



northern  
spark



2011



2019



# Northern Spark 2011–2019

## We Are Here: Resilience, Renewal & Regeneration

Northern Spark is a late-night arts festival in Minnesota—a free, multidisciplinary, multi-venue, multiple partner, night-time event. In early June, tens of thousands of people gather throughout the Twin Cities to explore the city’s great cultural institutions and neighborhoods, play in temporary installations in the streets, and enjoy experimental performances in green spaces and under bridges.

Over the past nine years Northern Spark has become an eagerly anticipated event that contributes powerfully to the image of the Twin Cities as an active, vibrant, diverse community; a place that attracts and retains young talent; a region that loves participatory outdoor and cultural activities.

In 2019 Northern Spark continued as a “new two-nights until 2 am” event and engaged three Twin Cities neighborhoods: Downtown East and the American Indian Cultural Corridor in Minneapolis and historic Rondo in St. Paul. The theme *We Are Here: Resilience, Renewal & Regeneration*, was born from conversations with local residents and Neighborhood Partners and woven together by the 2018–2019 Northern Lights Program Council. *We Are Here* invited artists to claim space and power through their stories of resilience, renewal and regeneration.

## Equity, Inclusion and Community

The 2017 festival signaled a shift in how Northern Lights.mn organizes Northern Spark. That year, we introduced a Program Council of artists of color who championed the cultural neighborhoods where the 2017 festival took place and juried the largest open call for that year.

To reflect our commitment to increasing the diversity of artists, partners and audience in our programming, we have made the Program Council an ongoing effort in our work. This rotating group works with Northern Lights.mn to address racial inequities present within our organization and to select artists for participation in Northern Spark.

We also continue to engage community-rooted organizations in the formation of neighborhood nodes for the festival, as a way of increasing racial equity and participation in Northern Lights.mn programming. As we continue these relationships over the next ten years, we look forward to building a model for both a curated and community-created festival.

### Northern Spark 2019 Major Supporters

#### LUMINARY



#### BEACON



#### NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERS





Northern Spark is produced and presented by Northern Lights.mn

The mission of Northern Lights.mn is to support artists in the creation and presentation of art in the public sphere, focusing on innovative uses of technology to imagine new interactions between audience, artwork and place and explore expanded possibilities for civic engagement.

<http://northern.lights.mn>

#### Northern Lights.mn Supporters



This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a Minnesota State Arts Board Operating Support grant, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund.







## Northern Spark 2011–2019 By the Numbers

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|                           |              |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| Artist Projects           | 660          |
| Venues                    | 138          |
| Attendees                 | 324,000      |
| Artists                   | 2,393        |
| Organizational Partners   | 328          |
| Sponsors                  | 231          |
| Media Impressions         | 12.8 million |
| Website visits            | 629,925      |
| Unique website visitors   | 413,522      |
| Website page views        | 1,580,802    |
| Facebook page impressions | 4,124,510    |
| Printed maps              | 119,500      |

### In 2019

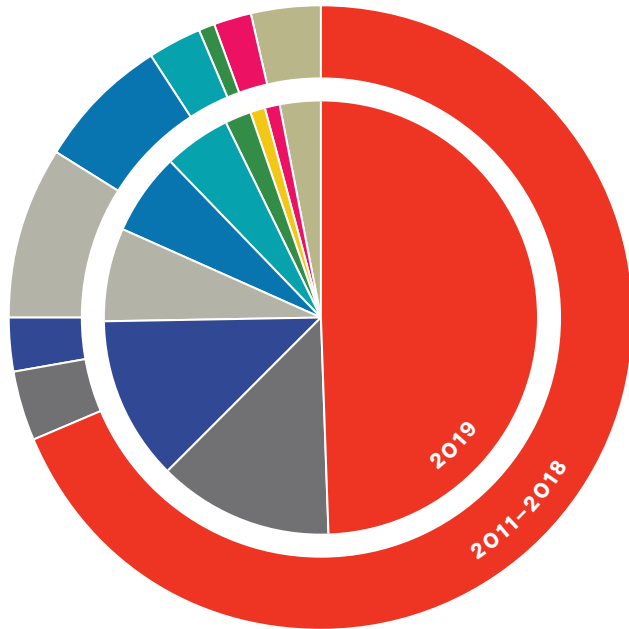
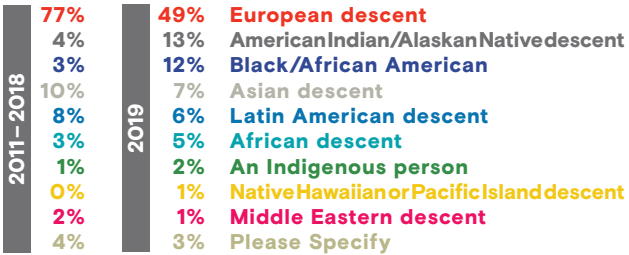
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|                   |           |
|-------------------|-----------|
| Artist Projects   | 31        |
| Artists           | 239       |
| Attendees         | 20,000    |
| Website views     | 45,398    |
| Media impressions | 5,840,300 |

