



**Grant Details**

**118486 - FY23 DMO Plan**

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**122485 - FY 23 Glacier Country DMO Plan**

**DOC Office of Tourism**

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# DMO Plan Narrative

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## 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.*

### OUR ORGANIZATION

Glacier Country Regional Tourism Commission (Glacier Country Tourism or GCT) is the officially recognized destination organization (commonly referred to as destination marketing and management organizations or DMOs) for our region. GCT, along with our in-region partner convention and visitor bureaus (CVBs), are essential to the economic and social wellbeing of the communities we represent, driving direct economic impact through the visitor economy and fueling development across the entire economic spectrum by creating familiarity, attracting decision-makers, sustaining air service and improving quality of life for the people who call it home.

Historically, people have thought about the hospitality industry with hotels and restaurants front and center, or that it's all about visitors in general, with specific segments of visitors prioritized. While these are understandable and important, destination organizations were originally created to provide opportunities for residents by creating demand for visitor experiences, which brings new revenue into our communities, stimulating economic development through business and job growth.

Our organization serves a greater purpose than we once did, and that is why we are expanding the description of who we are. We are in the middle of a community-driven process to develop a destination stewardship strategy that is assessing the current state of our regional tourism industry. We are working in partnership with the 75+ communities in the Glacier Country region to proactively map the evolution, marketing and management of the destination 10 years into the future. Glacier Country Tourism is proactively leading this effort to identify ways to protect, improve and enhance the region's long-term quality of life and economic prosperity.

As tourism has grown worldwide, many destinations have failed to plan for sustainable growth and encountered adverse effects on their community and natural resources. Western Montana continues to see record visitation from travelers. Glacier Country Tourism acknowledges the positive impacts tourism has, increasing the overall quality of life for residents. GCT also acknowledges that tourism adds pressure to the economic challenges Western Montana already faces, including infrastructure, affordable housing and workforce. With tourism serving as the largest local economic driver outside of agriculture, there is significant interest in how a stronger and smarter tourism industry might help mitigate these impacts. Glacier Country Tourism's Destination Stewardship Strategy will provide the community and tourism industry with a 10-year action plan for responsibly stewarding our destination and promoting the economic health of our region.

At the core, we wish to identify our community's shared values, which are appreciated at an individual level and shared by the community. Community values are the non-negotiable core principles or standards the community's residents wish to maintain. Community values guide the community's vision, mission and strategic plan as well as its goals, objectives, activities, capital projects, budgets and services. Our goal is to develop our strategic plan to align and support our community's shared values.

This DMO plan began in September 2021 and will be complete in the summer of 2022. This plan is based on what we have learned to date from 18 community town hall meetings, a resident sentiment survey, a stakeholder assessment

survey, 11 focus groups and multiple 1:1 interviews. Upon completion of the stewardship plan, we will attach and provide additional relevant information to this DMO plan.

Destination stewardship is critically important to ensure Glacier Country's tourism economy remains an economic engine for all Montanans. As tourism recovers globally from the pandemic slowdown and people begin to travel in greater numbers domestically and internationally, the tourism industry's long-term viability depends on its ability to protect, preserve and promote the traveler experience in tandem with quality of life for residents.

## OUR DESTINATION

Glacier Country is an extraordinary place of exquisite landscapes, small-town charm, rich history, American Indian culture and world-class recreation. More importantly, it is a place where the residents are genuine and authentic and warmly welcome visitors who have a hearty appetite for adventure and an eager respect for people, culture, sense of place, lifestyle, natural environment and heritage.

As the westernmost region of Montana, Glacier Country encompasses 75+ communities within the eight counties of Flathead, Glacier, Lake, Lincoln, Mineral, Missoula, Ravalli and Sanders.

