



## Grant Details

### 118486 - FY23 DMO Plan

#### 122498 - FY23 Great Falls DMO Plan

#### DOC Office of Tourism

**Grant Title:** FY23 Great Falls DMO Plan  
**Grant Number:** 23-51-049  
**Grant Status:** Underway  
**Comments:**  
**Applicant Organization:** Great Falls CVB  
**Grantee Contact:** Rebecca Engum  
**Award Year:** FY23  
**Program Area:** DOC Office of Tourism

| Contract Dates:             | Contract Sent               | Contract Received           | Contract Executed         |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Project Dates:</b>       | 06/15/2022<br>Proposal Date | 07/01/2022<br>Project Start | 06/30/2023<br>Project End |
| <b>Grant Administrator:</b> | Barb Sanem                  |                             |                           |
| <b>Contract Number</b>      | 23-51-049                   |                             |                           |
| <b>Award Year</b>           | FY23                        |                             |                           |

#### Contract Dates

Contract Sent    Contract Received    Contract Executed    Contract Legal

**Project Dates** 07/01/2022  
 06/30/2023

Project Start    Project End

#### Comments

#### Amendment Comments

## DMO Plan Narrative

### 1. Describe Your Destination

*Describe your destination (who you are, who you wish to attract and why they would come) addressing your strengths, opportunities, and potential challenges.*

Great Falls, Montana is the 3rd largest city in the Nation's 4th largest state, by landmass, with 147,000 square miles. With 1 million residents in the State and just under 60,000 residents in the city, the open space appeals to residents and non-residents alike. 2021, 12.5 million people visited Montana, and 1.4 visited Great Falls.

Great Falls is Montana's Basecamp for Art and Adventure. Designed for independent, outdoor adventurers, Great Falls provides a true, authentic Montana experience. 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. Great Falls' access to a variety of outdoor adventures is complimented by a haven of rich arts, culture, and history in a vibrant, modern community where you can renew your spirit.

Great Falls is Montana's Museum Capital. Famed cowboy artist and humanitarian, Charlie Russell made Great Falls his basecamp and the museum that bears his name has the largest collection of Russell's work, the complex has his studio and home, and The C.M. Russell Museum has been named Montana's Museum worth driving for. The Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center has North America's most extensive display of the Lewis & Clark expedition. First People's Buffalo Jump is North America's Largest and is a National Historic Landmark. The remaining museums in Great Falls celebrate our history, the life of Brother Van, modern artists, the railroad, the artwork of Sister Mary Trinitas Morin and Mother Raphael Schweda, the military missions at Malmstrom Air Force Base, and a hands-on Children's Museum.

Great Falls becomes the Western Art Capital of the World for one week in March, in celebration of Charlie Russell's birthday. This signature event brings in over 750 artists at 15+ shows for a variety of auctions, direct purchases, quick finishes, demonstrations, lectures, music, and more.

Great Falls is home to Giant Springs State Park, and a basecamp to Tower Rock State Park, Sluice Boxes State Park, and Smith River State Park. We have an airport that offers direct flights to Minneapolis MN, Denver CO, Seattle WA, Las Vegas NV, Mesa AZ, Salt Lake City UT, and seasonally, to Chicago IL.

Great Falls looks to attract culture and history buffs 50-65-years-old, active independent adventures 35-65-year-old, event experiencers age 25-45-years-old, and shop and diners 25-65-years-old.

Non-Resident visitation continues to grow in Montana overall; however, Great Falls Montana Tourism is challenged to get those independent adventurers to leave the National Park Regions. 84% of Great Falls' overnight guests travel by car, visitors to Great Falls must drive for several hours to access Glacier National Park, and its popular western entrance is even farther away. By car, visitors from the west, south, southeast, and east must pass through several cities that most directly compete with Great Falls, including Missoula, Kalispell, Butte, Bozeman, and Billings.

