



## Grant Details

### 118486 - FY23 DMO Plan

#### 122509 - FY23 West Yellowstone CVB DMO Plan

#### DOC Office of Tourism

**Grant Title:** FY23 West Yellowstone CVB DMO Plan  
**Grant Number:** 23-51-056  
**Grant Status:** Underway  
**Comments:**  
**Applicant Organization:** West Yellowstone Chamber of Commerce  
**Grantee Contact:** Katrina Wiese  
**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** 23-51-056  
**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.*

**Who We Are:** As the closest entrance to Old Faithful and Grand Prismatic in Yellowstone National Park, West Yellowstone has identified itself as the central location for exploring the Park and surrounding area. Sharing a border with Yellowstone and surrounded on all other sides by the Custer-Gallatin National Forest, the town has become the heart of amazing adventure. Clean air and water, abundant wildlife, scenic beauty, geothermal wonders and historical reference have made West Yellowstone a national and international destination.

**Who We Wish to Attract:** High-value, low-impact travelers who seek genuine experiences in a location, they can reconnect with each other and enjoy outdoor recreation.

**Why They Come:** West Yellowstone offers visitors an amenities-rich, safe platform for breathtaking experiences. Visitors can fish blue ribbon trout streams, hike in pristine wilderness, experience real western horseback riding, go whitewater rafting or mountain bike on hundreds of miles of single track and forest service roads. In the winter months there are over 50km of groomed ski trails for Nordic skiing and over 400 miles of groomed snowmobile trails for recreation, including snowshoeing and sled dog rides and races.

Those looking for fun, family-friendly activities can visit the Yellowstone Giant Screen Theater, presenting a six-story high screen with stereo surround sound or the Grizzly & Wolf Discovery Center, open 365 days a year, offering an educational experience and viewing area for visitors to watch live grizzly bears, wolves, raptors and riparian exhibit with river otters and other native wetland species in their own natural habitat. Seasonal events like the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, Music in the Park

concerts, Nordic Ski Races, and National Ice Fishing Tournament enhance visitors' experiences.

The Museum of the Yellowstone, located in the original Union Pacific Depot, features the history of visitation and transportation to our nation's first national park. The Museum is open daily from the middle of May through the middle of October. Visitors can also experience early West Yellowstone through the free, self-guided historic walking tour. Nearby attractions include the 1959 Madison River Canyon Earthquake Area & Visitor Center, Nevada and Virginia Cities, and the Nez Perce Trail.

Having the west entrance to Yellowstone National Park mere blocks from downtown funnels over two million visitors annually through West Yellowstone. We continue to develop ways to entice these travelers to stop and enjoy the amenities our town has to offer, before moving on to other locations.

#### **Strengths & Opportunities:**

- West Entrance to Yellowstone National Park.
- We are seen by some visitors as synonymous with Yellowstone Park and can effectively market ourselves as —Yellowstone Plus!
- Close proximity to Teton National Park and situated on the primary corridor between Glacier and Grand Teton/Yellowstone National Park.
- Access to outstanding natural assets such as mountains, lakes, and National Forests for outdoor recreation and social distancing.
- A nationally recognized, well-developed system of winter trails.
- International recognition among groups and individuals (i.e. Nordic Ski)
- Ideal family vacation spot - fun, educational, clean, safe with a variety of activities.
- Seasonal airport served by two regional carriers offering daily jet service mid-May through mid-October.
- Proximity to Bozeman International Airport with 23 direct flights to 19 states on 8 different airlines, seasonally and year-round.
- Home of the Museum of the Yellowstone.
- A host of year-round and annual events.
- Central location and convenient stop for travelers between area downhill ski resorts.
- Additional community marketing resources. Town of West Yellowstone Marketing & Promotions grant fund, West Yellowstone Tourism Business Improvement District, West Yellowstone Economic Development Council, West Yellowstone Foundation, etc.
- Tourism partners – Gallatin County, chambers, regions, Yellowstone Teton Territory (ID), and Visit Utah.

