



## Grant Details

### 118486 - FY23 DMO Plan

#### 122510 - FY 23 Southwest Montana Marketing Plan

#### DOC Office of Tourism

**Grant Title:** FY 23 Southwest Montana Marketing Plan  
**Grant Number:** 23-51-039  
**Grant Status:** Underway  
**Comments:**  
**Applicant Organization:** Southwest Montana  
**Grantee Contact:** Sarah Bannon  
**Award Year:** FY23  
**Program Area:** DOC Office of Tourism  
**Amounts:**  
**Contract Dates:**

<small>Contract Sent</small>	<small>Contract Received</small>	<small>Contract Executed</small>	
<b>Project Dates:</b> 06/15/2022	07/01/2022	06/30/2023	
<small>Proposal Date</small>	<small>Project Start</small>	<small>Project End</small>	

**Grant Administrator:** Barb Sanem  
**Contract Number:** 23-51-039  
**Award Year:** 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.*

Southwest Montana, the cradle of Montana history, features copper barons, feisty outlaws, gold miners, Lewis and Clark explorers, hardworking cowboys, adventurous frontiersmen, and a Nez Perce Battlefield all set in the backdrop of 21 wildlife-filled mountain ranges, blue ribbon streams, 3.3 million acres of forest land, natural hot springs, a stalactite filled cavern, sapphire mines, 316 species of birds, and a dozen mining ghost towns and ghosts offering a lifetime of adventure.

Southwest Montana attracts an active mature/boomer audience with a focus on soft adventure. The region is a big draw for heritage and culture enthusiasts. We have a large nationally recognized heritage corridor running from Butte to Anaconda. Our 2021 visitors were mostly repeat visitors with 72% of groups being repeat visitors to the state and 85% plan to return within two years. First time visitors made up 13% of our groups. **72% of our nonresident visitors travel alone or are in a group of two.**

**Strengths** – Interstates I-90 and I-15, historical opportunities including ghost towns and ghosts, historic sites, location between the national parks, Lewis & Clark sites and museums; cultural opportunities - western heritage, live theatre, concerts, rodeos, fairs, local celebrations, cattle drives, working ranch experiences, historical & cultural tours, trolley tours, pow-wows, farmers' markets and more; natural resources - hot springs, radon health mines, rockhounding for gems, Lewis & Clark Caverns, fly-fishing, rafting, blue ribbon rivers and streams, hiking, biking, outdoor trails, downhill skiing, and ski joring; and we have easy access airports in Butte and Helena.

**Opportunities** - Develop niche markets of history, ghosts, outdoor activities including multiple trail opportunities, and attract

filming opportunities."

**Challenges** - Transportation services and seasonal access concerns, employee shortage, high gas prices and the unknown fluctuation, off-season closures of attractions, limited cell phone coverage, and poor economic factors; potential environmental situations such as fires, smoke, flooding, viruses, and potential influence of world conflicts, a need for touring companies as many travelers prefer someone to take them to the attractions and take the guesswork out of their planning; shortage of meetings & convention facilities limits the ability to draw on these groups for potential revenue throughout the year and particularly in the off-season. Shortage of labor resources is taxing many small tourism businesses

## 2. Align with Montana Brand

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

Brand Vision: Enchant the visitor with adventures filled with scenic beauty, history, nature, excitement, indelible personalities and stimulate a desire to return.

Brand Statement: Various forms of "Ghost towns, road trips and hiking trails. The rest is history."

### **More spectacular unspoiled nature than anywhere else in the lower 48.**

Southwest Montana has 21 mountain ranges, numerous rivers, lakes, streams, Scenic Byways, Lewis & Clark Caverns offering an abundance of unspoiled nature. In addition, visitors can view a variety of wildlife while visiting Red Rocks Lake National Wildlife Refuge or the Scapegoat Wilderness Area (to name just a few).