- Geographic size: 22,000 square miles
- Population: 355,000
- Largest communities: Missoula, Kalispell, Whitefish and Hamilton
- Average February temperature: High of 39 degrees Fahrenheit and low of 31 degrees Fahrenheit
- Average July temperatures: High of 84 degrees Fahrenheit and low of 51 degrees Fahrenheit
- Tribal Nations: Blackfeet, Kootenai, Pend d'Oreille, Bitterroot Salish
- Rural Travel Corridors:
  - **Bitterroot Valley:** Lolo, Florence, Stevensville, Victor, Corvallis, Hamilton, Darby, Conner, Sula
  - **Blackfoot Corridor:** Bonner, Clinton, Greenough, Ovando
  - **Clark Fork Corridor:** Dixon, Paradise, Plains, Thompson Falls, Trout Creek, Noxon, Heron, Hot Springs
  - **East Glacier Corridor:** Browning, Cut Bank, East Glacier Park, Heart Butte, St. Mary, Babb
  - **Flathead Corridor:** Arlee, Ravalli, St. Ignatius, Moiese, Charlo, Ronan, Pablo, Polson, Big Arm, Elmo, Dayton, Proctor, Rollins, Lakeside, Somers, Bigfork
  - **Glacier National Park Surrounding Area:** Babb, Columbia Falls, Coram, East Glacier Park, Essex, Hungry Horse, Martin City, Polebridge, St. Mary, West Glacier
  - **I-90 Corridor:** Frenchtown, Huson, Alberton, Superior, St. Regis, De Borgia, Haugan, Saltese
  - **Northwest Corridor:** Marion, Kila, Libby, Troy, Yaak, Rexford, Eureka, Fortine, Trego, Stryker, Olney
  - **Seeley Swan Corridor:** Bigfork, Ferndale, Swan Lake, Condon, Seeley Lake

## STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Our strengths and opportunities as a travel destination include all that our brand pillars describe: spectacular unspoiled nature, charming small towns and communities that serve as gateways to natural wonders, and breathtaking experiences by day and relaxing hospitality at night. And, of course, we have all the amazing people who live here to provide the warm Montana hospitality we are so well known for.

The bountiful experiences we have are available to all who live and visit. Each and every one of our 75+ communities has a personality as special and unique as the other.

Our destination benefits from a culture of collaboration among its many partners who work together to build a sustainable destination that values resident quality of life as much as visitor quality of experience. These public and private partners include—but are not limited to—our historical heritage sites, arts and culture organizations, agritourism entities, businesses that locally source and produce products and services, transportation entities,

destination marketing organizations, local and state governments, Tribal Nations, University of Montana, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, Montana State Parks, Glacier National Park, conservation associations and all those who reside here. We wish to better partner with governments and other local leaders to provide them with the support they need to implement policies and solutions that lead to healthier destinations. Our destination stewardship efforts seek to develop and strengthen these relationships.

We will support local leaders with the knowledge they need to address the challenges they face and provide opportunities for the growth and change they desire for their community's future. We will help community managers and policymakers identify, develop and implement best practices for sustainable tourism development based on their community's wants and needs. We will serve as a trusted advisor by offering strategic guidance and recommendations and help community leaders plan for sustainable tourism growth and implement policies that preserve their culture and way of life. Together, we will work to achieve a common goal of sustainable tourism development by helping to bring together local governments, community leaders, businesses and NGOs to collaboratively tackle major challenges.

Our inclusive strategic plan seeks to mitigate adverse impacts and strengthen the ability of local communities to respond to natural disasters, economic downturns and other unforeseen events.

Our seasonality provides natural fluctuations in traveler numbers depending on location. Overall, our region's high season is June through September. However, there are some variations throughout our eight-county region. While there are challenges in areas with higher numbers of visitors there are opportunities for growth in those with fewer.

A favorite activity for locals and visitors is the many special events and festivals that occur across the region. These events bring prosperity to the economy, improve the lives of local communities and create a positive image of our destination. They also provide opportunities to appreciate our history, culture, customs, artisans, agriculture production, musicians, thespians, athletes, culinary scenes and craft beverages. We are fortunate to have an array of natural and human-made venues to serve as backdrops for all.

