

SEPTEMBER 2026
Volume 5, Issue 3

ASIAN KALEIDOSCOPE

MN BIZ VISION



**Arize Aesthetics:
Finding Beauty,
Healing, and Purpose
in the Journey**

**“Calling America
HOME” Series:
Xiongmee Chang**

**Beating the Heat,
Building Wellness
Territory at the
Center for
Wellness
Technology**



This monthly e-Magazine is published by Asian Media Access and Multi Cultural Community Alliance to highlight the accomplishments of Asian American and Pacific Islanders' (AAPI) small businesses in MN.

Table of Contents

01~02	Introduction
03~11	AAPI Business Profile - Suzanne Vang
12~17	Calling America HOME
18~27	Center for Wellness Technology
28~37	What's News in IT
38~43	AAPI Community Updates
44~46	Business and Workforce Development Resources
47~48	Upcoming Training Events
49	Contact



Bridging Cultures, Building Futures: Minnesota's AAPI Business & Workforce Magazine

Welcome to **MN Biz Vision: Asian Kaleidoscope**, a monthly e-magazine dedicated to empowering Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities across Minnesota. More than a publication, this platform uplifts AAPI entrepreneurs while advancing workforce pathways through the **Center for Wellness Technology** - a visionary hub that integrates Agricultural Technology, Multimedia Technology, and Wellness Technology into culturally grounded IT career opportunities.

AAPI Entrepreneurship & the Need for New Pathways

AAPI entrepreneurs are vital to Minnesota's diverse business landscape, operating successful restaurants, grocery stores, salons, healthcare practices, consulting firms, and manufacturing businesses, etc.. While AAPIs comprise 6% of Minnesota's population, Asian-owned businesses represent only 3% of the state's small businesses—revealing persistent barriers to entrepreneurship. Yet these 15,500+ Asian-owned firms account for 35% of all minority-owned businesses in Minnesota, demonstrating the community's outsized economic impact and resilience. Targeted workforce development in specialized IT sectors can help bridge this entrepreneurship gap and create new pathways for community economic mobility and innovation.

The Center for Wellness Technology: Our Dual Mission

At the heart of MN Biz Vision stands the Center for Wellness Technology, which unifies three high-impact technology tracks designed for AAPI youth, families, and entrepreneurs:

- **Agricultural Technology (AgTech):** Blending modern engineering with ancestral agricultural knowledge, learners explore aeroponics, aquaponics, vertical farming, and sustainable food systems that support food sovereignty and sustainability.
- **Multimedia Technology:** Youth and creatives gain experience in game design, AR/VR development, digital storytelling, and AI-assisted media production—tools that amplify AAPI voices and ensure cultural stories are represented in the digital future.
- **Wellness Technology:** Integrating traditional healing practices with modern innovations, the Center supports healing with telehealth systems, VR calming room designs, and culturally informed wearable devices, advancing non-invasive and holistic care models.

Together, these tracks demonstrate why IT matters: technology becomes a vehicle for economic mobility, cultural preservation, and community innovation.

What You'll Discover Each Month

Every issue of MN Biz Vision highlights AAPI business owners across diverse sectors, celebrates immigrant and refugee success stories, and shares practical resources on financing, marketing, digital tools, and entrepreneurship. Workforce development features dive into emerging IT opportunities within AgTech, Multimedia, and Wellness Technology, supported by training programs and employer partnerships.

Building Economic Opportunity & Cultural Resilience

Whether you are strengthening a family business, exploring a career transition, entering tech fields, or launching a new venture, MN Biz Vision: Asian Kaleidoscope connects you to the networks, knowledge, and inspiration needed to thrive. Join us each month as we celebrate AAPI excellence - honoring cultural traditions while embracing the technological innovations shaping Minnesota's future.





Suzanne Vang

For Suzanne Vang, beauty is about much more than skincare or appearance. It is about feeling comfortable in your own skin, reconnecting with yourself, and creating a space where people feel seen, cared for, and worthy of attention.

Suzanne is a Hmong American esthetician and the owner of **Arize Aesthetics Spa in New Hope, Minnesota**. A licensed esthetician since 2009, she founded Arize in 2019 with a vision of creating a welcoming environment for people of all backgrounds, body types, and identities.

Her services include customized skincare, body facials, waxing, lash and brow services, makeup artistry, and holistic

wellness experiences incorporating lymphatic facial massage, intuitive touch, and sensory relaxation.

At the heart of Arize is a simple philosophy: self-care is not just about looking beautiful. It can also be about slowing down, reconnecting with yourself, and remembering that you deserve to be cared for.

"I want every person who walks through my doors to leave feeling a little more confident, a little more relaxed, and a little more seen than when they arrived," Suzanne says.

ARIZE AESTHETICS: FINDING BEAUTY, HEALING, AND PURPOSE IN THE JOURNEY

A Journey Back to Her Calling

The path to Arize was not a straight one.

After earning her associate arts degree, Suzanne became a licensed esthetician in 2009. Following the 2008 financial crisis, however, finding work in the beauty industry proved difficult.

At the time, Suzanne also struggled with feeling that she did not fit the industry's

narrow image of what a beauty professional was expected to look like. While she watched classmates move forward in their careers, her own path took a different direction. Eventually, her esthetics license became inactive.

For nearly a decade, Suzanne worked in retail, sales, property management, and hospitality. Looking back, she doesn't view those years as wasted. Each experience taught her valuable skills in customer service, communication, sales, business operations, and problem-solving.

Years later, she would bring those experiences together to create Arize.



When Life Changes Your Perspective

Suzanne's decision to return to her calling was also influenced by a major health challenge.

After experiencing a traumatic brain injury, she found herself reassessing her life, priorities, and the gifts she had left unused. The experience affected her in ways that were not always visible to others, including profound neurological and emotional changes that made it difficult to function and recognize herself.

The experience also brought a serious mental-health crisis, including suicidal thoughts. Growing up in the Hmong community, Suzanne had sometimes seen mental-health struggles minimized or left unspoken. For her, sharing this part of her journey is not about focusing on the darkness. It is about reminding others living through a brain injury—or any chapter that feels impossible—that struggling with mental health is nothing to be ashamed of and that a difficult chapter does not mean life is over.

Her experience also taught her an important lesson about entrepreneurship: **mental health is essential because it helps set the foundation of a company.** Before she could fully build the business she envisioned, Suzanne needed to begin finding her way back to herself.

One of her greatest regrets was that she had never fully pursued her abilities as an esthetician and holistic practitioner.

That realization helped inspire her to begin again.

The name **Arize** is rooted in the Hmong expression *sawv tsees*, meaning “to rise up.” Within the shamanic tradition Suzanne grew up around, the words may be used while calling a person's spirit back during a healing ritual. For Suzanne, the phrase carries a meaning deeper than simply rising: it represents returning to oneself after grief, trauma, illness, or disconnection.

Arize became her own *sawv tsees*—a purpose that helped her rise from one of the darkest chapters of her life. It became more than a business. It became part of her healing and a way to transform what she had survived into care for other people. The lotus represents that same journey. Rising from the mud and still blooming, it symbolizes returning to the light without denying where the journey began.

That meaning also shapes how Suzanne cares for her clients. Although her professional work remains within esthetics, she understands that people do not always arrive seeking only a change in their appearance. Sometimes they are carrying grief, loneliness, insecurity, or simply a need to feel safe and seen. Through attentive care, compassionate listening, and intentional touch, she creates space for clients to reconnect with themselves.

Growing Up Without Many Resources

Suzanne's upbringing also shaped the kind of business owner and esthetician she would become.

She grew up as one of seven children in a Hmong immigrant family. Her family experienced financial scarcity, limited resources, and the lasting effects of war and trauma.

As a teenager, Suzanne struggled with acne on her face and body, which deeply affected her self-esteem. Her family could not always afford the skincare products or professional services she needed, and she did not have consistent guidance for

understanding her skin concerns.

As she became older and more financially independent, she finally gained access to the products, professional care, and education she had wanted as a teenager. That experience changed her understanding of beauty.

She realized that beauty is not simply about what someone sees in the mirror. How a person feels about themselves can influence how they care for themselves and how they move through the world.

That realization became part of the foundation of Arize.

Suzanne wanted to create the kind of place she wished her younger self could have visited—a place where someone could receive care without shame and be reminded that they are worthy exactly as they are.



Building a Business Without a Blueprint

Starting a business came with its own challenges.

One of Suzanne's biggest obstacles was gaining access to grants, loans, business education, and other resources. No one in her immediate family had owned a business, so she did not have a family blueprint to follow.

She had to learn as she went.

As a small business owner, Suzanne took on nearly every role imaginable. She was the esthetician, receptionist, marketer, salesperson, bookkeeper, decorator, cleaner, laundress, and problem-solver.

Rather than allowing financial limitations and discouragement to stop her, Suzanne became resourceful. She purchased equipment, furniture, and supplies on clearance, during sales, and secondhand whenever possible.

One of her favorite memories involved driving 13 hours round-trip in a single day to purchase professional equipment that originally cost thousands of dollars. The owner sold it to her for approximately one-fifth of its original value and then gave her about \$1,000 worth of unused supplies.

For Suzanne, the experience felt like a reminder to keep moving forward.

"I didn't have a lot of money or a family history of entrepreneurship, but I had creativity, resourcefulness, faith, and the willingness to learn."

Arize was not built because everything fell into place perfectly. It was built by learning how to create something meaningful with the resources she had.

A Spa With Hmong American Roots

Walk into Arize and you won't find a cookie-cutter spa.

Suzanne intentionally created a space that reflects her personality, humor, spirituality, and Hmong American identity.

