TRAVEL
SouthDakota

South Dakota Destination Development Program
Application Webinar

July 8, 2025

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AGENDA

What we'll discuss today

WELCOME & HOUSEKEEPING

LET'S GET STARTED

SESSION GOALS

- Understand the South Dakota Destination Development Program

- Learn how to confidently navigate the application process

- Get your questions answered before applying

TECH TIPS

- Please stay muted unless speaking

- Use the **chat** for comments and **Q&A box** for questions

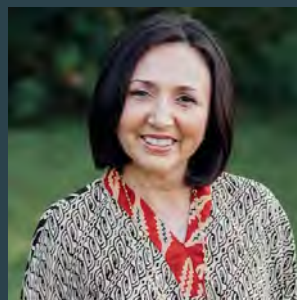- This session is being recorded and will be shared after

TEAM OVERVIEW

Kirk Hulstein
Industry Relations, Development &
Research Senior Director, Travel
South Dakota

Ciara Forest
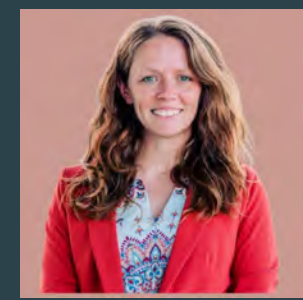Destination Development
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Seleni Matus
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PROGRAM AT A GLANCE

WHAT IS DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT?

Working with South Dakota communities and stakeholders to enhance tourism offerings for both residents and visitors.

By identifying needs and opportunities, the program empowers locals through technical assistance, funding and connections to resource providers, enabling them to successfully implement projects that enrich their destination.
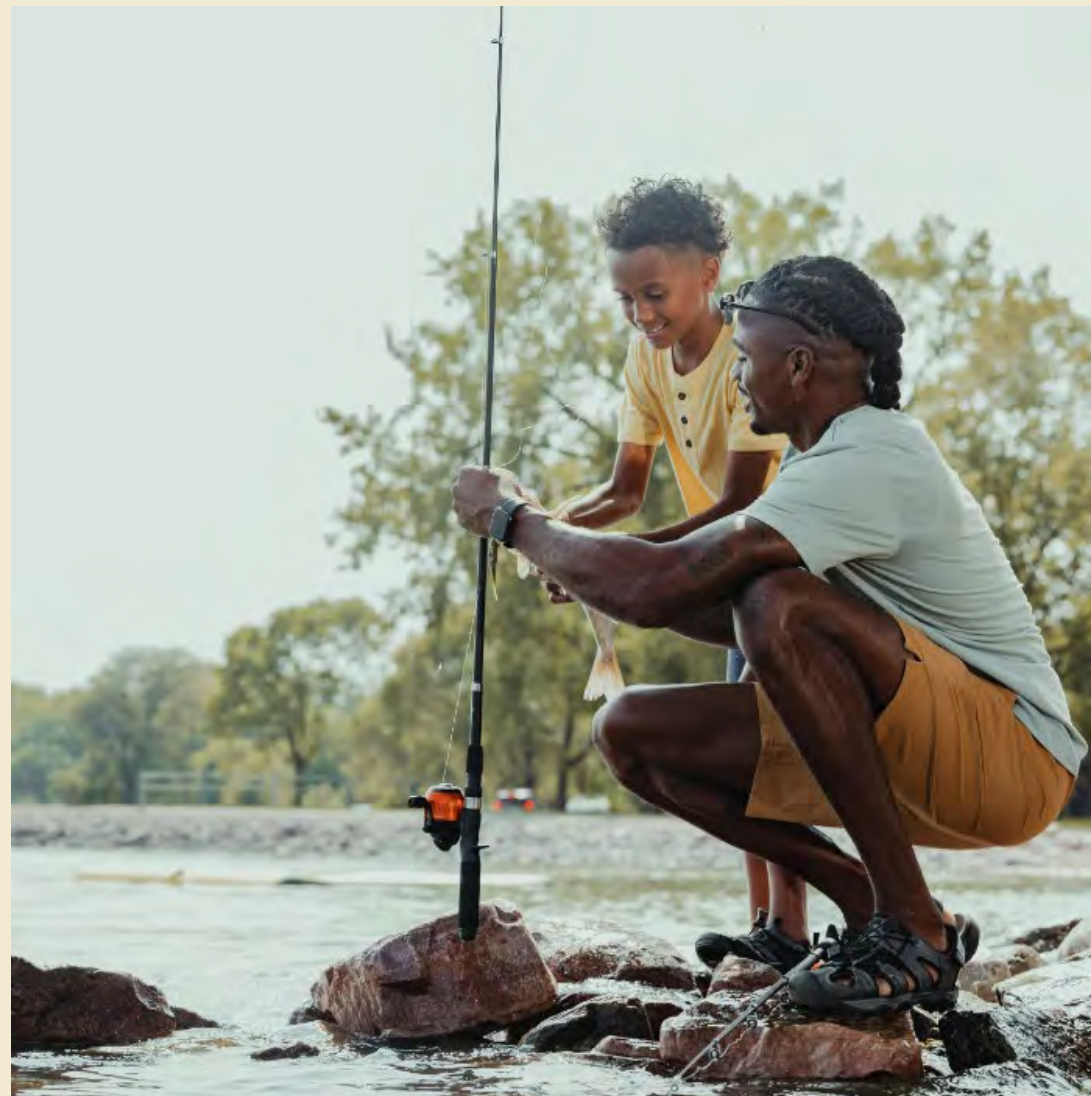
PROGRAM GOALS AND BENEFITS

