



Explore Minnesota Tourism Community Event Grant Program

- Initially funded in 2016, the Explore Minnesota Tourism Community Event Grant Program has touched every corner of the state.
- Community events grow tourism in Minnesota by driving first-time and repeat visitation, increasing overall spending, and highlighting individual communities.
- Community Events must be new to Minnesota (not held in the previous three years) and often fill voids left by seasonal travel patterns.
- Community Event grants generate a positive economic impact and increase media awareness of the state by providing funding to secure and operate new events throughout the state.
- The Community Event Grant Program is 100% pass through funds to the hosting organization.
- Past demand for Community Event Grant funding has left many requests unmet.
- HF 3271 (Christensen)/SF 3111 (Ruud) requests \$1 million in one-time funding to continue the tourism community events grant program.

2019 WORLD PLOUGHING COMPETITION BAUDETTE, MN

More than 7,000 people attended the weekend competition with 53 competitors from 28 countries. Scotland won one division; Switzerland took the other. Some competitors arrived three weeks in advance to practice. Next year, Russia will host the championship!

ICE HARVEST 2018

DETROIT LAKES, MN

THE CITY OF DETROIT LAKES' FOOD AND BEVERAGE TAX SAW AN INCREASE OF OVER 12% OVER 2017, AN ADDITIONAL \$327,400 IN SALES IN THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY 2018 JUST IN LOCAL RESTAURANTS! HOTELS, RETAIL, GAS AND ATTRACTIONS ALL SAW A NOTICEABLE INCREASE TOO!

JULY 2019 ADAPTIVE SPORTS USA JUNIOR NATIONALS BLOOMINGTON, MN

Grant funding was attractive and helpful to bring Adaptive Sports USA's signature event to Minnesota. Adaptive Sports USA Junior Nationals began in 1984 and is the largest longstanding annual multi-sport event for youth with a physical disability and/or visual impairment in the United States. Athletes and their families from around the nation were welcomed to Minnesota last summer for the weeklong event.

Please Support HF 3271 (Christensen) & SF 3111 (Ruud)

