

**Explore Minnesota for Business Council Meeting**  
**Tuesday, October 14, 2025**  
**Virtual Meeting**

**Attendees**

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

Explore Minnesota Staff: Marya Barsanti, Lauren Bennett McGinty, Frances Fyten, Beth Helle, Karina Hill, Kathryn Sutton

**Welcome and Approval of Minutes**

- Nicole Crews will join the next meeting as a new Council member.
- The Council voted to approve the minutes from the July 17, 2025, meeting.

**Update: PR RFP in Final Steps, Livability/Business Inclusions**

- The goal moving forward with Explore MN for Business is to focus more on earned media, PR opportunities, and elevating the story of MN in more places more often.
- Explore MN's PR agency of record supports these efforts.
- Explore MN is completing the final stages of the process for selecting and contracting with a new agency of record.
- The RFP stated that the selected agency must be able to integrate all different components of Explore MN's work, including tourism, livability and business.

**Final FY2025 Workforce & Business Attraction Campaign Results**

- All campaign pages and videos are still live and being used on social media.
- Many assets were created throughout the paid campaign which can continue to be used moving forward.
- Explore MN has worked with different media partners to achieve different media objectives during the campaign:
  - Awareness (increase awareness of MN as the preferred destination for workforces in strategic industries and businesses)
  - Consideration (drive target audience to the Explore Minnesota website)
  - Intent (retarget to those who have already visited the Explore Minnesota site to encourage them to take action)
- The campaign included a variety of paid content, including longer articles, blog posts, videos, and programmatic digital ads in different locations.
- During the campaign, ExploreMinnesota.com/live recorded 620K sessions and 723K pageviews, with paid media accounting for over 95% of sessions and 90% of pageviews.
- Sessions were slightly shorter, and the bounce rate was slightly higher when traffic came from paid media.
- CTV/Programmatic Video and Standard Display were the strongest traffic drivers, delivering high sessions at efficient costs per event.
- LinkedIn, Reddit, and Nativo drove fewer sessions relative to high cost.
  - Reddit saw improvement to CTR after location keywords were added.
  - Reddit performs better as a space for organic conversations; this may be why paid content does not perform as well.
- Campaign data and results will help target spending on future paid campaigns.

- All advertising at Explore MN has been impacted by the “Google Gemini effect” which decreases site visits for everyone.
  - Strategies moving forward include optimizing key words to drive click-throughs.
  - Google SEM is an evergreen tactic which has produced strong results.
  - Explore MN will continue with paid search and keep Reddit as an option for FY26.
- To spend limited funds most effectively, Explore MN will focus on strategies that have proven effective in targeting the right audiences in premium outlets, and will explore opportunities for targeted reach in high-value audio or cross-channel placements.
- The resident retention pilot was successful in reaching the 20-25 age group, producing over 17,000 sessions with a high average duration of 2 minutes and 21 seconds.
  - Meta (Instagram) and TikTok generated highest session volumes and durations, with average TikTok duration of 4 minutes and 20 seconds.
  - Reddit and Snapchat content did not meet all KPIs.
- Business attraction campaign:
  - New business attraction pages were added to [exploreminnesota.com/business](https://exploreminnesota.com/business).
  - The website now supports business-only navigation.
  - Having a more focused business space will help users navigate the website.
  - There are long form videos and a business focused sizzle reel on the website.
  - The goal this year is to identify high impact/low-cost projects and create materials that businesses, cities, counties and associations can use in their work.
    - Explore MN will make available to these groups updated kits, collateral and generic Minnesota-focused video speaking to business attraction.
  - The business attraction has been focused more on niche business publications and sites than on social media.
    - Display ads and programmatic videos have performed well during the campaign, and videos are front loaded with information, which could explain shorter sessions and higher bounce rates.
  - Moving forward, there will be increased focus on public relations and how we discuss the investment the state is making or other available opportunities that people may not know about.
  - Interest in business development fluctuates depending on the economy and other factors, and this can impact campaign results.
  - People who visit the website can complete a lead generation form which is reviewed by a dedicated DEED staff member.
  - The goal moving forward is to explore lower cost channels while maintaining a good click-through rate.
  - Wall Street Journal buy metrics exceeded benchmarks in nearly all categories.
    - The time on site was nearly five minutes, suggesting a high level of engagement with the content.
  - SmartBrief Newsletters performed well and drove significant positive sentiment.
  - A key takeaway from the campaign is the effectiveness of using paid content on premium publishers for brand positioning and high-quality engagement.
  - Over the next year, Explore MN will continue to reassess and monitor which spending has the highest impact.

#### **EMN & DEED Alignment and Recommendations for FY2026 Business Attraction Work**

- Explore MN is working with DEED to review DEED’s content and fold it into [exploreminnesota.com/business](https://exploreminnesota.com/business) as the entry point for this content.

- Work is also underway to evaluate content and functionality on DEED's internal government websites; DEED will continue to host the more technical and logistical forms and content on these websites.
- Explore Minnesota's website will continue to serve as the gateway.
- Efforts are ongoing to align Explore MN and DEED messaging.
- DEED launched a business development newsletter, which aligns Star of the North brand standards and messaging.
- Explore MN is creating a trade show toolkit for out-of-state event marketing, which will incorporate Star of the North brand standards and messaging and can be used by other state agencies and entities outside of state government.
- Explore MN was named a finalist for a City Nation Place award and will present at the City Nation Place American Conference in April 2026.
- Explore MN and DEED will work to coordinate content in public relations opportunities and press releases about new businesses, expansions and funding opportunities.

**Workshop: FY2026 Paid Marketing Spend for Workforce Attraction (EMN Budget: ~\$100k)**

- Explore MN may start a mini recruitment awareness campaign to engage with recruiters who recruit out-of-state and discuss messaging alignment (potentially through LinkedIn or public relations efforts).
- It's important to continue to monitor engagement around relevant third-party content and prepare to address any misconceptions with facts and data.
- It would be helpful to create and engage with a list of external stakeholders who interact with people who are considering moving to Minnesota, including recruiters, realtors, large employers and other organizations.
- An Explore MN priority for FY2026 is to increase instate stakeholder engagement, including with regional development commissions, chambers of commerce, and other individuals to keep them informed about the agency's workforce attraction work.
- Explore MN could consider connecting with organizations leading recruitment efforts across the state to attract healthcare professionals.
- In recent months, there has been an uptick in internationally based companies who are interested in partnering with MN-based organizations.
  - Governor's trade missions can be leveraged to help move these efforts forward.
  - Changes to federal visa programs have resulted in some confusion around procedures in hiring international workers.
    - Could Explore MN for Business develop a central repository for information around these processes as they pertain to MN?
      - This could help position MN as a place that is interested in welcoming people and companies from anywhere in the world.

**Open Council Seats:**

- Minnesota Tribal Leadership Representative
- Minnesota's Ethnic Chambers of Commerce Leadership Representative

**Future Council Meeting Dates:**

- Thursday, January 8, 10-11am (virtual)
- Thursday, April 2, 10-11am (virtual)
- Thursday, July 16, 10-11am (virtual)
- Thursday, October 8, 10-11am (virtual)