#### **Challenges:**

- The perception that West Yellowstone is only a gateway into the Park and not a destination.
- The perceived distance and lack of easy access from major population centers.
- National and world events including terrorism, infectious diseases, and natural disasters that impact tourism.
- The negative press generated on issues such as the wildlife, climate, natural events and Park access.
- Perception of limited or lack of restaurants, nightly entertainment & family friendly activities/events.
- Managing the number of visitors and traffic flow during peak warm season.
- Access to campgrounds, trails, and public lands in the national forests.
- Legislation and public policy decisions (budget cuts, work visas).
- Effective means of communicating with visitors passing through.
- Fluctuating lodging prices.
- Fewer RV space and services.
- Non-resident ownership and partnerships that results in more limited community involvement.
- Lack of public transportation regionally and through the Park.
- Lack of county collaboration or recognition.
- Developing competitors in neighboring communities and states.

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

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

*West Yellowstone is synonymous with the Montana Brand:*

### **SPECTACULAR UNSPOILED NATURE, VIBRANT & CHARMING SMALL TOWNS AND BREATHTAKING EXPERIENCES**

With Yellowstone Park in our "backyard" and our "front yard" composed of three national forests, *we can offer* more spectacular unspoiled nature than anywhere else in the lower 48. As the west entrance to Yellowstone National Park and geographically located adjacent to the National Forests, just two miles from Wyoming and 12 miles from Idaho, we are uniquely positioned to be a vibrant and charming small town that serves as a gateway to natural wonders.

Our messaging is similar to the guidelines laid out by Destination Analysts: honest and genuine, focusing on adventure and activity-based niches, unique experiences and access to unspoiled nature with modern comforts.

We differentiate our value proposition by featuring direct access to the First National Park and events and activities specific to the different seasons to offer breathtaking experiences by day and relaxing hospitality at night. We use focused messaging about area restaurants and nighttime offerings to help overcome the perception that there is not enough of that level of hospitality in the area.

### 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).

In addition to Destination Yellowstone's primary function of destination marketing, DY plans to enhance or implement destination management & destination development functions.

**Destination Management Target Audience:** hotel developers, tour operators, business owners, government officials, and others concerned with the sustainability and competitiveness of tourism destinations.

- Frontline Staff training
- VIC Staff training
- Visitor Outreach

**Destination Development Target Audience:** local, regional and state partners including the town staff and council, downtown development advisory board, TBID, Foundation, Custer-Gallatin National Forest, airport, Yellowstone National Park

- VIC Services (bathrooms, signage, wayfinding, beautification)

**Destination Marketing Target Audience:** We use our marketing funds to focus mainly on the family travelers and winter enthusiasts, incorporating niche messaging into our shoulder season campaigns. With our public/private partnerships, we are also able to penetrate some international markets including China, UK, Germany, Europe and India.

### i.CONSUMER

As a result of the Destination Analysts Study, Destination Think Tourism Sentiment Survey, and others we have received specific to West Yellowstone, we learned that the Geo-Traveler spans multiple generations and characteristics and has now morphed into a general profile of the high-potential visitor, with high-value niches.

Further research has shown us that our demographics are relatively split between male and female, skewing slightly depending on the season, average ages of 35-64. By using demographics, consumer behavior and geographic data, we are able to break these traveler demographics down even further to the four most valuable life stages: Midlife Success, Accumulated Wealth, Young Accumulators and Mainstream Families (source: Amplified Digital). Based on the data, these groups are most appropriate for targeting the products and services West Yellowstone offers.

