurants, cultural landmarks, and healthcare facilities, deprives residents of essential amenities that support daily life and promote physical activity. Additionally, the area lacks activity-friendly infrastructure, including sidewalks, bike lanes, and safe crossings, discouraging walking and cycling. Poorly lit streets and insufficient traffic calming measures pose safety risks for pedestrians and cyclists, particularly during evening hours. The site's neglect also exacerbates social and economic inequities, disproportionately affecting low-income and minority residents in the neighboring

Frogtown and Rondo communities. Furthermore, the lack of green and recreational spaces limits opportunities for wellness and social interaction, underscoring the urgent need for revitalization.



## Using the ACT Tool: Enhancing Street Design for Active Transportation at the Sears Site

To address challenges in creating an activity-friendly environment, the Sears Redevelopment Project applied the CDC's Active Communities Tool (ACT): An Action Planning Guide and Assessment Modules to Improve Community Built Environments to Promote Physical Activity. This guide supports communities in designing spaces that encourage active living by evaluating infrastructure, policies, and land use planning. For the Sears site, the project reviewed two key components of the ACT assessment: Module 1—Street Design and Connectivity and Module 4—Planning and Policy Implementation. In this article, it focuses on Module 1 which evaluates how well the existing street design and connectivity promote active transportation, such as walking and cycling. The findings from Module 1 are guiding the project's efforts to create an inclusive, activity-friendly environment tailored to the community's needs.



## Addressing Key Insights from ACT Module 1 for the Sears Site

Module 1 examines how a community's street network promotes or hinders connectivity and active living, focusing on factors like transportation modes and zoning regulations. For example, it considers whether plans address high- and low-stress streets and prioritize underserved areas. The Sears site, bordered by major arteries such as Rice Street and University Avenue, highlights these challenges. Heavy traffic on these streets creates high-stress environments for pedestrians and cyclists, compounded by the absence of bike lanes and sidewalks. While Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) elements have been included in area plans, current infrastructure heavily favors automobiles, limiting safe and convenient alternatives for non-drivers. Redevelopment plans aim to address these gaps by incorporating:

- **Bike Lanes:** Establish dedicated lanes to promote cycling as a safe and viable transportation option.
- **Pedestrian Walkways:** Build wide, well-lit sidewalks with adequate crossing signals.
- **Public Transit Access:** Improve connections to existing bus stops and light rail stations, possibly adding new stops closer to the site.



## Designing a Vibrant, Walkable Sears Site

The Sears Redevelopment project aims to unlock the potential of the Sears site. This site could be reimaged into a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly area that promotes community engagement. Incorporating green spaces, walkways, and seating would enhance both safety and accessibility, transforming the site into a lively hub for

shopping, socializing, and public services.

The assessment revealed several critical barriers to active living at the Sears site. The expansive parking lot creates an unwelcoming and unsafe environment for pedestrians and cyclists. This disconnect discourages active transportation and limits access to public transit and essential services, disproportionately affecting low-income residents in the surrounding Frogtown and Rondo neighborhoods. Redevelopment plans would like to address these barriers by prioritizing walkability, integrating bike lanes, and introducing green spaces.

The project aims to address significant gaps in accessibility and connectivity, particularly for low-income residents who rely on walking or public transit. The project seeks to enhance pedestrian infrastructure by adding clearly marked walkways, safe crossings, and improved lighting, creating a more inviting environment. By subdividing the large parking lot into smaller, walkable blocks, the plan will foster easier access to key locations and improve street connectivity. The project also aims to close transportation gaps by expanding bike lanes, improving pedestrian walkways, and strengthening public transit access. These changes will reduce the community's dependence on cars, increase safety, and encourage healthier, more active lifestyles, while promoting equity and sustainability for all residents.