### **Vibrant and charming small towns that serve as gateways to our natural wonders.**

Southwest Montana provides a direct route between Glacier and Yellowstone National parks and has many vibrant and charming small towns. Visitors can explore the fishing mecca of Ennis (also known for its great art scene) or take a trip to the Sweet Palace located in Philipsburg (noted as being one of the "Prettiest Painted Places in America"). Distilleries and craft breweries are found throughout the region. From the sophistication of the capital city, Helena, to historic Butte, America, and everything in between, the region offers visitors a variety of options when it comes to small town charm.

### **Breathtaking experiences by day and relaxing hospitality at night.**

Hiking, biking, skiing, fishing, rockhounding...from soft adventure activities such as scenic driving and wildlife viewing, to more extreme activities such as mountain biking and snow kiting, Southwest Montana offers a plethora of breathtaking experiences. And, with a wide range of lodging and dining options, the region also boasts a wealth of options when it comes to relaxing hospitality at night.

## 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

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

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

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**Primary**—Both our primary and secondary target markets include repeat travelers to Montana. Since Southwest Montana is 78% repeat visitors and only 13% new visitors, we consider advertising to the two National Parks a benefit to extend the traveler's stay in the state or to entice the traveler to the region on a repeat visit.

**Active Mature**—Consists of older married couples or singles (ages 55-64), college educated, usually without children. They lead an active lifestyle and enjoy visiting historic sites, landmarks and museums as well as partaking in general sightseeing and wildlife watching.

Our 2021 visitors were mostly repeat visitors with 72% of groups being repeat visitors to the state and 85% plan to return within two years. First time visitors made up 13% of our groups. **72% of our nonresident visitors travel alone or are in a group of two.**

well as partaking in general sightseeing and wildlife watching. According to 2018 data from the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research (ITRR), 36% of visitors to the region were between the ages of 65-74 and 35% were between the ages of 55-64 years old. And, another 35% of our visitors were between 55-64. The same data reveals that 52% of visitors to the region were made up of "couples" and 28% were individual travelers.

**Heritage/Cultural Enthusiasts** — This segment consists of individuals who enjoy learning more about western history and culture. They enjoy the experience of quaint communities and the opportunities within. They visit historic sites and landmarks and are interested in festivals and fairs about the West. Data collected in 2021 from the ITRR indicates that 21% of visitors to the region spent time at other state parks—of which we have 11 in Southwest Montana. Also, 16% visited hot springs, 11% visited Virginia/Nevada Cities specifically, and an additional 12% visited the areas ghost towns. Lewis and Clark Caverns had

10% visitation, the Montana History Museum had 10% visitation, and The Big Hole Battlefield had 4% visitation and Clark Canyon Reservoir attracted 5% of the visitors.

**Secondary—**

**Freelance or travel-publication specific writers** - with an assignment of preparing a vacation destination article for print, broadcast or Internet distribution.

**International Visitors** — We target Canadian visitors, particularly from Alberta through a travel show in Calgary. The region considers international visitors as a secondary market because while there aren't enough funds to aggressively target these markets and we do not participate in RMI programs, Southwest Montana is able to create regional itineraries for group travel and FITs.

**Film Production/Still Photography** — Film production remains a secondary target market due to the budget that would be required to reach such a niche audience. We are creating a video / photo library for location scouts looking for locations and attractions. When possible, the region works with the Montana Film Office to assist with production in the region. Consumer travelers are increasingly moved by "moving pictures" and therefore the region also focuses secondary marketing

**Geographic Focus**— Currently the region's top target audiences based on 2021 ITRR data are: Washington State 13%, California 9% Idaho 8%, and Utah 6%, and of course Montana. According to the Arrivalist data, Washington, Idaho and Utah are our top nonresidential visitors. As of 2021 Texas is emerging as a potential in the top target marketing. I

**Psychographic Focus** - We focus on history and cultural enthusiasts, outdoor recreationalists, scenic drivers, and experiential travelers. These are all part of the high potential visitors. ITRR 2021

According to ITRR, Southwest Montana attracts an active mature/boomer audience with a focus on soft adventure. The region is a big draw for heritage and culture enthusiasts. Most of our visitors are 65-74 years old (42%) and 39% are 55-64 years old with an additional 14% being over 75 years old. We pull in visitors that are already at the national parks and in Montana as well as Montanans. We also target Canadians through a travel show in Calgary.

