



2025 Marketing Report



Event Marketing Support Program - First Year 2025

Dedicated tourism bureau hours and paid advertising for marketing the Ely Winter Festival and Ely Film Festival.



Meta Ad Brief - Ely Winter Festival Ad (Running mid-late Dec)

Objective: Drive traffic to Ely Winter Festival website.

Targeting: First half of ad run: target Minneapolis/St. Paul and surrounding suburbs, Illinois. Second half of ad run: target Duluth, Grand Rapids, Virginia, Hibbing, Bemidji areas. Targeting may change during ad setup.

Key Messages

- Experience the magic of winter in Ely.
- International Snow Sculpting Symposium and many supporting events = lots to do.

Visuals

- Carousel: Snow Sculpture photo with EWF logo "tag" + supporting event photos.

KPI

- Click-through-rate (CTR). Aiming for a CTR of at least 1%.

Budget

- \$800

Primary Text: Join us in Ely February 6-16 for ten days of celebrating winter at the Ely Winter Festival! The world-famous Snow Sculpting Symposium is the main event, with international and local teams creating interactive, captivating sculptures in Ely's Whiteside Park. The fun doesn't stop there! Organizations across the area pack the festival calendar with events for everyone—from blacksmithing classes at Ely Folk School, to art on display all over town for Ely Art Walk, to the Great Nordic Beardfest at Ely's Historic State Theater. Experience the magic of winter at Ely Winter Festival | [Book lodging now!](#)

"This is the first year we've felt really supported." - Shauna V.

"We are so grateful for your involvement with the EWF!" - Christine K.

10 Days of Celebrating Winter!

Festival Website

Ely Winter Festival	Sent	Visit Ely (Ely Area To...	48.6%	5.8%
Regular email	Tue January 21, 2025, 7:00 pm	1,115 recipients	Opens	Clicks
Last edited Tue January 21, 2025 2:01 pm by Sarah Vogel				



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Dedicated tourism bureau hours and paid advertising for marketing the Ely Winter Festival and Ely Film Festival.



Increased Sales

In 2024, we sold 165 total passes (\$18,200 gross) & 975 individual tickets (\$9,685 gross) for a total gross ticket/pass sales of \$27,885. By comparison, in 2025, we sold 193 passes (\$20,631.50 gross) & 633 individual tickets (\$12,487.80 gross) for a total gross ticket/pass sales of \$33,119.30. Additionally, we gave 47 passes away to VIP Filmmakers attending from out of town for a total of 240 passes.



Meta Ad Brief - Ely Film Festival Ad (Running late January - Early March)

Objectives: Make visitors aware of the festival as they travel to the area for it. Drive traffic to Ely Film Festival website for people to book their tickets.

Targeting: First half of ad run: target Minneapolis half of ad run: target Duluth, Grand Rapids, Virginia Beach

Key Messages

- Celebrating local and regional films/filmmakers
- Ely is an emerging independent filmmaking hub

Visuals

- Carousel: Modified EFF Poster graphic

KPI

- Click-through-rate (CTR) of at least 1%

Budget

- \$800

Primary Text: Join us in Ely, MN March 12-16 for the third annual Ely Film Festival: A celebration of the magic of cinema, richness of culture, and the beauty of the Northwoods. Ely Film Festival showcases local and regional independent films from every genre, filmmaking workshops, Q&A sessions with filmmakers, and more! Get your festival passes and book your

"You all are doing such fantastic, inspiring, and supportive work. Thanks for your dedication to supporting our festival. You are all so talented, I'm in awe every day!"
-Jacob W.



Ely Film Festival	Sent	Wed February 19, 2025 5:00 pm	Visit Ely (Ely Area To...	46.9%	3.6%
Regular email			1362 recipients	Opens	Clicks
Last edited Wed February 19, 2025 7:41 am by Sarah Vogt					

Event Marketing Support Program - First Year 2025

Program Reporting - Ely Winter Festival



Paid Advertising

-MNMO digital display ads, one month. Results:

Impressions	Clicks	CTR
61,231	124	0.20%

(Average benchmark for digital display ads is a CTR of 0.10%).

