explore minnesota agency overview

February 18, 2026

EXPLORE MINNESOTA | star of the north

what we do

Explore Minnesota sustainably grows Minnesota's economy by welcoming all through innovative and inclusive marketing, storytelling, and industry partnerships that deliver measurable value for communities statewide.

strategic imperatives

Explore Minnesota's work is guided by five strategic imperatives

grow minnesota's economy

Increase economic opportunity for Minnesotans by driving visitation, supporting local businesses, and strengthening the state's visitor economy

advance & champion welcoming experiences for all

Increase participation from diverse communities, expand inclusive content, and foster relationships with cultural and heritage partners statewide.

provide industry leadership & maximize partner collaboration

Grow stakeholder participation, expand private and in-kind investment, and prioritize collaborative opportunities that amplify statewide impact.

foster state stewardship

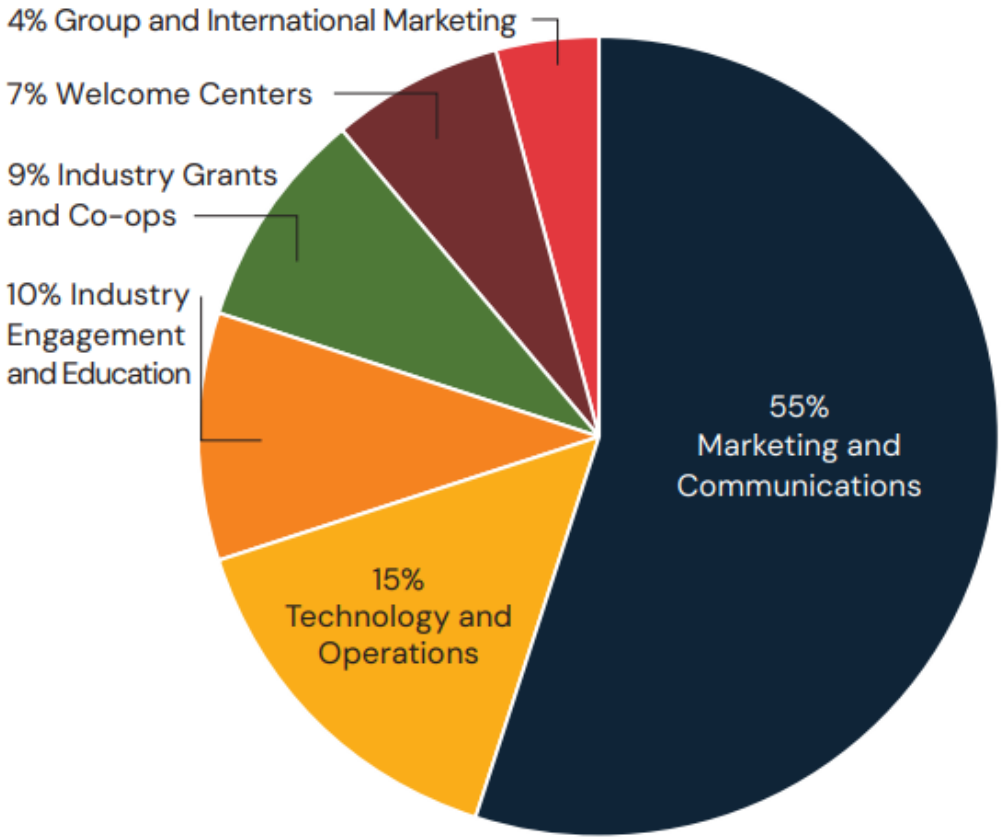
Support sustainable growth and protect the cultural, environmental, and economic integrity of Minnesota's destinations.

ensure organizational excellence

Strengthen internal capacity, data-driven decision-making, and operational effectiveness.

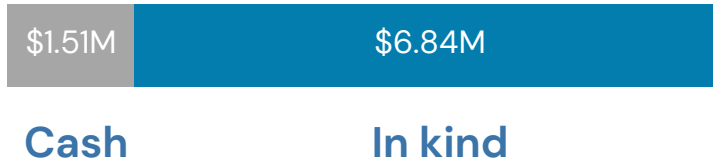
budget allocation for FY25

operating budget: $15.269M



private industry match

Total: $8.35M



one-time legislative appropriations

NEW Initiatives	$5.5M
2026 Special Olympics USA Games	$2M
Taste of Minnesota	$1.25M
Hmong International Freedom Festival event grant	$600K

economic impact

visitors

81M visitors

Tourism activity helps offset approximately **$1,031 / household** in state and local taxes

jobs & income

$8.3B total personal income

182,435 jobs generated

taxes

$2.4B state & local taxes

$1.8B federal taxes

economy

$24.7B in economic impact

$14.7B	$4.6B	$5.4B
direct	indirect	induced

long-term growth & return

Since 2004, Minnesota's visitor economy has experienced:

+ 185.3%

growth in visitation

+ 47%

growth in growth in visitor spending

+ 300%

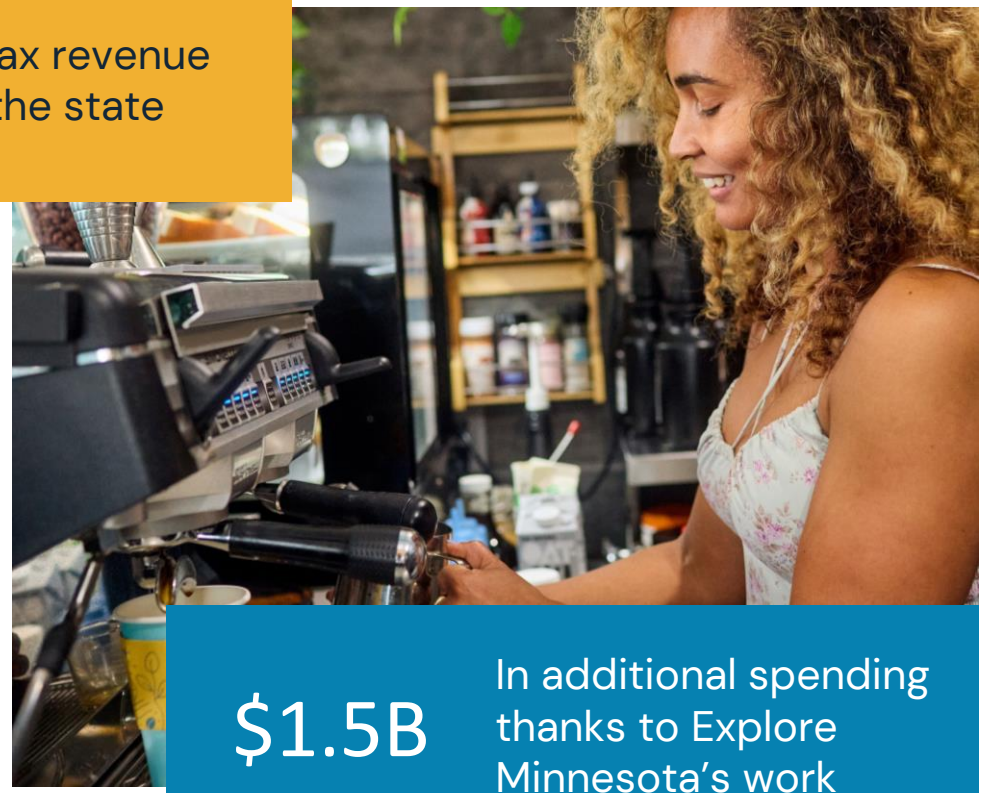
growth in sales tax generated

efficiency & ROI

For every **$1** spent on Explore Minnesota's 2025 spring/summer campaign:

$477 returned to state tourism businesses

$47 In tax revenue to the state



$1.5B In additional spending thanks to Explore Minnesota's work

integrated marketing & economic development

Tourism is the front door to economic development

Explore Minnesota's integrated approach connects:

- Tourism
- Outdoor recreation
- Film
- Livability & new resident attraction
- Community livability

When we invest in one area, we strengthen them all — supporting local economies, attracting talent, and enhancing quality of life statewide