Her cultural heritage has influenced the way she understands healing, wellness, and the body. She comes from a culture where traditional knowledge, spirituality, herbs, touch, and caring for one another have been passed down through generations.

Elements inspired by Hmong bodywork and traditions, including *kav*, a traditional scraping technique similar to *gua sha*, have influenced aspects of her practice while being thoughtfully adapted within her professional scope as an esthetician.

The spa also incorporates meaningful cultural and spiritual elements and was blessed by a Hmong shaman.

For Suzanne, being Hmong American means more than simply preserving traditions exactly as they were practiced by previous generations. It means allowing those traditions to evolve.

"Preserving culture doesn't always mean doing something exactly the way previous generations did it. Sometimes it means carrying the wisdom forward, honoring its roots, and allowing it to evolve authentically through the next generation."

Arize reflects that philosophy—a business shaped by Suzanne's Hmong heritage, American upbringing, professional experiences, and diverse influences.

Resilience as an Achievement

When asked about the accomplishment she is most proud of, Suzanne doesn't point to an award or business milestone.

She points to resilience.

She is proud of remaining optimistic and continuing to stay soft through difficult experiences.

She took a dream that had been placed on hold for nearly a decade and transformed it into an opportunity to use her talents and pursue her calling.

"I built Arize from scratch while I was scared, broke, broken, and lost," she says.

There was never a perfect moment when she suddenly had enough money, confidence, resources, or certainty. She simply chose to believe the dream was still worth pursuing.

Through a global pandemic, economic uncertainty, and personal and professional obstacles, Arize continued forward.

Every returning client who trusts Suzanne with their care reminds her that what she built has meaning.

*"A dream being delayed does not mean it has been denied," she says.
"Sometimes the path looks completely different from what you imagined."*

Her Advice to Aspiring Entrepreneurs

For immigrants and others who dream of starting a business, Suzanne believes the first step begins with developing a strong relationship with yourself.

Entrepreneurship can challenge confidence, patience, and resilience. Learning to believe in yourself, she says, is essential.

She also encourages aspiring entrepreneurs to research, learn as much as possible, make a plan, and be prepared to change that plan when circumstances require it.

Suzanne calls this her **TKO mentality**—a willingness to keep getting back up and respond to challenges with resilience, professionalism, creativity, and compassion. There will be setbacks and moments of doubt. The important thing is not to compare your journey with someone else's.

Entrepreneurs may not have the same financial resources, family support, connections, education, or opportunities as others. What matters is learning to work with what you have while continuing to grow.

"Fear doesn't necessarily mean you're making the wrong decision,"

Suzanne says.

"Sometimes it simply means you're doing something you've never done before."

You don't need to have everything figured out before taking the first step. Sometimes you simply need to take the next one.

Hmong and American: Two Parts of One Identity

Suzanne does not believe she has to choose between being Hmong and being American.

She is Hmong American, and both identities have shaped who she has become. Her Hmong heritage connects her to family, community, resilience, spirituality, and traditions passed down through generations. Growing up in America taught her independence, innovation, adaptability, and a willingness to challenge expectations.

She continues to educate herself about modern business practices, technology, marketing, and changes in the beauty and wellness industry while remaining connected to her cultural roots.

For Suzanne, preserving culture does not mean keeping it frozen in time.

"Culture can evolve while we continue to respect and acknowledge where we came from."

Arize is a reflection of that balance—a business where cultural heritage and modern entrepreneurship can exist together.

"To me, preserving my cultural identity isn't about resisting change. It's about knowing my roots well enough that I can continue growing without losing myself."

Making Arize Better, Not Simply Bigger

Looking toward the future, Suzanne isn't focused solely on making Arize larger.

Her goal is to make it better.

She wants Arize to be a trusted place where people can turn for their esthetic needs throughout different stages of their lives—whether they need help caring for their skin, want to feel more confident, or simply need a place where they feel seen and cared for.

Suzanne is also exploring mentorship and consultation for other estheticians. With an esthetics instructor license and years of hands-on experience, she hopes to help other professionals develop their skills, confidence, policies, pricing, client experiences, and individual identities within the industry.

She is also interested in creating educational opportunities that help bridge the knowledge gap between professional esthetics and wellness services and outside organizations that may not fully understand the field.

For Suzanne, success isn't measured only by the size of the business. It is measured by the people she helps and the knowledge she can pass forward.

Enjoy the Life You're Building

Perhaps the most personal lesson Suzanne hopes to share extends far beyond entrepreneurship.

Enjoy your life while you are building it.

Adults can become so consumed by work, responsibilities, survival, and reaching the next milestone that they forget how to simply experience life.

Suzanne encourages people to stay curious. Play. Laugh at yourself. Go outside after it rains. Smell the flowers. Blow on a dandelion and make a wish. Look at the moon. Try something you've never done before.

"Let yourself experience wonder without needing it to be productive."

She believes there is a version of each person who once explored the world without worrying about whether they were successful enough, beautiful enough, wealthy enough, or far enough along. She encourages each and everyone of us to not lose that person.

Suzanne has spent much of her journey learning how to survive, rebuild, and become

resilient. But she has also learned that resilience isn't only about how much hardship a person can endure.

Sometimes resilience means remaining soft enough to experience joy after everything you've been through.

"Build the dream. Work hard. Take care of yourself and the people you love. But don't become so focused on creating a beautiful life that you forget to actually live it."



A Place to Arize

Suzanne Vang's journey to entrepreneurship was anything but predictable.

Her path included financial hardship, professional detours, cultural expectations, health challenges, self-doubt, and the difficult process of building a business without a family blueprint.

Yet those experiences became part of what makes Arize unique.

Today, her spa represents not only her professional expertise, but also her Hmong American identity, her journey toward self-realization, and her desire to create a space where others can feel comfortable being themselves.

For Suzanne, the future isn't simply about growing a business. It is about continuing to learn, mentor, care for others, honor her roots, and create something authentic. And perhaps most importantly, it is about remembering to stay curious, stay soft, and leave room for joy along the way.

Connect with Arize Aesthetics Spa

Arize Aesthetics Spa - New Hope, Minnesota

Website: mnarizeaestheticssalon.com

Facebook: facebook.com/share/19V1RbpwbS/

Instagram: instagram.com/arizeaesthetics



Xiongmee and grandmother

Series Preface: Asian Media Access proudly presents “Calling America HOME” Series, inspired by the resilience and hope of immigrants and refugees from across the Asian diaspora who have rebuilt their lives in Minnesota. Through these stories, we invite readers to witness a legacy of survival, determination, and hope forged against impossible odds.

In this edition, we proudly feature **Xiongmee Chang, Nursing Manager at Regions Hospital and a member of the Board of Directors for the Hmong Nurse Association.**

Q1. Can you begin by introducing yourself and describing your journey to Minnesota?

My journey to Minnesota began when I was five years old. My mother and I fled Laos during the aftermath of the Secret War and escaped to Thailand, where we lived in a refugee camp for two years while waiting for the opportunity to start a new life in the United States.

We were sponsored by my great-grandmother and uncle, who helped us settle in Minnesota. Since arriving in America, Minnesota has been the only home I have known. While my mother and I were able to come to the United States, my father remained behind because he was a soldier and could not leave with us at that time. After a year, we heard rumors that my father had passed. During the war, many men would pass away and no one would know. Like many refugee families, our journey was marked by separation,



Xiongmee and her mother

uncertainty, and hope for a better future.

My first few years in America were both challenging and memorable. I had to learn a new language, adapt to a different culture, and navigate unfamiliar systems. One of my earliest memories is accidentally getting on the wrong yellow school bus, not knowing every school used a yellow school bus system and ending up at the wrong school because I didn't yet understand English. Looking back, it seems funny, but at the time it was a reminder of how overwhelming those early experiences could be for a young child trying to find their place in a new country.

Despite the challenges, Minnesota provided opportunities for my family to build a new life. Those experiences helped me build my resilience, work ethic, and commitment to helping others. They also inspired my passion for nursing and community service, where I hope to support individuals and families who may be navigating their own challenges and transitions.

Q2. How did your own cultural identity evolve while working in supporting others? How has that work shaped your sense of belonging in both Heritage and American cultures?

Growing up as a Hmong refugee in Minnesota, I often felt like I was navigating two worlds. At home, I was deeply connected to Hmong traditions, language, and values. My mother wouldn't allow us to speak English inside the house. We had to speak our own language, but when we were outside of the house, we were encouraged to speak English. I think this was her way of preserving our culture and language.

Outside of home, I was learning how to adapt to American culture, education, and opportunities. There were definitely times when it felt challenging to balance both identities, and I sometimes felt like I didn't fully belong to either world.

My perspective began to change as I entered nursing. Through caring for patients, mentoring staff, and supporting families from diverse backgrounds, I came to recognize that my cultural experiences were not something that set me apart, but a strength that allowed me to connect with others in meaningful ways. My upbringing taught me the importance of family, resilience,



Current Board Members of Hmong Nursing Association

respect for elders, and community.

Working in healthcare has also deepened my appreciation for representation and cultural understanding. I have had opportunities to advocate for patients and families who may face language barriers or challenges navigating the healthcare system, much like my own family did when we first arrived in America. Being able to bridge cultures and help others feel seen and understood has strengthened my connection to my Hmong heritage.

At the same time, my career has reinforced my sense of belonging in America. The opportunities I have received through education, nursing, and leadership are opportunities that my mother hoped for when she brought us to this country. I see my life as a reflection of both my refugee roots and the possibilities that America offered our family. Rather than choosing between two identities, I have learned to embrace both.

Q3. How do you balance cultural authenticity while making your work accessible to others who may not be familiar with your cultural traditions?