The Great Falls market has aged infrastructure in both lodging properties and convention spaces. Even with aged infrastructure, our convention spaces are occupied often, leaving limited availability for new events and meetings. Our ADR is brought down by a large percentage of below economy properties. Investment in the local market is limited with our newest property being constructed 2 years ago and one new property under construction with completion hopefully by next year. This is both a challenge and a strength: difficult to land new business and groups, but attractive as our rates are lower.

The opportunities are around growth. Growth in new air service and growth in developing the destination with new products that make Great Falls more attractive to overnight visitors.

In summary, Great Falls Montana Tourism is engaged with marketing, managing, and developing the destination. Through CDME coursework, it is conveyed that a DMO, or a Destination Management Organization, is involved with marketing of the destination, advocating for the destination and the industry, leading the organization and being a leader within the destination for Tourism connected challenges, developments, and strategic directions. In FY23 Great Falls Montana will lead its owned and paid media marketing with outdoor adventure, supplemented by art messaging while working with partners to manage and develop the destination to maintain and enhance competitive advantages, and if successful in securing grant funding, lead a tourism strategic planning effort for Great Falls and the organization.

## **2. Align with Montana Brand**

***Briefly describe how your destination aligns with the Montana Brand.***

Great Falls Montana aligns with the Montana Brand as we use paid, owned, and earned media to orient overnight visitors to Great Falls' unique spectacular unspoiled nature and the only in Great Falls breathtaking experiences that can be had by day, with the ability to come back to the relaxing hospitality of our community to renew their spirit for the next day. By developing trip ideas, and itineraries around specific events, we will facilitate extended stays in Great Falls, a vibrant and charming small town full of art and modern amenities, prior to departing for adventures in more of Montana's spectacular, unspoiled nature.

## **3. What is the strategic role of your DMO?**

***Select all that apply: Destination Marketing, Destination Management, Destination Stewardship, Destination Development).***

Destination Marketing, Destination Management, Destination Development

**Based on the strategic role you serve, provide the following information.**

***3a. Define your audience(s) (demographic, geographic, and psycho-graphic).***

- Active Independent Adventure Couples 35-65 years old in
  - Drive Markets
    - Spokane
    - Coeur d'Alene
    - Boise
    - Bismarck
    - Lethbridge
    - Calgary
  - Direct Fly Markets
    - Denver
    - Seattle

- Chicago
  - o Originating Flight Markets
    - Los Angeles
    - Dallas
  - o Emerging Markets
    - Nashville
- Culture and History Buffs aged 50-65 in
  - o Drive Markets
    - Spokane
    - Coeur d'Alene
    - Boise
    - Bismarck
    - Lethbridge
    - Calgary
  - o Direct Fly Markets
    - Denver
    - Seattle
    - Chicago
  - o Originating Flight Markets
    - Los Angeles
    - Dallas
  - o Emerging Markets
    - Nashville
- Event Experiencers aged 25-45 in
  - o Local Drive markets
    - Billings
    - Butte
    - Missoula
    - Kalispell
  - o Drive Markets
    - Spokane
    - Coeur d'Alene
    - Bismarck
    - Lethbridge
    - Calgary
    - Medicine Hat
- Shop & Diners aged 25-65 in
  - o Drive Markets
    - Lethbridge
    - Calgary
    - Medicine Hat

**3b. What research supports your DMO strategy?**

In calendar year 2021, Great Falls, Montana had 1,487,559 overnight visitors, according to ITRR, which is a 47% increase over 2019. During the same calendar year Great Falls market saw a 2.36% decline in room demand over 2019, according to Smith Travel Research, and a 1.76% decline in gross lodging tax collection, according to Department of Revenue. Fiscal year data is still projected, however, is expected to paint a much different picture. The reason is that the first quarter of 2021 still was being impacted by COVID-19.

