



MNTA Annual Meeting
October 1-3, 2025
Sanford Center | Bemidji, MN

AGENDA

Wednesday, October 1, 2025

12:00 PM **Registration Open; Vendor Showcase**

1:45 PM **Welcome**

2:00 PM **Opening Keynote: Journeys That Stick: The Art of Memorable Storytelling**
Dan Jasper

Powerful stories can transform the way destinations, attractions, and experiences connect with travelers. In an industry built on emotion, adventure, and discovery, Dan Jasper demonstrates how storytelling isn't just marketing—it's the heartbeat of travel.

3:00 PM **Break + Vendor Showcase**

3:30 PM **Session: Is Your Community Film Ready?**
Sarah Gebeke, Explore Minnesota Film

Sarah shares the advantages and economic impact of film and television production on local communities. Learn about the Film Ready certification process and discover what producers and location scouts look for in a destination. Sarah shares examples of successful communities, current efforts to attract productions to Minnesota, and strategies—such as using soft incentives—to position communities as attractive, film-ready locations.

4:30 PM **Adjourn**

5:00 PM **Dinner and evening activities on your own.**



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Thursday, October 2, 2025

8:00 AM **Breakfast Buffet Available**

9:00 AM **Welcome Back**

9:15 AM **Session: Reading the Signals: Using Intelligence to Guide Smarter Strategy**
Sydney Walter, Client Success Manager, Zartico
Panelists: Kat Holm, Lovin' Lake County; Tim Zunker, Visit Shakopee; A.J. Frels, Explore LaCrosse

Destinations today have access to more data than ever, but the real challenge is identifying which insights drive strategic impact. In this session, see how your peers are putting data to work, each finding unique ways to integrate intelligence into planning and execution. Hear real-world examples of what's working (and what's not), gain fresh perspectives to inform your own approach, and get a first look at new solutions designed to provide the most complete view of the visitor journey.

10:15 AM **Break**

10:30 AM **Session: How is your Destination Using AI?**
Facilitated Participant Discussion

From helping write copy to producing photos and images, we want to learn more about all the ways your destination is using AI to aid in the creative process, increase productivity, and save time.

11:30 AM **Networking Lunch, MNTA Annual Meeting & Presentation of Roger Toussaint Award**



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Thursday, October 2, 2025 (Con't)

1:00 PM

Break Out Sessions – Choose 1

Newer Executive Directors

Have you been in your position for 3 years or less? Join this session facilitated by seasoned professionals who can help guide, advise, and answer those questions that every new executive has.

Multi-Generational Workplaces

Dan Jasper shares key insights and characteristics of different generations which can sometimes create tension in the workplace. Learn how to maximize generational strengths for a strong team and organization.

Rewards and Challenges of the DMO World

Join a facilitated small group discussion. Facilitators are prepared to tee up questions for the group on topics of interest or manage a freestyle conversation. Attendees always agree the best learning comes from their peers!

2:15 PM

Session: News and Updates from Explore Minnesota

Lauren Bennett McGinty, Executive Director, Explore Minnesota

Hear the latest news and updates from Explore Minnesota's Executive Director, Lauren Bennett McGinty followed by Q & A.

3:00 PM

Break & Browse & Network

Final look at Silent Auction items, Vendor Expo, Network

3:30 PM

Silent Auction Closes-Adjourn

5:15 PM

Bus to The Loft Event Center (meet outside of hotel)

5:30 – 10:00 PM

Evening Activities



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Friday, October 3, 2025

8:00 AM **Breakfast Buffet Available**

8:15 AM **Breakfast Speaker: The Intersection of Economic Development + Tourism**
Dave Hengel, Executive Director, Greater Bemidji, Inc.

Dave Hengel, an experienced economic development director, presents Bemidji's story, illustrating how tourism can be a powerful driver of economic activity and highlighting the importance of collaboration among those promoting economic growth in the community.

9:15 AM **Session: Best Practices for Functional Boards**
Anna Tanski, Fired Up! Culture

Managing the dynamics of oversight from a board of directors, municipality or county can be challenging. Personalities can be a tremendous asset and a significant obstacle to conducting business. Understanding how people are wired can unlock the key to successfully navigating these relationships!

10:00 AM **Break**

10:15 AM **Session: Legislative & Election Update**
Todd Hill/Tony Kwilas

MNTA Government affairs professionals, Todd Hill and Tony Kwilas share the latest from the State Capitol, new legislators, the upcoming election season, and the policies and issues we'll be watching for the upcoming legislative session.

10:45 AM **Closing Keynote: Leading with Joy: The Secret to Thriving Leadership**
Dan Jasper

In a world where stress runs high and daily pressures can overwhelm, Dan Jasper shows how joy isn't a luxury—it's a leadership strategy. Through engaging stories, practical tools, and a thoughtful understanding of human motivation, Dan reveals how joy can fuel resilience, spark creativity, and transform organizational culture. This session invites attendees to embrace leadership that uplifts, empowers, and inspires.

11:45 AM **Closing Remarks + Adjourn**

**Topics and speakers will be added as they are confirmed. Please note this agenda is preliminary and subject to change.*