Xiongmee and her mother
in the U.S.

I think balancing cultural authenticity and accessibility starts with being proud of who I am and being willing to share my story. I have learned that people do not need to fully understand my culture to appreciate the values behind it. When I talk about my Hmong heritage, I focus on universal themes such as family, resilience, respect, service, and community. These are values that people from many backgrounds can relate to, even if they are unfamiliar with Hmong traditions.

In my work as a nurse and leader, I try to create opportunities for learning and dialogue. Rather than assuming others know about the Hmong community, I share experiences and perspectives in a way that is

welcoming and educational. I help run our Transition to Regions Hospital Practice (TRHP) Program is a nurse residency and fellowship structured program to support learning, role transition and retention of nurses at Regions Hospital. This program helps newly hired nurses acclimate and thrive. Whether you are a brand-new nurse, you've been a nurse for 5 to 10 years, or you're new to Regions overall, we are here to support you to ensure you are successful in your role.

- Develop into a competent professional nurse who provides safe, high-quality care
- Strengthen effective decision-making skills related to clinical judgment
- Integrate evidence-based practice into clinical practice
- Cultivate leadership skills at the point of care
- Grow as a professional nurse at Regions Hospital

I also recognize that I have the privilege of serving as a bridge between cultures. Growing up in a Hmong household while being educated and working in American institutions has allowed me to understand both perspectives. This helps me communicate across differences and find common ground. I do not feel that I have to simplify or change my identity to make it accessible. I focus on sharing it in a way that invites curiosity, respect, and connection. I hear that the Hmong community trusts Regions for Hmong patients because of a greater cultural understanding. I personally can understand the viewpoint on traditional Hmong medicine, such as the use of herbs for healing, while also being able to provide education on Western medicine. For example, if a patient needs to have a procedure done, I can understand that the patient is interested in waiting for a Shaman and advocate for the patient's health and safety by educating them about westernized options.

I believe cultural authenticity is about honoring where you come from, while accessibility is about creating opportunities for others to learn and connect.

Q4. What were some of the pivotal challenges you faced in building your life in America?

One of the biggest challenges was adapting to a completely new environment at a very young age. When my mother and I arrived in Minnesota, I was only five years old and did not speak English. Everything was unfamiliar, from the language and school system to the customs and expectations of daily life. I remember getting on the wrong yellow school bus and ending up at the wrong school because I didn't yet understand how things worked. Even as adults, coming to the U.S. and adjusting to a new lifestyle has challenges. For the first couple of weeks after coming to the U.S., my aunt was unknowingly bathing me with toilet water. Every morning back in Laos, my mom would go down to the river to refill a huge barrel of water. We saw the water bowl as a convenience; the water refilled itself,



Uncle Rock Lor, Grandma Mee Vang, Mother Mao Lor, and Xiongme

and we didn't have to go to the river for water refills anymore. While that memory makes me smile today, it reflects how overwhelming those early years were for many immigrant and refugee children trying to navigate a new world.

Like many refugee families, we also faced the challenge of rebuilding our lives after experiencing loss and separation. My father and grandfather remained behind in Laos because they were both soldiers and could not leave with us. Growing up without them during those years was difficult, and my mother and grandmother carried the responsibility of raising our family while adapting to a new country. There were also financial and educational barriers. My mother worked hard to provide opportunities for our family despite limited resources and language barriers. My grandmother stayed home to help care for us and missed her opportunity to learn English and learn how to drive. I primarily learned English at school and I wasn't allowed to speak English at home. It was important to my mom to keep us connected to our roots, who we really are, and preserve our language and culture.

Today, while many things have improved, some of these challenges still exist for refugee and immigrant communities. Language barriers, access to healthcare, cultural misunderstandings, and navigating complex systems continue to affect many families. I am also concerned that younger generations may lose connection to their cultural heritage and history if we do not intentionally preserve and share our stories. The experiences of Hmong refugees, including the sacrifices made during and after the Secret War, are important parts of American history that deserve and should be remembered. My hope is that by sharing my story and serving others, I can help make the path a little easier for the next generation.

Q5. What impacts do you hope to have on the next generation?

I hope to inspire the next generation to believe that their background, culture, and life experiences are strengths rather than limitations. As the daughter of a Hmong refugee who arrived in America with very little, I want young people to see that where you begin does not determine where you can go. With perseverance, education, and support from family and community, opportunities are possible.



Xiongmee and her family at the MSP/STP Business Journal 40 under 40 event in 2025 where she was one of the recipients



conference attendees

I also hope to encourage young people, especially those from immigrant and refugee families, to pursue careers where they can make a difference. Whether that is in healthcare, education, public service, business, or other fields, our communities need leaders who understand the unique experiences and challenges that many families face.

Representation matters, and when young people see someone who looks like them in leadership roles, it helps them believe they can achieve those goals as well.

Another impact I hope to have is helping preserve our cultural heritage. The Hmong community has a rich history rooted in resilience, sacrifice, and service. Many of our elders endured tremendous hardships during and after the Secret War so that future

generations could have opportunities they never had. I hope young people take pride in their heritage, learn our stories, and continue to pass them on.

Xiongmei Chang helped bring the Hmong Secret War Nurse Exhibition to Regions Hospital. The exhibition highlights the contributions, history, and courage of many Hmong women.

Editor's Note: Xiongmei Chang helped bring the "Hmong Secret War Nurse Exhibition" (featured at Sept. 1st, 2026 "Calling America HOME" series) to Regions Hospital. The exhibition highlights the contributions, history, and courage of many Hmong women. To read more about the Exhibition, please refer to the link here:

<https://ww1.amamedia.org/honoring-the-legacy-of-hmong-secret-war-nurses/>





CONTRAST HYDROTHERAPY: WHAT THE RESEARCH SHOWS

Hot-cold cycling has moved from Nordic bathhouses to mainstream wellness - and a growing body of research is starting to explain why it works.

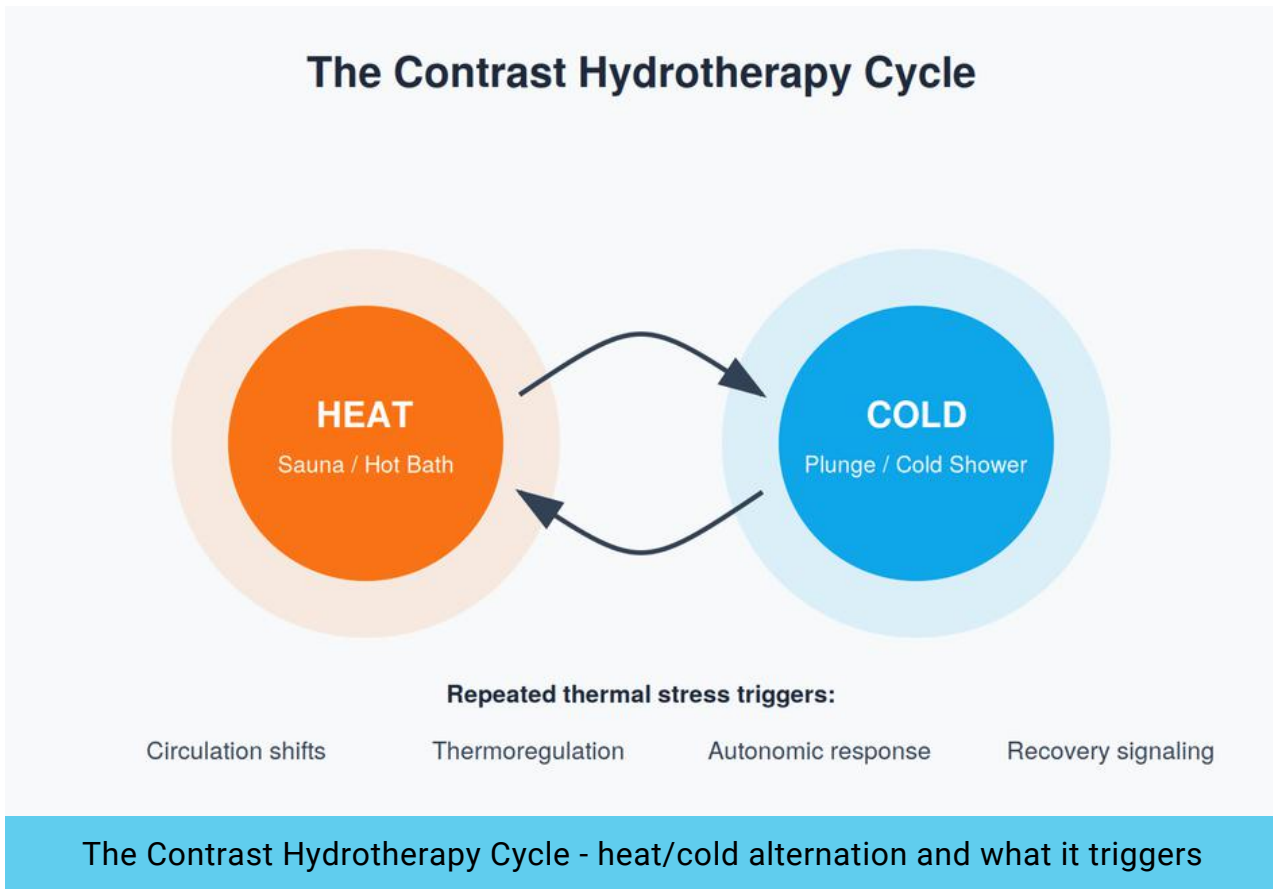
What Is Contrast Hydrotherapy?

