



2026 HANDBOOK



Northern Virginia



AIA Northern Virginia 2026 Canstruction® Handbook

The Handbook

The purpose of this handbook is to help teams understand and navigate the process leading up to the Canstruction® event. The handbook outlines each step with key dates the teams should keep in mind while developing, fundraising, and preparing to build their sculptures. If you have any questions about the 2026 Handbook or have any suggestions on how to improve future handbooks, please visit the AIA Northern Virginia Community Service Committee at <https://aianova.org/committee/community-service/> to contact the current Chair leading the Committee.

What is Canstruction®?

Canstruction® is a nationwide non-profit organization and program that aims to raise awareness about hunger insecurities through fun, local canned good design-build sculpture competitions. Teams spanning local architecture and design firms to government and construction agencies use their skills to build sculptures out of canned goods. These food sculptures are referred to as CanArt®. After the event, the nutritious food is donated to a local food bank for distribution to families in the Northern Virginia area. For more information about Canstruction®, visit <https://www.canstruction.org/>.

This year AIA Northern Virginia is partnering with Capital Area Food Bank (CAFB) and Fashion Centre at Pentagon City to prepare and host the Canstruction® event in September where up to ten (10) teams will compete for various awards and have the opportunity to move on to the national competition.

Thank You

- To our **partners**, Capital Area Food Bank and Fashion Centre at Pentagon City, for providing us the means to make this event a reality.
- To our **sponsors** for funding the event and donating to a great cause.
- To our **committee** for organizing and planning the event. This event could not happen without you.
- To our **teams** for your gracious participation and effort to make this a great event.
- To the **public** for following us every step of the way.

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KEY DATES

Registration

Early Bird: Wednesday, April 8
Final: Wednesday, May 6

Final Team Sponsor List

Due: Tuesday, Sept. 1

Clever Concept Design Draft

Early Bird: Wednesday, April 8
Final: Wednesday, May 6

Can Payment to Capital Area Food Bank (CAFB)

No later than Wednesday, Sept. 2 by 5PM

Can Order/List of Ingredients

Due: Wednesday, July 1

BUILD NIGHT!

Friday, Sept. 11 from 4PM to 11PM

Team Information, Pledge & Final Design

Due: Wednesday, July 29

Award Ceremony

Monday, Sept. 21

Can Check at Capital Area Food Bank (CAFB)

TBD Week of Aug. 10-14

De-Canstruction®

Monday, Sept. 21

NOTE: By participating in Canstruction® 2026, you agree to these Canstruction®, Inc. Rules & Regulations. Competition organizers do not disqualify an entry. All decisions are left in the hands of the Jury.

2026 Rules & Regulations

I. Structure Requirements

Size of Structure: Maximum structure size = 10ft L x 10ft W x 10ft H (3m L x 3m W x 3m H)

Size of Build Team: Maximum team size = Five (5) builders at a time in building area

Build-Out Time: Maximum build-out time = Seven (7) hours

II. Food/Beverage Requirements

Permissible Items:

- Full, unopened, canned food of all sizes with labels intact/unaltered
- Full, unopened, beverage cans of all sizes with labels intact (NO alcoholic beverages)
- Full, unopened, plastic bottles/containers of food/beverage with labels intact/unaltered
- Use of boxes, bags and packets of food is acceptable; however, cans must be used for the majority of the structure

Non-Permissible Items:

- NO glass containers or alcoholic beverages
- NO junk food (e.g. candy, chips, etc.) or pet food
- NO opened, exposed or expired food/beverage
- NO covered, removed or altered can/product labels
- NO empty cans or plastic bottles/containers

Please try to incorporate healthy canned foods into your design such as:

- Black beans, low sodium
- Black-eyed peas
- Carrots, sliced, no salt added
- Corn, no salt added
- Turnip greens, low sodium
- Chicken
- Tuna
- Low sodium peaches in water or juice
 - Pears in water or juice
 - Tomatoes, no salt added



III. Building Materials

Permissible Items: (provided they do not damage cans or labels)

- Velcro, magnets, zip-ties, tape, silicone
- Rubber bands, nylon string, wire mesh or wire
- Wood or steel rods, PVC pipe, threaded metal rods. Cardboard tubes provided they aren't more than $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick.
- Leveling materials (templates) no greater than $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick (6mm) - Examples of approved leveling materials are: cardboard, foam-core, masonite, MDF, plywood, plexiglass, fiberglass

Non-Permissible Items:

- NO wood or metal beams, struts, steel tubes or bracing materials
- NO leveling materials (templates) greater than $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick (6mm)
- NO sheet metal, steel plates, Fiberock, or glass
- NO permanent adhesives or bonding process (soldering, etc.)

Structures MUST be supported internally and externally by canned food and/or beverage cans between leveling materials. This does not mean that the structure needs to be solid cans throughout, but rather that the structure needs to be stable.

Props may be used: It is preferable to solve design problems with food items. (If you must use props, try to make them out of food items such as tea or coffee bags, condiment packets, etc.) Lighting, mirrors, electronic devices are acceptable but may reduce a structure's chance of winning the International Competition.

Safety is our top priority. When using electronics that require power cords, please be mindful of your surroundings in your build location. Some build locations have power outlets in the adjacent walls and some in the floors. Please locate and secure any power cords and cord extensions to ensure others do not trip/slip and fall over the power and extension cords.

No interactive structures. Do not encourage visitors to touch your Canstruction® structure. Once a sculpture is completed, stanchions and ribbons will be provided to each team to create a no-touch zone. Teams are responsible for leaving their site 'broom-clean', with all boxes flattened and trash placed in plastic trash bags for quick and efficient disposal by the mall.



IV. Best Practices

Suggested Best Practices from Years Past:

- Plan your sculpture in Revit if possible. You can print off templates for where to place your cans.
- Some teams mount those templates to foam core leveling boards.
- Place leveling boards after each level of cans.
- Check your can heights to make sure they are all the same height.
- Do not fill the entirety of the middle of your sculpture with cans. Only place enough cans inside your CanArt® to maintain the structural integrity, so you can buy fewer cans. The interior cans may be inexpensive cans, as the labels for the interior cans will not matter.
- Walls within the sculptures may tend to be unstable. Plan to use at least three (3) to five (5) rows of cans for sturdiness.
- Be mindful of where you are placing food. It is strongly recommended that food not be placed on the floor. Like many establishments in urban areas, placing non-canned food items on the floor can attract pests.
- Be thoughtful about the cans you select. While certain cans may have desirable labels for your sculpture, be aware of the cost of each can. It all adds up.
- If you are new to the competition and would feel more comfortable teaming up with another firm, please let us know at aianova@aianova.org, and we will try to facilitate a match for you.

V. Team Fundraising

All teams will need to provide funding for the purchase of their cans. Actual purchase of items listed on the can order spreadsheet will be made by Capital Area Food Bank (CAF) using donations from the Team fundraising pages. Any outstanding balances will be invoiced to the Team for payment at/before the can check. All teams are required to confirm financial responsibility for all cans ordered on their behalf during the team registration process.

Individual team fundraising pages on a CAFB provided website platform will be available after teams register, get approval of their Clever Concept, and agree to the terms of financial responsibility. After the fundraising page is open, teams can manage and update their pages as needed. AIA NoVA Community Service / Canstruction® Committee members will create the graphic below for team use. Suggested graphic elements/formatting for fundraising webpage:

1. Page Title: **Firm Name | Canstruction® 2026**
2. Image of team/previous design/current design (whatever you choose) with firm logo and AIA NoVA logo in one corner of the image. If you don't have an image, you can use just the logos.
3. Description: Recommend providing a catchy description to accompany your image.
4. Fundraising Goal: Add your fundraising goal to your fundraising website to encourage others to donate.