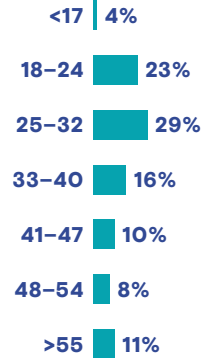


# Northern Spark 2011–2019 Attendee Demographics

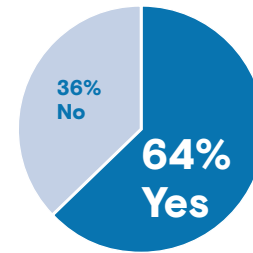
## With which group(s) do you self identify?



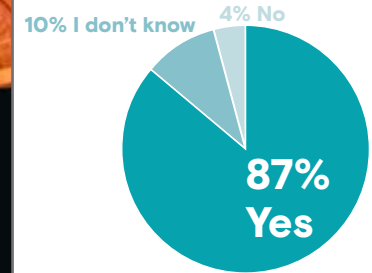
## Your age ... ?



## Have you attended Northern Spark before?



## Are you planning to attend Northern Spark next year?



## 2019 survey: what festival locations did you attend?

### American Indian Cultural Corridor



### The Commons



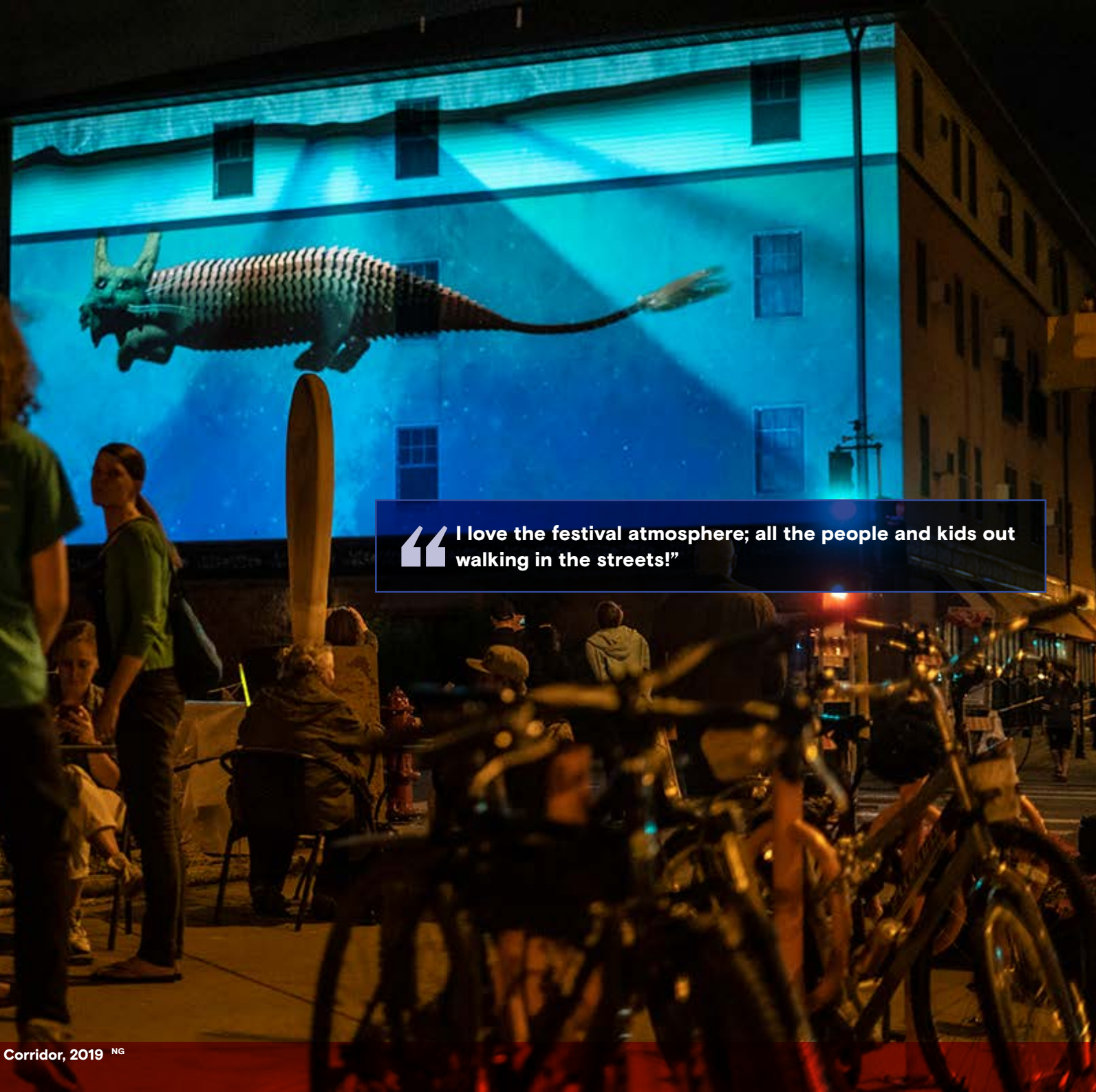
### Hallie Q. Brown Center / Rondo



### Rondo Community Library




# 2019



“ I love the festival atmosphere; all the people and kids out walking in the streets!”



A photograph of two men playing trumpets on a stage. The man on the left is wearing glasses and a colorful patterned shirt, playing a purple trumpet. The man on the right is wearing a denim jacket and playing a gold trumpet. The background features a large mural of a city street scene.

“ Just seeing people I never met before come up and do something they never did before and listening to how we all came together to make one sound. It gave me hope and made me feel good that we were there to be a conduit for something positive. On this weekend nothing bad happened in Rondo. It was all good and people from all different places went home with a different view of people from other backgrounds. I guarantee it.”



“ Northern Spark is  
constant connection.”





“ I love the way this event connects people in playful, interactive ways.”





“ Northern Spark is probably the best opportunity to share our collective art forms to an expansive & diverse audience. Usually we perform in venues of separated ethnicities but NS gives us the great opportunity to share collectively in one space so to speak. Art is the voice that speaks the same language although it is expressed or portrayed differently. This two-night event transforms & transcends us as a people.”





“ The energy is ecstatic!  
Everyone has SO much energy.”







“ Although I am not Dakota and/or Ojibwe, as a member of the Native community it was amazing to see us reflected even more prominently on Franklin Ave.”





## Program Council

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### Program Council members with Neighborhood Partners

Top row, left to right: Sara Endelew, Jonathan Palmer (Halle Q. Brown Community Center), Pa Na Lor, Donald Thomas, Alex Buffalohead, Sarah Peters (NL staff), Teeko Yang (NL staff)

Bottom row, left to right: Khadija Muse, MaryAnne Quiroz, Aki Shibata, SEE MORE PERSPECTIVE