Contrast hydrotherapy is a hydrothermal practice built on alternating heat and cold exposure to trigger repeated physiological stress responses in the body. In practice, it takes many forms: moving between a sauna and a cold plunge, hot and cold baths, steam rooms paired with cold showers, or other structured heating-and-cooling cycles. The practice has deep roots in Nordic, Japanese, Russian, and Central European bathing traditions, where it has long been used to support circulation, recovery, and general wellbeing.

Physiologically, the appeal comes from what happens when the body swings between thermal extremes: circulation shifts, thermoregulatory systems activate, and the autonomic nervous system responds. Most of the existing scientific literature has centered on athletic recovery, but researchers are increasingly turning their attention to broader outcomes - cardiovascular function, stress regulation, and overall wellness - making this a rapidly evolving area of study rather than a settled one.

That momentum is showing up outside the lab too. Saunas and cold plunges have become some of the most visible additions to wellness facilities in recent years, and

contrast hydrotherapy - combining the two into a single protocol - represents a natural next step for programs looking to build on that popularity with an evidence-informed offering.



Cardiovascular Effects: New Evidence from Sauna-Cold Water Protocols

Two 2025 studies add to the picture of how contrast exposure affects the cardiovascular system. Researchers at Poland's Wroclaw University of Health and Sport Sciences studied 28 healthy, normotensive women who completed three cycles of Finnish sauna heat followed by cold-water immersion. The team found significant changes in cardiovascular measures, including blood pressure and heart rate, indicating that alternating heat and cold produces substantial physiological responses and may help the body adapt to thermal stress. The study did not track long-term health outcomes, but it strengthens the case that sauna-cold immersion protocols common in thermal wellness settings have measurable, real-time effects on cardiovascular regulation.

A separate 2025 study from the Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, conducted through its REACT project, looked at how a single combined session of sauna bathing and cold-water immersion affects the body's cardiovascular response to physical stress. The researchers pointed out that sauna and cold exposure are

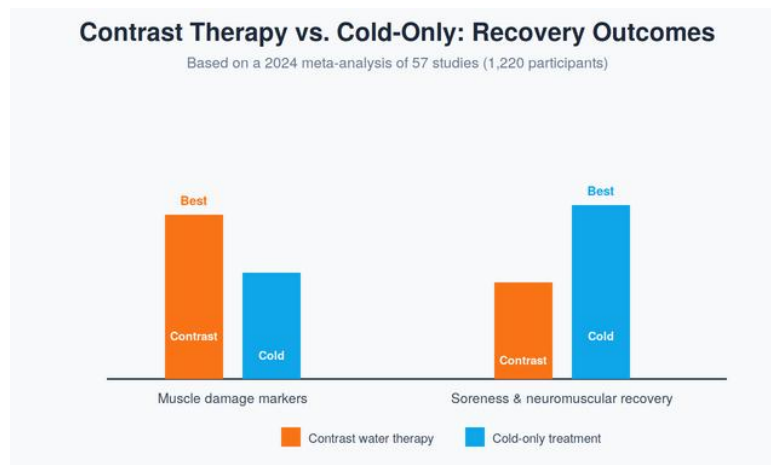
usually studied in isolation, even though they are typically practiced together in real-world bathing traditions. Their key finding was notable: a single combined session amplified the blood pressure response to exercise, but not to cold exposure itself - a distinction that hadn't previously been isolated in the research. While described as preliminary, the study marks a meaningful step toward understanding how contrast therapy actually behaves in the real-world settings - spas, bathhouses, thermal facilities - where it is most commonly practiced, rather than in a controlled athletic-testing environment.



Effects on the Autonomic Nervous System

A 2024 experimental study from the Japan Health and Research Institute examined how both water-based contrast bathing and sauna-based contrast exposure influence the autonomic nervous system, typically assessed through heart rate variability and related markers. The goal was to determine whether alternating heat and cold could meaningfully shift autonomic balance - the push and pull between the body's stress response and its rest-and-recovery response. The researchers confirmed that contrast interventions do produce measurable autonomic changes, but the effects varied depending on the specific protocol used - bath versus sauna - and were not clearly tied to downstream performance or health outcomes.

Small sample sizes, short-term measurement windows, and a lack of clinical endpoints mean the findings are best understood as mechanistic evidence rather than proof of lasting benefit. In other words, the study confirms that something measurable is happening in the nervous system during contrast exposure, but it stops short of showing that this translates into durable stress-resilience or health gains over time.



Recovery After Exercise: Contrast Therapy vs. Cold Alone

A larger 2024 meta-analysis from Beijing Sport University pooled results from 57 studies and 1,220 participants to compare water- and temperature-based recovery methods following exercise-induced muscle damage. The analysis found that contrast water therapy - alternating hot and cold - was the most effective approach for reducing biochemical markers of muscle damage, such as creatine kinase. Cold-only treatments, on the other hand, performed best for reducing perceived muscle soreness and improving neuromuscular recovery.

The takeaway is that these two approaches aren't interchangeable: contrast therapy appears better suited to addressing underlying physiological damage markers, while straight cold exposure has an edge for pain relief and functional recovery. Given the size of this analysis relative to the smaller individual studies above, it offers some of the more robust evidence in this collection - though it, too, is centered on athletic and exercise recovery rather than general wellness populations. Wellness and recovery programs may benefit from treating hot-cold contrast and cold-only protocols as complementary tools suited to different goals, rather than as substitutes for one another.

A Look at Metabolic Health: Early Evidence from Animal Research

A 2016 study published in *Nature* offers an early, if indirect, look at contrast therapy's potential metabolic benefits - though it was conducted in mice rather than humans. Researchers found that exposure to mild cold combined with thermogenic compounds called capsinoids reduced diet-induced weight gain by roughly 31%, a substantially larger effect than either intervention produced on its own. The combined exposure was linked to activation of brown and beige fat (the body's thermogenic fat stores), along with improved insulin sensitivity and glucose metabolism.

The findings suggest thermal stress, particularly cold, can boost energy expenditure

through thermogenesis, with potential relevance to obesity treatment. Because this research was conducted in an animal model nearly a decade ago, it should be read as a hypothesis-generating signal rather than a claim about human outcomes - but it helps explain why cold and contrast exposure have drawn interest from a metabolic-health angle, in addition to their cardiovascular and recovery effects, and it points to a clear direction for future human trials.

Where the Research Stands

Taken together, these studies point to a consistent theme: contrast hydrotherapy produces real, measurable physiological effects - on blood pressure and heart rate, on autonomic nervous system activity, on biochemical markers of muscle recovery, and potentially on metabolic regulation. What the research does not yet offer is a clear, unified picture of long-term health outcomes. Sample sizes remain small, protocols vary widely between studies, and much of the strongest evidence still centers on athletic recovery rather than general wellness populations.

That gap is exactly where the field is heading next. As sauna use and cold plunging continue to grow as mainstream wellness practices, researchers are increasingly asking how these protocols perform outside the athletic training context - in everyday cardiovascular health, stress management, and metabolic wellness. For wellness programs and practitioners, the current evidence offers a reasonable foundation to build on: enough consistent, measurable physiological effect across independent research groups to justify offering contrast hydrotherapy as a modality, paired with the honest caveat that much of it remains mechanistic and preliminary rather than definitive proof of long-term benefit.

For the Center for Wellness Technology considering contrast hydrotherapy as part of a broader wellness or recovery offering, the practical implication is straightforward: it is well supported as a modality with real, trackable physiological effects, best positioned alongside - not in place of - other recovery and stress-management tools, and worth continuing to monitor as more human-outcome research becomes available.

Sources: Studies referenced above were drawn from Nature, the journal Physiology (Western Norway University of Applied Sciences / REACT project), the Journal of Physiological Anthropology (J-STAGE), and PubMed. Full research on contrast hydrotherapy can be explored through PubMed, Trip, Cochrane, and Semantic Scholar databases.





BEATING THE HEAT, BUILDING WELLNESS TERRITORY AT THE CENTER FOR WELLNESS TECHNOLOGY

Extreme heat is a public health threat that lands hardest on the people precision wellness is meant to serve - and a Twin Cities campaign shows what culturally grounded prevention looks like in practice.

A Familiar Problem, A New Kind of Response

Minnesota summers are getting hotter, and more frequent extreme heat days have become a genuine public health concern-particularly for older adults, young children, people managing chronic conditions, outdoor workers, and anyone without reliable access to cooling. In response, Asian Media Access (AMA) partnered with Oromo Diaspora Media, the Islamic Civic Society of America, and Somali TV to launch "Beat the Heat: Extreme Heat Safety Video Series," working with extreme heat experts at Hennepin County to translate public health guidance into short, animated videos produced in English, Spanish, Hmong, Oromo, and Somali.

The campaign is a useful model for the Center for Wellness Technology (CWT) to study closely. CWT's programming at 19 Exchange St E is built around the same core premise that made AMA's campaign work: health information only changes behavior when it reaches people in a language, format, and voice they already trust. That is precisely the gap CWT is positioned to close for downtown St. Paul's wellness

district-connecting point-of-care wellness, community health navigation, and the multicultural coalition model already anchoring the St. Paul Wellness Coalition.

How the Videos Were Built

Before producing a single frame, AMA ran community focus groups with youth, professionals, and older residents to test video style, pacing, messaging, and cultural relevance. The consistent feedback: keep it short, make it visual, and don't make comprehension dependent on hearing the narration in English. That input shaped the final format—an animated storytelling approach starring Minnesota's state flower, the Lady Slipper Orchid, as a friendly, memorable guide that reads across age groups without needing translation to land emotionally. The English, Spanish, and Hmong videos AMA produced can be viewed [here](#).