In 2021, the overnight visitor to Great Falls, as shown in research conducted by ITRR, can be characterized as:

- A couple, 55-64 years old
- With \$100,000 to \$150,000 in household income
- Who has previously been to Great Falls
- Driving their personal vehicle

Arriving from:

- Washington
- Colorado
- Idaho
- California
- New Mexico
- Arizona
- Florida
- Oregon
- Texas
- Alberta
- Minnesota
- Utah

Engaging in these activities while in Great Falls:

- Scenic Driving
- Day Hiking
- Nature Photography
- Wildlife Watching
- Recreational Shopping
- Visiting Local Brewery
- Visiting Lewis & Clark Sites
- Visiting Museums

Great Falls Montana Tourism's owned media produced results. Our Facebook followers grew 26% to 11,173, Instagram grew 43% to 5,056, and YouTube grew 77% to 154.

Through this data, Great Falls Montana Tourism has identified who is arriving in Great Falls, where they are arriving from, and what they do while they are here. This guides the geographic markets and market personas that Great Falls Montana Tourism will target. Additionally, this data points to the images that should be used in paid media placement to connect the viewer to the activities they are interested in engaging in.

### **3c. What are your emerging markets?**

Nashville has been an emerging market for Great Falls for the past year and continues to be a market that Great Falls Montana Tourism works to develop.

Great Falls Montana Tourism will continue to review ITRR overnight visitor research, VisaVue spending data, and guest walk-in traffic to determine additional emerging markets.

### **4. Define and describe your overall goals.**

**A goal is an idea of the future or desired result that a person or group of people envisions, plans and commits to achieve.**

Goal 1: Increase room demand in Great Falls by 5%.

Goal 2: Develop 1 new event.

Goal 3: Increase percentage of overnight visitors to drive through visitors by 1%

Goal 4: Zero Audit Findings.

### **4a. Describe proposed tactics and projects as related to overall goals and controlled by the organization in its financial statements.**

Tactics for Goal 1: Promote Great Falls to potential leisure travelers to increase overnight visitors and stays in Great Falls, Montana.

#### Traditional Paid Media

- Provide outdoor recreation, cultural amenities, event, and itinerary messaging through paid ads on Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and YouTube.
- Market Great Falls' outdoor recreation and cultural amenities through articles published on digital and print platforms.
- Place ads in niche print publications.
- Take advantage of media opportunities that leverage video assets.
- Take advantage of media opportunities that retarget audiences engaging with a first Great Falls message.
- Take advantage of media opportunities that leverage Glacier and Yellowstone National Park trip planners and visitors.
- Create custom landing pages to support all paid media placement for better tracking.

#### Non-Traditional Paid Efforts

- Find opportunities to leverage influencers that will produce a strong return on investment.
- Be open to local product production partnerships: Pasta Montana, JJ Johnson, Mighty Mo, Mountain Wave Distilling, and others.
- Consider opportunities to promote Great Falls through Great Falls Sporting Venues: Electric City Speedway, Great Falls Trap and Skeet Club, Centene Stadium, Montana ExpoPark, Great Falls Ice Plex, and McLaughlin Center.
- Lead a targeted innovative "It's Greater in Great Falls" guerilla marketing effort in Texas if a new direct flight is announced.

#### Established Events

- Support Western Art Week show organizers by listing their shows and events at [WesternArtWeek.com](http://WesternArtWeek.com).
- Support Western Art Week shows by producing a comprehensive guide to all activities during the week and making them available to all guests.
- Promote Western Art Week to Event Experiencers, Shop & Diners, and History Buffs as a supplement to the show organizers' promotion to art buyers.
- Coordinate "The Greatest Dam Mimosa Showdown" the weekend of National Mimosa Day, to include a brunch the day after, leveraging technology assets to determine value.

#### Joint Ventures

- Participate in State of Montana Department of Tourism and Business Development opportunities that offer video or content placements.
- Participate in strategically aligned opportunities provided by partners.
- Provide opportunities to partners to capitalize on consumer awareness built by Great Falls Montana Tourism to increase interest for the member's business by sharing our media plan.