-Shared Meta ad (1/3 of budget for 1/3 of advertising space). Standalone Meta ad running for approx 6 weeks. Results: Impressions: 560,328 | Link Clicks: 7,920 | CTR: 1.4135% (our benchmark goal was 1%)

-Google ads Results:
 Impressions: 8,040
 Click-throughs: 712
 CTR (click-through rate): 8.86%
 Click-throughs to member sites from Ely.org: 415
 Conversion rate: 58.22%

Organic Advertising

- Podcast coverage
- Organic social posts
- Email Newsletter:

48.6%	5.8%
Opens	Clicks

Event Marketing Support Program - First Year 2025

But how did the Event Marketing Support Program impact lodging tax numbers?

February 2025 (Ely Winter Festival)

up ~38% from 2024

March 2025 (Ely Film Festival)

up ~65% from 2024



iHeart Campaigns

2025 Impressions: **1,944,303**

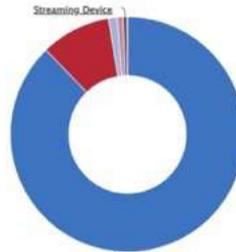


iHeart
MEDIA

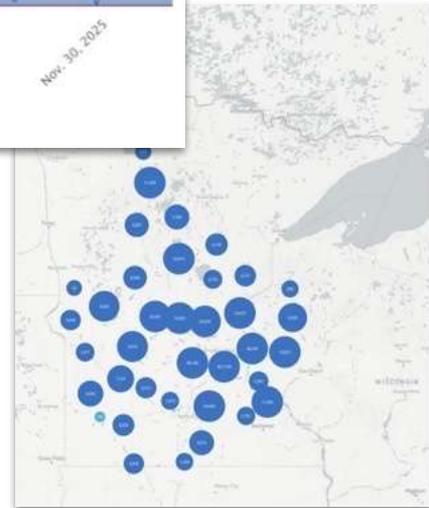
Play Autumn Spot →
(updating in 2026)

[VisitElyRadioSpot-Spring2025 -SA](#)

[VisitElyRadioSpot-Winter-B. \(1\) - SA](#)



Phone, Streaming Device, Desktop Smart TV, Tablet, Game Console, Media Player



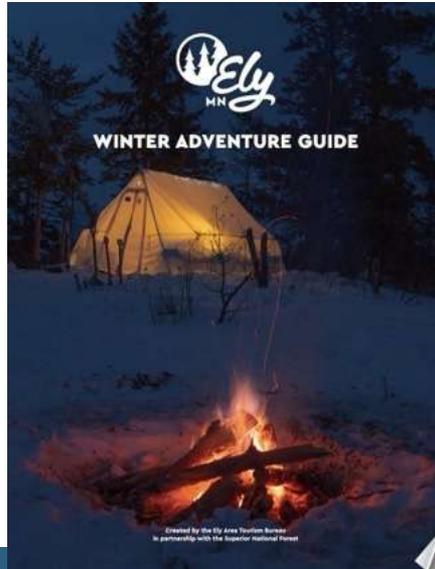
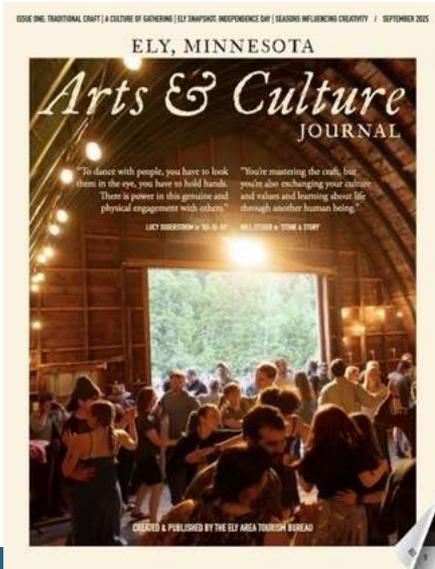
Digital Guides