Explore Minnesota Tourism Community Events Grants Funding



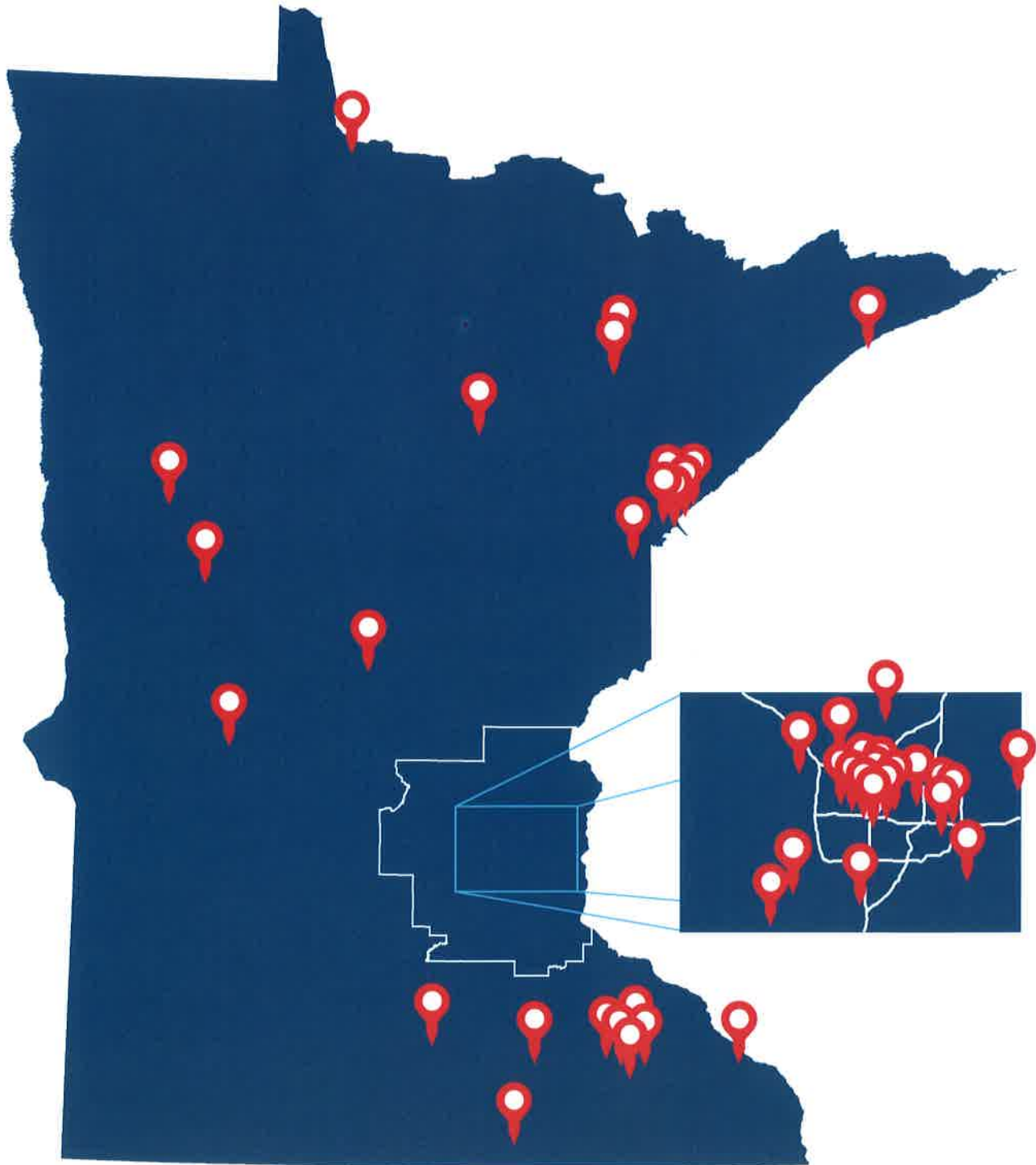
Organizations and Businesses Supporting Funding for Tourism Community Events Grant Program

Visit Duluth	Arrowwood Resort & Conference Center Alexandria, Minnesota
Timber Trails Resort Remer, Minnesota	Community of Minnesota Resorts
Visit Saint Paul	Roseville Convention & Visitors Bureau
Visit Grand Rapids	Ed-Ventures Educational Travel
Bloomington Convention & Visitors Bureau	Brophy Lake Resort Alexandria, Minnesota
Visit Sauk Centre	Mall of America
Hidden Haven Resort Cohasset, Minnesota	Minnesota Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus
Visit Fairmont	Explore Minnesota Golf
TrueMedia	Fergus Falls Convention & Visitors Bureau
Visit Mankato	Meet Minneapolis
Visit Saint Cloud	Visit Shakopee
Visit Winona	Grand View Lodge Nisswa, Minnesota
Niemeyer's Rugged River Resort Brainerd, Minnesota	Canal Park Lodge Duluth, Minnesota
Boyd Lodge Crosslake, Minnesota	Fargo/Moorhead Convention & Visitors Bureau
Iron Range Tourism Bureau	Explore Alexandria Tourism
Pike Point Resort Tenstrike, Minnesota	Discover St. Louis Park
Otter Tail County	Leech Lake Area Chamber of Commerce
Sunset Bay Resort Richville, Minnesota	Stillwater/Oak Park Heights Convention & Visitors Bureau
Experience Burnsville	Hampton Inn & Suites Alexandria, Minnesota
Minneapolis Northwest	... and many more!!

The Minnesota Tourism Growth Coalition was established in 2013 to coordinate activities to increase the marketing budget of Explore Minnesota Tourism through an increase in awareness of the importance of the tourism industry in Minnesota.

For more information visit: mntourism.net or contact Sarah Psick spstick@psickcapitalsolutions.com

Since its launch as a pilot program in FY 2017, Explore Minnesota has awarded a total of **45 grants**.