#### Public Relations

- Subscribe to the media request service and respond to appropriate leads to generate interest for Great Falls, Montana.
- Establish relationships with writers and offer familiarization tours in exchange for media coverage.

#### Facebook

- Be the leader in producing original content about Great Falls by posting Glimpse of Great Falls videos, Did you Know/Check this Out posts, podcast new episode announcement posts, new blog announcement posts.
- Members who create Facebook Events will have those events added to our page's event section.
- Launch member developed "Show Me" video segments where members will provide Great Falls Montana Tourism short videos that provide insider tips and behind the scene developed about their business.
- Share posts of positive news highlighting the Great Falls community, current non-political events, and exciting opportunities with the primary objective to make Great Falls, Montana the destination for a leisure traveler.
- Invite people who engage with our content to Like our page.
- Respond to comments and messages, both positive and negative, as appropriate.

#### Instagram

- Post breathtaking, emotion-invoking user-generated photos.
- Secure rights and leverage user-generated content that showcases our diverse landscapes and seasonal experiences in and around the basecamp; an approximate 60-mile radius from Great Falls.
- Include simple conversational toned captions, a location, and the minimum following hashtags: #VisitGreatFalls #GreatFallsMontana #GreatFallsMT #GreatFalls #Montana on all posts. Additional trending experience, season, and image specific hashtags will be included to leverage larger feeds.
- Post videos sparingly as we want the market to engage within seconds.
- Include shared stories that highlight outdoor adventure in Great Falls and the surrounding area that Great Falls Montana is tagged in, or with similar original content, as stories.

#### Twitter

- Post in real-time as events occur, conversational confident toned tweets, and attempt to engage, as appropriate, people of notoriety with our tweets.

#### YouTube

- Maintain a library of Great Falls Montana Tourism videos that currently includes the Montana People of Great Falls series, Introduction to Great Falls series, and our podcast, We're No Dam Experts, episodes.
- Develop a strategy to better leverage YouTube.

#### We're No Dam Experts Podcast

- Create, produce and deliver a weekly episode on a topic about Great Falls, Montana and publish to podcast libraries.
- Create a landing page for each episode and link that page to the show landing page.

#### Website

- Launch a redesigned website with dedicated content for wedding and sports segments.
- Develop and source, from partners and industry experts, blogs for [www.VisitGreatFallsMontana.org](http://www.VisitGreatFallsMontana.org) that will share first-person experiences for others to engage with.
- Create evergreen itineraries to inspire leisure travelers next trip to Great Falls.
- Develop custom content, as appropriate, to orient leisure travelers with Great Falls.
- Research opportunities to create digital passes that reduce the need for paper and will offer virtual guided engagement through Great Falls.

#### Direct Communication

- Create and deliver a seasonal "Get to Know Great Falls" email to all new inquiries on the following Tuesday after they are received.
- Create and deliver a monthly "Adventure Awaits" email to our entire leisure traveler database.
- Create and deliver special edition focused email communications to targeted interests as the need arises.

## Photos and Videos

- Secure new photos for owned and paid media utilizing hired photographers for staged shoots, call for submission to amateur photographers, and photo contests.
- Develop new video content to promote Great Falls with a connection to the outdoors, art, food, and shopping.
- Capture new Western Art Week video content for a new promotional video of Western Art Week

## Printed Support Materials

- Distribute printed visitor guides through Certified Folder for Yellowstone and Glacier Routes.
- Maintain a supply of Visitor Guides for distribution through Great Falls partners and Tourism's Basecamp.
- Provide printed guides to those who request one.
- Update design of City of Great Falls map and print map into pads.
- Update design of The Falls of the Missouri map and print map into pads.