#### Midlife Success

- Ages 25-44
- HHI of \$69,918
- 58% Homeowners
- Mostly Without Children
- Some College or More
- Prefer Vibrant Social Scene & Nightlife
- High Tech Adoption
- Research and purchase products online
- 9% of US Households

#### Accumulated Wealth

- Ages 35-54
- HHI of \$99,701
- 89% Homeowners
- Kids Under 18 in the Home
- Mostly College Graduates
- Love Travel & Fine Dining
- High Tech Adoption
- Own the Latest in Tech Trends
- 11% of US Households

#### Young Accumulators

- Ages 25-54
- HHI of \$74,901
- Mostly Homeowners
- Kids under 18 in the home
- Most with some college
- Focused on Family

- High Tech Adoption
- Lean on social/digital review
- 8% of US Households

#### **Mainstream Families**

- Ages 25-54
- HHI of \$61,890
- 71% Homeowners
- Kids Under 18 in the Home
- High School Educated or More
- Look for bargains & deals
- Medium Tech Adoption & Usage
- Tend to Shop National Brands
- 9% of US Households

#### **Target Geographic Markets**

FY22 visitation remained primarily domestic travelers, with strong numbers and record-breaking crowds in Yellowstone and surrounding public lands. People were still striving to get outdoors and experience nature. Winter visitation also rivaled the previous season, even with inventory issues early on. Reservations remained strong, with regional and national visitation.

West Yellowstone's primary geographic target markets have historically included:

- *Top states:* Utah, Montana, California, Texas, Idaho, Washington, Colorado, Florida, Illinois and Minnesota. (Fluctuating slightly seasonally)
- *Top countries:* United States, Canada, UK, France, Germany, Australia, Mexico & China

In 2021, we adjusted our markets to what was happening with the covid variants. We continued to monitor travel restrictions and shutdowns in various states, adjusting our target markets as needed.

We did not intentionally market to international visitors, nor did our partners, but we continued to update Covid-19 information and provide inspiration for when the time is right for them to travel again.

As international travel starts to reopen later in 2022, we are putting together campaigns with our partners to some of these countries. The Park's 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary has become inspiration for travel.

#### **ii: EARNED MEDIA/PUBLICITY**

Destination Yellowstone will continue to work with travel journalists and influencers, as well as those that specialize in outdoor recreation. Destination Yellowstone will also continue to leverage journalists and influencers with many followers on Instagram to continue to grow its audience on that platform. In addition, we are working with partners to put together an influencer FAM for the shoulder or winter season of FY23.

#### **iii. GROUPS**

Destination Yellowstone (CVB) does not promote to group travel due to limited meeting and convention facilities.

#### **iv. EVENTS**

Destination Yellowstone promotes community and seasonal events through its website calendar, social media channels, and travel planner. We include event information in some of our consumer campaigns in conjunction with other messaging.

#### **v. FILM**

Destination Yellowstone does not directly market to the film industry but is always open to partnering with industry partners and Brand Montana when opportunities arise.

#### **vi: TOURISM INDUSTRY PARTNERS**

Destination Yellowstone welcomes collaboration with tourism industry partners.

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

We utilize several research sources to verify our markets. These include ITRR and reports in conjunction with Brand Montana including Destination Analysts and Arrivalist/UberMedia. We use our Google Analytics and campaign engagement statistics to help guide our decision in markets, both demographic and geographic.

Our local resort tax collection reports show us monthly what sectors visitors are spending money in. Many of our retail establishments and restaurants continued to have high revenue despite low staffing and sometimes adjusted hours. Our snowmobile and Nordic Ski trail continued to see increased use, confirming that outdoor recreation was still a driving factor in travel.

Newly implemented in partnership with TBID, is the Zartico platform. This platform is customized to our community and will show us spending and traffic patterns of visitors when they are in West Yellowstone. It will also provide us with origin data to help us track conversions of campaigns to our target markets and show us what new markets may be available.

We also fully recognize the importance of the high potential visitor. In a normal year, West Yellowstone sees a higher volume of international and retirees than other areas of Montana, so we also try to take those markets into consideration when evaluating potential campaigns.