PROGRAM GOALS

- Strengthen local economies through tourism
- Preserve the unique character and natural environment of rural communities
- Enhance the quality of life for residents

CORE PROGRAM BENEFITS

- Tourism product development planning support
- Access to experienced facilitators and subject matter experts
- Seed funding for compelling product development idea
- Connections to marketing opportunities

COMMUNITY-LED PRODUCT PLANNING

PLANNING WILL BE PARTICIPANT-LED, WITH HANDS-ON SUPPORT FROM A DEDICATED PLANNING FACILITATOR. EACH COMMUNITY WILL BE PAIRED 1:1 WITH A FACILITATOR TO GUIDE RESEARCH, PLANNING, AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT, DEVELOP PROJECT IDEAS, AND CREATE FUNDING STRATEGIES THAT EXTEND BEYOND THE LIFE OF THE PROJECT.

KEY PLANNING ACTIVITIES

- Destination research and analysis
- Stakeholder engagement
- Product planning
- Destination Core Team collaboration

FACILITATOR SUPPORT

- Monthly Destination Core Team meetings & regular check-ins

COMMUNITY-LED PRODUCT PLANNING

FACILITATOR ENGAGEMENT

- Kickoff virtual meeting – September
- In-person community visit* – October
- Action planning workshop* – November
- Concept note preparation – December

Communities are responsible for securing space and managing logistics for all in-person visits

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE WORKSHOP

- Validating the destination assessment
- Aligning vision and strategy
- Developing priority project ideas

EXAMPLE PROJECT CATEGORIES & IDEAS

ATTRACTIONS & EXPERIENCES

- Walking, heritage, or agritourism itineraries
- Reenactments or packaged experiences
- Accessibility improvements
- Downtown beautification and public art
- Glamping experiences

COMMUNITY SPACES

- Visitor centers or shuttle pre-development
- Gathering spaces that serve both locals and visitors

TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE

- Trail or site feasibility studies
- Signage planning, designs, or prototypes
- Amenity upgrades: benches, shade, accessibility, restroom planning

VISITOR COMMUNICATIONS

- Maps, itineraries, interpretive signage
- Kiosks, info boards, or QR-linked stories
- Self-guided tours, videos, or rural tourism trails

PRIORITY PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

IMPLEMENTATION WILL BE COMMUNITY-LED, WITH EXPERT SUPPORT TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK, ENSURE ACCOUNTABILITY, AND KEEP EFFORTS ON TRACK.

IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

- Funding proposal submission

- Project implementation with support from the Implementation Expert

- Ongoing oversight & support

CLOSING ACTIVITIES

- Final reporting

- Ongoing learning and development

NAVIGATING THE APPLICATION PROCESS

1. CONFIRM ELIGIBILITY

WHO IS THIS PROGRAM FOR?