We are adding ghost enthusiasts to our target market as well which will now target a younger population. Also, new for us will be the outdoor enthusiasts interested in the Continental Divide.

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

Southwest Montana will remain mostly a destination marketing organization as we will strive to bring our target market visitors to the region. For destination management we will work with our rural communities to enhance the visitor experience and keep travelers in our region longer.

In 2020, nonresident visitors to Montana spent an estimated \$3.14 billion in the state. This \$3.14 billion in local spending directly supports \$2.60 billion of economic activity in the state, and supports an additional \$1.81 billion of economic activity, indirectly. The estimated total contribution of nonresident spending to Montana's economy was \$4.40 billion in 2020.

ITRR 2020 nonresident expenditures to Southwest Montana

2020 estimates of spending in Southwest Montana by nonresident visitors to the state totaled over \$299 million. •

This \$299 million in local spending directly supports \$195.4 million of economic activity in the region, and supports an additional \$124.3 million of economic activity, indirectly. •

The total contribution of nonresident spending to the regional economy was \$319.7 million.

Economic impact includes:	Direct	Indirect	Induced	Combined
Industry Output:	\$195,430,00	\$62,820,000	\$61,430,000	\$319,680,000
Jobs:	2840	450	480	3,770
State and local Taxes				\$15,730,000

ITRR 2021: 80% Repeat visitors, We have a much older audience:

42% are 65-74 years old, 39% are 55- 64 years old, an additional 14% being over 75 years old. Median age to SWMT 60

Come from Washington, California, Idaho, Wyoming, Ohio, Utah, Colorado

47% visited Glacier National Park, 44% visited Yellowstone Park, 21 % visited other State Parks,

16% visited a hot spring, 12 % visited Ghost Towns, 11% visited Virginia City/Nevada City; 10% visited MT Historical Museum in Helena and 10% visited Lewis and Clark State Caverns

53% did scenic driving, 52%-day hiking, 35% wildlife watching, 32% Car RV Camping; 31% nature photography

For trip planning: 27% used information from previous visits; 25% used official MT website; 61% used search engine; 12% used social media

During the trip: 51% used a search engine; 25% used information from connections living in Montana; 14% used other, 20% used visitor staff; 14% used brochure information rack

- Brochures, maps, and travel guides are the #1 in-market influence. (Bentley University)
- 70% of tourists pick up brochures in-market. (Bentley University)
- **Social Media & Tourism:** According to a 2019 study published by Value Penguin, “sixty percent of people have used social media to find travel destinations, and Facebook is the most common source, followed by Youtube and Instagram. Men are more likely than women to use social media to find travel destinations and 81% of Millennials have used social media to find travel inspiration.”
- 400 Assets from User Generated Content (UGC) for use on web and social
  - **Why social proof??** Consumers also look for information from people who are just like them. Consequently, the most popular content related to travel is generated by users themselves.

In the U.S., the craft beer industry is a \$82.9 billion industry. In Montana, the craft beer

- industry has an economic impact of \$498 million (2019) with 92 operating craft breweries in the state. A survey conducted by Visit Anaheim found that “tasting tourism” has increased as “seven in ten Americans have traveled to a destination specifically to sample the alcohol in the region.” Further, the survey offers that 72% of beer drinkers have spent vacation time going to a tasting at a local brewery and this trend is only increasing.

### **The State of the American Traveler May 2022 | Destination Analysts**

Many Americans seem to feel economic headwinds are inevitable. Right now, 59.0% of American travelers believe it is likely an economic recession will begin in the U.S. this year. And if gasoline prices don't come down, 58.0% of American travelers predict they will be taking fewer road trips this Spring and Summer, and 60.4% predict they will be staying closer to home on their road trips.

American travelers also exhibit a COVID wariness after the last two years. Over 45% of American travelers feel it's likely that a dangerous new variant of COVID-19 will emerge in the U.S. in the remainder of this year. In addition, those that feel the pandemic situation will get worse in the next month has more than doubled over the last several weeks—to 21.5% from 8.7%.