Tactics for Goal 2: Make Great Falls a more competitive destination to visit by recruiting and developing events; supporting new air service at Great Falls International Airport; advocating for the development and improvement of new venues to host events, meetings, and groups; encouraging new services to support the tourism industry.

- Continue to create alliances with willing partners to further the efforts of Great Falls Montana Tourism.
- Provide education on the details and the economic value of improving Montana ExpoPark to civic groups, organizations, and resident groups.
- Invest with money in and support with letters, presentations, and information the efforts through the Small Community Air Service Development grant, led by Great Falls International Airport Authority.
- Invest with money in and support with letters, presentations, and information the efforts of the Low-Cost Air Initiative that looks to bring cost-competitive new flights into Great Falls, led by the Great Falls area Chamber of Commerce Foundation.
- Provide data and insight to efforts that will enhance Great Falls' competitiveness for overnight visitation.
- Create and deliver "Let's Partner" Marketing Series Workshops to cover how to leverage Great Falls Montana Tourism's efforts and develop an event mini-marketing plan to attract overnight visitors.
- Conduct research to invest in recruiting or developing new signature events for Great Falls, Montana.
- Accept proposals to partner with Great Falls champions to grow tourism in Great Falls.

Tactics for Goal 3: Get guests to stay the night in Great Falls, extend their stay in Great Falls, and/or plan a return trip to Great Falls by assisting guests daily July 1 - September 30; May-June; and Monday-Friday October through April who call, walk-in, and email by answering their questions, sharing stories that excite them about Great Falls, and get them out experiencing Great Falls.

- Greet all in-market guests with a smile, answer questions, and add value by oversharing about Great Falls, Montana.
- Be available to in-market guests daily from July 1 - September 30 and May-June
- Greet all callers with a smile, answer questions, and add value by oversharing about Great Falls, Montana.
- Provide printed materials as requested, while encouraging electronic delivery.
- Work with partners to bring additional opportunities to Overlook Park, such as food trucks, bike rentals, and disc golf equipment rentals.
- Develop displays for in-market guests to engage with throughout 15 Overlook Drive.

Tactics for Goal 4: Maintain efficient and effective operations for the organization. Beyond paying bills, filing reports, leading Board and Executive Committee meetings, tracking progress towards goals, assisting with audits, specific objectives include recruiting, developing, and retaining staff and volunteers, advocating for the Future of Montana ExpoPark, and communicating with stakeholders.

- Conduct weekly Pipeline Meetings to prioritize leads, discuss what it will take to land projects, and strategize next steps for landed business.
- Conduct weekly Team Meetings to prioritize for the week, discuss hurdles, and strategize owned and paid media efforts.
- Create and deliver meeting progress reports as needed to venues and lodging properties regarding leads lost and secured and known business occurring in Great Falls.
- Create and deliver quarterly Basecamp Briefs for members, lodging properties, and community leaders.
- Create and deliver weekly, Tourism Tuesday emails for interested parties and the Board of Directors that highlights the team's results and pertinent items that affect Tourism, from the previous week.
- Create and deliver weekly Operations Update emails for the Board of Directors that provides insight to the pipeline, team's efforts, and paid media results.
- Create and deliver weekly, The Eventory, an inventory listing of events occurring in Great Falls for our event industry partners, interested parties, and lodging properties to aid in itinerary fillers for in-market guests and strategic planning or collaborating on established and new events.
- Provide staff opportunities for continuous education within the industry and their area of professional purpose.
- Oversee annual audit of assessment and tax funds. Coordinate 990 preparation for Great Falls Convention and Visitors Bureau. Submit annual reports for both Great Falls Tourism Business Improvement District and Great Falls Convention and Visitors Bureau. Deliver quarterly financial reports for Great Falls Convention and Visitors Bureau. Complete annual marketing evaluation report for Great Falls Convention and Visitors Bureau.
- If funding is secured, conduct a Destination Next assessment, strategic planning, and market analysis.
- Track all activity for inquiries, leads, projects, and partners through iDSS customer relationship management system.
- Track organizational goal progress, owned and paid media, visitation, lodging tax collection, and TBID assessment collection in Performance Dashboard and deliver report monthly to Board of Directors.
- Conduct monthly Board of Directors Meetings and Executive Committee meetings to monitor financials, review progress towards goals, review strategy, and adopt changes in strategic efforts.
- Provide live and recorded Director orientation.