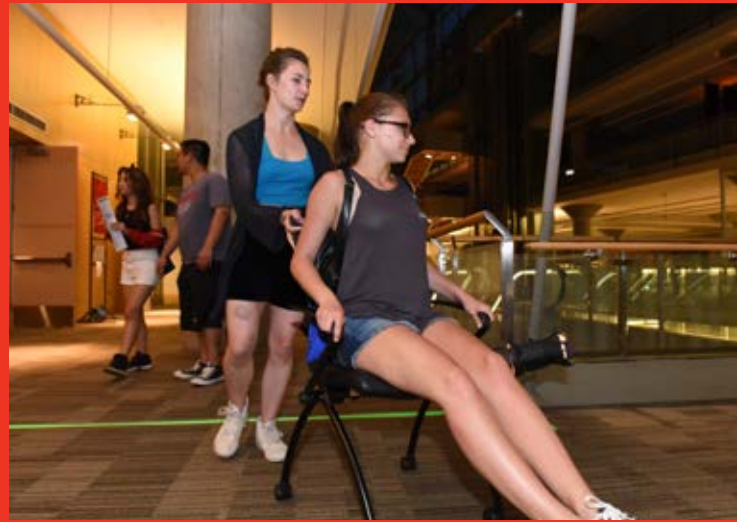
The 2018-2019 Program Council worked with Northern Lights.mn staff to help make Northern Spark 2019 reflect the communities where it took place. They wove the festival theme together from community and Neighborhood Partner feedback, and designed, promoted and juried the open call for artists for each festival area. The Council's work over 18 months is leading Northern Lights.mn towards more equitable, community-engaged practices.



# 2018

“ I most like Northern Spark because it encourages us to interact with each other and our surroundings in an entirely different way than what we're used to. Fresh perspective is so necessary for us to reimagine a world that is more fair, sustainable and enjoyable for us all. By showcasing our community's creative resourcefulness, Northern Spark helps to solidify my connection with the city I love most.” —festival goer, Matt Bartholomew







“ I like how diverse the crowd is at Northern Spark.  
It's a really nice display of the city.”





# 2017




Preston Drum, *Traffic Jam Scene* The Commons, 2017 <sup>DH</sup>





“ I liked this year’s focus on how climate change affects various global populations, especially those with diaspora communities in Minnesota.”





“ [Northern Spark is . . . ] A free open art installation event in your neighborhood! An amazing, inclusive, culturally diverse night of fun!”



“ We have a lot of power to change things with our choices. Climate change is not just a concern of the middle-class white population. Culture and environmental protection are one and the same. Northern Spark made me more aware of the intersections between climate change and race.”





“ Climate change is not an incomprehensible and sublime force, but a material, knowable, and fightable phenomenon. Art can help transition one’s understanding of it from the former to the latter.”





“ [Northern Spark is . . . ] An excellent reminder of the beautiful culture and people this community has to offer.”





# 2016

“ I thought having a theme knit the night together beautifully, and I loved experiencing many different projects and moments as variations on a theme that, taken together, helped me think more deeply about it. Northern Spark this year provoked far and away more reflecting and connecting than it has in past years for me. I also think that there is significant potential for art to powerfully impact the way that people think about climate change, and that this year’s festival was a beautiful example of that.”



“ Northern Spark is a weirdo contemporary arts event that goes all night. It’s free and its an incomparable cultural event, one that is unique globally just to MPLS. The festival has exposed me and the community to arts that are not only fun and participatory, but also engaging people who would not normally be open to progressive contemporary arts theories and practices. Plus, they had a howling wolf!”





# 2015





“ Each year it becomes more and more obvious that Northern Spark is essential in our social, cultural life. It’s renewing connections, building pathways, opening spaces and revitalizing our collective self. And the magic happens only through, and out of tremendous work, energy and time devoted to it by everyone involved.”  
—Piotr Szyhalski, Northern Spark artist, 2014





# 2014

“ I have memories of wild melding of all the performances under the Hennepin Ave bridge, which was so magical, and without the rain that grouping would not have happened. I'm in awe of the storms, the audiences who were so eager and the artists who made it work in what ever manner necessary.”

—Soozin Hirschmugl, Northern Spark artist, 2014





West River Parkway, 2014 <sup>IH</sup>



MakeSh!t, *Public Acts of Drawing* Minneapolis Convention Center Plaza, 2014 <sup>WS</sup>



Amanda Lovelee, Christopher Field, Kyle Waites, and Sarah West, *Balancing Ground* Minneapolis Convention Center Plaza, 2014 COURTESY THE ARTISTS



# 2013

Welcome to Union Depot  
June 9, 2013

“ For me, a lot of the magic of this evening was getting to see the spaces I see every day transformed into an exuberant playground of creativity, joy, community, and celebration. I will carry those happy images and memories with me every day now when I am in Lowertown. 4th Street is no longer just the path I walk down to get to my office, it's a giant board game! . . . as an artist myself, it was so uplifting to see so many people in one place making art, enjoying art, participating in art, interacting with art, and being art. . . .”