February 6, 2020

Honorable Tim Walz
Governor of the State of Minnesota
130 State Capitol
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Governor Walz:

I am writing to strongly encourage you to support the Explore Minnesota Tourism supplemental budget request of \$1 million for the Community Events Grant Program. Our community is very supportive of the events grant program because we have seen first-hand the results that it has brought to the state. In fact, we are starting our fourth year of Gather in the GreenSeam, an event that would not have started without the support of the Community Events Grant Program.

Gather in the GreenSeam was created to increase awareness of the GreenSeam, primarily within the Greater Mankato area in the first year, and to drive visitors to agri-tourism related services and activities. Visit Mankato led the promotional campaign highlighting the themed weekends as well as all participating partners. Much of our campaign was focused on drawing visitors from Iowa and South Dakota markets. In our best estimation, the 4.5 million impressions provided by all of our media efforts resulted in \$130,000 worth of media exposure, and the two month promotional period yielded an increase of 3% in hotel occupancy and 5% in average daily rate over the past three year average.

Visit Mankato engaged twenty-five partners for the event. As a collaborating organization, the director of the GreenSeam shared that he experienced an increase in buzz about the GreenSeam as a result of the new event. He received several inquiries which opened the door to many conversations and connections. As a partner, the Children's Museum of Southern Minnesota boasted that their participation doubled from an average of 4,500 visitors in previous years to over 9,000 over the Gather in the GreenSeam promotional period.

This new event certainly raised the awareness of the value of Visit Mankato on a new front and created new relationships with organizations the we hadn't previously worked with. It positioned the organization as a partner invested in growing agri-tourism opportunities and heightened awareness of this growing industry locally. We would not have been able to get this event off the ground without the event grant from Explore Minnesota Tourism. Now going into the 4th year we have partners talking about and starting to plan for this year's campaign.

Thank you for considering the supplemental budget request for the Community Events Grant Program and for your support of the tourism industry.

Sincerely,

Anna Thill
President, Visit Mankato



3 Civic Center Plaza, Suite #100, Mankato, MN 56001 | 507.385.6660 | visitmankatomn.com

A business unit of Greater Mankato Growth, Inc. (GMG)



OTTER TAIL LAKES COUNTRY ASSOCIATION

March 2, 2020
Honorable Tim Walz
Governor of the State of Minnesota
130 State Capitol
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Regarding: Community Events Grant Program

Dear Governor Walz,

It is my pleasure to write a letter of support on behalf of Explore Minnesota Tourism's supplemental budget request for the Community Events Grant Program. This grant was instrumental in the creation of OTC ON ICE! This winter festival, now in its third year, was created to support the county's rural rebound initiative – a campaign designed to recruit people to live, work and play in the region. The event is a substantial contributor to the local economy during a much-needed time of year. This year, the event also hosted the Official Special Olympics Polar Plunge. The event drew 200 jumpers and raised over \$67,000 for Minnesota Special Olympics. The Community Events Grant Program was instrumental in the creation of this event and the subsequent positive economic and community benefits.

On behalf of the Otter Tail Lakes Country Association Board of Directors, I encourage you to support the Explore Minnesota Tourism supplemental budget request of \$1 million for the Community Events Grant Program. Thank you for your consideration. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Dean Haarstick
City of Vergas – Mayor
Otter Tail Lakes Country Association – President



ICE HARVEST 2018
DETROIT LAKES, MN

2018 Ice Palace Re-cap

Grass-roots volunteers set out to build an Ice Palace on the shore of frozen Detroit Lake like never seen in northern Minnesota. On a frigid January 2018 day, with wind chills at -20 degrees Fahrenheit, a crew of volunteers harvested nearly 2000 blocks of ice each weighing 500+ pounds. For the next month, cranes, skid steers, and human muscles worked to build a 2 story palace designed by local artist Hans Gilsdorf. Ice sculptures of a king's throne, couches, chairs and fire pits surrounded the palace. Nearly \$100,000 was raised by volunteers and through grants including support from Explore Minnesota. Local contractors donated resources - from professional crane operators to custom-built tools. The adjacent Pavilion was turned into a traveling Becker County Museum, teaching the community about its 80 year ice harvesting history. Ice harvest workers shared their stories of a job they did more than 40 years ago. The City Park became a "Palatial Playground" of professional ice sculptures, high school snow sculptures and a sledding hill.