- Retain a high-performing, professional staff.
- Review and update policies; add new policies as needed.

**Optional: Add attachment Here**

**Optional: Add attachment here**

**Do you want to add an attachment?**

**Do you want to add an attachment?**

**Objectives/Metrics/Evaluation**

| Objectives  | Measurable Metrics for Success  | Report the Metric Achieved | Evaluation of Measurable Metrics for Success | Add'l Attchmnt |
|---|---|----------------------------|--|----------------|
| Increase overnight visitors and stays at Great Falls lodging properties by placing paid media in our targeted markets and developing content that is distributed through our owned media.   | Success will be a 5% increase in room demand over FY22 measured by Smith Travel Research reports. Great Falls Montana Tourism will also review room demand data weekly and monitor overnight visitors quarterly from ITRR data. | NA                         | NA   |                |
| Get guests to stay the night in Great Falls, extend their stay in Great Falls, and/or plan a return trip to Great Falls. Great Falls Montana Tourism will review ITRR non-resident reports quarterly and analyze numbers of guests assisted through its office and what percentage of guests that are not residents or campers, the percentage of guests visiting on the weekends, and percentage of guests visiting May-September. | Success will be a 1% increase in the percentage of overnight visitors against drive through visitors over calendar year 2022 as reported by ITRR.   | NA                         | NA   |                |
| Make Great Falls a more competitive destination to visit by recruiting and developing events; supporting new air service at Great Falls International Airport; advocating for the development and improvement of new venues to host events, meetings, and groups; encouraging new services to support the tourism industry.   | Success will be measured by hosting 1 New Event that has never been in Great Falls.   | NA                         | NA   |                |
| Maintain efficient and effective operations for the organization. Beyond paying bills, filing reports, leading Board and Executive Committee meetings, tracking progress towards goals, assisting with audits, specific objectives include recruiting, developing, and retaining staff and volunteers, advocating for the Future of Montana ExpoPark, and communicating with stakeholders   | Success will be measured by clean audit with zero findings.   | NA                         | NA   |                |

**DMO Budget**

| Allowable Methods     | Amount Budgeted | % of Budget Allocated | Amount Expended | % of Budget Expended |
|-----------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Administration        | \$35,200.00     | 19.94                 | \$0.00          | 0                    |
| Agency Services       | \$27,800.00     | 15.75                 | \$0.00          | 0                    |
| Joint Venture         | \$5,000.00      | 2.83                  | \$0.00          | 0                    |
| Opportunity Marketing | \$1,000.00      | 0.57                  | \$0.00          | 0                    |
| Paid Media            | \$87,508.00     | 49.58                 | \$0.00          | 0                    |

|                  |              |        |        |      |
|------------------|--------------|--------|--------|------|
| Visitor Services | \$20,000.00  | 11.33  | \$0.00 | 0    |
|                  | \$176,508.00 | 100.00 | \$0.00 | 0.00 |

**Narrative Evaluation**

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**Reg/CVB Required Documents**

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| Description                                     | File Name   | File Size |
|---|---|-----------|
| Certificate of Compliance                       | FY23 Annual Certificate of Compliance.pdf                       | 119 KB    |
| Bylaws  | GFCVB Bylaws Adopted 2-20-2020.pdf                              | 88 KB     |
| Resolution to approve FY23 DMO Plan and Budget. | Great Falls Montana Tourism Board Meeting 4-21-2022 Minutes.pdf | 53 KB     |



