Grant Details

95522 - FY21 Region/CVB Marketing Plan

101313 - Great Falls Montana Tourism 2021 Marketing Plan

DOC Office of Tourism

Grant Title: Great Falls Montana Tourism 2021 Marketing Plan
Grant Number: 21-51-019
Grant Status: Underway
Applicant Organization: Great Falls CVB
Grantee Contact: Rebecca Engum
Award Year: FY21
Program Area: DOC Office of Tourism
Amounts:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Contract Dates</th>
<th>Contract Sent</th>
<th>Contract Received</th>
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<td>06/15/2020</td>
<td>07/01/2020</td>
<td>06/30/2021</td>
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<td>Contract Dates</td>
<td>Proposal Date</td>
<td>Project Start</td>
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<td>Grant Administrator:</td>
<td>Barb Sanem</td>
<td>21-51-019</td>
<td>FY21</td>
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Project Dates

07/01/2020 Project Start
06/30/2021 Project End

Comments

Community & Brand Support

Describe your destination (who you are, who you wish to attract and why would they come) addressing your strengths, opportunities, and potential challenges. How does your destination align with Montana's brand pillars?

Great Falls Montana Tourism is the Destination Management Organization [DMO] focused on promoting the city of Great Falls, Montana to overnight visitors. It includes efforts of the Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Tourism Business Improvement District. Great Falls is the 3rd largest city in the Nation's 4th largest state. With 1 million residents in the State and just under 60,000 residents in the city, Great Falls Montana Tourism is focused on generating overnight visits from independent adventures and planners of meetings. As we plan for 2021, we are in uncertain times that will be taken day by day, then week by week, then month by month as the situation surrounding COVID-19 evolves. Our strategies and budget may change by July 1, 2020 as new data and guidance becomes available.

What remains constant is the reason overnight visitors travel to Great Falls. From every direction, Montana's spectacular, unspoiled nature calls to the traveler. Our community sits on the banks of the Missouri River in the center of the State. Great Falls is a basecamp to the Rocky, Big Belt, Highwood, and Little Belt Mountain Ranges; each providing public access for a variety of outdoor recreation. It is also a basecamp to the Sun and Smith Rivers; Belt Creek, and Holter Lake; it is 2.5 hours south of the East entrance to Glacier National Park, and 3.5 hours north of the North Entrance to Yellowstone National Park. One of the greatest things about our community is we are welcoming, down-to-earth, and proud of what we have. Great Falls is a place where guests, like our residents, feel more independent to pursue passions, from outdoor recreation to embracing the inner artist. It's a place where our guests can gain perspective, stay socially distanced, and truly renew the spirit.

STRENGTHS

Art | In the broadest sense of the term, Great Falls has art—from statutes and murals on the river’s edge trail and downtown, to state parks and museums that capture our history and culture, to restaurants who source local food, to residents who create masterpieces on canvasses or using batik and our entrepreneurs who create industry-changing products. Great Falls is creative, innovative, and full of art.

River | The Missouri River connects Great Falls' history to the Plains Indians, Corp of Discovery, mining, and electricity. Today it provides access to outdoor recreation, bird viewing, a path for scenic drives, and a backdrop for stunning photography.

Basecamp | In about an hour or less from Great Falls, you can be in the Rocky Mountain Front and the greater Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex, Sluice Boxes State Park, and the Little Belt Mountains, the Highwood Mountains, on Holter Lake, at Smith River, Sun River. And, just a little further in Glacier National Park.

Malmstrom | 3,300 personnel, along with their families, are stationed in Great Falls’ air force base. The base itself draws national contractor business, and the personnel’s extended family come to visit.

GTF | Our international airport is small and accessible, offering direct flights from Seattle, Denver, Las Vegas, Minneapolis, Phoenix, Salt Lake City, and seasonally to Chicago.

WEAKNESS

Venues | Tried and true, our facility infrastructure is stable but suffers from deferred maintenance and lack of capital investment for industry demanding improvements.

Impression | Immediate thoughts of Montana include mountains, roaming wildlife, and backpacking adventures, and Great Falls is a modern community on the Missouri River with an industrial history.

Detractors | 34% of Great Falls residents hold a low-self image of and are negative about the community being a great place to visit.

OPPORTUNITIES

I-15 Corridor | Great Falls is roughly halfway between Salt Lake City, Utah, and Edmonton, Alberta (via Highway 2 in Alberta, Canada). Through traffic provides a chance to convert travelers for experiences and events. 55% of travelers drive through Great Falls without spending a night.

