

# **Rushmore Region Project History and Overview**

April 10, 2014

In 2012, the Marketing Committee of the Black Hills Business Council launched a lengthy nationwide RFP process to solicit proposals from economic development marketing firms to pursue a regional economic development branding and marketing initiative for the Black Hills.

In early 2013, the leadership of the Black Hills Business Council presented a proposal to the Black Hills Vision Board of Directors requesting and subsequently receiving funding for the initiative. The funding request was based largely on the proposals received from the 4 most qualified firms identified during the RFP process. In April 2013, Atlas Advertising was selected and awarded the contract. Work on the project commenced with several outreach visits with leaders from throughout the region. The Atlas team toured the region and held many stakeholder meetings in the Southern, Central and Northern Hills over several months, mostly during the summer of 2013. The Atlas meetings also included specific visits with leaders in business, government and education. These interviews and stakeholder outreach meetings (supplemented by extensive research and survey work) became the bedrock for the branding and marketing plan that was developed during the balance of 2013.

In early 2014, Atlas once again returned to the region and shared the branding and marketing concepts with leaders in the Northern, Central and Southern Hills – effectively conducting a “soft-launch” of what is now called the Rushmore Region brand. Website development is now well underway and an official launch of the Rushmore Region is scheduled for April 25, 2014.

In connection with this impending launch, the Black Hills Business Council is requesting that each of our economic development professionals and elected officials enter into a Code of Conduct (COC) which will help to govern our working relationships relative to handling of economic development prospects generated by this initiative. We presented this COC in draft form at the Black Hills Mayor’s luncheon in February in Deadwood and again in final form at the March meeting in Sturgis.

We are requesting that the attached COC and corresponding Resolution are reviewed and adopted by each city within the Rushmore Region in the next couple of weeks, prior to brand launch.

Respectfully submitted,

Black Hills Business Council