- Rural communities with populations under 30,000 people
- Communities with untapped tourism potential or those needing revitalization

WHO CAN APPLY

- Local/regional government, Tribal entities, DMOs/CVBs, chambers of commerce, nonprofits and tourism businesses
- Nearby communities may apply jointly to develop shared tourism experiences and attractions

2. BUILD A COALITION

IMPORTANCE OF PARTNERSHIPS

- Cross-sector collaboration strengthens planning and implementation

- Building a Destination Core Team (DCT) is a program requirement and ensures a shared vision and sustained collaboration

STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING SUPPORT

- Map stakeholders to identify key players, gaps, and outreach approaches

- Start with conversations—listen and align priorities

- Use local data to spark interest

- Engage unexpected partners

3. STUDY THE TOOLKIT

WHAT IS THE TOOLKIT

- An overview of program goals, eligibility, and application process

- Guidance on coalition-building and stakeholder engagement

RESOURCES IN THE TOOLKIT

- Templates for stakeholder mapping, communication strategy, and match tracking

- Sample letters of support and planning resources to aid in preparing a strong application

4. PREPARING YOUR APPLICATION

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

- Identify your Destination Core Team (DCT) and assign a Destination Coordinator to lead the process

- Clarify roles, secure in-kind support, and gather support materials

DEMONSTRATE READINESS

- Collect letters of support from diverse community partners to show broad local buy-in and identify in-kind contributions, both of which are requirements for the application

- Begin brainstorming tourism product ideas–clear concepts aren't required, but early thinking can help shape direction

5. APPLY!

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

- Application – tell us about your community, your Destination Core Team, history of collaboration, goals for this program, and ability to meet the time commitment and match requirements

- Commitment to in-kind and logistical support

- Submit at least 1 letter of support

    - Up to 3 total letters of support will be accepted

WHAT MAKES A STRONG APPLICATION?

APPLICATIONS THAT DEMONSTRATE THE FOLLOWING...

- Strong community support and engagement
- A clear project vision that has the potential to increase visitation
- Demonstrated benefits to the community through the resources provided
- Location in a rural area with a population under 30,000
- Potential for in-kind or financial support from the community
- A plan for sustainability and long-term impact
- Innovative and creative project approaches
- Alignment with a tourism product need in South Dakota

Q&A AND NEXT STEPS

IMPORTANT DATES

- **August 4, 2025:** Applications Open

- **August 29, 2025:** Applications Close

- **September 10:** Selected Participants Notified

- **September – December 2025:** Project Planning

- **January – November 2026:** Project Implementation

- **December 2026:** Project Close & Reporting

GRAB YOUR APPLICATION TOOLKIT TODAY

TOOLKIT INCLUDES

- An overview of program goals, eligibility, and application process

- Guidance on coalition-building and stakeholder engagement

- Templates for stakeholder mapping, communication strategy, and match tracking

- Sample letters of support and planning resources to aid in preparing a strong application
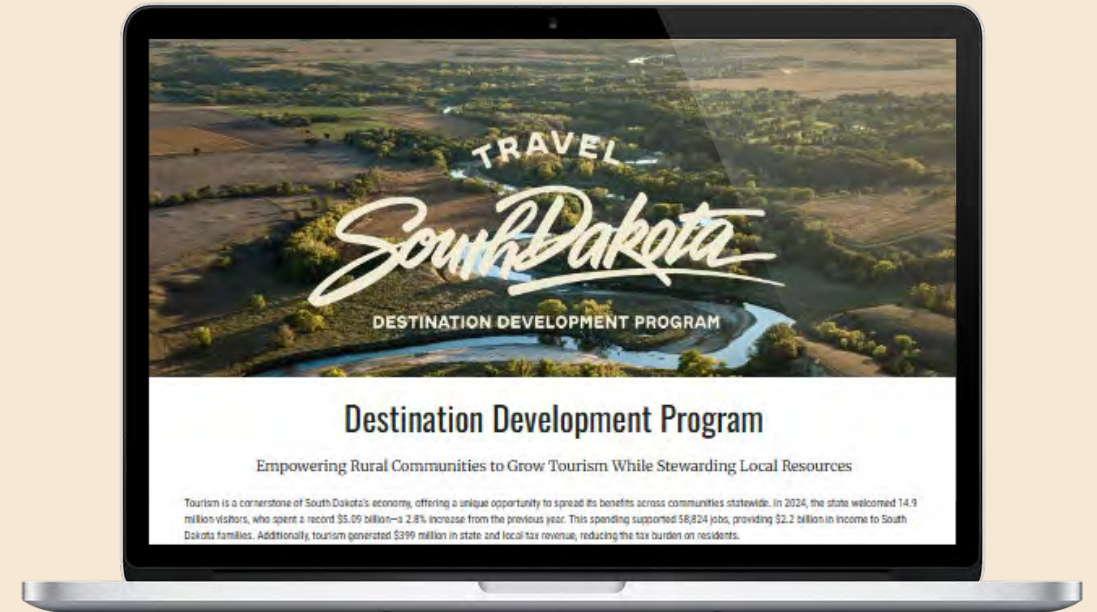
THANK YOU!

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