Once teams create their fundraising pages, teams can direct potential donors to their pages using their own private link. Since CAFB is a 501(c)(3) charity, any donations made by donors can be written off as a tax credit, and CAFB will not pay taxes on the purchased food items.

Note: Remember to set can purchase numbers and fundraising goal higher than expected. Can totals must take into account the possibility of damaged cans and/or labels.

VI. Acquisition of Canned Goods

Using CAFB's can ordering spreadsheet, submit your can information including JPEG images of each product shelf label showing desired product code numbers (6-digit item code and 5-digit UPC), description, can size, retail price, and quantity of cans.

Preferred Store: Giant

CAF&B partners with Giant to provide food items for this event. Teams will be working directly with Giant on any changes/substitutions to their can orders.

Shopping at Other Stores: The purchase of food items at other food stores is permitted. However, Capital Area Food Bank will not be responsible for items procured at stores other than Giant. Teams that acquire additional food items from stores other than Giant are required to pay, store, and transport these items separately from can orders placed from CAFB.

Can Order Form Example:

Please note that the above can order spreadsheet/form is for reference only. Teams will be sent the updated can order spreadsheet form after registration.

VII. Canstruction® Team Poster

canstruction®
NORTHERN VIRGINIA

Number of Cans: **3,502**

Designed & Built By: **SAMAH**

Design Statement: **Fueling Kindness - One Can in the Bug!**

Our Beetle is more than just an iconic car — it's a pop culture classic known for its round shape, quirky personality, and timeless charm. The Beetle brought people together across generations and cultures, becoming a lasting symbol of fun and joy. In that same spirit, we're relying on the power of the can to bring people together again. Inspired by Capital Area Food Bank's mission to provide dignified access to food for all, our "Can-Beetle" is packed with purpose and compassion. So hop in, buckle up, and help us fuel kindness — one can at a time!

Design:



Team Members:

Apna Nali - Co-captain	Sari Melhem
Neda Motabar - Co-captain	Tess Crain
Amy McCarty	Tom Lee
Dave McNamee	David Agarwal
Dongru Zhu	Stephanie Guerrero
India Young	Ari Auer
Joshua Mendez	Jessica Dugay
Ken Calhoun	Yvonne Gautam
Kyle Lee	Carly Cullen
Rachel Sanders	
Sandra Wu	

Ingredients:

Green Beans	Chickpeas
Tuna	Sweet Potatoes
Tomato Paste	Bread Crumbs
Diced Tomatoes	

Team Sponsors:

- KUM Services
- Legacy Engineering
- Ehren Bryant
- James Posey Associates, Inc.
- Clark | Azar | Associates
- Spartan Surfaces
- Polytronics

Organized & Hosted By:

- AIA Northern Virginia
- FASHION CENTRE AT PENTAGON CITY
- Capital Area FOOD BANK

www.canstruction.org

Samaha Team Board - 2025

canstruction®
NORTHERN VIRGINIA

Number of Cans: **2,388**

Designed & Built By: **Jacobs**

Design Statement: **Summer Vibes**

Hang on Summer, don't leave just yet! Inspired by a laid-back mentality, vibrant colors, and an iconic symbol of relaxation, Summer Vibes is a sculpture designed to keep the viewer in the sunny months. We curated a selection of food items consisting of fruit cocktail, various coconut products, and a variety of cereals to make a refreshing mid-summer treat for a vacation beverage — just in case the sight of our build doesn't do the trick! Though supported only by a series of concentric columns, the structure is built to be a can tower. Each tier of the sculpture is built on the coconut is cantilevered, moving the cans further away from the center point as the structure progresses upwards. The strategic use of heavier ingredients like fruit cocktail and cereal at the base of the tower helps the design achieve its rough height of 8.5'. Join us in holding on to warm weather, sunny days and helping our neighbors in need in the D.C. metro area!

Design:



Team Members:

Tom Berninger, Assoc. AIA (Captain)	Meagan Gross
Spencer Bullinger	Isabel Ehrenthal/Romero
Brionna Riffner	Ashley Raudsta
Bill Stevens, AIA	Mina Koon (AIA)
	Donald Deda

Ingredients:

Fruit Cocktail	Ising
Coconut Milk	Hot Cocoa
Apple Sauce	Coconut Flakes
Oatmeal	Jello

Team Sponsors:

- Jacobs
- Friends + Family
- Shewell-Williams
- Steele
- Yardley Winery
- Grace Gan
- Bill Stevens
- Ricki Henschel
- Spencer Bullinger
- Kurt Maldavan
- Caitlyn Devaney
- Lauren Robinson
- Laurens van der Tak

Organized & Hosted By:

- AIA Northern Virginia
- FASHION CENTRE AT PENTAGON CITY
- Capital Area FOOD BANK

www.canstruction.org

Jacobs Team Board - 2025

The Team Poster celebrates your team and everything—from canned goods to sponsors—that went into transforming your initial Clever Concept into reality. The deadlines we've laid out in the Key Dates serve to ensure teams are iterating and finalizing all relevant content so that it can be displayed on your Team Poster. The following list provides guidelines on how to best present the required information.

- The 'Project Title' of your proposed sculpture. Be pun-ny and go for the laughs.
- For the descriptive statement of your design: Using an approximate 150 word limit, write a descriptive statement of your design. Keep your statement pithy and let the entry speak for you. **DO NOT use firm or sponsor names in the descriptive statement, as this statement will be shared with the jurors at the competition judging.**
- List your team members in alphabetical order, team captains on top. Please pay special attention to spelling of the names! Don't forget to add your AIA credentials.
- Based on CAFB's can ordering spreadsheet, submit your final can count and your ingredient list.
- When submitting your list of Final Team Sponsors, make sure not to leave anyone out!

VIII. Build Night & Venue

- Friday, Sept. 11, 4PM to 11PM in the Fashion Centre of Pentagon City. Please note, all stores close at 9PM.
- There is only space for 10 teams. The order in which teams register will determine build location/site selection order.
- Do as much prefabrication of foam core or other special materials you require. If you have a chance to practice your build in your office, take that opportunity to lessen the chance of any surprises on site.
- Come with plenty of extra supplies — over-estimate. Sometimes cans can be damaged in shopping so be sure to order extra just in case.
- We will provide dinner and water for the teams to keep you working throughout the evening.

IX. Press/Public

The public will be invited to view the completed structures Sept. 12 through De-Canstruction®, and to vote for their favorite project beginning on Friday, Sept. 11 until the Awards Event. One dollar = one vote. The press will be invited to attend Build Night, Awards, and De-Canstruction® events.

X. De-Canstruction®, Judging, & Awards

Local winners go on to compete nationally through the submission of photographs to a national panel of jurors. For national award consideration, structural integrity of the integral design components of the sculpture need to be maintained and intact through judging and photography on Sept. 12.