The Ice Palace was lit in grand style. Music, food, tent party on the lake, senior citizens enjoying hot chocolate in a heated bus; all waited for the countdown while 2000 spectators gathered in the street on a -20 degree evening! The color-changing, LED lights made the palace a magical vision every night for the next 10 days. On Saturday, fireworks were set off from the ice of Detroit Lake over the colorfully-lit Palace.

An additional 18,000 visitors came to see the Ice Palace, 50 media interviews were conducted, and 300,000 screens caught the live feed and social media posts. Eating establishments saw record crowds, engagement photos were taken, memories were made and more than 500 volunteers donated hours in the cold supporting the Palace built by the community, for the community.

- 65 interviews and articles in local and national media
 - Star Tribune
 - Minnesota Public Radio
 - National Public Radio's Weekend Edition
 - Connecticut to Georgia to Hawaii
 - Over 50% of Minnesota & North Dakota newspapers
- Palace Lighting Night
 - Facebook: 15,000 viewers
 - Twitter: 200 engaged
- Saturday with Fireworks
 - Facebook: 17,500 viewers and 1,800 reactions/comments
 - Instagram: 100 hearts
 - Twitter: 65 engagements reaching 800 Twitter users & Super Bowl Twitter Feed!
- Over 5000 views on YouTube videos (local TV3 and others)
- **Total Harvest – Pummeling (start to finish):**
 - **Facebook totals over 220,000 screens!**
 - **Website: 22,600 page views!**
- Economic Impact: The City of Detroit Lakes' Food and Beverage Tax saw an increase of over 12% over 2017.... That's an additional \$327,400 in sales in the month of February 2018 just in local restaurants! Hotels, retail, gas and attractions all saw a noticeable increase too!

More information:

www.IceHarvestDL.org

c/o Becker County Historical Society, 218-847-2938



ICE HARVEST 2018
DETROIT LAKES, MN

Ice Harvest 2018 Testimonials

“The Detroit Lakes Ice Palace was a wonderful monument and tribute to the indomitable community spirit that make our region such an awesome place to live.”

Kent Eken
Minnesota Senator
District 4B

“The community responded with hundreds of volunteers to showcase our City’s history and winter activities with the building of the “Ice Palace”. This fabulous project along with Polar Fest brought Detroit Lakes to the attention of people throughout the area as well as the world! It was like the 4th of July in February! The commitment of our community to provide service for such projects is outstanding.”

Brad Green
Public Works Director
City of Detroit Lakes

“When I heard the plan to build the Ice Palace in Detroit Lakes, I wasn’t sure what to expect or what the final result would be. But after seeing the entire community work together, in sometimes extreme weather conditions, I knew failure was not an option. It was overwhelming seeing the crowds coming to Detroit Lakes to view the palace. Awesome work, everyone!”

Todd Glander
Becker County Sheriff

More information:
www.IceHarvestDL.org
c/o Becker County Historical Society, 218-847-2938

BLOOMINGTON

simply central

Honorable Tim Walz
Governor of the State of Minnesota
130 State Capitol
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55155

February 13, 2020

Dear Governor Walz,

I am writing to you today to ask you to restore the funding for the Explore Minnesota Event Grant Program which was eliminated in 2018. Grant funding is attractive to event holders in the competitive selection process and helps many tourism organizations bring business to their cities that they normally would not have been successful in securing without the help of these grants. Prior to it being cut, it had a long history of success for many cities throughout the State.

I have attached three letters of support from top clients on the importance of these grants and what it means to the sports community.