The English, Spanish, and Hmong versions all lean on the same design choice: on-screen text and visual cues carry the safety messages throughout, so the videos work for viewers with limited English proficiency, people watching without sound, and multilingual families where generations may not share a first language. Each video closes with the same core reminders—stay hydrated, limit outdoor activity during peak heat, dress lightly, recognize the symptoms of heat exhaustion and heat stroke, and check on vulnerable family members and neighbors.

The campaign also formalizes something that already happens informally in immigrant and refugee households: younger family members are recruited as community health ambassadors, asked to check that parents, grandparents, and neighbors have water, working cooling access, and transportation if they need to reach somewhere cooler. That intergenerational safety net is a design principle worth carrying directly into CWT's own outreach, given the multicultural, multigenerational populations the coalition already serves.

Why Heat Is a Wellness Issue, Not Just a Weather Issue

Extreme heat is a direct physiological stressor, and its risks concentrate in the same populations CWT already prioritizes:

- Cardiovascular strain: The body diverts blood flow to the skin to cool itself, raising heart rate and placing added load on anyone managing existing heart conditions.
- Dehydration risk in older adults: A blunted thirst response means significant dehydration can set in before a person feels thirsty at all.
- Heat exhaustion vs. heat stroke: The line between the two is the line between recoverable at home and a medical emergency, which is why symptom recognition—not just prevention tips—is central to the messaging.

- Compounding chronic conditions: Diabetes, respiratory disease, and certain medications used for mental health conditions can all impair the body's ability to regulate temperature, raising risk for populations already navigating cancer recovery or short-term rehab.
- Uneven exposure: Outdoor workers and residents without reliable cooling access carry a disproportionate share of the risk, which is why cooling-center access and transportation support are built directly into the campaign's messaging.

The throughline is trust. Public health guidance only works if the messenger feels familiar and the format respects how the audience actually communicates—the same principle behind CWT's validate-first, no-shame approach to community health outreach around cancer screening. Heat safety and cancer screening look like different topics, but they run on the same trust infrastructure.



What This Means for the Center for Wellness Technology

CWT sits at the center of a three-node model with M Health Fairview Hospital and a Safer Recovery Center - serving post-hospital patients, adults in short-term rehab, seniors - the exact risk profile that extreme heat threatens most. A few direct applications follow from AMA's approach:

- **Multilingual, multicultural messaging as infrastructure, not an add-on:** The St. Paul Wellness Coalition's African American, Pan-African, and Pan-Asian leadership base gives CWT the same kind of trusted-messenger network AMA

relied on through Oromo Diaspora Media, Somali TV, and the Islamic Civic Society of America. Extreme heat guidance-and future seasonal health campaigns-could route through those same community partners rather than being translated after the fact.

- **The skyway system as a cooling network:** St. Paul's downtown skyway already connects CWT, area apartments, and other district nodes. Framed explicitly as climate-adaptive infrastructure, the skyway could double as a mapped cooling route for older adults and caregivers moving between appointments during extreme heat days - a concrete, low-cost extension of the 'activate existing infrastructure' philosophy already guiding the district.
- **Intergenerational health ambassadors:** The CWT already connecting Saint Paul Public Schools through local colleges and universities is a natural home for a youth health-ambassador model, training students to check on family and neighbors during heat events while building toward CWT's broader workforce pipeline.
- **Point-of-care wellness as heat-risk screening:** CWT's herbal medicine, acupuncture, and point-of-care wellness offerings put staff in regular contact with older adults and chronically ill patients-natural checkpoints for heat-risk screening and cooling-resource referrals during Minnesota's hottest months.

As climate patterns continue pushing more extreme heat days into Minnesota summers, culturally responsive public education isn't a nice-to-have add-on to wellness programming-it's core infrastructure. AMA's Beat the Heat campaign demonstrates what that looks like in practice: trusted partnerships, community-tested formats, and messaging designed around how people actually live and communicate. For CWT and the broader St. Paul Wellness Coalition, the opportunity is to fold that same model directly into the City of Wellness vision-using the multicultural coalition already in place, the physical infrastructure already connecting the district, and the trust already built with the communities it serves.

A Practical Starting Point

None of this requires new construction or a new funding vehicle to get moving. AMA's model shows that the highest-leverage first step is almost always the same: bring the trusted community messengers into the room before a single piece of content gets made, not after. For CWT, that could mean a short pilot-a heat-season adaptation of the existing cancer screening outreach materials, co-developed with FRBCA and MCCA partner organizations, tested with the same kind of small focus groups AMA used, and distributed through the community channels already established for other health messaging.

A pilot like this would also generate something CWT needs regardless of the topic: a

reusable production and testing process for culturally specific health communication. Once a community-vetted format exists - animated, plain-language, visually anchored, tested for pacing and tone - it can be adapted for the next seasonal health risk, the next screening campaign, or the next workforce announcement, rather than being rebuilt from scratch each time.

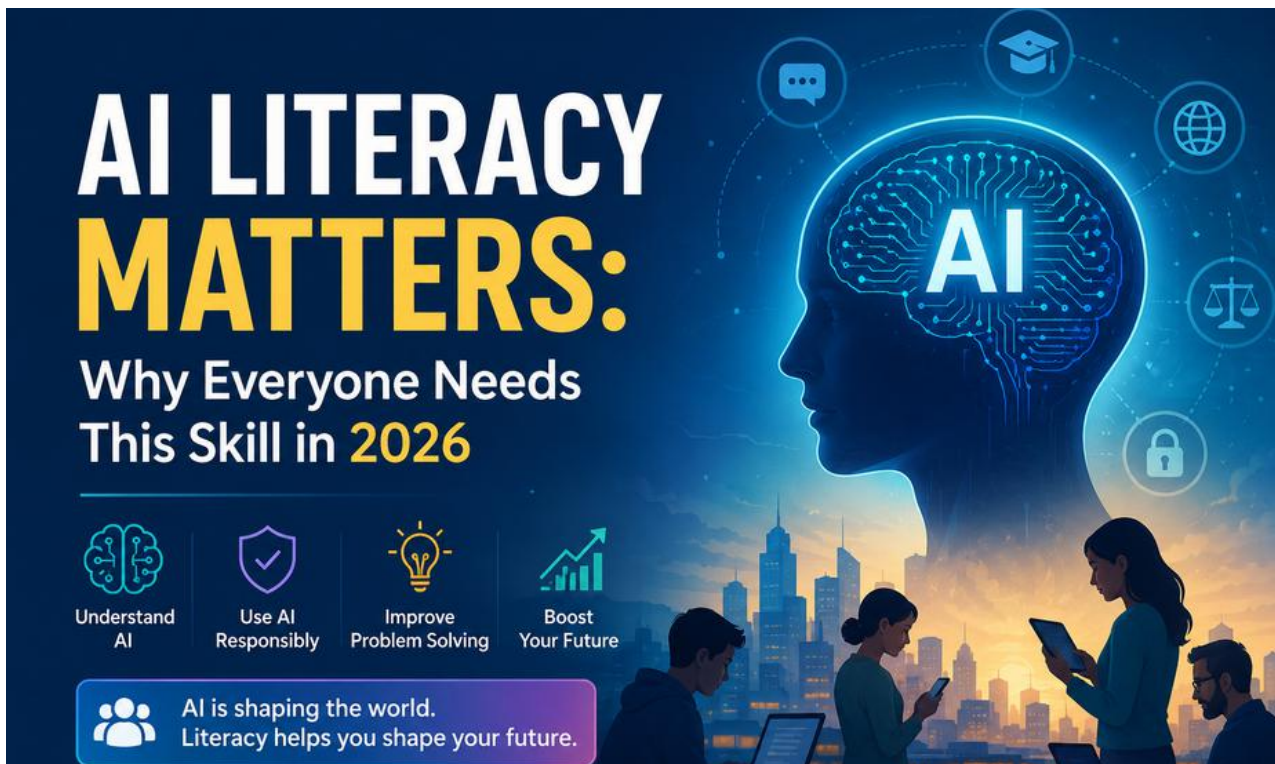
There is also a sequencing advantage to starting with heat safety specifically. It is a lower-stakes, broadly relatable entry point compared to cancer screening or other sensitive clinical topics, which makes it a good testing ground for message format and community trust-building before applying the same process to more difficult conversations. A community that has already seen CWT show up with useful, non-judgmental, in-language guidance about staying safe in the heat is a community more likely to trust CWT's voice when the topic turns to something like cancer screening or chronic disease management.

The larger point is one of positioning. St. Paul's bid to become a national model City of Wellness rests on demonstrating that integrated, precision wellness can work at the population level, not just the individual level. Extreme heat is exactly the kind of population-level, climate-driven health threat that a City of Wellness should be visibly prepared for - and AMA's Beat the Heat campaign offers a tested, low-cost template for getting there.

Source: Adapted from "Beat the Heat: Multilingual Videos Help Communities Stay Safe During Minnesota's Extreme Heat," Asian Media Access, July 29, 2026 -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FRVdfr09xkc>





AI LITERACY MATTERS: WHY EVERYONE NEEDS THIS SKILL IN 2026

Columnist - Vivek Ekarat

Based on the U.S. Department of Labor's AI Literacy Framework (Training and Employment Notice No. 07-25, released February 13, 2026)

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is no longer a technology confined to science fiction or research labs, it has quietly become part of our everyday lives. Every time we ask a virtual assistant a question, get a movie recommendation on Netflix, use Google Maps for directions, or chat with tools like ChatGPT or Claude, we are interacting with AI.

As AI becomes woven into education, healthcare, business, finance, agriculture, manufacturing, and entertainment, one skill is quickly becoming as essential as reading, writing, and basic computer literacy: AI literacy.