## Continuing the Vision for a Walkable, Inclusive Sears Redevelopment

The Sears site redevelopment has the potential to transform a neglected space into a vibrant, connected hub. By addressing the barriers identified in the ACT Module 1 assessment, the project will enhance connectivity, promote active transportation, and reduce inequities for Frogtown and Rondo residents. With ongoing collaboration and thoughtful design, the redevelopment will create an inclusive, accessible community space that serves everyone. If you would like to learn more about the project, please visit "<https://searsstpaul.info/>".



October 29, November 06, 13, 18

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP 101

We hosted Entrepreneurship 101 classes at the Brookdale Library, consisting of four 2-hour sessions. The cohort began on October 29th and runs for a total of four weeks.





### Thinking about starting your business?

Sign up today for the **FREE** 4 two-hour weekly classes at the Brookdale Library.

**INCENTIVE \$200**

Get \$100 on the first day and \$100 for completing the class.  
Get a \$1000 support when you develop a business plan.

**Lead Instructor: Poh Lin Khoo, CEO, Khoo Consulting LLC**

### Cohort #1 Schedule:

Date	Time	Topic
<b>29</b> Tue October, 2024	5:30 PM - 7:30 PM	Orientation with \$100 sign up bonus
<b>06</b> Wed November, 2024	5:30 PM - 7:30 PM	Entrepreneurship 101
<b>13</b> Wed November, 2024	5:30 PM - 7:30 PM	Entrepreneurship 101
<b>18</b> Mon November, 2024	5:30 PM - 7:30 PM	Entrepreneurship 101 with \$100 completion bonus


**SIGN UP NOW!**



<https://forms.gle/jyhCTE4fXaqBESRA6>

More cohorts to follow if you are unable to attend cohort #1.  
Cohort #2 begins in January and will be virtual.

For more info: [info@aabrn.org](mailto:info@aabrn.org) [www.aabrn.org](http://www.aabrn.org)



### Introduction to Entrepreneurship and Business Planning

Prepared For: Asian American Business Resilience Network (AABRN)

Sponsored By: Mn Department of Employment and Economic Development

Oct. 29, 2024



CERTIFIED OFFER SMALL BUSINESS

### Poh Lin Khoo

#### Intersecting Identities

- Woman-of-color
- Immigrant
- Self-funded first generation college student
- Advocate for the advancement of small business
- Advocate for DEI practices
- Global and multicultural experience
- Multilingual
- Community builder

#### Career experiences

Khoo Consulting founder

Multicultural communities

Government agencies

Higher education

Public health and community building

Nonprofits

Small businesses

Fortune 500 company

International advertising agency

2023 Outstanding Immigrant Business Award  
Minnesota Resident

2022 Received the Marketing and Awareness and Promotion Plan Award from the National Association of County Park and Recreation Officials



Outstanding Immigrant Business Award

Poh Lin Khoo / Khoo Consulting LLC

2023 Winner

Week: May 27

### Agenda

Topic
Introduction
Entrepreneurship and Mindset
Business Opportunities
Business Planning Basics
Business Models
Activities: Self Assessment
Business Idea Development





October 31

# SEARS MASTER PLAN OPEN HOUSE

We partnered with the Frogtown/Rondo Church Alliance to host a heart-warming Community Engagement Day for Sears Redevelopment with presentation, resource tables, vaccination clinics, and the best of all - trick or treat for neighborhood kids!





November 07

## UMN HEALTH FAIR

AABRN partnered with the University YMCA at the University of Minnesota for a tabling event that included a resource fair, networking sessions, arts and crafts, snacks, and a PAWS therapy animal session. This event offered a wonderful opportunity to connect with students and promote their mental well-being.





November 12

## HTC CELEBRATIONS OF NATIONS

We participated in Hennepin Tech College's Celebrations of Nations event, where we embraced and celebrated the richness of diverse cultures through food, community, and shared experiences.