Air Service | United, Delta, Alaska, and Allegiant are great partners, however, there are opportunities to add carriers and direct flights. Some carriers are opportunistic during economic downturns and Great Falls will be ready to support them.

Events | Signature events give visitors a specific time to travel to Great Falls. We have room to add more even during COVID-19 with smaller events. With many being canceled, we will look to create smaller, impactful events for overnight visitors to attend.

In-Market Experience | The Missouri River is amazing; however, we are missing the opportunity to make it, and other experiences, easier to access. Great Falls can benefit from easy access equipment rentals, tour guides, facilitated experiences, and review worthy interactions.

THREATS

COVID-19 | We have already witnessed postponed, canceled, and rescheduled events, conventions, and meetings. The uncertainty of how long the current shelter-in-place and group size restrictions will remain, hinders travel. In addition, local businesses that support the tourism ecosystem will have taken dramatic losses and may not be able to continue operations or support the industry as they did. Recovery in our target markets may take longer than in Montana and could delay travel.

I-90/I-94 CORRIDOR | This Montana route has larger communities with larger population bases, sees higher traffic counts, and has had more success in event routing than I-15.

Market Economy | Volatility in the local economy of our target market communities can directly impact travel decisions.

Growth | The success of peer and benchmark communities related to increased retail experiences and capital investments in infrastructure have increased their tourism budgets to attract more visitors, causing Great Falls to lag.

Describe your destination.

Knowing what activities visitors like to experience, how they make decisions, and how to help influence the decisions at each stage all form the cornerstones to Great Falls Montana Tourism’s marketing strategies. The Montana Department of Commerce’s Office of Tourism and Business Development makes a significant investment to support the inspiration stage of the trip planning cycle. Great Falls Montana Tourism leverages that investment with joint marketing opportunities and using “Montana” in all communications. Our strategy starts by using paid and owned media to inspire overnight visitors with Great Falls' unique spectacular unspoiled nature and breathtaking experiences that can be had by day, such as:

- Giant Springs State Park
- Little Belt Mountains
- Missouri River
- Sluice Boxes State Park
- First People’s Buffalo Jump
- Rocky Mountain Front
- Sun River

All the inspiration drives traffic to our website, where, as part of the orientation step of the trip planning process, Great Falls Montana Tourism provides infographics on direct flights, drive time, and distance from our target markets to support the message that making a trip to the city can be done in a day or less.

Great Falls Montana Tourism facilitates by delivering various trip ideas for weekends and multi-day vacations. This is where we will share the relaxing hospitality of our community to renew their spirit for the next day by showcasing:

- Local food establishments
a. Define your target markets (demographic, geographic and psychographic).

Great Falls Montana Tourism's target markets will be staged in FY2021.

Leisure Travel

Stage 1 includes Montana Independent Adventurers and Historical Encounters age 30-65 from:
- Billings
- Missoula
- Bozeman
- Kalispell

The Independent Adventurer enjoys outdoor recreation, such as day hiking, nature photography, snowshoeing, skiing, fishing, river rafting, and kayaking. The Historical Encounterer appreciates history, such as military, mining, historic figures, and milestone moments.

Stage 2 includes Drive Market Independent Adventurers and Historical Encounters, age 30-65. Specific locations will depend on the COVID-19 recovery phase and status of travel restrictions within the market. Great Falls Montana Tourism will monitor recovery in:
- Lethbridge & Calgary, Alberta
- Spokane, Washington
- Boise & Coeur d'Alene, Idaho
- Bismark & Williston, North Dakota
- Rapid City, South Dakota
- Casper, Wyoming

Stage 3 includes Fly-Market Independent Adventurers and Historical Encounters, age 30-65.
- Denver, Colorado
- Seattle, Washington
- Salt Lake City, Utah
- Chicago, Illinois
- Minneapolis, Minnesota

Specific locations will depend on the COVID-19 recovery phase within the originating city and the status of travel restrictions within the market.

b. What are your emerging markets?

Great Falls's emerging markets are Food and Event Travelers and younger travelers age 25-30 from our current target markets. We also see the emergence of independent travelers from Texas and Oregon.

Optional: Include attachments here.

c. What research supports your target marketing?