## **CHALLENGES**

Glacier Country Tourism is working with our communities and partners to take a fresh look at what our challenges are through our destination stewardship strategic planning. The bulk of the process involves various ways we could engage and learn from the residents and stakeholders of our region. How we address the identified challenges is still yet to be determined, but we do not intend to operate from behind the scenes. We will continue to stay informed and engage with partners on the latest issues and leverage available resources when possible and appropriate. These resources include accuracy in our marketing messages and imagery used; staying abreast of new marketing trends and opportunities; maintaining a positive tone and message in our publicity and social media efforts; working with our partners to understand the concerns and impacts our industry has at a local, statewide and national level; and assisting financially when possible, while knowing that our ultimate mission is to create demand for the tourism product our businesses and communities supply.

### Identified Challenges

1. Diminishing resident sentiment toward tourism
2. Community capacity
3. New recreationists and poor visitor behavior
4. Affordable housing
5. Workforce shortages
6. Vehicle reservation system awareness in Glacier National Park
7. Over-capacity visitation of Glacier National Park in areas without vehicle reservations
8. Recovery of international travel
9. Recovery of meetings and conventions

10. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
11. Airline challenges
12. Climate change/changing landscape/weather
13. Crisis management, outreach and traveler education
14. Fluctuations in economy
15. Emerging markets
16. Public lands infrastructure and maintenance issues
17. International issues
18. Market competition
19. Public transportation
20. Shared economy accommodations
21. Algorithm changes and expanded privacy laws
22. Broadband infrastructure and Wi-Fi
23. Federal government closures
24. Federal and Tribal land closures
25. DMO funding for sustainable destination stewardship and development
26. Perception of Glacier National Park being closed when the Going-to-the-Sun Road isn't open in its entirety
27. Destination marketing and management organization awareness

## Identified Challenges

1. **Diminishing resident sentiment toward tourism** – The warm hospitality Montanans provide to our visitors is part of the Montana brand. Currently over 30% of residents feel there are too many visitors during our peak seasons, which impacts how welcome our visitors are feeling. Even more challenging is that residents are having a difficult time differentiating between new residents and visitors. Visitor-related issues pose short-term challenges. New residents pose long-term ones and are seemingly enhancing negative perceptions of visitors.
2. **Community capacity** – Available workforce and affordable housing are increasingly a problem, especially during peak visitation months. Our businesses are overwhelmed, which makes providing a consistent quality of service more difficult; this can negatively impact the quality of the visitor experience. It can also decrease the ability of residents to enjoy their own community.
3. **New recreationists and poor visitor behavior** – Some of our region's new visitors are unfamiliar with practices many of us take for granted. Educating visitors about recreating responsibly in Western Montana is paramount to the success of a sustainability plan and improving bad visitor behavior.
4. **Affordable housing** – With the influx of new residents and continued increase of short-term rentals, it is becoming increasingly expensive to live in Glacier Country. This directly impacts cost of living and available workforce.
5. **Workforce shortages** – While not a new issue, COVID-19 has amplified the challenges that our communities are facing related to workforce shortages. Restaurants, hotels and many other businesses in the hospitality industry are still working below capacity due to lack of staffing. This can create a poor visitor experience and adds to capacity issues in our communities.
6. **Vehicle reservation system awareness in Glacier National Park** – It is very important that we all help build awareness of the vehicle reservation system in Glacier National Park. Visitors who show up unaware of the system will have a poor experience. The system is also an opportunity to disperse visitors throughout the region.
7. **Over-capacity visitation of Glacier National Park in areas without vehicle reservations** – Although some areas of the park are accessible without a vehicle reservation, these areas are still experiencing capacity issues. Visitors may be turned around or may not be able to access these areas of the park during peak visitation times, creating a poor experience.
8. **Recovery of international travel** – International long-haul travel is recovering from pandemic travel bans that were put into place, and our region will see an increased number of visitors into the future as they often center

their holidays to the U.S. around one or more of the national parks. International visitors often utilize a U.S. receptive tour operator to book all of their travel for ease and logistics. However, the Glacier National Park vehicle reservations require that individuals obtain their own and cannot be purchased by a third party. Between the language and time differences to access recreation.gov, this is becoming confusing and frustrating for international travelers and may cause them to seek other national parks that don't have reservation requirements.