Fortunately, Americans are still prioritizing their leisure travel. Nearly 90% have trips planned—3.0 on average.

Despite their economic concerns, 60.6% continue to say their leisure travel is a high priority in their budget for the next 3 months. Americans recorded another record level of excitement about their leisure travel, as well.

### **The State of the American Traveler April 2022 | Destination Analysts**

COVID continues to retreat as an impediment to Americans' realization of the experiences they seek from travel. Meanwhile, 81.0% of American travelers report strong excitement for their travel this year and 86.2% are in a ready-to-travel state-of-mind.

Inflation and gas prices are an issue for trip volume, but Americans still plan to spend on travel. Nearly one-quarter of American travelers said that recent inflation in consumer prices has led them to cancel an upcoming trip and 55.8% say that if gasoline prices don't come down, they will be taking fewer road trips this spring/summer. Yet 61.3% still say travel is a high budget priority for them, and 40% still say luxury travel experiences are an important part of their trips.

While no one is simply returning to who they were in February 2020, now that many feel the global pandemic receding, it is a good time to ask: who are you as a traveler now? We asked Americans several questions about how they plan to travel in the future and their current travel preferences, and how this compares to their pre-pandemic selves. We found that while today's traveler is still trending towards shorter, closer to home and more carefully planned trips than before the pandemic, they are more motivated to travel than ever.

### **Travel Passion Profiles: Birding Enthusiasts | Destination Analysts**

A sizable group of Americans are interested in our feathered friends year-round – and will travel to attend birding festivals, migration paths and see other birding hotspots. According to the National Audubon Society, there are 47 million birders and over 1,100 varieties of birds in the United States. The best news for destinations seeking to attract these travelers is that birds can be found anywhere people live.

It's probably not a surprise that most birders say they're looking to experience beautiful places and relax while traveling. What is surprising is that birding enthusiasts are over three times more likely than other travelers to turn to Twitter for destination marketing messaging. True to form, birders love Tweets!

### **The Value of DMO Visitor Guides | Destination Analysts (please see attached info)**

#### **Call Center for 2021:**

Most inquiries came from: California, Texas, Florida, Washington, Illinois, and Montana.

The overwhelming interest was in History / Ghost Towns, followed by wildlife viewing, Lewis and Clark Trails, and hot springs, lodging and rock hounding. Most of our reader service comes from *Yellowstone Journal*.

**Ghosts:** 2022 Paranormal video on Gunslinger Gulch on Travel Channel. Southwest Montana put up a blog following this film on The Travel Channel's new show *The Ghost Town Terror*. Within one week we had 3000 views; within three weeks we had over 9000 views on the blog. We are at over 16,400 views in less than two months!

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

The newest emerging market is "Ghosts." We have had paranormal film crews in the region and the response we are getting is quite astounding.

We are also adding hikers and bikers using the Continental Divide Trail as we have four Gateway Communities for this in Southwest Montana.

We are adding a partnership with Glacier Country and Yellowstone Country on the Glaciers to Geysers program. We will feature motorcycle, snowmobiling and museums.

We are adding Night Sky to our 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.*

1. Raise awareness of Southwest Montana to inspire first-time and return visitation.
2. Increase information to assist local and regional travelers and aspiring travelers to the region.
3. Increase photo, film, video, and stories of the region.

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

1. Raise awareness of Southwest Montana to inspire first-time and return visitation.
  1. Use multi-media marketing including print, online, digital, and printed materials.
  2. Use joint ventures to stretch marketing reach.
  3. Use social media to expand our presence.
2. Increase informaton to assist local and regional travelers, and aspiring travelers to the region.
  1. Offer travel guides, brochures, map information to visitors.
  2. Use website, call center, Certified Folder, kiosks.
  3. Have Frontline Fam tour, published stories, blogs, and local interviews to gather information and have available to our visitors.
3. Increase photo, film, video, and stories of the region.
  1. Do at least one photo shoot to increase our library of photos.
  2. Add two more videos to our Breweries and Distilleries project.
  3. Add film video to encourage location scouts to check into our region for potential films, commercials, photography opportunities.