ITRR statistics provide us this info regarding visitors who stayed at least 1 night in West Yellowstone:

- Top Attractions: Yellowstone/Glacier National Park, Ski/Snowboard, Mountains/forests, Camping, Open space/uncrowded areas
- Top Niche Activities: Day hiking, wildlife watching, scenic driving, camping, photography, shopping
- The majority (89%) entered MT through West Yellowstone by motor vehicle/RV.
- The Visitor Information Center has welcomed over 60,969 guests YTD in FY21 (down nearly 50% from FY20).  
*Yellowstone Park did not staff inside our shared building, choosing to have an outside presence – this kept many people from entering.*
- Visitor Breakout = 52% are repeat visitors, 22% first-time, 26% mixed; and 72% plan to return within 2 years
- Average age is 55. Average household income \$50,000-\$150,000
- Average group size was 3.19 (80% couples or immediate family).
- Average night stay: 5.02 nights in MT (spent at least one night in W. Yell).
- Top 5 States: CA, UT, WA, TX, ID (MT did jump into the top 10)

Google Analytics from destinationyellowstone.com show us interesting statistics for our website traffic in FY22:

- Our visitors skewed slightly male at 53%
- The top two age groups were 25-34 and 55-64
- Interests include: Food & Dining, Lifestyle & Hobbies - Outdoor Enthusiasts, Banking & Finance - Investors, Travel Buffs, Shoppers

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

Geographic markets continue to fluctuate with covid variants and external factors like gas prices. Research and bookings indicate that international travel will start to come back later this year.

The demand for outdoor recreation boomed in 2020 and continues. New residents to the state and region, plus those from urban areas trying to escape crowded cities, has expanded our niche activity-based market.

West Yellowstone's emerging geographic target markets include:

- Feeder markets to our local airports: Regional jet service with direct flights from Salt Lake City, UT to West Yellowstone May-Oct., and seasonal direct flights into Yellowstone Bozeman International Airport, make for easier access from across the US, especially the coasts. We are adding Atlanta and Texas into our digital mix, as these are at the top of the list for our local airport.
- Domestically, our top ten states stayed consistent with Western states making up the majority of traffic. Yellowstone Country has seen a bump in markets when new flights are announced.
- Drive markets in the NW have returned and will mostly likely be key this warm season with the rise in gas prices, with outdoor recreation being the catalyst. Using a market index report, Amplified Digital isolated counties with the highest potential to visit from the following five states: WA, UT, OR, ID and MT. (Source: Claritas, 2020)
- Through public relation efforts, internet presence, and regional partnerships we will continue to reach more domestic and international markets. Our top countries include: United States, Canada, UK, Germany, India, China, Australia & Mexico as travel resumes. (These campaigns tend to emphasize shoulder season travel.)

### **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 – Destination Marketing:**

Targeted marketing campaigns to reach an audience that asks for information, travels to West Yellowstone, and spends significant dollars utilizing multi-media channels.

#### **Goal #2 – Destination Development:**

Work with our Local and State Industry Partners to begin the process of a developing a community-wide wayfinding system.

#### **Goal #3 – Destination Management:**

Encourage and educate residents and visitors on safe travel and recreating responsibly.

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

**Goal #1 – Destination Marketing:**

Targeted marketing campaigns to reach an audience that asks for information, travels to West Yellowstone, and spends significant dollars utilizing multi-media channels.

**Tactics include** expanding our marketing effectiveness by joining our efforts with those of marketing partners. Incorporate the Montana brand pillars and initiatives whenever possible. To counteract the perception of lack of restaurants, entertainment and activities, we plan to promote local area offerings more directly using imagery in targeted marketing campaigns using content (photos/videos/articles) from area partners. Telling the story of those locations will help educate travelers before they visit.

**Goal #2 – Destination Development:**

Work with our Local and State Industry Partners to begin the process of a developing a community-wide wayfinding system.

**Tactics include** evaluating, analyzing, and developing a wayfinding plan.

**Goal #3 – Destination Management:**

Encourage and educate residents and visitors on safe travel and recreating responsibly.

**Tactics include** creating media and messaging around traveling respectfully and responsibly, leaving no trace and overall wildland fire safety. Setting the right expectation for travelers will be important, so incorporating messaging of where to get information BEFORE planning a trip will be important. (i.e. RV campers for instance have to plan ahead to get a spot, and those expectations can be communicated with paid/earned media messaging such as on Facebook to further educate travelers.)