9. **Recovery of meetings and conventions** – The meetings and convention industry is recovering post pandemic. We are seeing more RFPs (requests for proposal) into the region with short booking windows, especially for the incentive market requesting higher-end properties. With limited availability, we are seeing these opportunities being turned down.
10. **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion** – Equity, Diversity and inclusion (EDI) is a key component of tourism sustainability. Advancing DEI initiatives within the travel and tourism industry is key to strengthening organizations by bringing new ideas, perspectives and open-mindedness to the forefront. Elevating the importance of DEI and ensuring it is woven into the core of the industry is vital for the future of travel and our workforce. As we rebuild the travel industry following the COVID-19 pandemic, it is essential for our future growth and success to support programs that increase diversity and upward mobility throughout and across all sectors of the industry. A successful future relies on an inclusive and diverse workforce and guest experience.
11. **Airline challenges** – Commercial airline capacity saw strong growth in 2020 and 2021 with some of that growth related to airlines rerouting aircraft to destinations with strong outdoor recreation and visitation, like Montana. We have already seen some decrease in those direct flights now that urban destinations are reopening and demand to those destinations is increasing. While we have seen airfare decrease with competition, it is back on the rise with costs of inflation and staffing shortages. Both our major airports are also undergoing construction.
12. **Climate change/changing landscape/weather** – Climate change threatens destinations tourism relies on. The greenhouse effect on the melting glaciers in Glacier National Park continues to come under the spotlight as environmental conservation agencies petition to have the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park declared an endangered World Heritage Site. Unpredictable weather nationwide, wildland fires and snow levels could have repercussions on the yearlong travel season. Wildland fires impact the shape of the land and public perception with immense acreage that has been blackened in the middle of heavily forested areas. Smoky skies from wildland fires near and far can also keep visitors at bay.
13. **Crisis management, outreach and traveler education** – The global pandemic, wildland fire and smoke, rental car shortages, community capacity and recreating responsibly are all ongoing crises that we address through outreach and education.
14. **Fluctuations in economy** – The economy is seeing continual fluctuations. Many estimate we may see a decrease in visitor spending now that COVID-19 relief stimulation payments have stopped.
15. **Emerging markets** – We have a new visitor to Glacier Country. They are new to outdoor recreation and lack the experience and etiquette we are used to. A high-value visitor may no longer be considered high in value based on spending but on how many of the shared values a visitor has and the respect and consideration they show. To define a shared value visitor more clearly, we refer to them as a preferred visitor.
16. **Public lands infrastructure and maintenance issues** – Public land infrastructure repairs, reconstruction, late openings, limited parking and unpredictable weather events result in seasonal impacts. Fluctuations in agency funding results in additional infrastructure impacts. While funding has been dedicated to addressing these issues, there is not enough to address all the problems. Also, the impacts to visitor experience while the improvements are being made are often significant. Communication strategies will be key factors for keeping the public informed about year-round services and activities in and around our federal and state public land recreation areas.
17. **International issues** – Trepidation to travel overseas to the U.S. because of worldwide issues continue to impact Glacier Country. International travelers have a lot to contemplate; whether the issue is a global pandemic and testing regulations to return home, perceived safety issues, economic instability and rising prices, or concern over a war between Russia and the Ukraine, these are all issues that impact people's ability and proclivity to travel.

