

Explore Minnesota for Business Council Meeting
Wednesday, January 15, 2025
Virtual Meeting

Attendees

Council Members: Jennifer Byers, Michael Flynn, Sean Higgins, Nick Leonard, Pamela Schechtman, Tawnya Stewart, Amanda Taylor, Denise Williams

Explore Minnesota and DEED Staff: Marya Barsanti, Frances Fyten, Beth Helle, Karina Hill, Sean Lydon, Lauren Bennett McGinty, Kat Sutton, Matt Varilek

Agenda

Welcome and Approval of Minutes

- The minutes from the October 8, 2024, Council meeting were approved.

Workforce Attraction and Business Attraction Performance Updates

- The strongest performing messaging in this campaign focuses on quality of life.
- Sponsored content with *The Atlantic* and *Conde Nast* has performed well.
- YouTube AI has performed strongly, with an 85% view through rate on skippable videos (well above average rate of 60%).
- and the strongest performing markets have been San Francisco, Boston, Washington D.C., Seattle/Tacoma and Denver.
- The campaign is continually adjusted to keep building momentum, with additional SEM spending on specific key words.
- Reddit channels are continually monitored.
- In recent months, Minnesota has received significant positive media attention, and the campaign is adjusted to capitalize on the interests of people discovering the state for the first time.
- The click-through rate decreased in November by 18%, but conversion rate increased by 66%, indicating strong interest by content viewers.
- The highest converting keywords were “move to mn”, “things to know before moving to minnesota”, and “state with low cost of living”.
- The cost per conversion decreased by 30% over this period.
- Explore MN is gathering information on winter creative and how best to integrate winter content into campaigns to highlight the fact that the state has four seasons.
- Staff has discussed ways to highlight the climate advantages of Minnesota and the state’s lower risk from climate change.
- KPIs are generally focused on the top of the funnel.
- Discussions are ongoing about the most effective ways to serve information to people, such as newsletter signups, a potential check box when someone applies for a driver’s license, or a way to target job seekers.
- The business attraction campaign launched in September 2024, and early campaign

data is being reviewed.

- All video-forward content has had the best performance; additional strong performers include NPR Business & Innovation podcasts, Forbes, LinkedIn, Business Facilities Display Package.
- All active tactics are performing above benchmarks.
- DEED sites have experienced increased traffic.
- Explore MN.com/business includes repackaged and reformatted content from joinusmn.com.
- The Business Facilities Display Package is seeing a 1.66% click through rate (above the typical click through rate of .10%); there are higher open rates by nearly 10% for all business facilities emails.
- Business attraction is a long process; it takes years for businesses to relocate.
- When people or organizations show interest, they are sent to DEED as leads, and DEED is seeing momentum in this pipeline.
- There has been no observed negative impact on perceptions of Minnesota after recent workforce reductions or other negative news from large companies; overall job creation and the tech sector remain strong, while the unemployment rate remains low.
- It will be important as the campaign moves forward to amplify these positive stories about Minnesota's economy.
- New web content includes: infrastructure landing page (live), talent landing page (in development), and trade landing page (up next).
- These changes will help repackage DEED content with consistent branding and make it easy for people to navigate and to be directed to the correct pages.
- There are also plans to create additional business facilities sponsored content focused on business development.
- There will be continued focus on SEM, with purchases in key words including "Business expansion support", "minnesota workforce", "business relocation support", and "business site incentives".
- Explore MN recently onboarded a videographer to help with in-house content creation for business and tourism campaigns.

Scoping of Resident Retention and Recovery Campaign

- The campaigns start with tourism marketing, because visiting a place has a significant impact on whether someone would consider moving there.
- Tourism marketing includes quality of life messaging, which connects with workforce attraction.
- The resident retention campaign will start with younger audiences, targeting recent graduates to keep them in the state for schooling or jobs.
 - To prepare for this campaign, Explore MN has conducted meetings with stakeholders including other state agencies, universities, and economic development organizations.
 - Staff are working to identify data and messaging to target these very specific younger segments of the population to retain or recover them for the state.
 - It will be necessary to work against national trends to retain this population, while resident recovery campaigns tend to produce greater ROI.
 - Audiences for the retention campaign will include recent high school graduates, in-state guardians and career counselors, college students and recent college

- graduates.
 - Targeting of young in-state college attendees/graduates will map alongside workforce attraction targets including healthcare, education, tech, high-tech manufacturing.
 - A one-page information packet is being developed to share with educational institutions, current students and alumni; this will likely be shared for feedback before it is finalized (by the end of the fiscal year).
 - It would be helpful as part of this campaign to develop information about livable wages in Minnesota and the percentage of residents who earn those wages.
- Resident recovery will focus on attracting people to return to Minnesota after leaving for school or early career jobs.
 - Audiences for the resident recovery campaign will include recent out-of-state college graduates, particularly if they align with workforce attraction targets
 - Mid-career individuals who are interested in returning to Minnesota for quality of life, family, and other considerations will also be targeted.
 - Current timeline for these campaigns:
 - Stakeholder mapping & outreach: finalizing
 - Continued research & planning: through March
 - Messaging, content & creative: through March
 - Kick-off with agency partners: March - June
 - Launch internal pilot initiatives: May/June 2025
 - Launch initiatives with agency partners, as applicable: Sept. 2025

Coming Up (Including Legislative Update)

- The Governor's budget proposal is forthcoming.* (addendum below)
- Due to the recent lower revenue forecast, there may be limitations on funding for some programs.
- The work of Explore MN for Business will continue and may be adjusted depending on budget; foundations have already been established for all aspects of the campaign.
- There are three open Council positions (Council members are invited to contact Explore MN or DEED staff with suggested potential members):
 - Minnesota Tribal Leadership Representative
 - Minnesota's Ethnic Chambers of Commerce Leadership Representative
 - Representative in Marketing, Human Resources, or Executive Leadership from Minnesota-Based Companies with more than 100 Employees Representing Minnesota's Key Industries

Future Council Meeting Dates:

- Thursday, April 17, in person – 10:30 a.m.-12 p.m. (lunch to follow).

*Addendum: Budget Update

- According to the January 16, 2025 release of the Governor's budget proposal, the Explore Minnesota base budget for FY26-27 will remain intact.
- The proposal did not include special or one-time funding for Explore Minnesota tourism initiatives, or funding for Explore Minnesota for Business.

- For programs that received one-time funding previously, discussions will continue with the administration about sustaining this work moving forward.
- Agency leadership is crafting a strategic plan for the years ahead, allowing the tourism industry and state to thrive.
- Over the coming weeks, Explore MN will continue to thoughtfully utilize base budget funding for the current and next biennium to determine if planned projects for FY2026 can be advanced.