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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
Incorporate Recreating Responsibly & Safe Traveling information into messaging and graphics of our multi-media and Travel Planner. Provide materials to residents and visitors in our Town. Recreate Responsibly & Travel Responsibly messaging help with our focused goals of Destination Development and Destination Management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include messaging in 45,000 printed Travel Planners.</li> <li>• We will track QR code scans and website traffic to the "Recreating Responsibly" page on the site. (Increase over the previous fiscal year traffic.)</li> <li>• Approximately 75%+ of our paid media will incorporate the Recreate Responsibly messaging, as this message is of high priority.</li> </ul>			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approximately 50%+ of our paid media will incorporate a Travel Responsibly message.</li> </ul>			
Hit or exceed industry averages for social media engagement. Paid Media targeted tactics will include, but are not limited to, targeted email, geofenced display, branded content, video and social media.	<p>Track social media engagement on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Pinterest.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.90% CTR (Amplified Media)</li> <li>\$.63 CPC (Amplified Media)</li> <li>Instagram – 1.41%, Facebook .27%, Twitter 0.04% (socialinsider.com)</li> </ul>			
Be a strategic partner with our Town to begin the process of developing a Wayfinding plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner with at least 2 private/public partners for the project (Town, TBID, USFS, National Park Service)</li> <li>Obtain at least 3 bids from consultants.</li> <li>Hire a consultant to develop initial plan to present publicly before June 2023.</li> </ul>			
Track visitation spending and conversion from target markets.	<p>Utilizing Zartico's extensive software, we will get a clearer picture of visitation movement and spending.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a functioning personalized dashboard.</li> <li>Track visitation from Bozeman and West Yellowstone airports to the Town of West Yellowstone through origin data to help us track conversions of campaigns to our target markets and show us what new markets may be available.</li> </ul> <p>3% increase in West Yellowstone Resort Tax Collections over the previous fiscal year.</p> <p>3% increase in Lodging Tax Collections over the previous fiscal year.</p>			

## DMO Budget

Allowable Methods	Amount Budgeted	% of Budget Allocated	Amount Expended	% of Budget Expended
Administration	\$85,000.00	14.41	\$0.00	0
Agency Services	\$25,000.00	4.23	\$0.00	0
Earned Media/Tourism Sales	\$15,100.00	2.56	\$0.00	0
Education/Outreach	\$10,000.00	1.7	\$0.00	0
Joint Venture	\$19,000.00	3.22	\$0.00	0
Opportunity Marketing	\$5,100.00	0.89	\$0.00	0
Paid Media	\$268,199.00	45.47	\$0.00	0
Marketing Personnel	\$22,000.00	3.73	\$0.00	0
Product Development	\$24,900.00	4.22	\$0.00	0
Research	\$20,000.00	3.39	\$0.00	0
Travel/Trade Shows	\$10,000.00	1.7	\$0.00	0
Visitor Services	\$40,500.00	6.86	\$0.00	0
Website Development (Online, Website, Mobile)	\$45,000.00	7.62	\$0.00	0
	\$589,799.00	100.00	\$0.00	0.00

## Narrative Evaluation

**Reg/CVB Required Documents**

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<b>Description</b>	<b>File Name</b>	<b>File Size</b>
Meeting Minutes, approving the FY23 Marketing DMO Plan	BOD Minutes_4.12.2022.pdf	194 KB
Meeting Minutes, approving the FY23 Marketing DMO Plan	BOD Minutes_4.12.2022.pdf	194 KB
Current By-Laws	By-Laws_04.12.2022-Signed.pdf	3.9 MB
Bylaws	By-Laws_05.03.2022-Signed.pdf	4.1 MB
Certificate of Compliance	Certificate of Compliance_FY23_04.12.2022.pdf	280 KB
Certificate of Compliance	Certificate of Compliance_FY23_04.12.2022.pdf	280 KB