18. **Market competition** – Seemingly, our region has been discovered, but as urban and international destination travel begins to recover from the impacts related to COVID-19, we must be ready for fluctuations in visitor numbers. We must be ready to maintain the market share of responsible visitors we want, including seasonal visitors for communities with capacity. Western Montana also offers indoor experiences, sports events, meetings and conventions, destination weddings, etc., many of which still have room for additional visitors.
19. **Public transportation** – Although we have key modes and providers of transportation within our larger communities, much of our region has limited means of public transit between cities and area attractions. Supply chain challenges are causing disruption in rental cars and airline transportation, which increases cost of services and decreases visitor experience.
20. **Shared economy accommodations** – There is a continued increase of short-term rentals, and while they greatly enhance visitor experience and community capacity in destinations with few or no hotels and motels, they reduce long-term housing capacity and impact the ability for workers to reside in these homes in the area where they are employed.
21. **Algorithm changes and expanded privacy laws** – There has been an increase in ad blockers and changes in privacy laws, which can affect digital targeting options. Social platform demographics and algorithms are evolving quickly as well. Short-form video, user-generated content and influencers are more important than ever. Chronological feeds are also making a comeback. We must be nimble, innovative and strategic in an ever-changing landscape.
22. **Broadband infrastructure and Wi-Fi** – Having access to broadband is increasingly important, especially with remote workers remaining strong.
23. **Federal government closures** – Increases in frequency and length of federal government shutdowns in recent years have and will continue to affect infrastructure and public perception of Glacier National Park. Strong communication strategies will be key factors for keeping the public informed about year-round services and activities in and around our federal and state public land recreation areas.
24. **Federal and Tribal land closures** – COVID-19 caused a global health crisis that sent entire communities into shelter-in-place as a way to flatten the curve of infections. While many of those closures lasted mere weeks, others lasted well over a year. The social and economic impact has been devastating. We must be prepared to respond with communication strategies to ensure awareness of the closures to minimize impacts to resident and visitor experiences.
25. **DMO funding for sustainable destination stewardship and development** – DMOs are rapidly responding to the evolution from destination marketing to destination management and stewardship. Protecting the 4% lodging facility use tax used for these expanding roles remains a constant struggle. The need for funding to address the challenges our communities are facing from an imbalance of resident quality of life and visitor quality of experience is of great importance.
26. **Perception of Glacier National Park being closed when the Going-to-the-Sun Road isn't open in its entirety** – Many of our travelers think Glacier National Park is only open during the summer season, particularly when the Going to-the-Sun Road is open. Glacier Country Tourism is actively working through public relations, newsletters, our travel guide, social media and our website, as well as our call center, to aggressively promote the fact that Glacier National Park is a year-round destination. It is critical to our effort to lessen the impact to the park during the summer and increase awareness of the other three equally stunning seasons of the year.
27. **Destination marketing and management organization awareness** – While not as much of a challenge as it was a couple years ago, DMOs must continue to work at building awareness of who we are, what we do and why we do it, especially the notion that we are part of the problem not the solution.

## WHO WE WISH TO ATTRACT

Glacier Country Tourism first and foremost respects the lifestyle our residents treasure. We want to attract people who seek to enjoy the experiences available in the various corridors of our region and value our natural resources and the people who call Glacier Country home. We wish to attract visitors who provide financial value to our local communities while having the optimal social and environmental impact for that community. Through our destination stewardship

planning process, we have learned that visitor “value” does not mean high spending—it means a visitor who aligns with the interests and characteristics of the people who live in the community. No longer does a one-size-fits-all strategy work for a region that is home to 75+ communities in eight counties.

According to ITRR, Glacier Country receives the highest number of both day trips and overnight trips of all travel regions in Montana at 28%. Our region is a top destination for not only nonresident visitors but residents from across the state. The ability to actively communicate with residents in Montana is a game changer as we address strengths, weaknesses and opportunities moving forward. Of the residents of Glacier Country surveyed in our Destination Stewardship Resident Survey, 82.3% of respondents would strongly welcome visitors from Montana to their community compared to 66.3% of those surveyed welcoming Canadians, 62% international visitors outside of Canada and 59% out-of-state U.S. travelers. Our communities clearly prefer that we invite fellow Montanans to visit which, prior to the pandemic, was not allowed using lodging tax dollars.

