

**Explore Minnesota for Business Council Meeting**  
**Tuesday, April 15, 2025**  
**Virtual Meeting**

**Attendees**

**Council Members:** Jennifer Byers, Michael Flynn, Pamela Schechtman, Tawnya Stewart, Amanda Taylor, Denise Williams

**Explore Minnesota and DEED Staff:** Marya Barsanti, Sean Lydon, Lauren Bennett McGinty, Kevin McKinnon, Kat Sutton, Matt Varilek

**Welcome and Approval of Minutes**

- The Council voted to approve the minutes from the January 15, 2025 meeting.

**Workforce Attraction Campaign Update**

- This campaign has performed well; March saw the highest ever web session performance since the campaign was launched.
- In March, the new Tourism campaign launched, and this works in tandem with the workforce attraction campaign.
- Organic traffic remained even over the last four months.
- Explore MN continually monitors key words and adjusts the campaign to match the top search terms.
- Connected TV (CTV) ads have 99% completion rate, YouTube ads have 80% completion rate (both rates are well above average).
- Social retargeting campaigns have shown costs per action lower than benchmarks.
- The boomerang campaign has been focused on Meta and LinkedIn, and targets mid-career individuals between the ages of 25 and 40 who may be ready to return to the state for personal or professional reasons.
  - The overall investment in this campaign is significantly lower than would be required for a broadcast campaign.
- In the first quarter of 2025, Explore Minnesota's LinkedIn channel saw a 352.7% increase in impressions compared to the previous quarter.
- There will be campaign expansions to other SEM and paid search aimed at driving newsletter signups.
- Explore MN is closely tracking results to ensure the most cost effective channels can be used in the next fiscal year when there will be less funding available.

**Business Attraction Campaign Update**

- There were increases in web traffic and campaign performance during the first quarter of 2025.
  - January saw the highest overall web session performance since campaign launch.
- A goal of the campaign is to elevate the stories of businesses in MN that are expanding

- in MN or moving to MN.
- A lot of the success of this campaign will likely depend on conferences and trade missions, as well as elevating the good PR the state is experiencing from investments by businesses and by the state.
- There is a strong business attraction pipeline and additional announcements are expected soon regarding additional expansions and investments across MN.
- DEED is continuing to have conversations with businesses about when they will make decisions about potential investments in MN.
- Ads in Business Facilities continue to perform well (568 leads from newsletters since launch).
- The SmartBrief newsletter was launched and has seen better than average performance compared to benchmarks.
- The campaign included a one-time buyout of the Wall Street Journal on January 28<sup>th</sup>.
- Website improvements are ongoing to [exploreminnesota.com/business](https://exploreminnesota.com/business).
  - There will be a separate menu for the business attraction pages, and the Join Us branding is being removed across DEED assets.
  - The goal is to ensure alignment and consistent performance across webpages.

### **Resident Retention Pilot Update**

- The goal of this campaign is to attract people to targeted jobs in the state and keep people in MN.
- The pilot is targeting instate students and recent graduates in the 20-25 age group.
  - Research demonstrated that this was the best age group to target as they are at a stage where they are making important life and career decisions.
- The campaign will use a lot of existing content, but many of the people in the existing content are not in the targeted age group.
- Explore MN is determining how to best deliver messaging to Gen Z through potential use of guerilla marketing and young people telling their stories, as well as apps like Instagram, TikTok, YouTube and Snapchat.
- Explore MN has worked with state agencies including the Office of Higher Education to identify factors that are critically important to students as they are facing the next stage in their lives.
- The campaign will be targeted to publications such as Elite Daily & Bustle (social and display ads), which are more targeted toward young people.
- There will be targeting within the geographic areas of college campuses to attract students to stay in MN.
- The campaign will be complete by June 30, and Explore MN is gathering results and data to help move this work forward into the next fiscal year and the future (if additional funding is made available for new campaigns).

### **Sustaining This Work in FY26-FY27**

- The funding proposal for Explore MN for Business was not included in the budget proposal for FY26-FY27.
- The \$11 million in one-time funding which was received in the last biennium was invested in materials and promotional activity.
- The campaign showed that business and workforce attraction campaigns can pair with

- tourism campaigns to elevate each other and elevate the state.
- Explore MN is developing plans to move this work forward in a way that is sustainable (without dedicated funding) through:
  - Organic content (web, social, Reddit, newsletter drip campaign)
  - Earned media / PR as a way to tell the story of MN and the investments the state is making in its people and businesses
  - Support for other state agency and organization branding work (e.g., MN colleges, collateral development, event guidance)
- Explore MN will track the impact of the lack of funding for the business campaign on tourism performance in MN, given the close ties between the success of the business and tourism campaigns.
- Explore MN is starting a brand sentiment study, which will focus on state sentiment about MN generally, and not just on tourism.
- Explore MN will track web presence over time to develop an ongoing case study of the impact of reduced funding for campaigns.
- Explore MN is looking at its Visitor Services team and whether they can be trained to answer questions about moving to MN in addition to questions about traveling in MN.
- Explore MN is looking into developing a relocation guide for MN and how Explore MN could provide resources to businesses, counties and cities throughout the state who are looking to attract more workers.

### **Coming Up**

- Several Council seats are still open:
  - 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, July 17 (virtual – 10-11am)
- Tuesday, October 14 (virtual – 1-2pm)