“ The anticipation of Chris Larson’s event was immense. I was one among a growing crowd of thousands, waiting for a flame and for a friend to show up. I wanted to experience this with someone close to me, someone who knew the story behind the burning of the house. Suddenly, without any prior cell phone communication, my friend emerged from the crowd in front of me. Five minutes later, we got we got to experience not only the glow of the successful reincarnation, but the warmth of feeling like our world was in tune with the night.”



Chris Larson, *Celebration/Love/Loss* Union Depot, 2013 <sup>01</sup>



Chris Larson, *Celebration/Love/Loss*, artist's studio COURTESY THE ARTIST



Chris Larson, *Celebration/Love/Loss* <sup>DH</sup>





# 2012

“ The point of this evening is really for us to see things that are familiar and beautiful and striking but different. Looking at ourselves and our place in a unique way.”  
—Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak







“ Northern Spark transformed the city of Minneapolis into an all night art playground . . . my favorite parts were swinging in synchrony with 20 strangers in a skyway, playing Capture the flag at midnight in neon face paint, and dancing with strangers in the streets.”



Keetra Dean Dixon, *Swing Hall, Swing All* MCAD, 2012 TOP: JH BOTTOM: DH



David Goldes and Jonathan Bruce Williams, *THE Northern Spark* Main Street SE, 2012 PK



Michael Murnane, *Under Ice* Main Street SE, 2012 PK



# 2011



“This event has tremendous opportunity to become a signature summer event for Minneapolis, much like the White Nights in St. Petersburg, *Nuit Blanche* in Paris or *Fete des Lumieres* in Lyon. There was fantastic energy on the Stone Arch Bridge—you could tell people were loving the strolling and being outside on such a beautiful night and craving artistic inspiration.”

—Tristan Pollock, *The Line*





Top: Debora Miller, *MURMUR* Stone Arch Bridge, 2011 <sup>NL</sup>  
Bottom: Janaki Ranpura, *Egg & Sperm Ride :: Hide & Seek* Stone Arch Bridge, 2011 <sup>PK</sup>



The Notion Collective, *Station Identification* W Minneapolis-The Foshay, 2011 <sup>PK</sup>



Michael Murnane and Andrew Saboe, *Landmark in a River City* Landmark Center, 2011 <sup>PH</sup>



# Partners 2011–2019

4 Seasons Dance Studio  
African Economic Development Solutions  
airsweetair gallery  
Alchemy Architects  
All My Relations Arts  
Alley Cat Cycles  
Altered Esthetics  
American Composers Forum  
American Craft Council  
American Indian Cultural Corridor  
American Swedish Institute  
Ananya Dance Theater  
Annicha Arts  
Art Institutes International MN  
Art Shanty Projects  
Arts, Culture and Creative Economy  
Program of the City of Minneapolis  
Artspace  
Asian Economic Development Association  
Aurora St. Anthony Neighborhood  
Development Corporation  
AZ Gallery  
Baaken Museum  
Bauhaus  
Bedlam Theater  
Bell Museum of Natural History  
Big Table Studio  
Black Dog Cafe  
Brave New Workshop  
Burnet Gallery  
Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters  
Can Can Wonderland  
Catalyst Arts  
Center for Energy and Environment (CEE)  
Center for Hmong Art and Talent  
Center for Spirituality and Healing  
Climate Generation  
Conservation MN  
Cycling Museum of Minnesota  
Deborah Elias Danza Espanola  
Douglas Dayton YMCA  
Emily Johnson / Catalyst  
Eyeo Festival  
FOCI Minnesota Center for Glass Arts  
Forecast Public Art  
Forever Young  
Franklin Art Works  
Gallery13  
Gamut Gallery  
Glitch  
Gorilla Yogis  
Grand Challenges Curriculum,  
University of Minnesota  
Green Minneapolis and The Commons  
Guthrie Theater  
Hack Factory  
Hallie Q. Brown Community Center  
HECUA  
Hennepin County Library  
Hennepin Energy Recovery Center (HERC)  
Hennepin Theater Trust  
HiFi Hair and Records  
High School for Recording Arts  
Highpoint Center for Printmaking  
Hmong Museum  
innova  
Institute for Advanced Study,  
University of Minnesota  
Intermedia Arts  
Juxtaposition Arts  
Key 4/4 Kids  
Landmark Center and Plaza  
Leav  
Loft Literary Center  
Lowertown Bike Shop  
Lunalux  
MacPhail Center for Performing Arts  
Make It. MSP.  
McNally Smith College of Music  
Meet Minneapolis  
Midtown Greenway Coalition  
Migizi Communications  
Mill City Museum  
MINN Lab  
Minneapolis American Indian Center  
Minneapolis Art Lending Library (MALL)