Great Falls Montana Tourism collects a variety of data to help determine strategies. Attached is the specific research. We utilize:
- Institute of Tourism and Recreation Research
- VisaVue
- Arrivalist
- Expedia
- VisitGreatFallsMontana.org Analytics
- Facebook Analytics
- U.S. Border Patrol Border Crossings

Great Falls saw a slight decrease in overnight visitors in 2019, down 19,543 visitors from 2018.

Top 5 markets out of state overnight visitors came from:
- Alberta 14%
Washington 7%
Idaho 7%
Colorado 6%
California 6%

*Institute of Tourism Recreation Research

Our overnight visitors top 5 activities were:

- Scenic driving 58%
- Day hiking 32%
- Recreational shopping 31%
- Wildlife watching 30%
- Nature photography 27%

*Institute of Tourism Recreation Research

Our overnight In-State Traveler is arriving from:

- Billings 45%
- Missoula 40%
- Bozeman 38%
- Kalispell 21%
- Helena 17%

*Arrivalist

Our overnight visitors primarily arrive by vehicle [63%]. Spending continues to decrease, from $198 million [2017] to $184 million [2018]. Top spending categories include:

1. Fuel
2. Restaurants
3. Retail
4. Grocery
5. Lodging

*Institute of Tourism and Recreation Research

The Business traveler continues to trail the Leisure traveler, with only 13% of overnight visitors being here for a convention or meeting. We saw an increase in first-time visitors to 11%, over 7% the previous year.

*Institute of Tourism and Recreation Research

- Retain 90% of Current Members
- Get 75 NEW Members
- Get 4 NEW Conventions
- 45% Growth in Facebook Followers
- 45% Growth of Instagram Followers
- Establish 1,500 Twitter Followers
- Obtain 65% Room Demand of FY18

a. In what types of co-ops with MTOT would you like to participate?

Great Falls Montana Tourism appreciates Joint Venture opportunities. With a limited budget, the opportunity to leverage it with the State spend is great. The types of Joint Ventures we look for are:

- Digital Paid Leisure Traveler Placement
- Social Paid Placement
- Paid and Owned Content
- Research
- Influencers
- Specific Market Efforts (Example: Paid Media in North Dakota)

Optional: Include attachment here. Traveler Research.pdf
b. In what other types of co-ops would you like to participate? (Regions/CVBs, etc.)

Great Falls Montana Tourism will look for Joint Ventures with local Attractions, Dining Establishments, and non-profit partners. We will also be looking this year for Joint Ventures with Central Montana, Glacier Country, Missoula, SouthEast Montana, Billings, SouthWest Montana, Butte, and others. The types of Joint Ventures will be collaborative efforts on scenic drives, in-common unique features, and backyard exploring promoted through:

- Digital Paid Leisure Traveler Placement
- Social Paid Placement
- Paid and Owned Content
- Research
- Influencers
- Specific Market Efforts
- Organizational Websites

Depending on the Joint Ventures offered, Great Falls Montana Tourism would make adjustments to current budget line items to take advantage of the right opportunities.

c. What types of co-ops have you done in the past? Were they successful - why or why not?

We have partnered with Montana Department of Commerce’s Office of Tourism and Business Development on Paid Digital Placement through Sojern, Trip Advisor, and National Geographic. Content through Interfuse and RootsRated. We have partnered with Great Falls International Airport on Canadian Print, Central Montana on Travel Booths and Research, Western Art Week Shows on Digital and Print Paid Placement, and with Great Falls Development Authority on video and photo content.

Sojern and Trip Advisor were successful based on the delivered impressions and reach. National Geographic wasn’t as successful based on video engagement and reach.

Interfuse was successful with impressive time-on-site engagement with the content and the reach and impressions. Roots Rated didn’t produce the engagement and the content wasn’t inspired.

The Canadian Print didn’t produce expected results of increased web traffic.

Travel Booths and Research have been successful. Travel booth increases engagement with direct market and reduces cost. Research shares expense and provides good insight.

Digital and Print Paid Placement and Video and Photo Content are successful because of the cost shares and increase in room demand during specific events.

Optional: Include attachments here.

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**Marketing Segment, Method & Budget**

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<td></td>
<td>Online/Digital Advertising met the objective. The strategy was successful. With lodging tax dollars, we used a mix of Connected TV, Search Marketing, Spotify, and banner ads on Expedia.</td>
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</table>
Great Falls Montana Tourism will place paid media through digital platforms to match our demographic, geographic and psychographic market segments. This could include banner ads driving traffic to specific content, weather channel mobile banner ads, video ads on outdoor adventure-based websites, videos on streaming television services, online audio ads through Spotify or Pandora.

