

Hmong Cultural Center

Executive Summary for Legislative Testimony

Started in 1992, the Hmong Cultural Center is one of the oldest Hmong organizations in Minnesota.

Located just four blocks from the Minnesota State Capitol, the Hmong Cultural Center storefront museum is the first stand-alone Hmong museum in Minnesota. Visitors learn substantively about Hmong culture, history, contributions to Minnesota and Hmong folk art traditions through cultural objects, artworks, display panels and interactive video exhibits.

Our museum is open to the public daily on University Avenue in St. Paul and serves the 90,000 Hmong in Minnesota as well as members of the broader community seeking to learn more about their Hmong neighbors.

In 2022, more than 50 schools and community groups booked guided tour field trips to our museum for a total of 1,300 visitors, we are on track to provide tours to many more schools and community organizations and walk-in visitors in 2023.

The funding we are requesting for the Hmong Cultural Center Museum will support the following activities over the next two years:

- Support for our new, expanded storefront museum location of 1,200 square feet at University and Western in St. Paul.
- Support for staffing to assist with museum marketing and to lead tours to school groups and the general public.
- Support for the development of new school curriculums related to Hmong Folk Art Traditions (Wedding and Funeral Songs and Sung Poetry) and Hmong Culture (Language, Clans, Religion and Weddings and Funerals)
- Support for a new Guided Tour App to allow us to provide virtual field trips and to support the self-guided tour experience for walk-in visitors.

To sum up, if this project is funded, Minnesota residents will have greater opportunities to learn about Hmong history in Minnesota, Hmong achievements in the state and Hmong culture and Hmong folk art forms.

Importantly, our unique museum fits strongly with current efforts to promote Ethnic Studies and increased inclusion of diverse Minnesota cultural communities in the curriculums in our schools as well as efforts to promote greater cross-

cultural understanding in an era of social unrest and increased public expressions of discrimination against Asian Minnesotans which our museum itself confronted in September 2021 when it experienced vandalism perpetrated by a local White Supremacist group.

The proposed project builds strongly on Hmong Cultural Center's heritage over the past 31 years teaching the public about Hmong culture and history. It is also strongly related to a key guiding principle of the Legacy fund: *“Arts, history and cultural heritage programs will engage our diverse communities from every corner of the state in celebrating the richness of our differences while building greater understanding and connection to the values that bind us together.”*