

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Minnesota Governor's Pheasant Hunting Opener
Request for Proposal to Host
October 9-10, 2026



MINNESOTA GOVERNOR'S PHEASANT HUNTING OPENER EVENT

The state of Minnesota is seeking proposals from communities interested in hosting the 2026 Minnesota Governor's Pheasant Hunting Opener. This event is a cooperative effort between the host community, the Office of the Minnesota Governor, Explore Minnesota, and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

Through several high-visibility events for outdoor and general media, the Minnesota Governor's Pheasant Opener helps elevate public awareness of the host community, conservation, and outdoor recreation, and creates a lasting local impact. Please consider your community's marketing, media relations, tourism and civic goals and how hosting this significant event can help achieve your objectives.

Event Overview and Background Information

The Minnesota Governor's Pheasant Hunting Opener (GPHO) was established in 2011 by Governor Mark Dayton. The GPHO is held annually in October on the opening of the Minnesota pheasant hunting season. This document outlines the basic goals and responsibilities of hosting the GPHO.

Event Goals

- Promote the intersection of tourism, outdoor recreation, and hunting/hunting-related activities to media and the general public.
- Introduce and promote pheasant hunting to a broad and diverse cross-section of Minnesotans.
- Highlight the many benefits of public and private grasslands in Minnesota.
- Build and maintain short-term and long-term relationships with communities, stakeholders, businesses, and elected leaders.

Community Benefits of Hosting the Event

The GPHO provides the host community with an opportunity to highlight area hunting and other outdoor recreational activities, tourism attractions, and points of interest. Numerous media outlets and influencers attend the event and generate significant media placements, stories, and social media posts that appear locally, regionally, and nationally. The event creates earned media exposure for the host community before, during, and after the event.

Invited Guests

All GPHO guests must register in advance and be approved to participate. Estimated attendance includes 50 Media, 25 state agency staff, 25 legislative invitees, 50 hunter hosts, and 20 community invites and/or sponsors. Explore Minnesota will assist the host organization in setting up event registration and payments. Invited media receive complimentary registration, whereas all other invited guests pay to attend the event and cover their own lodging and meals.

Eligible Host Community

Eligible community organizations that may apply to host the event include chambers of commerce, convention and visitors bureaus, resort associations, cities and municipalities, or a committee formed specifically for the purpose of hosting the event.

Agreement

A formal agreement between the host community organization, Explore Minnesota, and DNR solidifies the promotion and participation for the GPHO event. Explore Minnesota will present the agreement to each entity for review and signature. Once all partners sign, copies of the agreement will be given to each entity.

CORE EVENT COMPONENTS

Listed are the core components of the GPHO that a host community, working with Explore Minnesota and DNR, are responsible for coordinating.

Friday

- **Event Registration/Check-in:** The host community/organization is responsible for registration on Friday, including the location and coordination of attendee check-in. Explore Minnesota will coordinate the event website and online event registration system. Individual registration fees collected through this system will be paid directly to the sponsoring organization via their credit card processor.
- **Public Land Ceremony/Community Dedication:** Holding a public land ceremony or community dedication has become a tradition of the GPHO. This is an opportunity to highlight and celebrate a recently purchased piece of public land or community infrastructure related to outdoor recreation/tourism activities. This event is free and open to media and the public to attend.
Estimated attendance: 150-200
- **Community Celebration:** This will be complimentary for media and others as determined by the host community. A set price will be included with attendees' registration or per ticket price for other invited guests. This event is open to the public to attend at their own cost.

Saturday

- **Media Row and Hunter Breakfast:** Breakfast must be available for the hunting parties, guests and media at a designated location, with space for media interviews beginning around 6 a.m. This will be complimentary for media and others as determined by the host community, with a set price per ticket for other invited guests.
Estimated attendance: 75 -125
- **Hunting and Lunch:** The hunt will take place on Saturday morning and will include 40-50 hunter hosts. These hosts will guide event guests on a hunt on public lands (preferred) and private lands (if needed) near the event location, with each host being paired with media representatives and other attendees. Additionally, private hunting land and hunter hosts will need to be identified for the Governor and Lieutenant Governor. Lunch must be available for the hunting parties, guests and media at a designated location. This will be complimentary for media and others as determined by the host community, with a set price per ticket for other invited guests.
Estimated attendance: 75 -125
- **Additional Event Activities:** The host community/organization can offer alternate/ optional activities for guests and media who do not hunt. There could be one activity on Friday afternoon, Saturday morning and Saturday afternoon. Examples may include tours highlighting area points of interest, outdoor recreational activities and/or children's school programs related to the outdoors.

LODGING REQUIREMENTS

Lodging

The sponsoring organization/host community must provide lodging as follows:

- **Thursday Night** – Complimentary lodging is optional for the host community to provide based on the media who register for broadcasting at Friday morning media row. Some rooms should be blocked for agency and governor's staff.
- **Friday Night** – Complimentary lodging for between 15-30 media guests. Non-complimentary lodging for up to 50 people; including legislators, invited guests, staff, etc.
- **Saturday Night** – The host Community is not obligated to offer complimentary lodging on Saturday night, but may want to offer it to media staying for the weekend.