Specific media spends are determined in May and approved in June. Traditionally our total media spend has been roughly 20% Banner Ads, 20% Audio, 25% video lead-ins, 30% social, and 5% print.

Between July 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020, Great Falls Montana Tourism's full digital media placement has generated 5.9 million impressions and 21,959 clicks.

Success will be measured by impressions and click-throughs.

Digital advertising has provided Great Falls Montana Tourism the ability to specifically target markets, where they are, monitor impressions and clicks. As the campaign progresses, we can make adjustments to messaging, market spend, and content based on what we are learning. In general, it is a more responsive media spend and generates valuable reach and engagement.

In the event the funding received is less than budgeted and dependent on the amount, we would cut administration expenses then we would make adjustments to spending in this line item.

Expedia banner ads ran between March and May, generating 1,111,634 impressions and a .03% click through rate.

The search placement was site conquering and search engine marketing. Site conquering targeted people who were on similar other websites and served ads to them. This ran from March to May and generated 861,093 impressions with a click through rate of .10%. The search engine marketing ran from February to May and generated 210,544 impressions and a 5.36% click through rate. This was an extremely targeted placement and was effective, however, has a higher cost per impression. We retargeted those who searched between March and May, as well, generating 401,552 impressions and a .16% click through rate. This method will be used in the future.

The Connected TV placement was placed from March to May and generated 692,660 impressions with an 82.19% view through rate and a click through rate of 16%. This method will be used in the future.

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click through rate, which was a little lower than expected. The platform is still viable and will be considered in the future.

Our Spotify placement ran in August until October and generated 628,010 impressions and a click through rate of 0.05%. This method will be used in the future.

Great Falls Montana Tourism will place ads on a mix of social media that could include Facebook, YouTube, SnapChat historically generates a lot of impressions for us, however, is usually a low click through. This placement, which ran from March until May produced similar results. The ad generated 1,609,107 impressions with a click through rate of 0.17%. The cost per click was $3.71 and cpm was $6.21, well below our average of all campaigns. This placement was successful and will be used again in the future.

Social Media Advertising met the objective. The strategy was successful. With lodging tax dollars, we placed paid media through Snapchat, Facebook, and YouTube.

On Facebook, we ran a campaign from August to October that generated 271,510 impressions, reached...
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<tr>
<td>Snapchat and Instagram.</td>
<td>From July 1 2019 to March 31 2020, Social Media placement has generated 89,653 clicks for a cost per click of $0.51. Just our geographic, demographic, and psychographic banner ads in that same time period generated 1,957 clicks for a cost per click of $6.35. According to ComScore, <a href="https://www.comscore.com/Insights/Presentations-and-Whitepapers/2017/The-2017-US-Mobile-App-Report">https://www.comscore.com/Insights/Presentations-and-Whitepapers/2017/The-2017-US-Mobile-App-Report</a>, Facebook, YouTube, Facebook Messenger, Google Search, Instagram, and SnapChat are the most popular apps used by people aged 18+. Time spent on Social Media continues to increase, <a href="https://www.broadbandsearch.net/blog/average-daily-time-on-social-media">https://www.broadbandsearch.net/blog/average-daily-time-on-social-media</a>.</td>
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Specific media spends are determined in May and approved in June. Traditionally our total media spend has been roughly 20% Banner Ads, 20% Audio, 25% video lead-ins, 30% social, and 5% print. In the event our budget increases, it is likely additional funds would be allocated to this method. | Great Falls Montana Tourism has seen great engagement from Paid Social Media. Reactions to Social Media Ads also allow us the opportunity to grow our audiences within the channels. |

Success will be measured by clicks and the percentage of video views. | $28,357.00 |

| 91,221 people and had a click through rate of 2.75%. It had a 27.17% view through rate, which is lower than we usually see, however, the click through was higher, so still effective. We then refreshed the campaign with more summer focused from February to April. It generated 613,536 impressions, reached 219,591 people, with a 1.69% click through rate and a 2.93% view through rate. This placement didn't perform as well as we wanted. We then retargeted those who had seen the placement with a banner ad, which generated 543,225 impressions, reached 46,633 and produced a .95% click through rate, which was effective and will be used in the future. |

The YouTube placement ran in July, generating 92,168 impressions with a 50.83% view through rate. The click through rate was .23% and was targeted to Montanans. This method will be used in the future, however, targeting a more local audience was not as effective as our national placements have been. |

With uncertainty of actual lodging
Great Falls Montana Tourism will use joint ventures to leverage its paid media by sharing costs with a partner.