FlippingBook

VISIT *Ely* MN

Spring & Summer, Autumn, and Winter Adventure Guides; Arts & Culture Journal: Issue One published and online. [Seasonal Guides >](#) | [Arts & Culture Journal - Issue One: Craft & Gather](#)

Hosting Ely Winter Festival Digital Guide and Ely Film Festival Digital Guide on FlippingBook to help market those festivals and drive tourism. **Click each guide below to view!**



Email Newsletter Program



mailchimp

VISIT *Ely* MN

Audience growth in 2025: **85%!**

Total sends

14,605

▲ 533.6%

Total opens

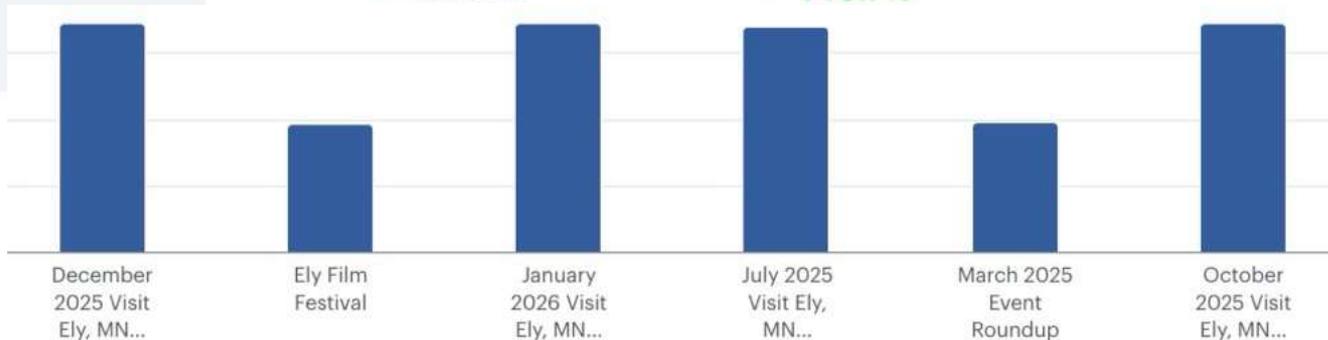
2,177

▲ 419.6%

Clicked

390

▲ 140.7%



Comcast Advertising Campaigns



Streaming impressions in 2025: **157,647**

Streaming view-through rate of 92%



A view-through rate of 60% or higher is considered a “good” benchmark for video ad campaigns.

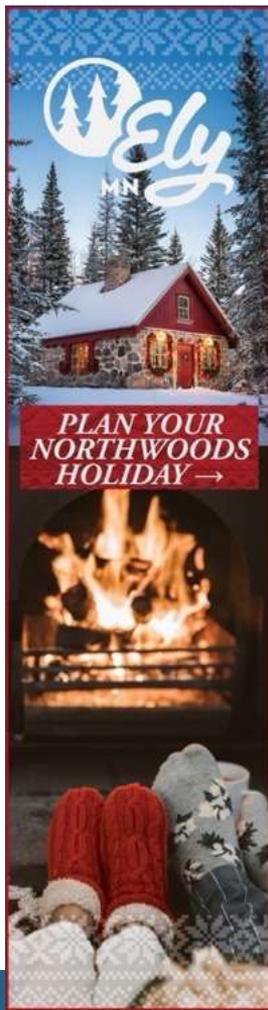
Our streaming ad was featured on these networks:



2025 RECAP

Minnesota Monthly Campaigns

Digital Display Ads in 2025: **606,673**



Minnesota Monthly VISIT Ely MN

Impressions

606,673

↑ 137.94% from last period

Clicks

549

↑ 11.59% from last period

Podcasts

Forest North: – **downloads in 2025**

-A Visit Ely appointed rep threw out the first pitch and did a third inning KFAN interview at a St. Paul Saints game in August via invite from Explore MN.

What's Up, Ely?: – **downloads in 2025**

-Podcasts consistently drove high clicks from email newsletters, and Forest North podcast was among the top links clicked on our Superior National Forest landing page.