November 14

## 5TH ANNUAL MINNESOTA MULTIFAITH NETWORK (MNMN) CONFERENCE

The Hindu Society of Minnesota successfully hosted the 5th Annual Minnesota Multifaith Network (MnMN) Conference, themed "A Call for Justice and Healing," with over 200 attendees. The event featured cross-cultural sharing, including a guided tour of the sacred mandir and a traditional Indian banana leaf dinner, creating an enriching experience.





November 17

# FESTIVAL OF LIGHT

Loy Krathong Festival of Light at Wat Promwachirayan (November 17, 2024) – A heartwarming community celebration hosted by the Thai American community!!!

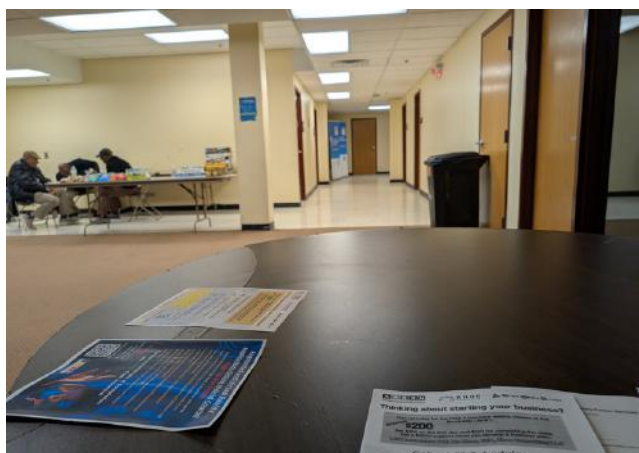




November 19

## URBAN LEAGUE RENTER RIGHTS AND HEALTH RESOURCE FAIRS

We have joined the City of Minneapolis Health Department hosted a Renter Rights and Health Resource Fair. The event aimed to provide essential resources and services to the community with a focus on both health and housing.





November 22

## MINNESOTA HMONG CHAMBER OF COMMERCE - END OF YEAR EVENT

The Minnesota Hmong Chamber of Commerce organized an end-of-year event aimed at helping business owners expand their networks and connect with other professionals. This exciting gathering was a great opportunity to meet new people and share knowledge!



## Networking Connections

End your year making new connections!



