

Affiliate Welcome Center Program

The Affiliate Welcome Center Program is part of the Explore Minnesota Welcome Center network. While there is no financial exchange between Explore Minnesota and the participating tourism organization, the program enhances a community's visibility to travelers.

What impact do programs like this have on local tourism?

Programs like the Affiliate Welcome Center Program can have a significant impact on local tourism in several ways:

- **Increased Visibility:** By distributing publications and featuring locations on well-trafficked platforms like Explore Minnesota's website, these programs put smaller communities on the map for travelers, encouraging them to visit.
- **Improved Visitor Experience:** Accessible materials like travel guides, maps, and curated brochures help travelers plan their trips more effectively. A well-staffed welcome center also ensures visitors receive helpful recommendations, enhancing their overall experience.
 - **Economic Growth:** Increased tourism leads to more spending at local businesses, such as restaurants, hotels, and shops. This economic boost can create jobs and support the community's growth.
- **Community Pride and Representation:** Being part of a state-level initiative fosters a sense of pride and belonging in the community. Local tourism organizations can highlight their unique offerings, culture, and attractions.
- **Strengthened Partnerships:** Collaboration between Explore Minnesota and the affiliate centers encourages stronger ties within the tourism industry, promoting a unified effort to attract and engage travelers.

Benefits Provided by Explore Minnesota Tourism:

- Access to larger quantities of Explore Minnesota publications, including:
 - *Minnesota Travel Guide*
 - *Minnesota Highway Maps*
- Additional publications when available and provided based on availability.
- Explore Minnesota decals and/or logo artwork to create signs for Affiliate Welcome Centers.
- Promotion in selected state publications and on the Explore Minnesota website.
- Brief training videos as available.

Requirements for Affiliate Welcome Centers:

- All brochures and promotional materials are provided free of charge to the public.
- Minnesota maps are distributed to informational center visitors at no cost.
- Physical facilities will store, and display Explore Minnesota travel information publications. Both parties acknowledge that storage space is limited and will restrict

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shipments of publications to the initial quantity and any subsequent requests. Each box in shipments will not exceed a weight of 25.00 pounds.

- The welcome center must maintain staff to provide visitor services and promote Minnesota travel.
- Display the Explore Minnesota logo in a visible area of the welcome center.
- Represent Explore Minnesota and the tourism industry of Minnesota in a positive and credible way that reflects favorably on both.
- Visitor counts are required to be emailed monthly to Explore Minnesota at Albert.Lea.TIC@state.mn.us.

Key Considerations for New Affiliate Program Participants

When evaluating new participants for the program, we focus on the following criteria:

- **Operational Hours:** The hours your information center is open to the public.
- **Visitor Tracking:** Monthly data on the number of people served at your information center.
- **Seasonal Consumer Volume:** Visitor traffic during the peak months of May through September and throughout the year.
- **Staff Training:** Details about the current training program for your information center employees.
- **Location:** The physical location of your information center.
- **Signage:** Existing Street or highway signs that direct traffic to your location.
- **Parking Availability:** The number of public parking spaces adjacent to your building.
- **Restroom Access:** Whether public restrooms are available inside or near the information center.
- **Brochure Display:** Adequate space in brochure racks to showcase statewide brochures and maps.
- **Storage Capacity:** Sufficient storage space to maintain a stock of state brochures and maps.
- **Visual Documentation:** Submission of photographs as part of the application process.

Applications are found on our Tourism Industry website under the "Partner with Us" section. [Minnesota Tourism Industry | Explore Minnesota / Tourism Industry Minnesota](#)

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