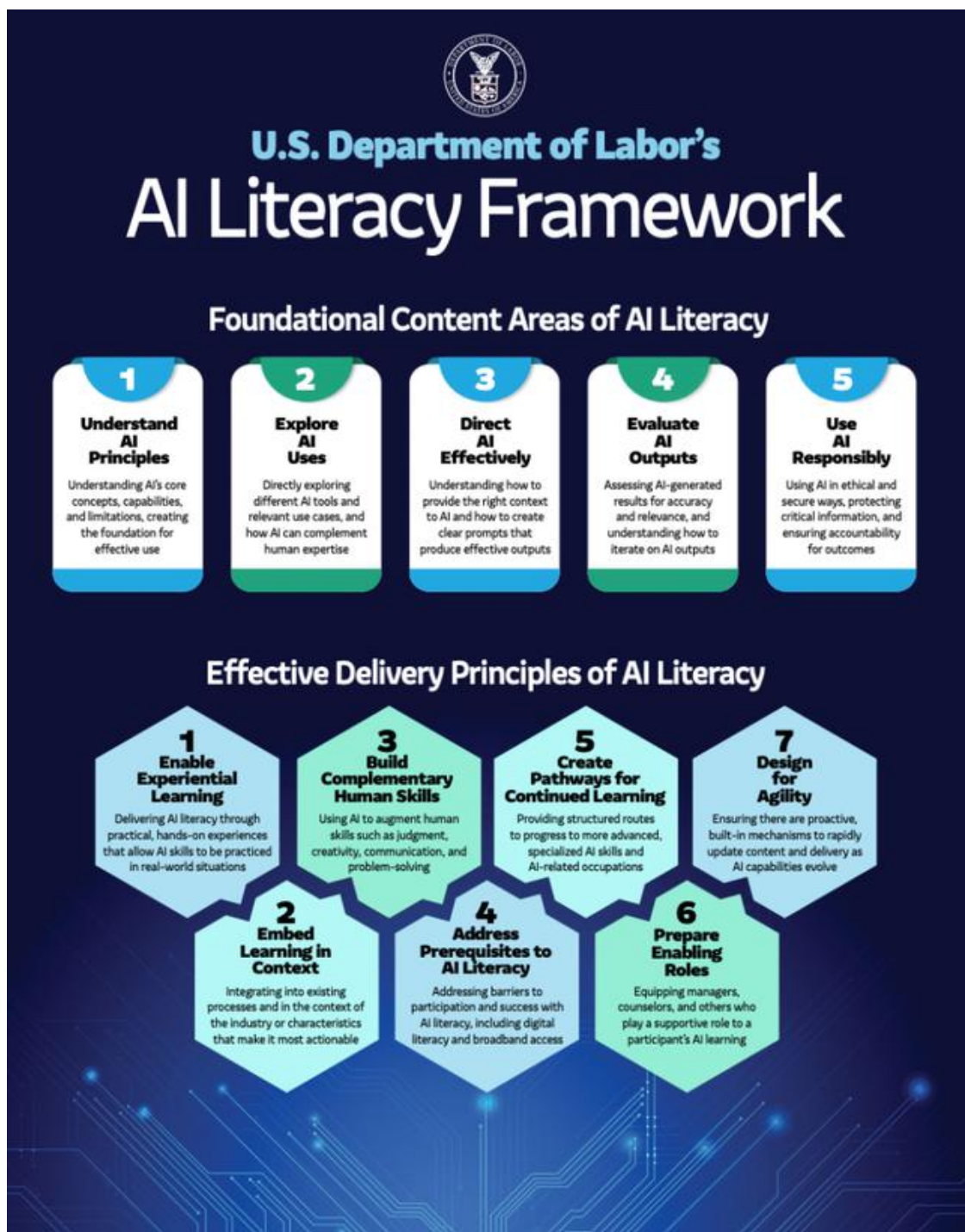
AI literacy isn't about becoming a computer programmer or a machine learning engineer. It's about understanding *what* AI is, *what it can and cannot do*, *how to use it effectively*, *how to evaluate its answers*, and *how to use it ethically and responsibly*. To help standardize this growing need, the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) published a national AI Literacy Framework on February 13, 2026, through Training and Employment Notice (TEN) No. 07-25. It gives

students, professionals, educators, organizations, and lifelong learners a shared roadmap for building these essential skills, and it is built around two components:

- Five Foundational Content Areas (the “what” of AI literacy)
- Seven Effective Delivery Principles (the “how” of teaching it)

together, these prepare people to confidently and responsibly use AI throughout their education, careers, and daily lives. The framework is **voluntary guidance**, not a binding regulation, it’s meant to be adapted, not mandated, across industries, roles, and educational settings.

source: [U.S. Department of Labor: AI Literacy Framework announcement](#)



What is AI Literacy?

AI Literacy is the ability to:

1. Understand what Artificial Intelligence is.
2. Know how AI systems work at a basic level.
3. Use AI tools effectively.
4. Evaluate AI-generated information critically.
5. Recognize AI's limitations.
6. Use AI ethically and responsibly.

Think of AI literacy like learning to drive a car.

Driving isn't just about pressing the accelerator. A good driver understands how the car works, knows traffic rules, practices road safety, knows when to brake, and knows what to do in emergencies.

Similarly, using AI isn't just about typing a question into a chatbot. A person who is AI literate knows:

- How AI produces its answers
- When AI is likely to make mistakes
- How to ask better, more precise questions
- How to verify the information it gives
- How to protect their own and others' personal information

According to the Department of Labor's own definition, AI literacy is a foundational set of competencies that enable individuals to use and evaluate AI technologies responsibly, with a primary focus on generative AI, which is increasingly central to the modern workplace.

Why is AI Literacy Important?

Artificial Intelligence is changing almost every profession:

- Doctors use AI to assist with medical diagnosis and analyze scans.
- Teachers use AI to create personalized learning experiences.
- Engineers use AI to design better products faster.
- Farmers use AI to monitor crop health and predict yields.
- Scientists use AI to analyze massive, complex datasets.
- Businesses use AI to improve customer service and detect fraud.
- Artists and musicians use AI to enhance and accelerate creativity.

The Department of Labor puts it plainly: every worker will need baseline AI literacy skills to succeed, regardless of industry or occupation, and organizations are being urged to help onboard new hires, upskill current employees, and ensure managers

can guide AI adoption.

Without AI literacy, people may:

- Trust incorrect AI answers without questioning them
- Share sensitive personal information carelessly
- Become overly dependent on AI
- Misuse AI tools (intentionally or not)
- Miss out on emerging career opportunities

With AI literacy, people can:

- Learn faster and work smarter
- Solve problems more efficiently
- Think more critically about the information they receive
- Make better-informed decisions

🎥 Watch: [Navigating the DOL AI Literacy Framework for an AI-Ready Workforce \(YouTube\)](#).



The Five Foundational Content Areas of AI Literacy

These five pillars represent the essential knowledge every AI user should have.

1. Understand AI Principles

Before using AI, we need to understand what it actually is. Artificial Intelligence is a computer system designed to perform tasks that usually require human intelligence: understanding language, recognizing faces, translating text, making predictions, recommending products, and answering questions.

But AI is **not human**. It doesn't think, feel, or understand the world the way people do.

Instead, it learns statistical patterns from enormous amounts of data and uses those patterns to generate responses or predictions.

What AI can do:

- Write essays and summaries
- Translate languages
- Generate computer code
- Create images
- Analyze data and detect patterns
- Answer questions and generate ideas

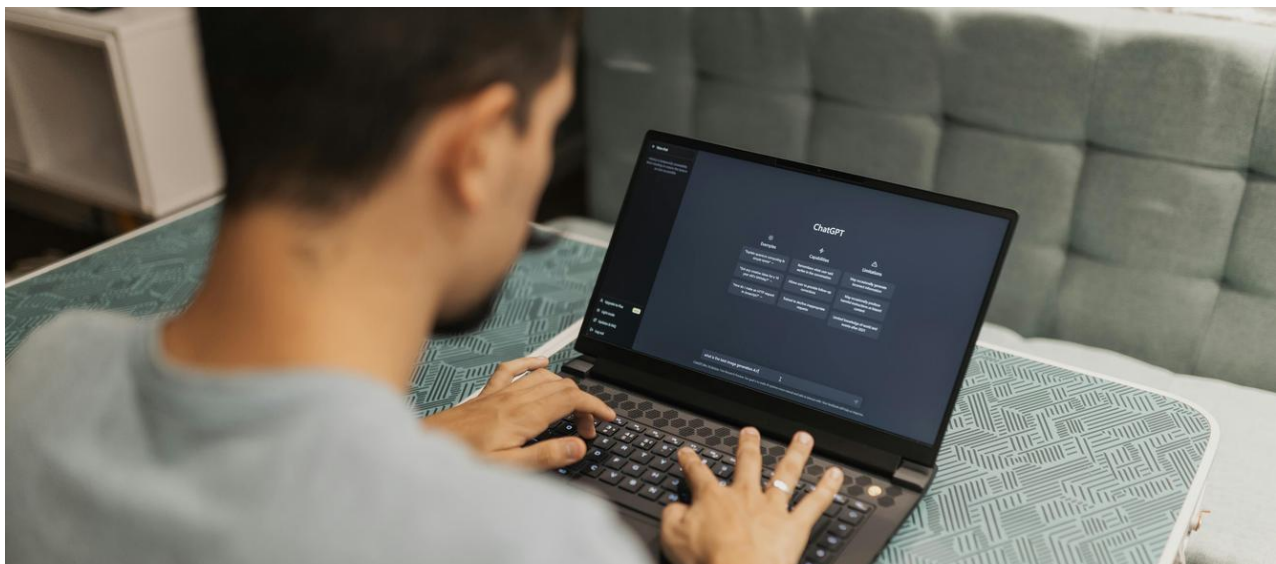
What AI cannot always do well:

- Guarantee factual accuracy
- Fully understand context the way a human does
- Stay free of bias
- Know about very recent events (depending on the tool)
- Avoid “hallucinating” : confidently stating false information

Example: If you ask an AI tool “Who invented the light bulb?”, it might answer simply “Thomas Edison.” While Edison improved the commercially viable light bulb, inventors like Joseph Swan and Humphry Davy also made important early contributions. Without understanding this limitation, someone might walk away with an incomplete picture.