Friday, Nov 22nd  
4 pm - 6 pm

Partner Host  
Comcast  
10 River Park Plaza, St. Paul, MN 55107



MINNESOTA HMONG  
CHAMBER of COMMERCE

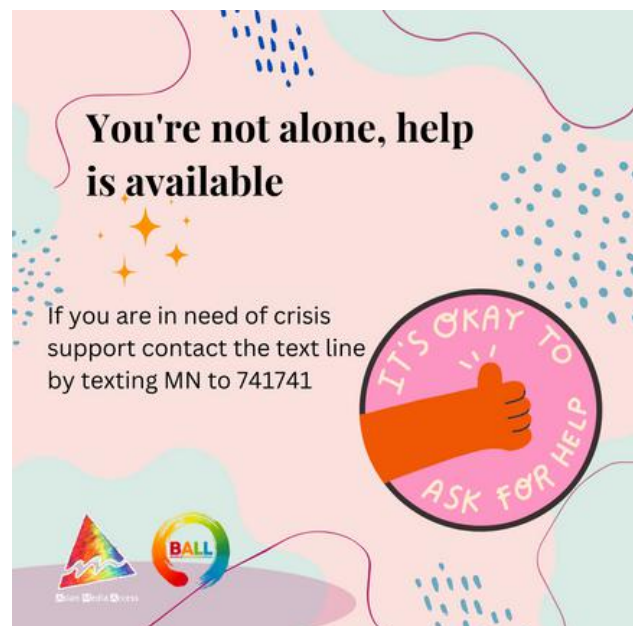
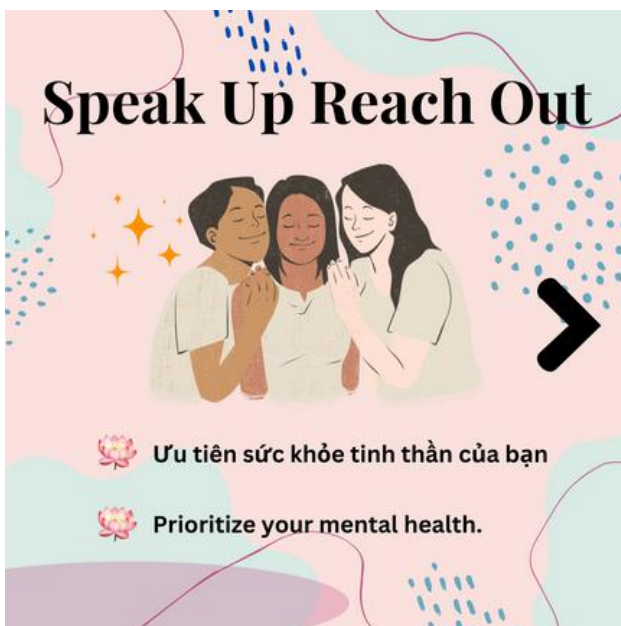
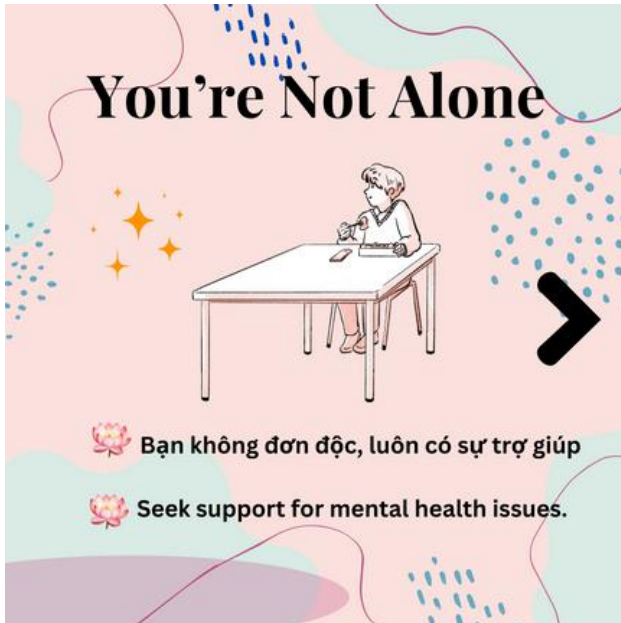
For more information visit our website  
at [www.mnhmongchamber.org](http://www.mnhmongchamber.org)

[Register Now](#)



## MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS FLYERS

Asian Media Access has created a set of mental health heritage story cards. If you are in need of crisis support contact the text line by texting MN to 741741.





For more than 60 years, the SBA has celebrated National Small Business Week, highlighting the vital contributions of America's entrepreneurs and small business owners.

**Nominate a small business owner today!**



**SCAN** the QR Code or visit [sba.gov/nsbw](https://sba.gov/nsbw) to download nomination forms and guidelines.

**DEADLINE: December 5, 2024 | 4 pm EST**

**District Office Information:**

Local District Office: Minnesota District Office

Office website: <https://sba.gov/mn>

Contact: [minnesota@sba.gov](mailto:minnesota@sba.gov)



U.S. Small Business  
Administration

## **SBA 2025 NATIONAL SMALL BUSINESS WEEK AWARDS**

For more than 60 years, the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) has celebrated National Small Business Week (NSBW), which acknowledges the critical contributions of America's entrepreneurs and small business owners. National Small Business Week 2025 will take place May 4-10, and SBA will officially recognize their hard work, ingenuity, and dedication, including their contributions to the economy.

[Click here to get details and submit your nominations by Dec. 5th.](#)





## Earn while you learn

Explore a career in a high-demand field. No prior experience necessary. Combine classroom training with real, hands-on experience while you earn a paycheck. We are here to help you get started!