Click each episode below to listen on Spotify.



Print Advertising

Full page Duluth News Tribune, MN Trails, SnowGoer Map, Explore Minnesota Winter Bucket List Issue, MN Wheelin', Minnesota Monthly Winter Adventures, Minnesota Monthly Travel Guide Full Page Ad 2025, and more.

MOUNTAIN BIKING LIKE NOWHERE ELSE

HIDDEN VALLEY RECREATION AREA

Looking for a paved ride?
The 165-mile long Mesabi Trail ends in Ely and links 28 communities along a scenic 10-foot wide paved trail.

Plan your trip at VisitElyMN.org

VISIT Ely MN
YOUR DESTINATION FOR *Holiday Magic*

SHIPPING & DINING
OUTDOOR RECREATION
COZY LODGING
LEGENDARY EVENTS
We are winter!

- Shine Bright Ely! Nov. 27 - Dec. 31
- Mrs. Claus Holiday Hops Dec. 5 - 7

Scan to learn more and view other holiday events.

Mrs. Claus Party

December 6th, 2025 | Grand Ely Lodge | FREE

Meet Santa and Mrs. Claus and enjoy making a variety of holiday crafts. Holiday cookies + Hot chocolate bar + Family holiday photo booth. Each child will receive a goodie bag filled with treats, gifts, and a book!

Ely.org/Winter-in-Ely

THE ARTS ARE ALIVE YEAR-ROUND IN ELY!

Check out the new Ely Arts & Culture Journal:

Ely.org/ArtsandCulture

MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

- Ely Winter Festival | Feb. 5 - 15, 2026
- WolfTrack Classic Sled Dog Race | Feb. 22, 2026
- Ely Film Festival | March 11 - 15, 2026

VISIT Ely MN

Over 250 miles of trails. Countless memories.

PLAN YOUR TRIP TODAY AT ELY.ORG



WINTER HEADQUARTERS

Ely MN

Featured Meta Stats - Late Summer & Fall ATV Campaign

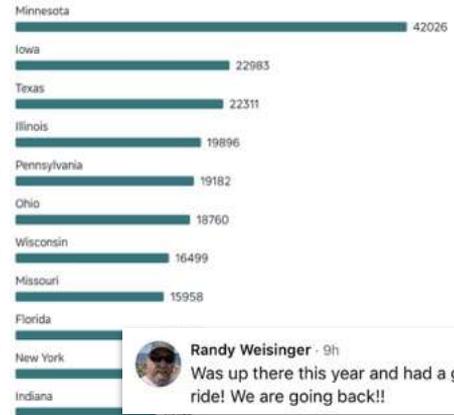


Performance

\$2,395.01 spent over 30 days.

Lifetime

Landing Page Views	10,231	Cost per Landing Page View	\$0.23
Views	884.4K	Reach	414.5K



Activity



Randy Weisinger · 9h
Was up there this year and had a great time and ride! We are going back!!

Tom Young · 1w
Look like nice trails that won't beat ya up? How many miles or days of riding?



250+ Miles of Trails

592 likes 24 shares

All comments

Abu Salah · 3d
I had the privilege to stay in the cabin about 14 miles north east of the village of Ely on Farmer Lake or Farm Lake was the best experience I ever had in my life very Serene atmosphere
Reply Message Hide 1

Curt Steffes · 6d
Enjoyed ride to Ely a few years ago. Stayed at Hotel Ely, great place with huge wall mural and green bathroom fixtures. Trails were good with very little traffic during the weekday ride from Two Harbors. Don't ride down Main street, police officer was very nice that pulled us over and informed us of violation with verbal admonition.
Reply Message Hide 1