If adequate lodging is not available at one property, other arrangements may be considered and should be outlined.

Lodging properties should be dog-friendly for this event and must include documentation on lodging letterhead by an authorized representative indicating the property is dog-friendly.

The rate charged to the planning committee by the lodging properties should be the same at each property. Friday night lodging is part of the event package. A flat rate is charged to the attendees for Thursday evening. All money for lodging is paid to the host organization, who in turn will pay each lodging property.

FINANCIAL COMMITMENT

Budget

The host community must generate the necessary event support funding for this event through existing budgets, sponsorships, and/or fundraising activities. Include a preliminary budget estimating lodging, events, food and beverage, marketing, and other costs in your proposal, along with the primary funding mechanism(s) you propose. Regular budget and financial reports will be included in the monthly planning meetings showing income and expenses to date.

Event Grant

Explore Minnesota will provide a grant of up to \$12,000, reimbursable to the host community, to assist with event operations and execution costs. This grant is subject to a 1:1 and/or in-kind cash match for eligible expenses incurred in executing the GPHO.

Sponsorships and Fundraising

The host community must receive approval from Explore Minnesota before selecting contributors, supporting sponsors or in-kind contributions for the GPHO. The State reserves the right to approve or reject potential sponsors.

While fundraising should concentrate on covering the event's expenses, if any fundraising for the GPHO results in revenue over expenses, the host community shall work with Explore Minnesota to develop a marketing plan to promote the host community/area.

Governor's Pheasant Hunting Opener Event Commemoratives

The host community is responsible for providing a blaze orange commemorative hat with the official GPHO logo at the front center of the hat. Estimated number of hats: 250. Any items imprinted with the event logo will be subject to approval.

Other commemorative items such as clothing, bags, etc, are distributed to officially registered attendees of the event. Background information, schedules, maps, community visitor guide, DNR and Explore Minnesota materials should also be given to registered guests.

ADDITIONAL HOST COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITIES

Name Badges/Lanyards

The host community is responsible for providing name badges/lanyards for all official participants.

Event Insurance

The host community/organization will be responsible for securing event liability insurance in the amount of \$2 million to cover all aspects of the event. Hunter Hosts will not accept any fee for services and by not accepting any fees, will not assume responsibility or incur liability for any injury to person or property as provided in Minnesota Statutes 604A.20 to 604A.27.

Event Contact with Health Department

The planning committee/host community must contact the Health Department to determine any needs regarding food handling at the event.

Hunting Land

The Saturday morning hunt should be held on a mix of public and private hunting land within 25 miles of the host community. Private land must be solicited for the Governor's and Lieutenant Governor's hunting parties (about 200 acres total).

Hunter Host Information

Approximately 50 volunteer hunter hosts will be solicited from the host community to lead guests on the hunting portion of the event and serve as local ambassadors. Hunter hosts should be experienced pheasant hunters but will not carry a shotgun during the hunt. Hunter hosts with trained hunting dogs will receive preference. DNR will assist the host community with recruitment and coordination of hunter hosts. A meeting for the hunter hosts is to be held within 1-2 weeks before the GPHO to share event information and pair the hunter hosts with their hunting parties. Hunter hosts, landowners, the local planning committee, and agency staff attend the meeting.

Estimated attendance: 50 – 75

Transportation

The host community should be within reasonable driving distance of an airport. Additional transportation may be needed for media and other guests to and from the airport and event locations.

Example Event Schedule (can be changed based on community needs)

Friday

6–9 a.m.	Media Row
9 a.m.	Check-in Registration Opens
10 a.m.–3:30 p.m.	Media Tours
4:30 p.m.	Public Land Ceremony or Community Event
5–7 p.m.	Community Celebration

Saturday

6–8 a.m.	Media Interview Opportunities
6–8 a.m.	Breakfast & Final Hunting Host Pairing
8:15 a.m.	Depart for hunting
11:30 a.m.	Lunch for Hunters and Invited Guests
12:30 p.m.	Interview Opportunities & Event Ends
1 p.m.	Optional Afternoon Hunting (only if the host community chooses to offer)

Additional Notes

This outlines the basic responsibilities of hosting the Minnesota Governor’s Pheasant Hunting Opener event. The host community must work with Explore Minnesota to develop an event schedule that not only highlights the Pheasant Hunting Opener but also provides opportunities to showcase tourism activities within the area. The host community can also work with DNR to develop additional events designed to promote pheasant hunting to historically underrepresented communities and to highlight other public outdoor recreation opportunities in the area.

Governor’s Pheasant Hunting Opener Event Logo

Explore Minnesota will provide the host community with the official GPHO logo to be used on commemorative items. All uses of the official logo must receive approval prior to being utilized.

The host community agrees to limit use of the official GPHO logo and marketing of the event to official parts of the Opener Event agenda. Events outside of the official Opener Events may not mention the Governor, Explore Minnesota, DNR and the event, nor may the official GPHO logo be used by the host community any event not sanctioned by the DNR or Explore Minnesota.