## Build your:

- ✓ Knowledge
- ✓ Skills
- ✓ Relationships
- ✓ Confidence

## Build your future with apprenticeship

### Visit us

#### Apprenticeship Outreach Office

North Minneapolis CareerForce Center  
800 W Broadway, Minneapolis, MN 55411

### Schedule a one-on-one



The Apprenticeship Outreach Office is a program of Minneapolis Employment and Training in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development and Department of Labor and Industry.



## LEARN, EARN, GROW - APPRENTICESHIP


Ready to kickstart a career in a high-demand field? With the Apprenticeship Outreach Office, you can earn while you learn—no experience needed! Get hands-on training, grow your skills, and build your future.

Learn more at:

<https://www2.minneapolumn.gov/government/departments/cped/economic-development/minneapolis-employment-training/apprenticeship/>



# Small Business Funding Marketplace

 Funding

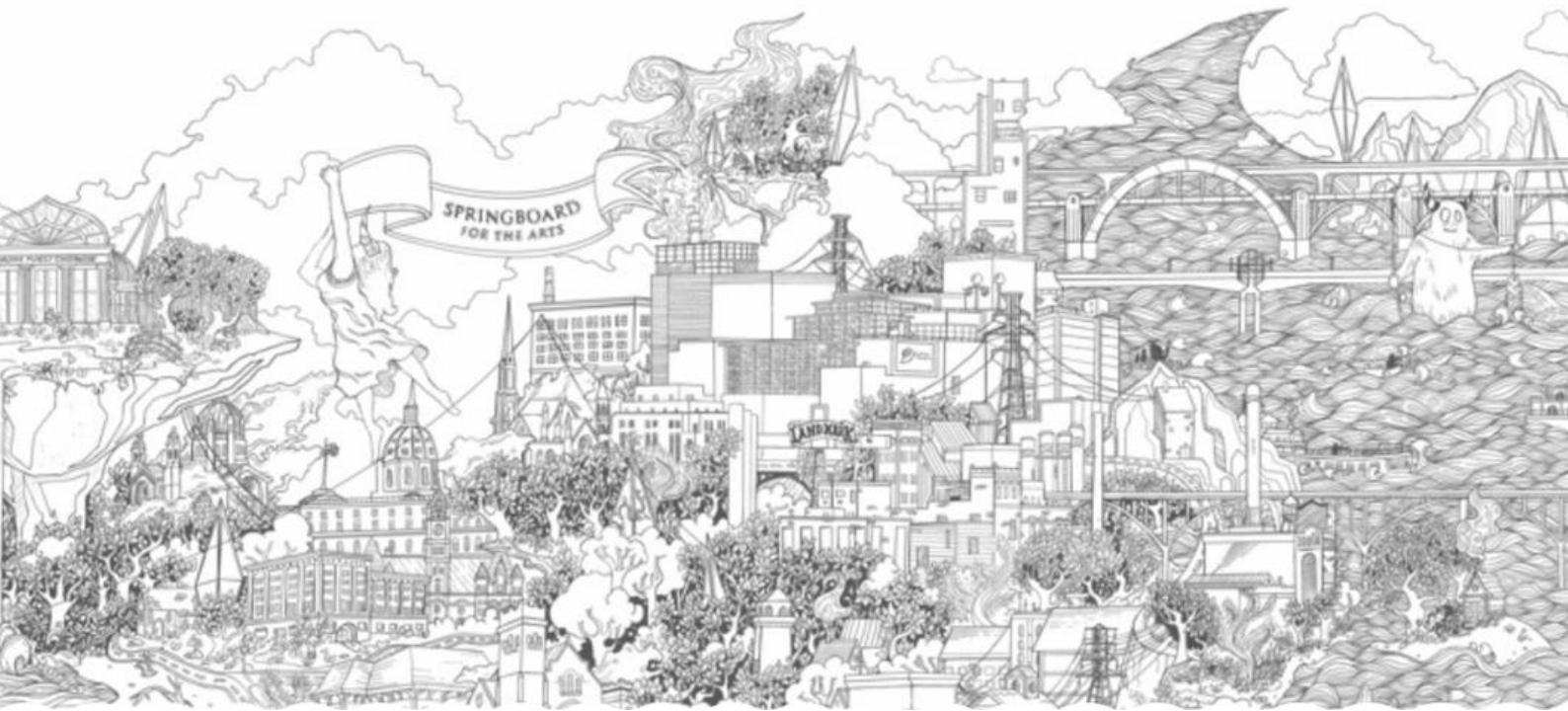
## **SMALL BUSINESS FUNDING MARKETPLACE**