Mitchell Nielsen · 1w
Awesome trails 😊

Google Analytics Web Stats



Active users ▾

242K

↑ 7.7%

Event count ▾

4M

↑ 2.4%

Engaged sessions ▾

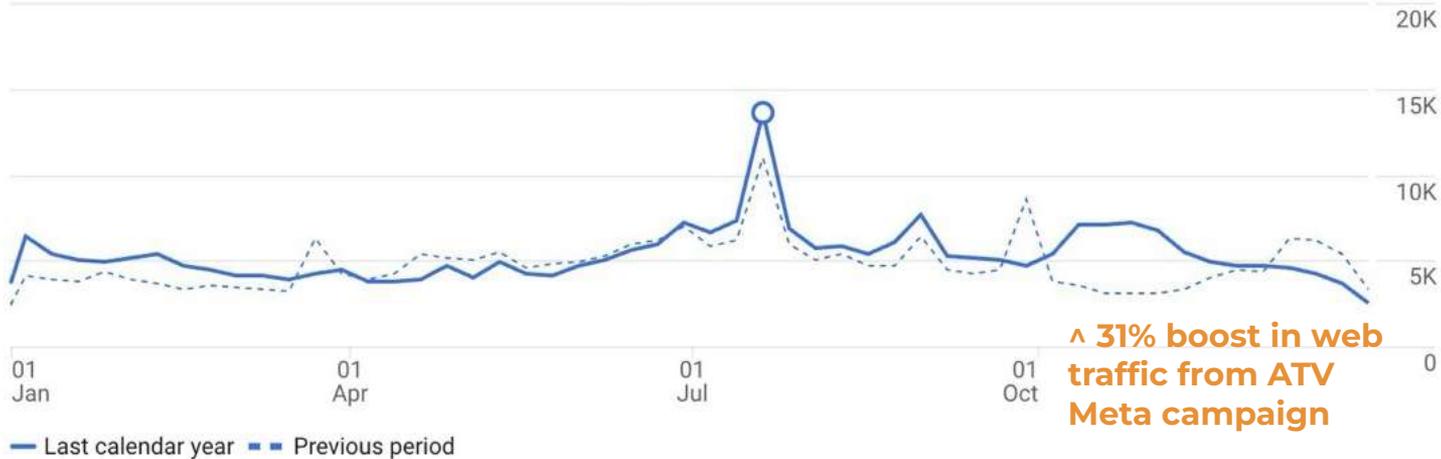
262K

↑ 10.0%

New users ▾

241K

↑ 9.6%



Last calendar year ▾

[View reports snapshot →](#)

Ely Heritage Preservation Commission Partnership

TOUR ELY

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

- 1) ELY COMMUNITY CENTER
30 3rd Ave
- 2) ELY'S HISTORIC STATE THEATER
238 E Sheridan St
- 3) TANNER HOSPITAL
204 E Camp St
- 4) BURNTSIDE LODGE
2754 Burnside Lodge Rd
- 5) BULL-OF-THE-WOODS LOGGING SCOW
Hornet Bldg, Burnside Lake - Access Via Water
- 6) KAWISHIWI LODGE
3187 Fomberg Rd
- 7) SIGURD F. OLSON WRITING SHACK
506 E Wilson St
- 8) LISTENING POINT
3120 Van Vleet Rd
- 9) PIONEER MINE BUILDINGS
401 N Pioneer Rd
- 10) HALFWAY RANGER STATION
21223 Highway 1

MUSEUMS

- 11) NORTH AMERICAN BEAR CENTER
1926 Highway 109
- 12) ELY-WINTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
1000 E Camp St
- 13) U.S. FOREST SERVICE KAWISHIWI DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS
1313 Highway 109
- 14) DOROTHY HOLTZER MUSEUM
2003 E Sheridan St
- 15) INTERNATIONAL WOLF CENTER
1396 Highway 109

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

★ NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES 🏛️ MUSEUMS
🌲 PARKS AND RECREATION SITES 🎨 VISUAL ART 🏹 HUNTING
📍 POINTS OF INTEREST 🏠 NOTABLE HOUSES 🚶 LOGGING
WALKING • DRIVING • BIKING

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE!
TourEly.VisitElyMN.org

QR CODE WILL GO HERE!

