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## News Release

### Immediate Release:

Watertown, S.D.  
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## **New Watertown Start-Up Named a Governor's Giant Vision Award Finalist**

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WATERTOWN, S.D. – When Les Strong was a boy, he toted toy six-guns and looked for trouble. Now that he is a grandfather, he still likes guns, but now he is looking for business. He is also hoping his entrepreneurial, home-grown spirit and business plan will earn him a \$20,000 grant from the state of South Dakota.

In March, Strong and his business partners, Scott Mueller and Michael King, were named as one of 11 business finalists in the Governor's Giant Vision Awards. Originally recognized as a method for the South Dakota Chamber of Commerce and Industry to play a role in Governor Rounds' 2010 economic development goals, the Governor's Giant Vision Business Awards were established to help citizens realize that South Dakota is the very best place to start a successful business. The program was designed as an opportunity for entrepreneurs to compete for seed money and a chance to achieve their dream.

Strong and his partners hale from Minnesota, but they began a start-up firearms business in Watertown at the end of 2009. "We came to Watertown because South Dakota is an ideal state for starting a business like ours. The state and people are gun friendly, but violence is low. The business climate is excellent. South Dakota really impressed me," Strong said.

Strong said he was encouraged to enter the Giant Vision competition by advisors who had seen their business plan, and was excited and honored to receive news that they had made the cut for the finals.

"This is a great opportunity for a start-up like ours. The extra capital would make a difference in our first year. We are committed to making our business a success, and this competition is an extra incentive. It is a good program," he added.

The Giant Vision program has a student competition as well as a business competition. This year, LATI students Travis Edgar of Watertown and Tom Waletich of Milbank were named as two of eight student finalists. The top prize in the student competition is a \$3,500 grant. Second and third place awards are also given in both competition categories.

Focus Watertown President Craig Atkins says the announcements bode well for Watertown. "The entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well here in Watertown. To represent three of the less than 20 finalists is a great indicator of the good ideas and hard work that come from Watertown," he said.

Winners will be announced tonight, at the Governor's Economic Development Conference banquet in Sioux Falls.

Focus Watertown is a non-profit economic development organization funded by public and private investors with the mission of increasing job opportunity and the property tax base of Watertown.

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