Verizon has partnered with Next Street to offer the Small Business Funding Marketplace. The Small Business Funding Marketplace is a tool designed to empower small businesses by providing a carefully curated set of small business loans and grants in one streamlined marketplace. Users will be able to filter across many small business capital providers and financial products to see what they qualify for based on their business characteristics and compare terms across their options.

Learn more at: <https://digitalready.verizonwireless.com/course-details/capital-offering>

Join Digital Ready to get the same free resources and apply at:  
<https://digitalready.verizonwireless.com/grants>





## Springboard for the Arts Calendar of Events - Professional Development

- November 20, 2024 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm - Stitch-in with Kandace Creel Falcón
- November 21, 2024 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm - EXHALE: "It's Basic" Film Screening and Discussion
- November 23, 2024 1:00 pm to 3:30 pm - Work of Art: Business Plan Essentials
- December 3, 2024 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm - Art-Train Individual Artist Training
- December 3, 2024 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm - Photographing Your Artwork
- December 4, 2024 6:00 pm to 8:30 pm - Pitching Your Work
- December 6, 2024 1:00 pm to 3:30 pm - Special Topics: Gallery Design and Installation
- December 7, 2024 1:00 pm to 3:30 pm - Work of Art: Engaging Customers & Selling Your Work
- December 11, 2024 6:00 pm to 8:30 pm - Artists Working in Community
- December 12, 2024 6:30 pm to 7:30 pm - Ask Me Anything: Copyright and Contracts for Public Art

Learn more and register at: <https://springboardforthearts.org/events/>

## Tax Tips from the IRS



- [Here's what taxpayers need to know about business related travel deductions](#)
- [Companies who promise to eliminate tax debt sometimes leave taxpayers high and dry](#)
- [Get an Identity Protection PIN.](#)
- [Tax Resources for Members of the Military](#)



NOV  
**22**  
3pm~4pm

## **An Holistic Approach to Entrepreneurial Wellbeing**

Business Webinar

[LEARN MORE >>](#)

NOV  
**25**  
11am~12pm

## **Branding vs. Selling: Which One to Do (and When)**

Business Webinar

[LEARN MORE >>](#)

NOV  
**26**  
2pm~3pm

## **Small Business Week Awards Overview**

Business Webinar

[LEARN MORE >>](#)

DEC  
**2**  
12pm~1pm

## **The Enduring Enterprise: Navigating Crisis in Advanced Economies**

Business Webinar

[LEARN MORE >>](#)





DEC

2

12pm~2pm

## Startup Pitch Practice: Share Your Idea and Get Expert Feedback

Business Webinar

[LEARN MORE >>](#)

DEC

9

12pm~2pm

## Co-Founder Networking: Find a Business Partner

In-Person Business Event

[LEARN MORE >>](#)

DEC

11

11am~3pm

## 2024 Fall IPO Bootcamp

In-Person Business Event

[LEARN MORE >>](#)

DEC

13

12pm~1pm

## Leveraging Regional Strengths

Business Webinar

[LEARN MORE >>](#)



Visit Our Website for More Upcoming Events

[OFFICIAL WEBSITE >>](#)

# Contact Us

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## Partnering with



Asian Media Access



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Asian American Business Resilience Network