SCAN ME!
ELY.ORG/TOURELY

ELY IS BROUGHT TO YOU BY:
Heritage Preservation Commission
Ely Tourism Bureau
Member of Commerce
Ely Historical Society
COURTESY ELY-WINTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

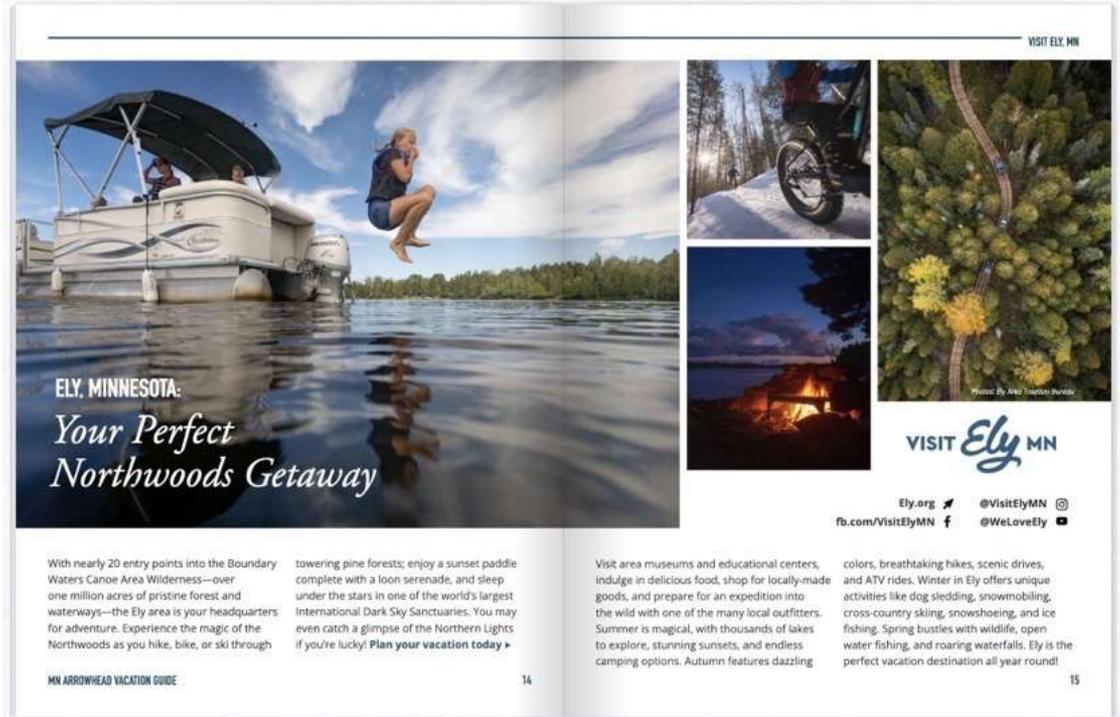
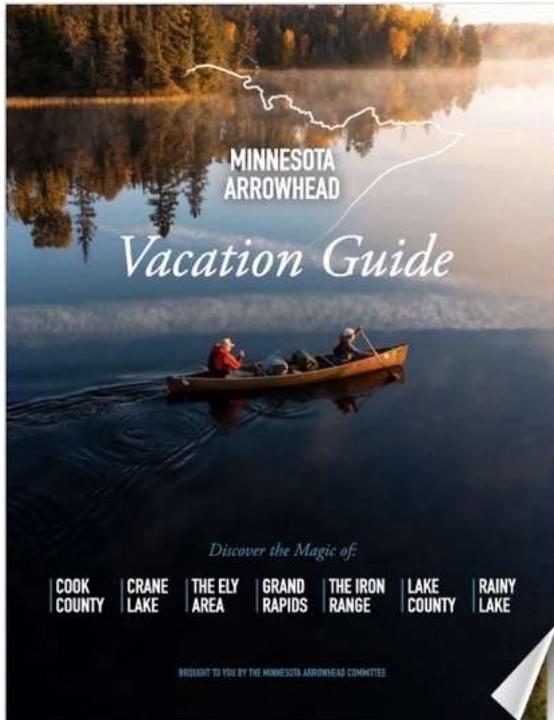
Visit the website: <https://tourelly.visitelymn.org/>

#visitelymn #elymn #elyminnesota #northwoods #exploreminnesota

“You are fabulous! You are making this happen. Thank you!” - Pam T.