Awards that are submitted to the National Canstruction® competition:

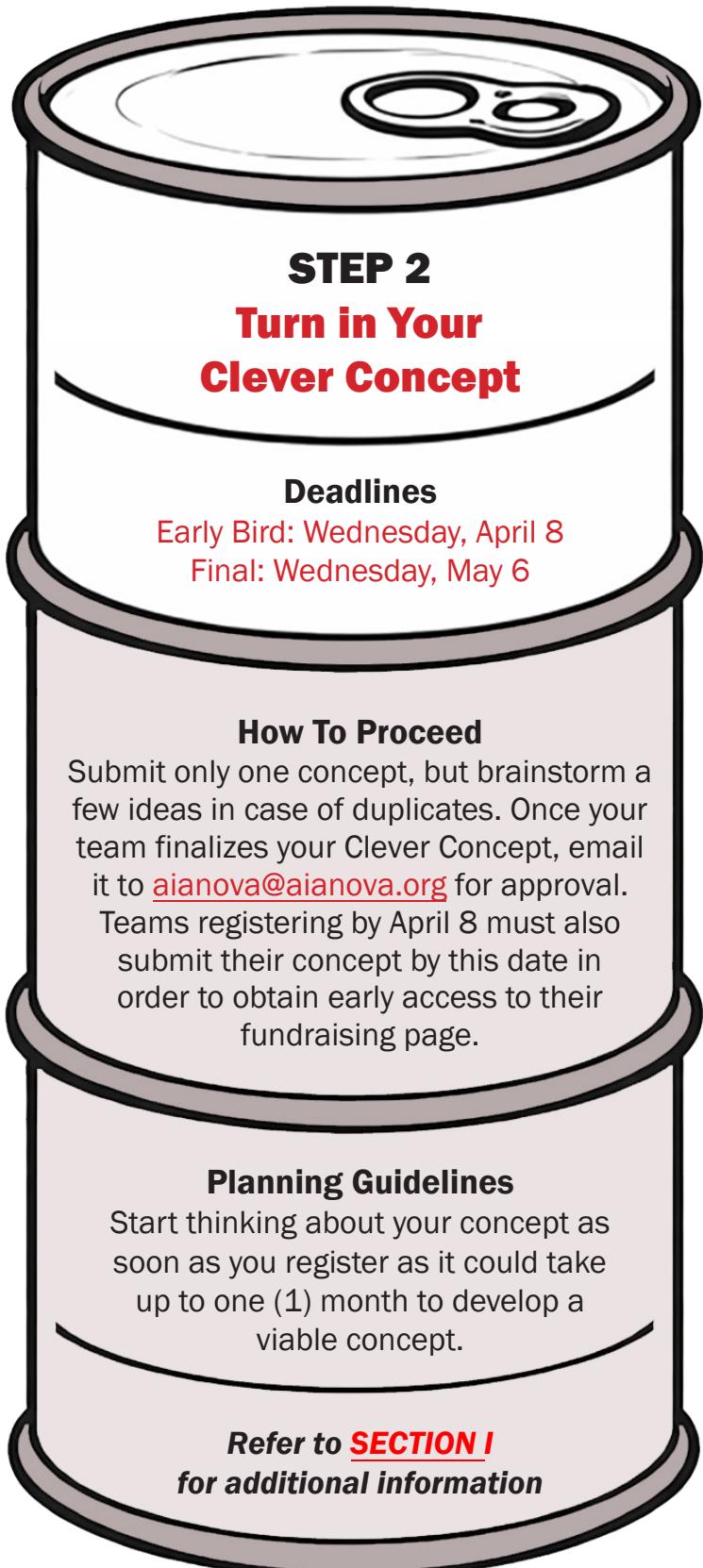
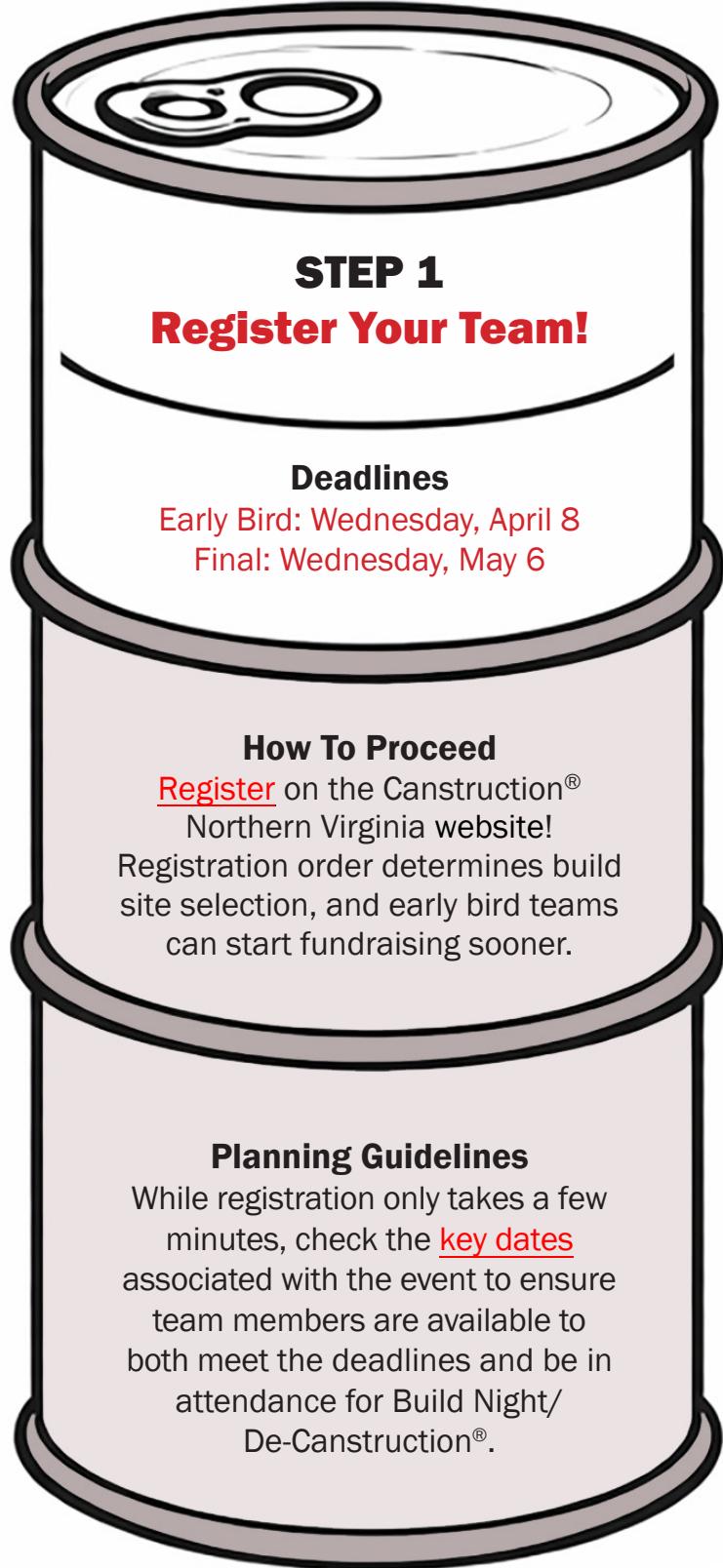
- Best Original Design
- Best Meal
- Best Use of Labels
- Structural Ingenuity
- Most Cans
- Peoples' Choice Award
- Local Awards at Judges' Discretion