- Adaptive Sports USA-Empowering individuals with disabilities to be involved in adaptive sports to promote active lifestyles
- AAU Minnesota-Amateur Athletic Union is a multi-sport organization to promote the development of amateur sports and physical fitness programs
- Furfine Network- Network of business development visionaries that specializes in aligning sports and entertainment properties to create extraordinary events.

I urge you to please renew the Events Grant Program so we can continue to provide opportunities.

Sincerely,



Bonnie L. Carlson, CDME
President and CEO
CC: Sarah J. Psick, John Edman





EMPOWERING ATHLETES SINCE 1956

Adaptive Sports USA is a 501 c 3 nonprofit organization.

Honorable Tim Walz
Governor of the State of Minnesota
130 State Capitol
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55155

February 13, 2020

As the Executive Director of Adaptive Sports USA, it has been a joy working alongside Todd Lehrke and the Bloomington Convention & Visitors Bureau over the past year to bring our signature event, the Adaptive Sports USA Junior Nationals, to Minnesota.

The Adaptive Sports USA Junior Nationals began in 1984 and has grown to become the largest longstanding annual multi-sport event for youth with a physical disability and/or visual impairment in the United States. The week-long national sport championship event is open to young athletes through the age of 22, and annually serves over 200 athletes who have a spinal cord injury, cerebral palsy, visual impairment, amputation, dwarfism, limb deficiencies, or other congenital abnormalities. Contested in a different city each summer, we are excited to welcome athletes from around the nation to Minnesota this July to be greeted by your world class hospitality and the beauty of your state.

We are a proud recipient of the Explore Minnesota grant for the 2019 Junior Nationals. The grant will make the event a reality and help offset costs associated with planning and facilitating the event for our high impact, yet small budget nonprofit. The funds will allow us to provide a safe and rewarding experience for the athletes, their families and all of the spectators that take in the magic of the event on July 14-19. It is because of our relationship with the Bloomington Convention & Visitors Bureau and their understanding of the importance of our event that we received this essential funding through Explore Minnesota as well as gained hotels and venues throughout the area. This is the 36th annual event which is bid out to a different city each July. Grant funding was attractive and helpful for us during the selection process. I encourage you to continue to provide such opportunities to create an impact on organizations such as Adaptive Sports USA and leave a legacy in your community.

Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions at 719-439-3823 or director@adaptivesportsusa.org. We wish you luck in your important decisions.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan B. Rossi".

Susan B. Rossi, MNpS, CTRS
Executive Director



February 13, 2020

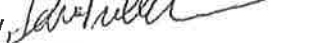
Honorable Tim Walz
Governor of the State of Minnesota
130 State Capitol
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Saint Paul, MN 55155

On behalf of Minnesota AAU and all our sport members I strongly encourage you to continue or renew funding for your tourism budget. The explosion of youth sports and competitive athletic events we provide locally, as well as nationally, has increased the costs significantly to host and/or bid on sport events. As a non-profit organization providing athletic opportunities to between 8,000-9,000 Minnesota amateur athletes we rely on support and financial assistance from organizations in Minnesota, like Bloomington CVB, to operate and improve our events.

Locally hosted amateur sport events provide significant economic benefits to many communities in Minnesota. But more importantly, the opportunities provided to amateur athletes to participate, improve their skills, play against high quality competition, build leadership and teamwork skills, and receive regional and national exposure to potential post-secondary playing opportunities is critical for our amateur athletes. The partnerships we form with our local DMOs is a vital aspect to the success we have enjoyed in our programs as well as the economic success our communities enjoy from these events held in their communities.

Currently, the landscape for providing events to our amateur athletes has been impacted greatly by competition from for-profit event operators locally and nationally. The DMOs and CVBs support for us is extremely critical in order for us to be a player on the regional and national stages. Currently in Minnesota we offer state championship events in various sports and regional and national championship competition in basketball and hockey. Accessing the network of amateur athletic clubs/teams throughout the country requires skills and capabilities the DMOs and CVBs possess and we do not. Non-profit organizations depend on partnering with these skilled people from these entities to successfully recruit clubs/teams to our events and help our Minnesota clubs/teams attend important regional and national competition.