“We want to start with a big thank you as we are excited about the brochure becoming a reality.” - Margaret E.

Minnesota Arrowhead Committee Partnership



ELY, MINNESOTA: *Your Perfect Northwoods Getaway*

With nearly 20 entry points into the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness—over one million acres of pristine forest and waterways—the Ely area is your headquarters for adventure. Experience the magic of the Northwoods as you hike, bike, or ski through

towering pine forests; enjoy a sunset paddle complete with a loon serenade, and sleep under the stars in one of the world's largest International Dark Sky Sanctuaries. You may even catch a glimpse of the Northern Lights if you're lucky! **Plan your vacation today >**

Visit area museums and educational centers, indulge in delicious food, shop for locally-made goods, and prepare for an expedition into the wild with one of the many local outfitters. Summer is magical, with thousands of lakes to explore, stunning sunsets, and endless camping options. Autumn features dazzling

colors, breathtaking hikes, scenic drives, and ATV rides. Winter in Ely offers unique activities like dog sledding, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and ice fishing. Spring bustles with wildlife, open water fishing, and roaring waterfalls. Ely is the perfect vacation destination all year round!

Featured ORGANIC Meta Content - Team Favorites



Views

31,075

Engagement

1,966

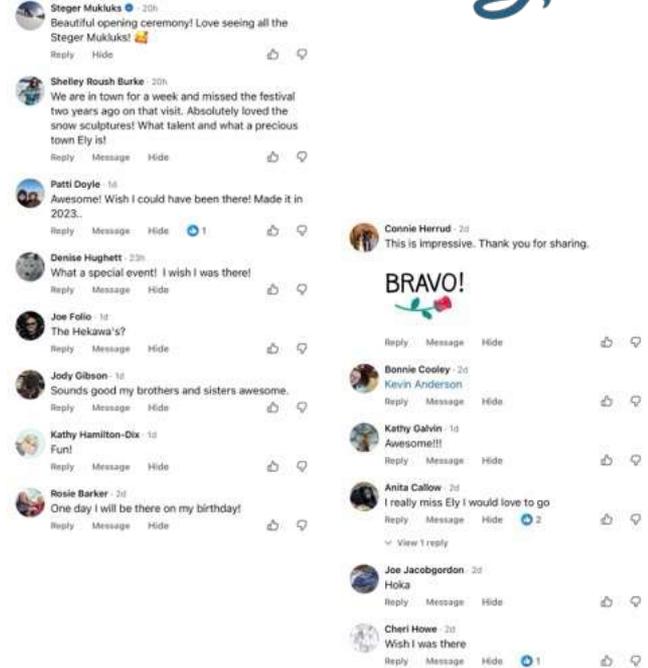


This video has 205x more non-follower views than your typical post. [See performance summary](#)

1.9K Engagement ⓘ

👁️ Clicks	1.1K
👍 Reactions	740
➦ Shares	79
💬 Comments	28
🔖 Saves	9

This type of organic reach and engagement is only possible if we pay local contractors.



Featured ORGANIC Meta Content - Team Favorites



This post is getting 1,971% more views than your typical post!

Views

12,205

Approximate earnings

\$0.00

Engagement

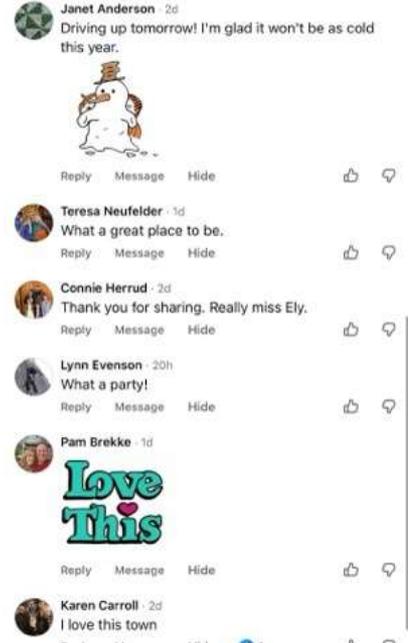
774

Net follows

17

774 Facebook engagement

👍 Reactions	453
👁️ Clicks	239
➦ Shares	41
💬 Comments	27
🔖 Saves	5



This type of organic reach and engagement is only possible if we pay local contractors.