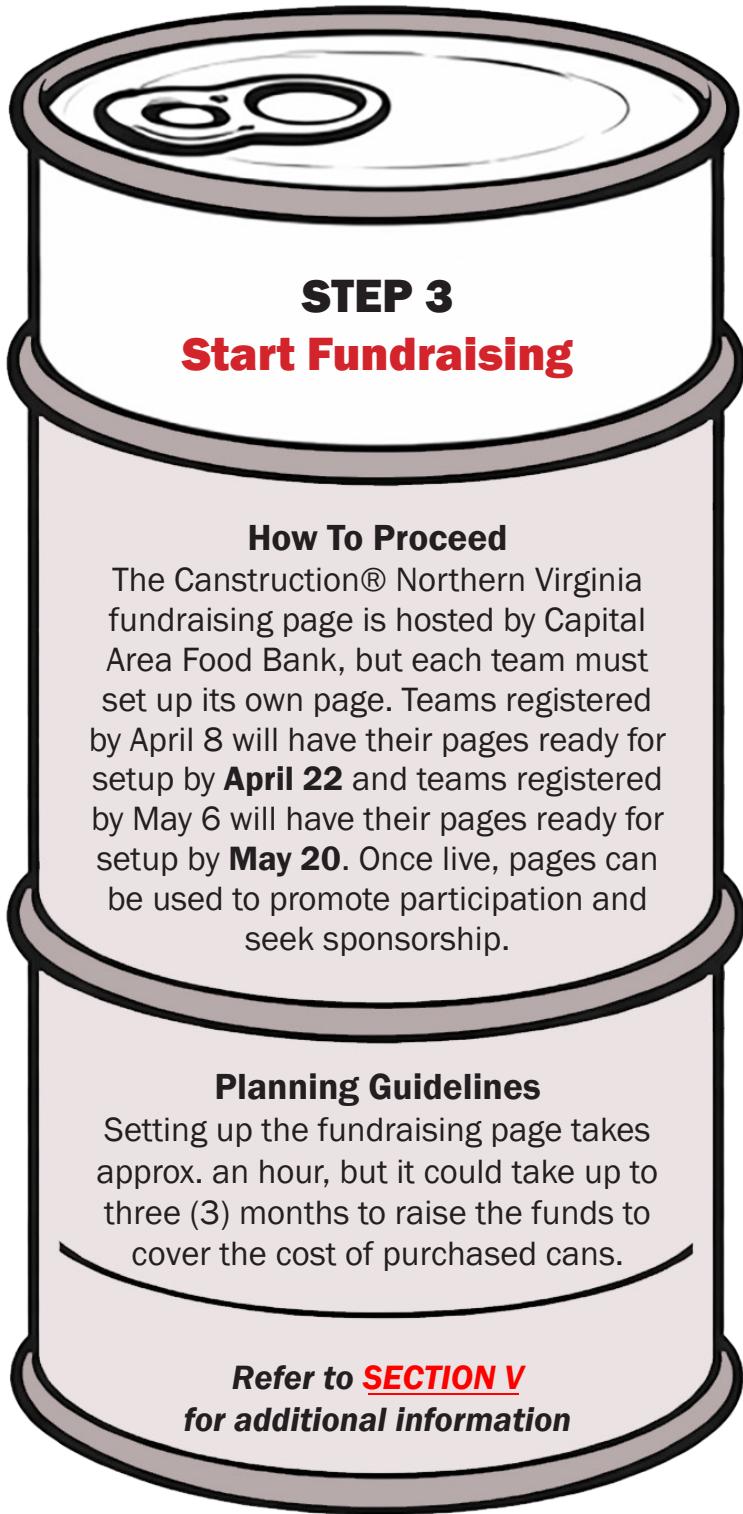
Awards will be announced at a restaurant located in Fashion Centre at Pentagon City. The Awards Event and De-Canstruction will be held back-to-back on the evening of Monday, Sept. 21. At least two (2) team members must be present for De-Canstruction.

Note:

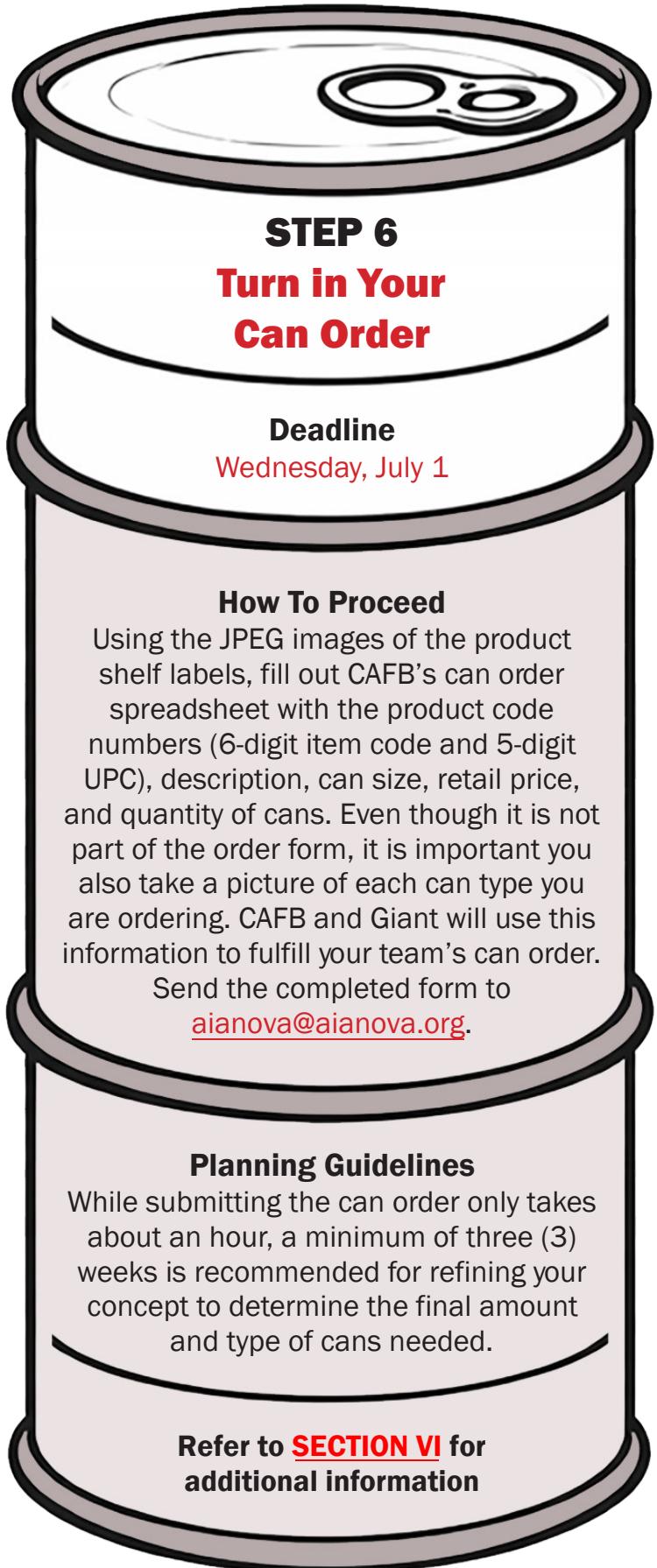