explore minnesota film

200%
increase in productions

20+
film-ready communities

13
productions in the pipeline

$825K
annual budget

outdoor recreation

$13.5B
gross domestic product

$23.5B
economic output

96K
jobs supported by outdoor rec

$150K
annual budget

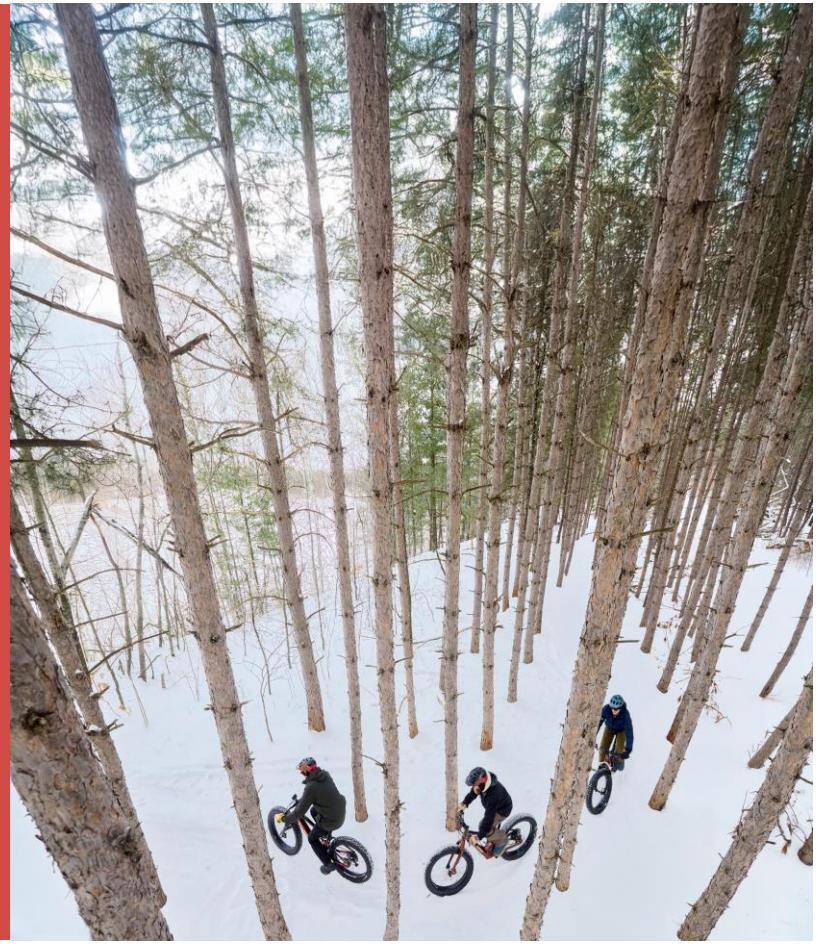
marketing & visibility

Explore Minnesota focuses on marketing investment where it delivers the greatest statewide return, prioritizing:

year-round visitation

regional balance

audience segments aligned with growth areas



digital infrastructure & data

Explore Minnesota is actively addressing the evolving digital landscape by:

- Ensuring Minnesota appears **above the search fold — including within AI-generated summaries**
- Publishing accurate, compelling, and authoritative content that AI platforms can reference and amplify
- Strengthening exploreminnesota.com as the trusted subject matter expert for Minnesota travel and experiences
- Improving accessibility, navigation, and structured data so search engines and AI tools can correctly interpret and surface Minnesota content

media coverage

2.85B
impressions

$10.2M
ad value

USA TODAY

CNN travel

AFAR

BUSINESS INSIDER

TRAVEL+ LEISURE

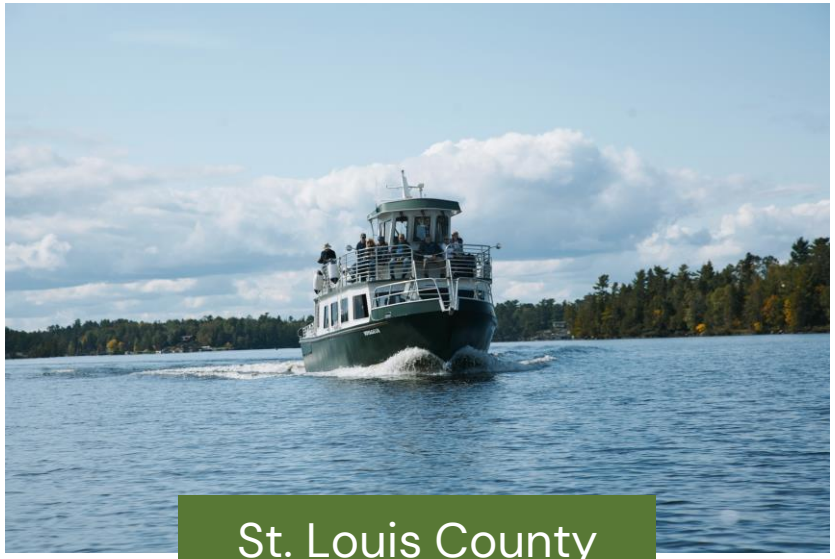
industry support beyond funding

Explore Minnesota supports the tourism industry through:

- Strategic marketing and demand generation
- Industry training, tools, and resources
- Partner coordination and shared insights
- Industry support grants

Explore Minnesota supports the tourism industry statewide through:

- Strategic marketing to drive demand to communities
- Targeted grants and partnerships that strengthen local capacity
- Industry training, tools, and shared data resources
- Coordination that amplifies local efforts at a statewide level



St. Louis County

Hennepin County

integrated program stewardship

livability & perception

76% of people aware of Explore Minnesota advertising also agree Minnesota is a great place to live — representing nearly a **19% lift** in positive perception.

a top state

#2
lake life*
(fishing, boating & paddling)

#2
least-stressed^

#3
state for health care^

#3
best park system†

#4
shopping*

#4
winter outdoor recreation*

#4
best state overall†

#6
happiest state^

among regional* travelers, minnesota ranks as accessible, affordable and inclusive

#7
performing arts

#7
lgbtq+ friendly

#7
welcoming to all races & ethnicities

#8
outdoor recreation

#8
accessible travel

#10
professional sports

#10
affordable vacation

#10
concerts

**Regional travelers defined as travelers from Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, Colorado, Nebraska, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, Ohio, Utah, Wyoming, Winnipeg, Canada and Thunder Bay, Canada. Source: SMARI 2025 Spring/Summer Ad Effectiveness Study*

^ Source: WalletHub *† Source: U.S. News & World Report*

looking ahead

Explore Minnesota will continue to:

- **Efficiently and effectively generate tax revenue**
- **Build on integrated strategies**
- **Collaborate with partners statewide**
- **Position Minnesota for long-term, sustainable growth**

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thank you