Key Lesson: AI is a helpful assistant, not an all-knowing expert.

The framework describes this content area as helping workers grasp how AI systems rely on pattern recognition and probabilistic outputs, how training differs from inference, and why hallucinations occur.



2. Explore AI Uses

Once we understand what AI is, the next step is learning where and how it can actually be useful.

AI in Education, Students use AI to explain difficult concepts, practice math, learn programming, improve writing, summarize notes, and prepare for exams. Example: Instead of copying homework answers, a student should ask, "Can you explain Newton's Laws with simple, real-world examples?" This encourages learning rather than dependency.

AI in Healthcare, Doctors use AI to analyse X-rays, detect diseases earlier, predict patient risk, and manage medical records , AI assists doctors, it does not replace them.

AI in Business, Companies use AI for customer support chatbots, inventory management, marketing campaigns, sales forecasting, and fraud detection.

AI in Agriculture, Farmers use AI to predict rainfall, monitor crop health, detect plant disease, and optimize irrigation, an increasingly important application as smart farming grows.

AI in Daily Life, Most people use AI every day without even realizing it : through Google Search, Siri, Alexa, Google Maps, Netflix recommendations, Spotify playlists, and email spam filters.

Key Lesson: AI works best when it complements human expertise rather than replacing it.

3. Direct AI Effectively (Prompting)

Using AI effectively depends heavily on giving it clear instructions. This skill is called **prompting**.

What is a prompt? It's the instruction or question you give an AI system.

Poor Prompt	Better Prompt
"Tell me about space."	"Explain the solar system to a 10-year-old using simple language and examples."
"Write an essay."	"Write a 500-word essay about climate change suitable for Grade 8 students, with examples."
"Create a presentation."	"Create a 10-slide presentation explaining renewable energy for high school students."

A good prompt typically includes:

- Context: background information
- Audience: who the output is for
- Style: tone, formality, format
- Level of detail: how deep or simple the answer should be

Key Lesson: Better prompts produce better results. AI cannot read your mind, the more information you give it, the better the output.

For deeper guidance on this skill, Anthropic publishes a detailed prompt-engineering guide:

- [Prompt Engineering Overview](#)
- [Anthropic: Prompt Engineering Guide](#)

4. Evaluate AI Outputs

Even when AI gives an answer, it should never be accepted blindly.

Check for:

- **Accuracy:** Does this match trusted sources?
- **Relevance:** Does this actually solve my problem? Is it right for my audience?
- **Completeness:** What information might be missing?

Verify using:

- Books and academic journals
- Government websites
- Teachers or subject-matter experts

Example: If AI says “Bananas grow on trees,” a botanist or science teacher would point out that bananas actually grow on large herbaceous (non-woody) plants, not true trees. This is exactly why verification matters.

Improve through iteration: if an AI’s first answer isn’t ideal, ask follow-up questions:

- “Explain that in simpler words.”
- “Add real-world examples.”
- “Give me sources or references.”
- “Compare this with another concept.”

Key Lesson: Critical thinking is more important than blind acceptance of AI answers.



5. Use AI Responsibly

Responsible AI use means using it ethically, safely, and legally.

Protect Privacy: Never share passwords, bank details, medical records, government ID numbers, or confidential company information with an AI tool.

Respect Copyright: Don't use AI to copy someone else's work and pass it off as your own; acknowledge sources where required.

Avoid Harmful Use: AI should never be used to spread misinformation, create scams, cheat on exams, harass others, or generate harmful content.

Be Accountable: Humans remain responsible for decisions made with AI's help. If AI helps write a report, the author is still accountable for verifying its accuracy.

The framework frames this directly: workers must understand the boundaries of appropriate use, both to safeguard information and to ensure outputs are applied ethically and effectively... recognizing the limits of AI authority, protecting sensitive data, complying with workplace or legal requirements, and maintaining accountability for outcomes.

Key Lesson: Responsible AI users think about the consequences of their actions.

The Seven Effective Delivery Principles of AI Literacy

Knowing what to teach is only half the journey, the framework also explains how AI literacy should be delivered.

1. Enable Experiential Learning

People learn best by doing. Rather than only reading about AI, learners should experiment with real tools, solve real-world problems, practice writing prompts, and compare different AI responses. As the framework notes, this hands-on approach accelerates skill development by helping users see results firsthand rather than learning about AI only in the abstract.

2. Embed Learning in Context

AI education works best inside real-life situations : AI in healthcare for medical students, AI in law for legal professionals, AI in agriculture for farmers, AI in business for managers. Learning becomes meaningful when tied to everyday work.

3. Build Complementary Human Skills

AI cannot replace uniquely human abilities: creativity, judgment, empathy, leadership, ethical decision-making, communication, and collaboration. The framework's own language emphasizes that AI amplifies human capabilities, it doesn't replace them, so training should highlight how AI enhances critical thinking and creativity rather than substituting for it.

4. Address Prerequisites to AI Literacy

Not everyone has equal access to technology. Effective programs must account for digital literacy gaps, internet access, affordable devices, and accessibility for people with disabilities, AI literacy should be available to everyone, not just the digitally privileged.

5. Create Pathways for Continued Learning

AI evolves rapidly, so learning can't stop after one course. The framework treats foundational literacy as a "starting point," encouraging learners to progress through online courses, workshops, certifications, and hands-on projects.

6. Prepare Enabling Roles

Managers, teachers, counsellors, and mentors play a critical role in supporting AI learning. Organizations should equip these people through approaches like train-the-trainer models to guide learners, encourage ethical AI use, and foster a culture of responsible adoption.

7. Design for Agility

AI technology changes fast, so training programs must evolve with it. The framework notes that because "AI technologies evolve at a pace unlike previous workplace tools," programs need modular content design, continuous updates, and feedback-driven iteration.



Bringing It All Together

The Department of Labor's AI Literacy Framework emphasizes that AI literacy is more than learning how to operate AI tools: it's about developing the knowledge, skills, and judgment needed to work with AI confidently and responsibly.

- The **five foundational content areas** help people understand AI, use it effectively, evaluate its outputs, and act ethically.
- The **seven delivery principles** ensure AI education is practical, inclusive, adaptable, and connected to real-world needs.

Whether you're a child using AI to learn, a student completing assignments, a teacher designing lessons, or a professional improving workplace productivity- AI literacy empowers you to treat AI as a thoughtful partner, not something to rely on blindly.

It's worth noting that the framework has also drawn some constructive criticism. Some commentators argue it focuses mainly on how to use AI tools well, but spends less time on deeper questions, such as understanding bias as a structural feature of AI systems, or asking whose data shaped a given model's worldview. This is a fair point worth keeping in mind: full AI literacy benefits from pairing practical, "how-to" skills with a critical eye toward how these systems are built and whose interests they may (or may not) reflect.

Conclusion

Artificial Intelligence is reshaping how we learn, work, communicate, and solve problems. Just as reading and computer literacy became essential skills for previous generations, **AI literacy is becoming a core competency for the future.**

The U.S. Department of Labor's AI Literacy Framework offers a practical, voluntary roadmap for developing these competencies. By understanding AI principles, exploring meaningful applications, learning to prompt effectively, evaluating outputs critically, and using AI responsibly, individuals can capture AI's benefits while minimizing its risks.

Ultimately, AI is a powerful tool, but its true value depends on informed, ethical, and skilled human users. Building AI literacy today equips learners of all ages to participate confidently in an AI-driven world, and to help shape a future where technology serves humanity responsibly and effectively.