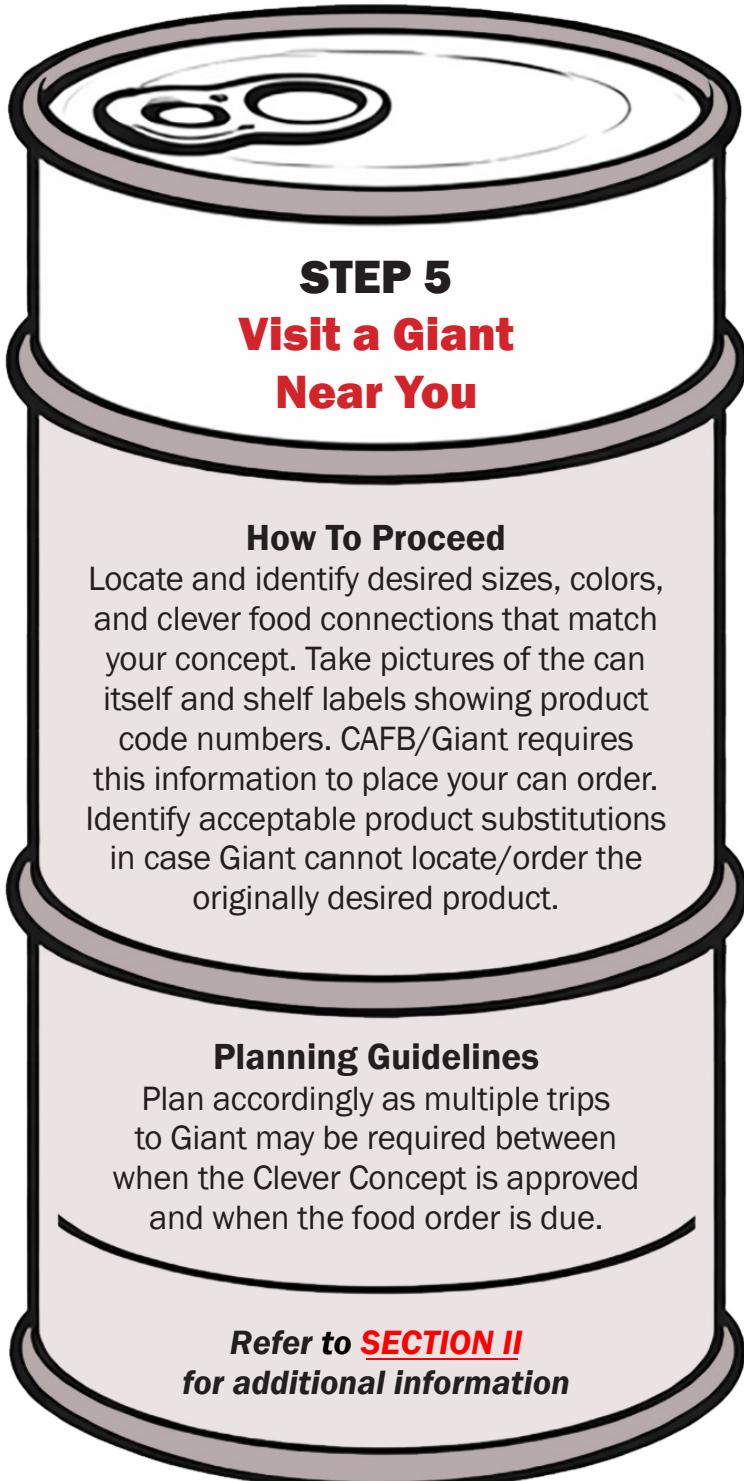
- No signage may be near your structure until the jurors have left the area.
- No team member(s) may be present during judging.
- To be considered for the Structural Ingenuity Awards, the primary structure of the CanArt® contributing to the overall concept of the design must be structurally sound at the time of jury selections.