Our National AAU leadership just presented it's 89th James E. Sullivan Award to the nation's top amateur athlete, Kathryn Plummer of Stanford University, at the New York City Athletic Club. The AAU has recently been selected to lead and renew the President's Award for Physical Fitness program throughout the nation. Minnesota AAU proudly follows the leadership and mission of our national leadership - "*Sports For All, Forever.*" Supporting this mission as volunteers is made significantly easier and possible through the assistance and partnership with our DMOs and CVBs. Once again, I strongly encourage you to please continue to budget adequate funds for the Explore Minnesota Tourism program. So many depend on this support at a time when we need to enhance and improve opportunities for amateur athletes and all they gain from their participation.

Sincerely, 
Dave Preller, Director
Minnesota AAU Girls Basketball
Lt Governor - Minn AAU
National AAU Board of Directors
National AAU Girls Basketball Executive Committee



Honorable Tim Walz
Governor of the State of Minnesota
130 State Capitol
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St. Paul, MN 55155

February 13, 2020

Being integrally involved in the sports-event industry for more than thirty years, I have forged strong relationships with DMOs within the state of Minnesota and throughout the country among many other stakeholders in sports business. During this time, I have witnessed an industry that has grown and evolved in every way. I was often asked to speak at industry events on sports-related travel, where the distinction was clearly made that this market segment is the most resilient and continues to generate travel, regardless of economic conditions.

Within the growth of sports event business, so too has been the competition among destinations to host tournaments, championships and sports-related meetings and conventions.

Clearly Minnesota has world-class venues that have hosted some of the biggest events and understands what those requirements entail. Most recently and notable, the 2016 Ryder Cup, 2018 NFL Super Bowl, and the 2019 NCAA Final Four Championships. What many people don't realize is that there is just as much economic impact and collective revenue generated for destinations from the amateur, collegiate and youth markets as there is from the pros. It is this fact, along with the reality that not every destination has the state-of-the-art venues required to host big time events which keeps competition among destinations fierce.

Any destination differentiator that can provide the Twin Cities with an advantage, beyond the obvious venue and hotel needs when bidding for events and/or meetings can be a game changer. And the Events Grant Funding is exactly that type of differentiator that resonates with event rights holders. I was recently in Washington DC where I had the opportunity to speak with several other DMOs, and they too, in order to remain competitive, are working on establishing a state-wide grants program specifically to fund sports events.

Currently, I am working with the Bloomington CVB and Mall of America in bringing an esports meeting to the area in August. Esports is the latest phenomena in sports which has a global audience, defined by both viewers and enthusiasts, which will grow to 580 million participants by 2021. Revenues are also growing and will reach \$1.49 billion by 2020. And while these numbers are staggering, so is the number of destinations who building esports specific arenas. Beginning with Los Angeles, including Las Vegas, Arlington and most recently Philadelphia.



The meeting I am bringing to Minnesota, will include 25 of the top producer, developers and tournament directors from the esports industry. In addition, many of the local stakeholders will be in attendance. These twenty-five industry influencers are the decision-makers who are responsible for determining where their events will be held. It is imperative they come away from this event with the understanding and confidence that only a one-of-kind VIP experience demonstrates. The Event Grants Fund will go a long way in helping to accomplish this goal and will be a key selling feature for your DMO leaders in order to secure their future events.

Now is not the time to pull back on this funding mechanism. And if the past is any indicator of the future, I would say double down on this effort and really separate Minnesota from the rest of the DMOs throughout the country.

Should you wish to discuss this or any other aspect of the industry, I am happy to do so. The team throughout Minnesota are some of the best in the business and I am looking forward to bringing my clients to town.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lisa Furfine', with a long, sweeping underline.

Lisa Furfine
President and CEO