**Optional: Add attachment Here**      DMA\_West\_Visitor\_Guide\_Readership\_Study\_\_\_Presentation\_Deck\_11\_4\_21.pdf

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**Objectives/Metrics/Evaluation**

Objectives	Measurable Metrics for Success	Report the Metric Achieved	Evaluation of Measurable Metrics for Success	Add'l Attchmnt
Use multi-media marketing including print, online, digital, and printed materials.	We optimize for cost per thousand impression and cost per click. We also track lead generation.			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Digital: \$1.50 average cost per click</li> <li>Generate at least 1200 leads</li> <li>Print advertising to reach over 300,000 under \$40 average cost per thousand</li> </ul>			
Collaborate with many partners including Crown of the Continent, the state joint ventures, the CVB's in the region, Geysers to Glaciers, and with the University of Montana, Rick Graetz.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participate in at least one joint venture with the state</li> <li>Do the Geysers to Glaciers joint venture with Yellowstone Country and Glacier Country</li> <li>Add at least 4 stories with the partnership with the University of Montana</li> </ul>			
Continue to use our social media to reach a greater audience. This includes Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Blog.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>15% increase in Facebook Engagement over FY22</li> <li>25% increase in Instagram Followers over FY22</li> <li>7% increase in blog views over FY22</li> </ul>			
Offer Travel guides, brochures, map information to visitors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fulfill 100% of requests for Southwest Montana Travel Guides at call center.</li> <li>Print and disseminate Tear-off Maps and Birding Brochures to Southwest Montana partners through brochure exchange and per requests.</li> <li>Produce a Ghost Tour Map and Continental Divide Map with itineraries</li> </ul>			
We will use website, call center, Certified Folder, kiosks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12% increase in website traffic over FY22</li> <li>5% decrease in bounce rate over FY22</li> <li>7% increase in blog views over FY22</li> <li>2% increase in call center activity over FY22</li> </ul>			
Have Frontline FAM tour, publish stories, blogs, and local interviews to gather information and have available to our visitors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do one Frontline Fam tour to bring travel counselors from neighboring region to educated them about Southwest Montana.</li> <li>Publish at least two PR stories of Southwest Montana.</li> <li>Have at least two interviews of local residents and put the information on our website.</li> </ul>			
Southwest Montana wants to add specific photos of people in action to our library.  We are planning on capturing photos through user generated content using Crowdriff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Obtain at least 10 high quality photos with full nonexclusive rights</li> <li>Obtain 400 assets from User Generated Content (UGC) for use on web and social</li> </ul>			
Add two more videos to our current Breweries and Distilleries web pages. Continue obtaining video footage to use for location scouts for movies, commercials, and photography.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Obtain one new video of a brewery and distillery with interviews .</li> <li>Update the Tour map with the new inclusions of the videos.</li> </ul>			

## DMO Budget

Allowable Methods	Amount Budgeted	% of Budget Allocated	Amount Expended	% of Budget Expended
Administration	\$154,000.00	18.9	\$0.00	0
Agency Services	\$66,000.00	5.75	\$0.00	0
Cooperative Marketing	\$21,500.00	1.41	\$0.00	0
Earned Media/Tourism Sales	\$19,000.00	2.23	\$0.00	0
Education/Outreach	\$23,459.00	0.38	\$0.00	0
Joint Venture	\$134,000.00	12.21	\$0.00	0

Marketing Resources	\$4,500.00	0.29	\$0.00	0
Opportunity Marketing	\$23,000.00	1.53	\$0.00	0
Paid Media	\$358,000.00	31.28	\$0.00	0
Travel/Trade Shows	\$4,000.00	0.47	\$0.00	0
Visitor Services	\$239,134.00	19.15	\$0.00	0
Website Development (Online, Website, Mobile)	\$176,500.00	6.4	\$0.00	0
	\$1,223,093.00	100.00	\$0.00	0.00

### ***Narrative Evaluation***

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### ***Reg/CVB Required Documents***

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<b>Description</b>	<b>File Name</b>	<b>File Size</b>
Required documents	required documents.pdf	2.0 MB