XI. What's Required for Canstruction®

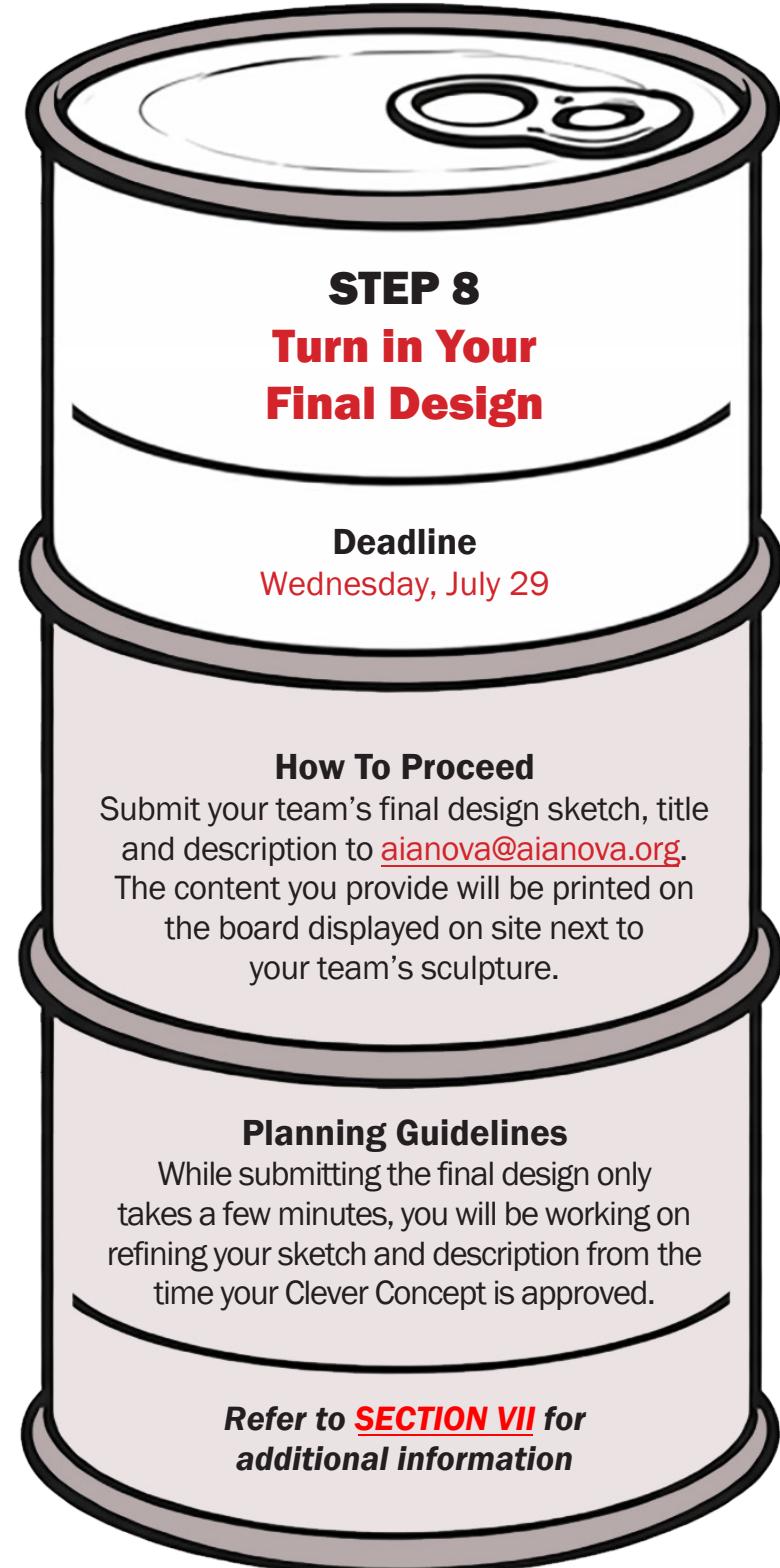
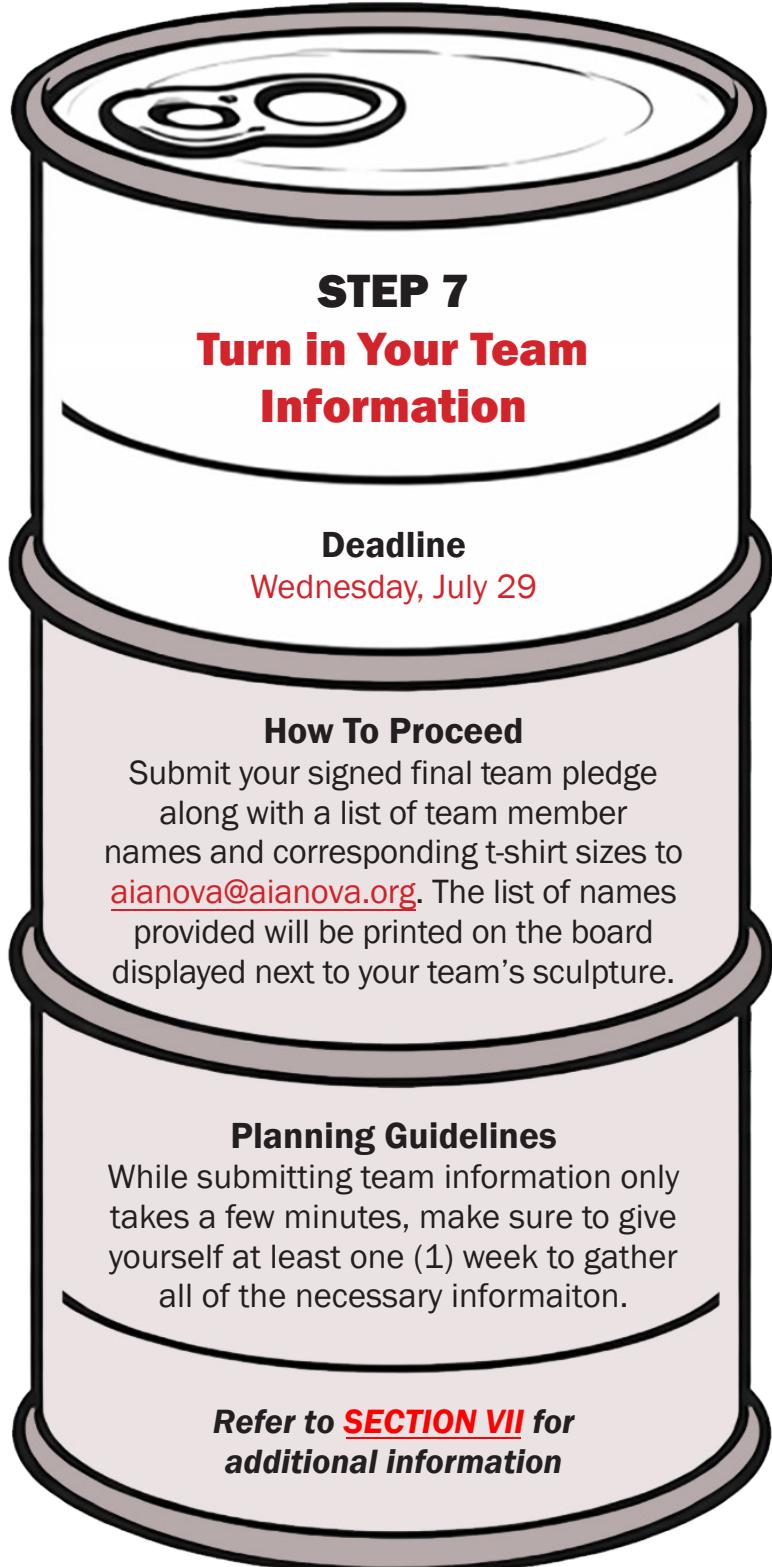