2026 Budget and Marketing Strategy Overview

Adapted budget due to a ~1/3 budget cut, see "2026 Marketing Strategy" Document for Details.

- **Meta Campaigns:**
 - Winter Adventures Campaign (February 1–15)
 - The "Celestial Escape" (March 1–20)
 - Focus: Astro-tourism* fans, science teachers, and Twin Cities families.
- **MN Monthly Digital Ad:**
 - January: Snowmobile
 - February: Slow Down Up North
- **Newsletter Themes:**
 - January: Ely Winter Festival
 - February: Ely Film Festival, Dark Sky Festival
 - March: Thaw Out
- **Content Creator:** Demographic - Family interested in astro-tourism (March 20-22)
- **Key Events:**
 - January 28: BWCAW Permit Selection Opens
 - Feb 5–15, 2026: Ely Winter Festival
 - February 13–18: 218 Days Celebration
 - Feb. 22, 2026: WolfTrack Classic Sled Dog Race
 - March 11-15, 2026: Ely Historic State Theater Film Festival



2026 MARKETING STRATEGY

Whitney Woods / Marketing Director / Ely Area Tourism Bureau

Executive Summary

In 2026, the Ely Area Tourism Bureau will pivot to a **Digital-First, Content-Owned** model designed to maximize impact despite a 40%+ structural budget reduction. This strategy shifts the Bureau from a traditional administrative entity to a high-efficiency marketing house, focusing on three core pillars:

- **Strategic Agility:** By reallocating **90% of legacy media spend** (TV/Radio) into precision digital channels, the Bureau gains the precise targeting necessary to bypass regional instability and target resilient traveler demographics.
- **Fiscal Accountability:** A complete restructuring of the ledger separates operational

The 2026 Strategic Pivot

From Passive to Active Marketing

In 2025, a significant portion of the budget was spent on Other Media (TV/Radio) which reached a wide but untargeted audience.

- **The Problem:** Broad media is passive. We hope the right person sees it, but we can't be sure.
- **The 2026 Solution:** We have shifted that funding into **Digital Marketing (+49%) and Public Relations.**
- **The Board Value:** We can now target specific niche travelers like **Astro-tourists** and **Off-Roaders**, who are statistically more likely to travel during a crisis than the general public.

Digital Asset Investment

Contractors were miscategorized as staff in the 2025 budget and have been appropriately added to the Marketing bucket. Content creation is an essential need for effective and sustainable marketing and an investment, not an expense.

- **The 2025 Model:** Categorizing marketing resources as staff and incurring criticism for wages that didn't exist.
- **The 2026 Model:** We are paying for the output of assets as any strategic agency would.
- **The Board Value:** Every dollar spent now results in a high-quality video, photo, or ad that VisitEly owns. This builds a library of evergreen content that serves us for years.

Leadership as the Strategic Engine

The consolidation of the **Marketing Director** role into a competitive, full-time position (\$70,000) is a critical survival move.

- **The Reality:** We have eliminated high-cost agencies and secondary staff.
- **The Board Value:** By having one dedicated expert handling everything from crisis management (Twin Cities unrest) to grant writing and digital ad placement, we ensure a unified brand voice and the ability to pivot in real-time without administrative lag.

April 15 – May 9)

and Fall Lake

the big catch

(April)

ists, digital detoxing professionals, and

April 15 – May 9)

and Fall Lake

the big catch

(April)

ists, digital detoxing professionals, and

en" Season. Most people think April is just mud,

Northern Lights are incredibly active (Equinox

turn.

the awakening." Use time-lapse videos of ice

high-contrast photos of the first spring buds



Ely



**TOURISM
BUREAU**