2026 MINNESOTA GOVERNOR'S PHEASANT HUNTING OPENER EVENT

Event Dates: October 9-10, 2026

The state of Minnesota is seeking proposals to host the 2026 Minnesota Governor's Pheasant Hunting Opener Event. This request for proposal does not obligate the State to award the proposal.

Complete the proposal agreement form and attach it to your written event proposal. The event proposal must include details for the following event requirements:

- 1. Lodging** – Please include proposed lodging headquarters and names and location of any other committed lodging facilities. **Lodging properties should be pet/dog-friendly for this event and must include documentation, on lodging letterhead, by authorized representative indicating the property is dog-friendly.*

- 2. Community Support** – Provide letters of support from local/county government, conservation clubs, businesses, tourism attractions, agriculture, natural resources, gun clubs, and/or other related organizations to help make this event appealing and welcoming to a broad audience, including first-time hunters and non-hunters.

- 3. Provide hunting and outdoor recreation/tourism promotion examples in your organization's marketing program** (i.e. website, brochures, advertising).

- 4. Financial Commitment** – Please include a brief description about the organization's fundraising experience.

5. Facilities – Propose locations and facilities for the following activities/events:

Friday Locations

- Media Row Location 6–9 a.m.
- Registration Location 9 a.m.–4 p.m.
- Media Tours 10 a.m.–3:30 p.m.
- Public Land Ceremony or Community Event 4:30 p.m.
- Community Celebration 5–7 p.m.

Saturday Morning Location 6–8:30 a.m.

- Media Interviews
- Hunter Host Pairing at Breakfast Tables
- Saturday Morning Breakfast

Saturday Afternoon Location 11:30 a.m.–1 p.m.

- Hunters Lunch
- Media Interviews
- Any Additional/Optional Community Activities

6. Please identify the availability of public and private hunting lands through local agencies, partners, and private parties.

7. Please briefly describe how your organization will recruit Hunter Hosts.

8. Please provide a brief description about your organization’s experience in hosting events.

- 9. Optional Activities** – Please include samples of the types of optional activities that may be planned for the event.
- 10. Transportation Information** – Please include distance from a commercial airport and options available for busing or shuttling to/from events included in the proposal.
- 11. The sponsoring organization must provide a current copy of the Board of Directors of the CVB or Chamber of Commerce or City Council Meeting Minutes with the approval of the governing board of directors' acceptance and commitment to host and sponsor the event should it be awarded.**

PROPOSAL EVALUATION

Proposals must be received no later than **August 15, 2025**, to be considered for hosting the 2026 event. This request for proposal does not obligate the State to award the proposal.

Below is a tentative timeline for a site visit, notification, attending the current year's event and first planning meeting for the following year's event.

2026 Minnesota Governor's Pheasant Hunting Opener - Event Timeline

- August 15, 2025 2026 MN GPHO Event Proposal Due
- September 2025 Prospective Host Community Site Visit
- October 2025 Notification to Responders/Event Awarded
- October 10-11, 2025 Attend 2025 GPHO Event in Ortonville, MN
 - » Up to four representatives from the 2026 host community may attend
 - » Governor officially announces 2026 GPHO Location at current year event
- December 2025 First Planning Meeting for 2026 GPHO Event

Please contact Explore Minnesota's Governor's Pheasant Hunting Opener Event Coordinator with any questions or to submit a proposal.

Lisa Havelka, Event Coordinator
Minnesota Governor's Pheasant Hunting Opener
Explore Minnesota Tourism
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Email: lisa.havelka@state.mn.us

2026 MINNESOTA GOVERNOR'S PHEASANT HUNTING OPENER EVENT PROPOSAL APPLICATION FORM

Please complete and sign the agreement below and attach to the proposal information requested in the specifications along with a copy of the sponsoring/hosting organization's current meeting minutes showing approval of support for submitting to host the 2026 Governor's Pheasant Hunting Opener. Include the signature of the Officer of the sponsoring/hosting Organization.

Name of Sponsoring/Host Organization _____

Host Community _____

Contact Person _____

Address _____ City _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____ Cell Phone _____ Fax _____

E-mail _____ Website _____

Tourism Region: Southern ____ Central ____ Northwest ____ Northeast ____ Metro ____

Signature of Officer of Sponsoring/Host Organization _____

Printed Name _____

Signing this form signifies agreement of the organization to provide a minimum of the requirements as outlined in the attached proposal information if selected as the 2026 Minnesota Governor's Pheasant Hunting Opener event host community and sponsoring organization.

****Please attach a copy of the organization's meeting minutes showing approval of submitting a proposal for the Minnesota Governor's Pheasant Hunting Opener event; including the signature of the Officer of the Sponsoring/Host Organization.****

Disclosures

Proposals are carefully considered and compared. This request for proposal does not obligate the State to award the proposal. The State reserves the right to cancel the solicitation if it is considered to be in its best interest.

All documents must be received by August 15, 2025, to be considered.

Please return to: Explore Minnesota | Lisa Havelka, Southern Industry Relations
lisa.havelka@state.mn.us



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exploreminnesota.com/industry