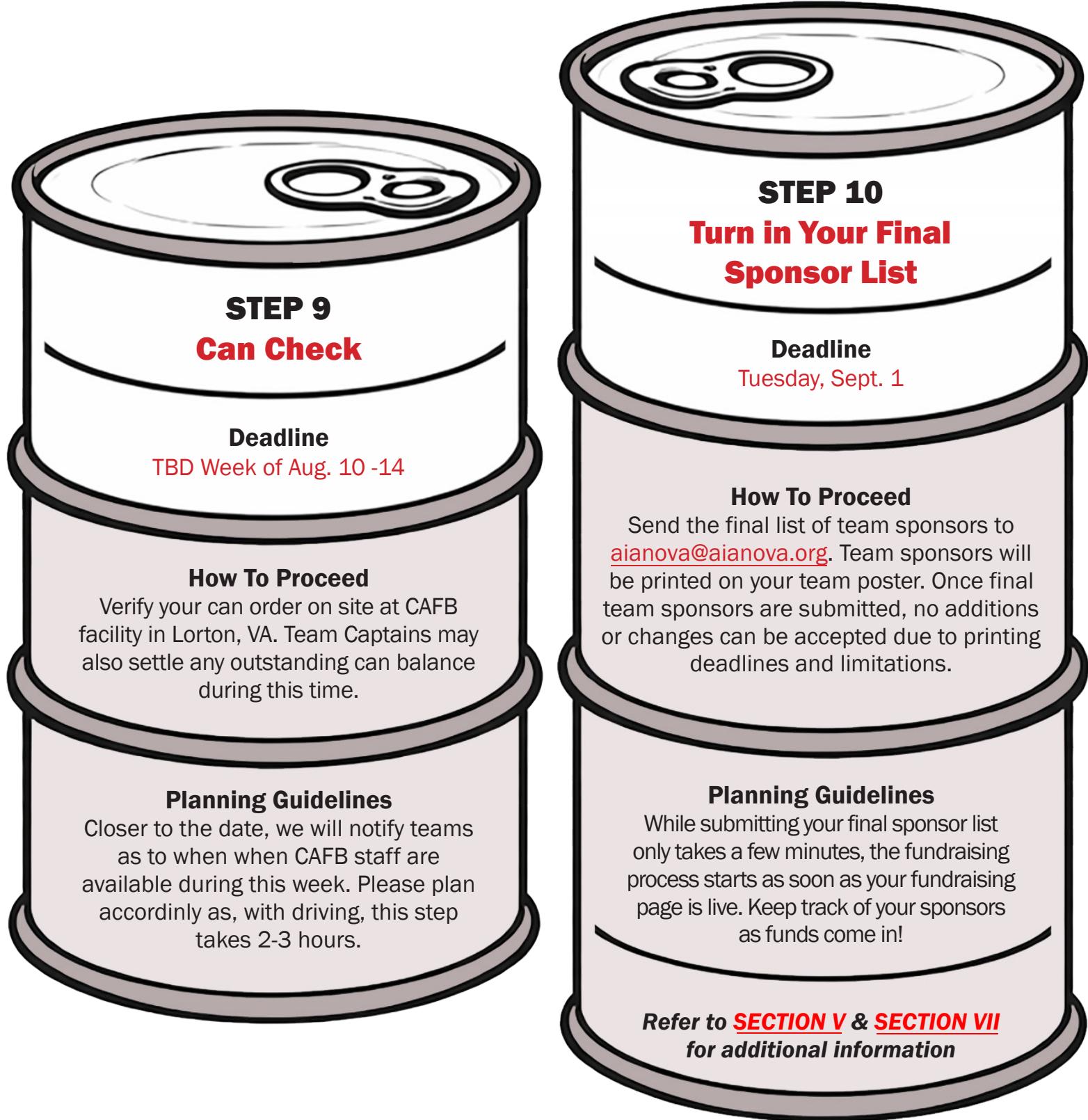
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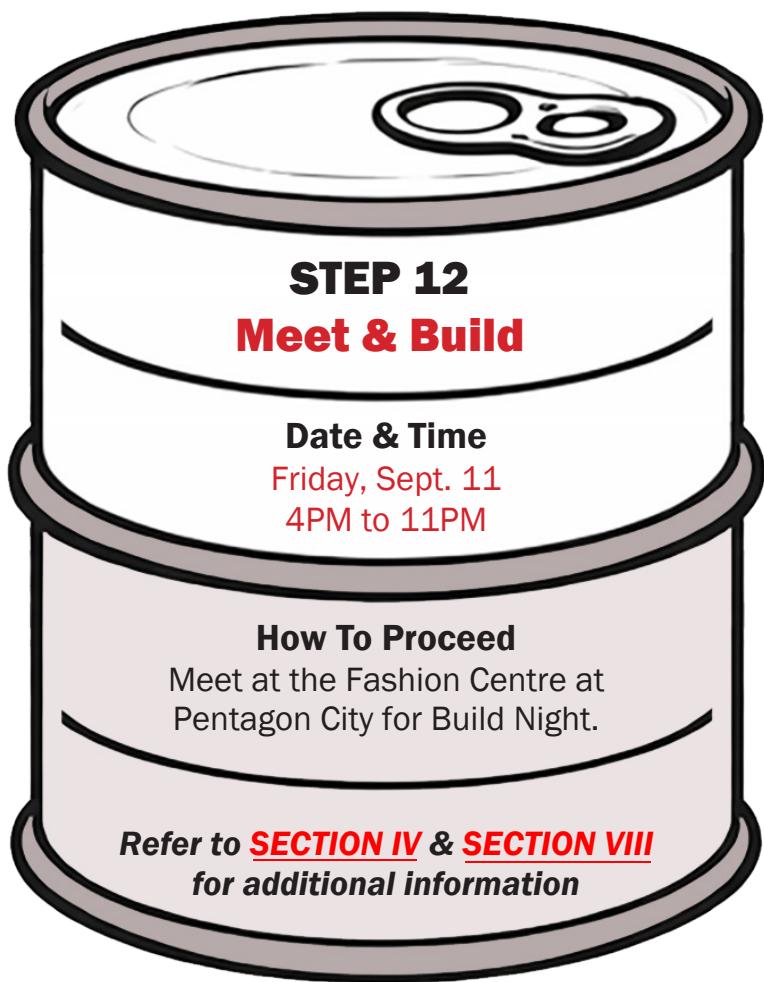
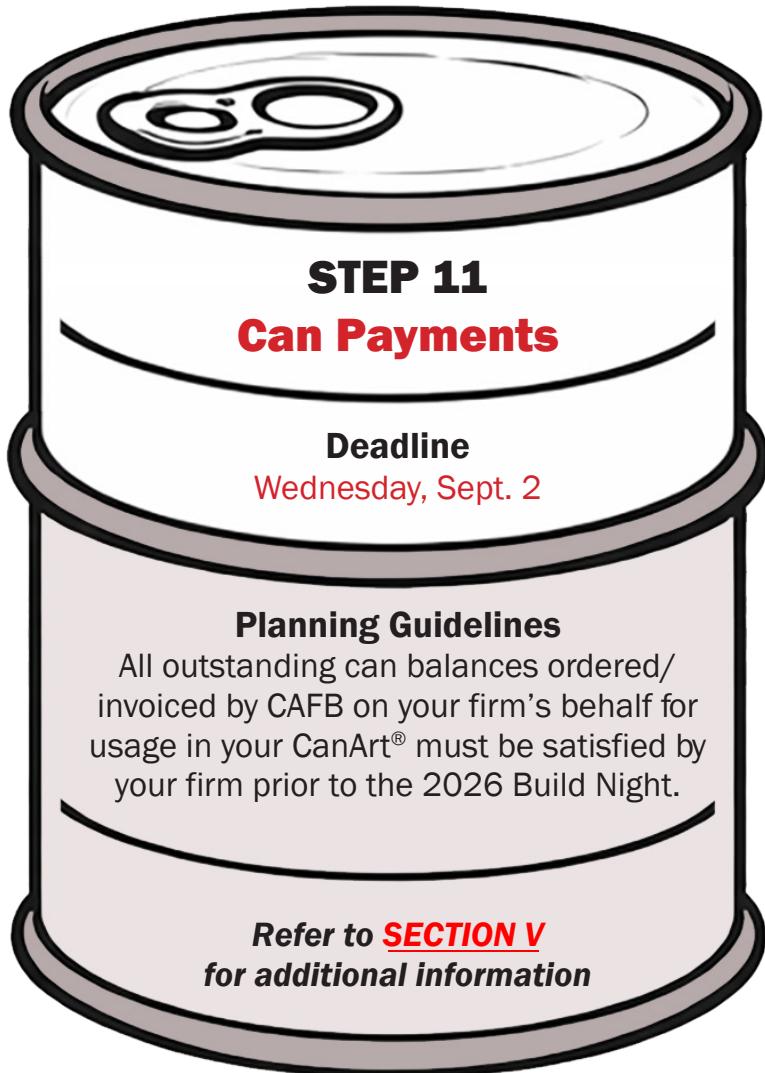