Reference Links

- [U.S. Department of Labor: Official Announcement](#)
- [Training and Employment Notice No. 07-25 \(Official Notice\)](#)
- [Complete AI Literacy Framework Document \(PDF\)](#)
- [WorkforceGPS Resource Page on the Framework](#)
- [American Psychological Association: Overview of the Framework](#)
- [Stanford Teaching Commons: Understanding AI Literacy](#)

August 15

INDIAFEST 2026

Hosted by the India Association of Minnesota, IndiaFest 2026 brought community members together at the Minnesota State Capitol to celebrate India Day and the richness of Indian culture and heritage. This year's theme, "Weaves and Traditional Fabrics of India," highlighted India's diverse traditions through cultural performances, exhibits, food, community activities, and more. Photo Courtesy: India Association of Minnesota



August 29

TAIWAN FILM FESTIVAL

Hosted by Taiwan Online Library, the 2026 Taiwan Film Festival brought community members together at the Hopkins Center for the Arts for a screening of *A Chip Odyssey: The Century-Long Bet..* The event also featured a panel discussion with experts from academia and the technology field, along with cultural exhibits and interactive booths celebrating Taiwan's technology, culture, and community connections. Photo Courtesy: Taiwan Online Library



August 29

COLORS OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN FESTIVAL

Organized by the City of Brooklyn Park and The SEAD Project, the 2026 Colors of Southeast Asian Festival celebrated the rich cultures and traditions of Southeast Asian communities. The festival featured food vendors, cultural performances, dance groups, a fashion show, and interactive activities such as DIY kite making, bringing families and community members together for a day of culture, learning, and connection. Photo Courtesy: City of Brooklyn Park and The SEAD Project



August 29~30

KPOP MINNECON & CONCERT

Organized by MNKpopConnect and KpopMinnecon-MN, KPOP Minnecon 2026 brought K-pop fans from across the Midwest together at the Saint Paul RiverCentre for two days of music, culture, and community. The event featured performances, dance showcases, panels, shopping, photocard trading, and other fan activities celebrating K-pop, fashion, creativity, and the shared energy of the community. Photo Courtesy: MNKpopConnect



September 14&20

GANESH CHATURTHI

Hosted by the Hindu Society of Minnesota, Ganesh Chaturthi 2026 brought community members together to honor Lord Ganesha through traditional prayers, ceremonies, and cultural traditions. The celebration included Ganesh Sthapana, processions, pooja, and Visarjan, bringing families and devotees together in a spirit of faith, culture, and community. Photo Courtesy: Hindu Society of Minnesota



September 19~20

MINNESOTHAI

Hosted by the Thai Cultural Council of Minnesota, MinnesoThai 2026 brought the community together to celebrate Thai culture through authentic street food, traditional music, cultural performances, arts, and local vendors. The family-friendly festival offered an opportunity to experience Thai traditions while strengthening cultural appreciation and community connections. Photo Courtesy: Thai Cultural Council of Minnesota and MinnesoThai



\$10K grants are now open!

It's easier than ever to apply for **\$10K grants**

Digital Ready grants are back. **Apply for \$10,000 grants, part of over \$1M in total funding this year.** You only have to apply once to be considered all year for a \$10K grant, giving you more time to submit an application and take advantage of our courses and events.

VERIZON SMALL BUSINESS DIGITAL READY \$10,000 NATIONAL GRANT

Digital Ready grants are back. Apply for \$10,000 grants, part of over \$1M in total funding this year. You only have to apply once to be considered all year for a \$10K grant, giving you more time to submit an application and take advantage of our courses and events.

Who can apply?

Owners of for-profit small businesses based in the United States, Puerto Rico, or the U.S. Virgin Islands who are 18 or older may apply. Owners of multiple businesses may apply for one business only. See national grant FAQs for more information.

How do I apply?

Register and complete any combination of two eligible courses or events anytime in 2026 to unlock the grant application. Apply once to remain eligible for \$10,000 grants awarded throughout the year.

When will I hear back?

Applications will be reviewed monthly from June through December 2026. Each month, 10 small businesses will be selected for grants. If you are not selected in a given month, your application will remain under consideration for the remainder of 2026. All applicants will receive a final decision by January 12, 2027.

[Apply Today >>](#)



We can help you find your focus

Building a budget that actually works.
Growing your network organically.
Mastering work/life balance. All this and more with Digital Ready. What will your focus be?

Check it out



BUDGETING TIPS AND NETWORKING KNOW-HOW

Struggling with budgeting, networking, or work-life balance? Digital Ready can help you find your focus and achieve your goals. Discover expert insights and practical tools to streamline your success at:

https://link.digitalready.verizonwireless.com/OTk2LUtXQy0zNzcAAAGZKn5A0-kz96GrTzwrOAAOnZ_2TNNWrU_BQXIGWbjvQHw_pjs1hSTgctExNiFQleIF4R3PHE=

Find the event that fits your goals:

<https://digitalready.verizonwireless.com/category/events>



Event • Ask the Expert

Brand rituals for consistency

Oct 1, 11 AM CT



Event • Ask the Expert

How to plan your week like a CEO

Oct 1, 2 PM CT



Event • Ask the Expert

AI for security: outsmarting mobile scams and phishing

Oct 13, 2 PM CT

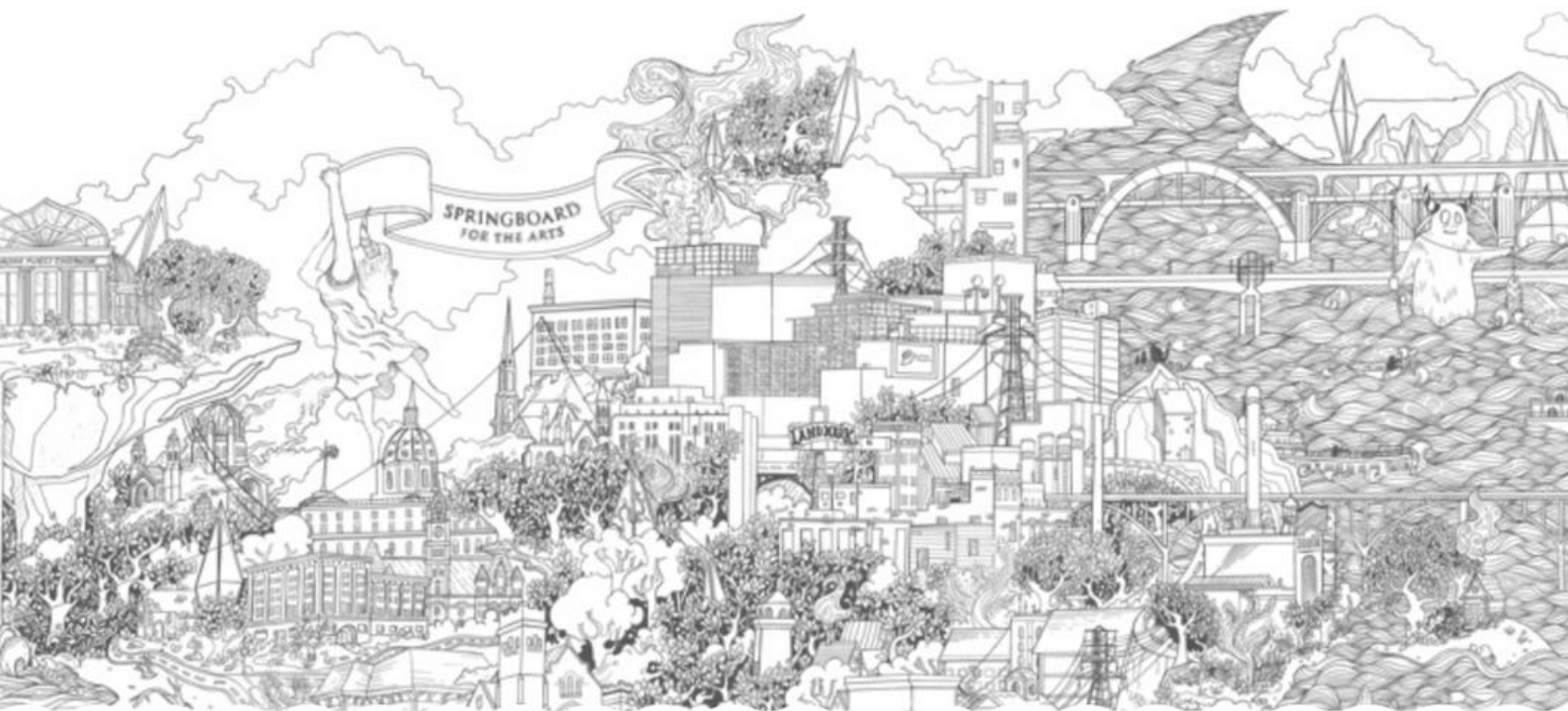


Event • Ask the Expert

From startup to scale: Building a global brand through eCommerce

Oct 14, 12 PM CT





Springboard for the Arts Calendar of Events - Professional Development

- September 26, 2026 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM - Website Basics for Artists
- October 6, 2026 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM - Work of Art: Marketing
- October 10, 2026 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM - Business Structure Basics for Minnesota Artists

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

Additional Resources

- Get connected to Artist Career Consultants here:
<https://springboardforthearts.org/professional-growth/career-consultations/artist-career-consultants/>
- Work of Art Toolkit: <https://springboardforthearts.org/woa>
- Handbook for Artists Working in Community:
<https://springboardforthearts.org/artists-working-in-community/>

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](#)



SEP
22
1pm~2pm

TURN YOUR EXECUTIVE CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS INTO B2B REVENUE

Business Webinar

[LEARN MORE >>](#)

SEP
24
1pm~2pm

SHOWCASE YOUR WORK: FOUNDER MILESTONE SHOWCASE

Business Webinar

[LEARN MORE >>](#)

SEP
30
1pm~2pm

INSIDE THE MIND OF AN ANGEL INVESTOR

Business Webinar

[LEARN MORE >>](#)

OCT
1
1pm~2pm

MILESTONE CIRCLES: INFORMATION SESSION

Business Webinar

[LEARN MORE >>](#)



OCT

7

1pm~2pm

AI-READY TO SCALE: BUILD SYSTEMS YOUR BUSINESS NEEDS TO GROW

Business Webinar

[LEARN MORE >>](#)

OCT

13

1pm~2pm

THE STORY BEHIND THE ASK

Business Webinar

[LEARN MORE >>](#)

OCT

15

11am~1:30pm

MERGERS AND ACQUISITIONS BOOTCAMP: FALL 2026

Business Webinar

[LEARN MORE >>](#)

OCT

27

1pm~2pm

INVESTOR-READY: CRAFT A PITCH THAT BUILDS INVESTOR CONFIDENCE AND DRIVES FUNDING CONVERSATIONS

Business Webinar

[LEARN MORE >>](#)

Contact Us

Email

lily.do@amamedia.org

Telephone

(612) 376-7715

Address

2418 Plymouth Ave N, Room 105,
Minneapolis, MN 55411



Partnering with