Minneapolis Bike Coalition  
Minneapolis College of Art and Design  
Minneapolis Convention Center  
Minneapolis Downtown Improvement District  
Minneapolis Institute of Arts  
Minneapolis Photography Center  
Minnesota Center for Book Arts  
Minnesota Children's Museum  
Minnesota Chippewa Tribe Building  
Minnesota History Center  
Minnesota Interfaith Power & Light  
Minnesota Museum of American Art  
Minnesota Sacred Harp Singers  
Mississippi Park Connection  
Mizna  
MN Orchestra  
MN Original and Twin Cities PBS  
MN Planetarium Society  
MN350.org  
martists.org  
Model Cities  
Motion Poems  
Mpls Parks Foundation  
MSP Film Society  
Museum of Minneapolis  
Musicant Group  
Nash Gallery  
Native American Community Development  
Institute  
Nautilus Music Theater  
Northern Clay Center  
Northern Voices Festival  
Northrop Auditorium  
On Being  
Open Book  
Open Eye Figure Theater  
Ordway Center for Performing Arts  
Palace Theater  
Penumbra Theater  
Printland Press  
Public Art Saint Paul  
PUNY  
Rain Taxi Review of Books  
Regis Center for the Arts  
Revolver  
Rondo Community Library  
Saint Paul City Ballet  
Saint Paul Public Library  
Saint Paul Saints  
Schubert Club  
Science Museum of Minnesota  
Screenprinting on the Cheap  
Somali Museum of Minnesota  
Soo Visual Arts Center  
Springboard for the Arts  
St. Cloud State University Art Dept  
St. Paul Neighborhood Network  
Students for Design Activism  
Studio Sendero  
Sumunar Indonesian Music and Dance  
Sundance Institute  
Take Action Minnesota  
The Commons  
The Loft Literary Center  
The Museum of Russian Art  
The Soap Factory  
The Southern Theater  
The Textile Center  
The UpTake  
Twin Cities Maker / The Hack Factory  
University of Minnesota Department of Art  
/ Beijing Film Academy  
University of Wisconsin-Stout School  
of Art and Design  
Upstream Arts  
VidTiger  
Vine Arts Center  
W Minneapolis - The Foshay  
Walker Art Center  
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Weisman Art Museum  
West Bank Business Association  
Whittier Artists in Storefronts  
Works Progress  
Zeitgeist



# Select Sponsors 2011–2019



ARTS, CULTURE AND THE CREATIVE ECONOMY  
City Coordinator



National Endowment for the Arts  
arts.gov



This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through Minnesota State Arts Board Operating Support and Arts Access grants, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund.



NORDSTROM



# Neighborhood Partners 2017–2019



ARTS, CULTURE AND THE CREATIVE ECONOMY  
City Coordinator



AMERICAN INDIAN CULTURAL CORRIDOR





## Video Highlights

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### Northern Spark 2019

<https://vimeo.com/northernspark>



### Northern Spark 2018

<https://vimeo.com/297152679>



### Northern Spark 2017

<https://vimeo.com/233936253>



**More videos:** <http://vimeo.com/northernspark>

**All photos:** <http://nspk.mn/photos>

**Photo highlights:** <http://nspk.mn/topphotos>

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