XI. What's Required for Canstruction®

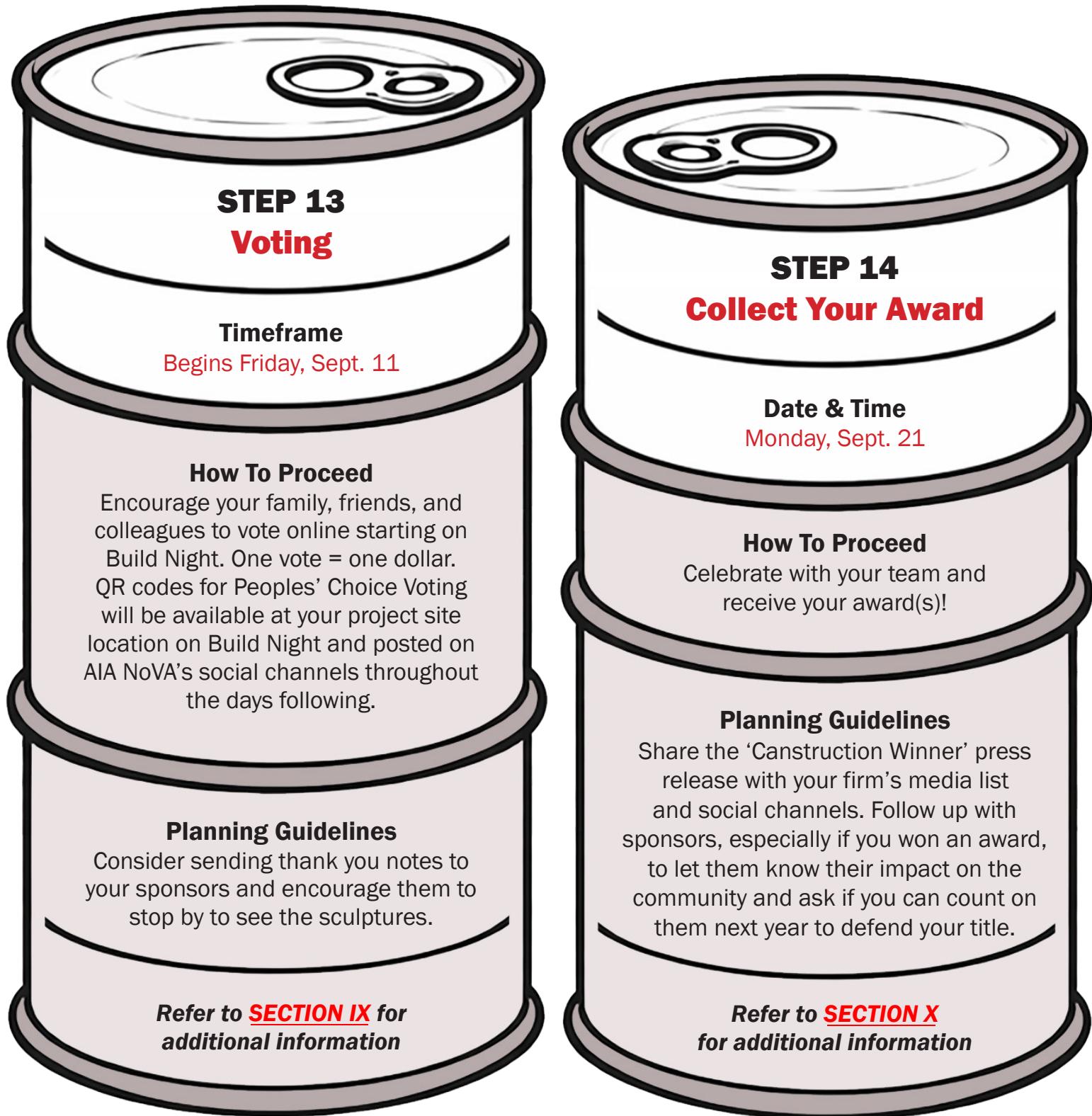


XI. What's Required for Canstruction®

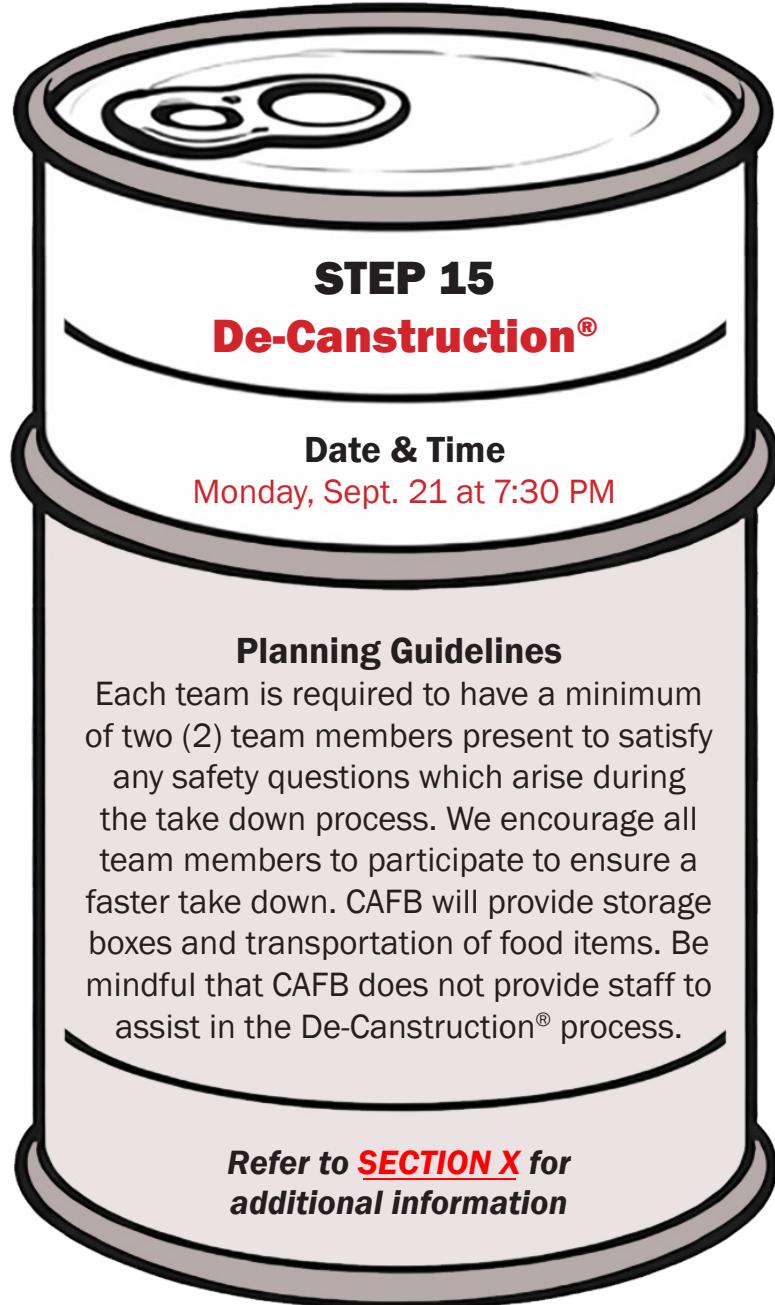




XI. What's Required for Canstruction®



XI. What's Required for Canstruction®



XII. Team Pledge

Canstruction® Northern Virginia 2026 Team Pledge

We are thrilled you have chosen to participate in this year's Canstruction® Northern Virginia event! Canstruction® is a celebration of creativity, collaboration, and community impact, and your team's involvement is what makes it possible. To ensure everyone has a shared understanding of their role and responsibilities, please review the pledge below and sign the next page. Once all team members have signed, the Team Captain should submit a copy to aianova@aianova.org no later than **Wednesday, July 29**.

As a Canstruction® 2026 Team we pledge:

- *To work together with creativity, integrity, and purpose in support of our community.*
- *To meet all deadlines as outlined in the AIA Northern Virginia Canstruction® Handbook understanding that our preparation, fundraising, and organization are essential to the success of this event.*
- *To design and build a structure that is safe, structurally sound, and compliant with all competition rules, using approved materials and food items, while prioritizing healthy canned goods whenever possible.*
- *To actively fundraise, promote our project, and engage our networks to support our team and the overarching mission of turning creativity into compassion for helping those who face food insecurity in our community.*
- *To collaborate respectfully with our teammates, organizers, sponsors, venue staff, and the public, representing our team and AIA Northern Virginia with professionalism and goodwill.*
- *To build efficiently during Build Night by maintaining a clean and safe work area.*
- *To remove all remaining cans and supplies from our build area upon completion of our sculpture and place them in the designated storage area.*
- *To fully participate in De-Canstruction® by arriving on time and leaving our site broom-clean at the conclusion of the event.*

Thank you again for your participation and we look forward to seeing your amazing CanArt® sculpture come to life!

Canstruction® Northern Virginia 2026

Team Pledge Form

Firm Name: _____

Sculpture Name: _____

Team Member Printed Name	Team Member Signature	Date
#1		
#2		
#3		
#4		
#5		
#6		
#7		
#8		
#9		
#10		

Email Your Completed Pledge Form to aianova@aianova.org.