Historic performance of Joint Ventures versus a stand-alone paid media spend.

Success will be measured with the placement of a complimentary ad placement with supporting distribution numbers, online page views, and engagement time.

Joint Ventures allow Great Falls Montana Tourism to increase their buying power and increase the number of people engaging with our marketing message. If the right Joint Ventures are offered, Great Falls Montana Tourism would consider adjusting budget line items to take advantage of the opportunity. If the total budget increases, Great Falls Montana Tourism would consider adding additional funds in this line item.

Great Falls Montana Tourism did receive a complimentary ad in Livability thanks to our local economic development organization, Great Falls Development Authority. This Joint Venture met the objective. The publication is used by local employers to recruit new employees by educating them on the community and is provided to people considering relocating to Great Falls, Montana. This is a print placement and available digitally. The publication had a distribution of 7,500, with 24,200 pageviews and an average time of 3:24 of engagement. In-migration to Great Falls comes from the same major markets overnight visitors come from. This method will be used in the future.

Travel Guide met the objective. The strategy was successful.

Great Falls Montana Tourism undertook the design of a full visitor magazine. The more heritage market is still interested in a concise document that inspires and orient.
| Consumer | Travel Guide | According to ITRR research, 84% of Great Falls’ overnight visitor is 55 years old and older. In 2019, Great Falls received 18,000 requests for Travel Guides for Great Falls. We distributed 30,000 visitor guides through Certified Folder, and 1,000 through our office. | Success will be measured by the redesign of a travel guide. | $3,657.00 | $3,657.00 project was not completed in this fiscal year. With the assistance of safety funds, unused FY21 funds, and additional budget in FY22, the magazine will be completed and available online. Once the design is completed and other projects are complete, we will work to allocate funds for printing the guide. This method will be used in the future. |
| Marketing Support | TAC/Governor’s Conference meetings | Great Falls Montana Tourism will have staff attend Tourism Advisory Council Meetings throughout the year and the Governor’s Conference on Tourism. | Staff have learned of new programs, developed partnerships, and gained resources from previous attendance. | $1,500.00 | $1,500.00 This objective was met. The strategy was successful. The Executive Director attended every available TAC Meeting. The Governor’s Conference on Tourism and Recreation did not occur, so was not attended. This method will be used in the future. |
| | | Great Falls Montana Tourism will retain an Executive Director. The Executive Director will | | | |

[https://funding.mt.gov/getGrantPrintPreview.do?documentPk=1592252236815&compName=All][12/16/2021 10:21:58 AM]
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<td>attend required meetings, manage marketing placement, oversee the budget, manage grants, submit reports, and other duties as needed to maintain the organization.</td>
<td>Commerce Office of Tourism and Business Development Partner Calls, timely financial report submission, completed audit, timely annual marketing evaluation report submission, timely annual marketing plan submission, timely completion of 990, successful and timely submission of an annual report, budget management, marketing management, and successful financial management.</td>
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<tr>
<td>During the period of time where the organization was managed by volunteers, deadlines were missed, meetings were not attended, audits took longer, and reports were not filed.</td>
<td>Paid staff have provided better management of the organization, cleaner audits, and timely responses compared to a volunteer structure.</td>
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In the event our funding is reduced from what is budgeted, this line item could be cut as Great Falls Montana Tourism is currently applying for grant funds to help offset personnel costs. This is dependent on applications made being funded.

Commerce Office of Tourism and Business Development staff to review prior to Tourism Advisory Council review, developed an annual marketing plan and budget and submitted through WebGrants in the format required by the system, submitted the organization’s 990 by deadline, and successfully submitted an annual report to the Secretary of State, managed the budget through the year, managed the paid media placement, and processed accounts payable in a timely manner.

This method will be used in the future as it is a needed expense to keep the organization operational.

$100,396.00

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marketing Method Evaluation Attachments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attachment 1: Great Falls CVB FY21 Budget to Actual and Pie Chart.pdf</td>
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<td>Attachment 2</td>
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# Marketing Method Budget

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# Miscellaneous Attachments

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# Reg/CVB Required Documents

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