



Explore Minnesota for Business Council Meeting

Thursday, July 16, 2026

Attendees

Attendees: Adam Hammer, Annie Holschuh, Jennifer Byers, Lisa Anderson, Michael Flynn, Nick DiLorenzo, Nicole Crews, Pam Schechtman, Sam Voss, Sydney Zayethri, Tawnya Stewart

Explore Minnesota (EMN) Staff: Lauren Bennett McGinty, Beth Helle, Frances Fyten, Kat Sutton, Lyndsey Hanson, Lydia Hollingsworth, Sean Lydon

Resident Attraction Update

- We ran a mini campaign from May 5 – June 30 to target smaller region:
 - Chicago and Madison had a lot of demographics we were looking for in Minnesota (industry, age, etc.)
 - We also tested a new in-house video style for TikTok.
 - We don't have results yet (available at the October meeting).
- New student attraction article launching this summer:
 - We are working in partnership with higher education institutions.
 - There's interest in creating messaging and promotional material around student attraction.
 - We are currently developing a student attraction article that will live on EMN website, similar to resident retention.

Business Attraction Update

- No funding available for FY2027 but continuing to work with Dept. of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) on organic activities:
- DEED updated their business website to align more closely with exploreminnesota.com/business and so the sites can work in tandem.
- DEED also launched Choose Minnesota campaign:
 - Goal is to draw sales to local MN businesses. Remind people to shop local and choose MN businesses.
 - Campaign started with roundtables and a PR effort over the last couple of months, which saw good returns. Also, gathering data from IG and FB and other paid ads.

Comment: I just wanted to congratulate the Travel & Leisure post that states Minneapolis is one of the 11 best places for young adults to move to. It was great to be listed among other cities and get exposure.

Public Relations Updates

- EMN is working with BVK (PR agency of record) for more livability and quality of life messaging.
 - For instance, Lauren has been on more podcasts to promote MN as a place to visit and live.
 - We are actively pitching more campaigns surrounding why MN is the top state for families, promoting how much less you can pay to live here and how we welcome newcomers.
 - Also exploring neighborism messaging and why MN is the best for MedTech.
- EMN welcomed new External Relations Director, Ben Johnson, to focus on strategic comms for the whole agency.
- For FY2027, EMN is developing a new subject matter expert ambassador program for PR outreach.
 - **Request for council members:** Please consider sending EMN team ideas, contact details of anyone who can to speak to why MN is a great place to work, live, visit as we pitch articles and get new voices to tell the story.

FY2027

- Very minimal funding.
- EMN is working with DEED to work on marketing and increase reach across the state.
- Focusing on increased perception of Minnesota:
 - Recently put out perception study through EMN and will conduct another in the next few months.
 - Preliminary results: perception has stayed the same or increased in a positive way
- Increased to outreach across the state—how do we talk to other businesses and universities and network with more people regarding outreach efforts?
- We are activating leads gathered over the last few years to work toward FY2027 and are planning what funding might look like.

Example Activities:

- Docuseries
 - Capturing real life examples of newcomers and why they chose and stayed in MN; similar in style to previous Star of the North videos
 - Three stories per season: highlighting northern, southern and metro areas and documenting why people moved to Minnesota.

- In process of filming a couple moved from Seattle to Winona.
- More to come on launch date, largely focused on organic, including social media, website and earned media.
- Partnerships
 - Trying to tap into large associations that will give us a bigger spread.
 - EMN has a meeting with University of MN in alignment with their 175th anniversary to tap into alumni reach out of state and help us get to the boomerangs or anyone interested in moving to Minnesota.
- We also have ongoing efforts in PR, relying on good data to tell good stories. With more data via surveys or focus groups, we can spend time strategizing to move forward.

Legislative Update

- New governor elected in November.
- Currently starting to build out policy and budget with the transition in mind. We are always looking for new avenues for funding.
- Putting in proposals to increase budget and a sustainable funding model for the agency as a whole.
- We will shift into high gear come November
- **Council Request:** If there are priorities to include in proposal, please let us know.

Discussion and Feedback

Question: As we look to 2027, did anything come from your roundtables? Any insights or opportunities that might be notable to share?

Answer: Roundtables were more focused on tourism, but there was discussion of development opportunities. We heard more interest in greater or rural MN development. We've looked at programs that are successful in North Dakota and Tennessee, in collaboration with commerce and economic development teams, such as Main Street revival efforts, outdoor rec, and quality of life which has attracted business. We will include this in our proposal and find ways in our work to establish cross-county/city collaboration in greater Minnesota. We've also worked with Tribal Nations, walking through new ideas for tourism marketing, and then putting in time for development infrastructure—we're seeing more interest there from Tribal Nations, including brand new web content, which will include livability content, as well. A lot is coming out of greater Minnesota than metro area, so we're looking to connect the two in the coming weeks.

Question: Can we dig more into the McKinsey study about the silver tsunami. As boomers retire, they are getting out of their businesses, and there's an opportunity for younger generations to take over. It could be interesting for EMB to look at the opportunities and growth behind this large trend.

Answer: We see that a little of this in the resort business, so we will definitely look into that further.

Comment: Coming from higher education, we've talked about silver tsunami in nursing and health care to care for the aging community, but I haven't thought about it in that perspective.

Comment: Thank you for the comment about Tribal Nations. Tribes are uniquely positioned in Minnesota, so I just wanted to make sure that was highlighted. We don't talk about our opportunities too much, but there's a definite shift that business opportunities are rising.