



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Steve Mann

Phone: 612.249.5629

Email: smann@mnsportscorp.org

**Minneapolis Final Four® Local Organizing Committee, NCAA® Introduce
Statewide Reading Initiative to Create Impact Off the Court**

MINNEAPOLIS (May 10, 2018) – In addition to crowning a national basketball champion, an event as significant as the NCAA Men’s Final Four offers many opportunities to positively impact the host community and leave a lasting legacy. Today, the 2019 Minneapolis Final Four Local Organizing Committee (MLOC) and the NCAA announced Read to the Final Four – a year-long, statewide reading initiative to promote and inspire reading for young people throughout Minnesota.

“The NCAA is committed to leaving a lasting and positive impact on Minnesota as the state prepares to host the 2019 Final Four,” said JoAn Scott, managing director of men’s basketball championships. “We are excited to have the Final Four serve as a way to drive and promote the values of reading.”

The new initiative will be open to students across the state, and accessible in schools, community and library settings. There will be several ways for students to participate, including a tournament-style reading competition, supported by a library of thousands of digital books.

“As kids across the state head into summer vacation, when an emphasis on books and reading can slip away, it’s the perfect time for the MLOC and NCAA to announce our Read to the Final Four program,” said Kate Mortenson, MLOC president and CEO. “We’ll be the first Final Four host region to take this initiative to promote reading, at the third-grade level, across an entire state and for a whole year.”

“Read to the Final Four aligns with the NCAA’s commitment to enhance community engagement and support the educational development of youth,” said Katrice Albert, NCAA executive vice president for the Office of Inclusion and Human Resources. “Academics is at the core of the NCAA’s mission and we are thrilled to be a part of helping young people reach their reading goals this upcoming school year.”

Program features include:

- Available to all Minnesota students who will be in third grade during the 2018-19 school year
- Schools and parents/guardians can sign up their students to participate now by visiting finalfourminneapolis.com, and clicking on “Read to the Final Four” from the “Community” drop-down menu
- Students will receive free access to personalized literary software that provides more than 5,800 high-quality digital books and can begin reading as soon as they’re signed up
- Tracking of minutes read will begin this upcoming Fall
- The 68 schools with the highest average time spent reading will qualify for a tournament-style bracket competition
- Teachers will have access to actionable data, highlighting students’ time spent reading
- Prizes will be awarded to the winning school, as well as individual reading leaders, during Final Four week in April, 2019
- Students will continue to have access to the software even after the Final Four has concluded, through June 30, 2019

“The NCAA Final Four provides a tremendous opportunity to showcase our exceptional state and welcome all basketball fans to Minnesota,” said Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton. “It is terrific that the Final Four Organizing Committee will extend benefits beyond the court. I thank the Committee for its promotion of children’s literacy. Ensuring that all Minnesota children receive excellent educations is the most important legacy we can leave.”

The Read to the Final Four program began in 2016 as a way for the NCAA to leave a lasting legacy in the Final Four host community and utilize the excitement around the event to encourage students to accelerate reading through the competitive spirit that March Madness brings each year.

###

About the 2019 Minneapolis Final Four Local Organizing Committee

The Minneapolis Local Organizing Committee (MLOC) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that was formed to plan and deliver the 2019 NCAA Division I Men’s Basketball Championship in Minneapolis as a local partner to the NCAA. The MLOC includes the University of Minnesota as the host institution, the City of Minneapolis, Sports Minneapolis and Meet Minneapolis as liaisons for bids, venues and the hospitality community, the Minnesota Sports Facilities Authority, representing the game venue, U.S. Bank Stadium, as well as representatives of the local business community. For more information, visit finalfourminneapolis.com.