For the past two years, all but one of our 75 communities has felt the number of visitors in their community in July and August is near or over capacity. Prior to the pandemic, only the communities around Glacier National Park reported feeling this. Combine high visitation with housing and workforce issues, residents are frustrated and overwhelmed. Service providers are exhausted and look forward to seasons with a more manageable number of people visiting. Many businesses are seasonal, so when the summer season ends, they close down until the next summer season begins. In 2021, September and October visitation was well above normal, but some communities had fewer services and limited operations to serve them. When asked if they felt shoulder seasons should be promoted more, we received mixed responses with some saying yes as it would help keep and retain employees longer and others saying no because they need a break and want time to recoup or take a vacation of their own. Communities with year-round services reported the number of visitors was at a manageable level or they could accommodate more.

## **WHY THEY COME**

Within the boundaries of Glacier Country exists an endless array of activities, from thriving arts and cultural offerings to exhilarating adventures and authentic western experiences surrounded by stunning landscapes and wide-open spaces. Per the Montana brand, we have more spectacular unspoiled nature than anywhere in the lower 48 states, vibrant and charming small towns that serve as gateways to our natural wonders, breathtaking experiences by day and relaxing hospitality at night, and, more importantly, it is the many Montanans who deliver genuine and authentic experiences that help turn our first-time visitors into return visitors.

In recent years, people are coming to escape the pandemic in search of a destination with wide-open spaces and low population densities. These people came in the form of visitors, remote workers and learners and those seeking a more rural and laid-back quality of life. Outdoor recreation became the activity of choice for both new residents and visitors who are both experienced and novice recreationists. Western Montana became a top destination.

## **DESTINATION STRENGTHS**

Our strengths are our natural landscape, people, communities, history, culture, quality of life, services and experiences. Our opportunities are built upon these strengths taking into consideration our wants, needs and desires of the people who call Glacier Country home. We are working with each community to determine what those opportunities are based on seasonality and capacity.

More spectacular unspoiled nature than anywhere in the lower 48 states

- Glacier National Park
- Rocky Mountains, with several smaller mountain ranges
- Geological features (Glacial Lake Missoula)
- Wildlife



- Bison Range
- Montana state parks
- Bitterroot National Forest
- Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex (Great Bear, Bob Marshall and Scapegoat wildernesses)
- Cabinet Mountains Wilderness
- Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness
- Mission Mountains Wilderness
- Rattlesnake National Recreation Area & Wilderness
- Kootenai National Forest
- Lolo National Forest
- Flathead National Forest
- Flathead Lake
- Lakes and rivers
- International Dark Sky Park designation, stargazing, northern lights

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

- Art galleries
- Artisan tours and events
- Explorer trails: Lewis and Clark, David Thompson, John Mullan
- Historic “red buses” of Glacier National Park
- Historic sites
- Historic St. Mary’s Mission
- Main-street businesses
- Museums
- Live music
- Railroad history
- Shared border with Canada
- Live theater
- Two American Indian reservations/native culture and history

Breathtaking experiences by day and relaxing hospitality at night

- Agricultural experiences
- American Indian culture
- ATVing
- Biking and cycling
- Birding
- Boating
- Camping and RVing
- Destination learning
- Dog sledding
- Downhill skiing
- Festivals/music
- Fishing
- Golfing
- Hiking
- Historic sites
- Horseback riding
- Kayaking and canoeing
- Llama trekking

- Montana state parks
- Motorcycle touring
- Mountain biking
- Nordic skiing
- Pow wows
- Public art
- Rafting
- River surfing
- Rodeos
- Running events and competitions
- Scenic flights
- Skijoring
- Sleigh rides
- Snowmobiling
- Sportsman adventures
- Stand-up paddleboarding
- Stargazing

#### Hospitality

- Blackfeet Community College
- Breweries
- Cideries
- Dining
- Distilleries
- Farmers markets
- Farm-to-table restaurants
- Flathead Valley Community College
- Meeting and convention spaces
- Missoula College
- Salish Kootenai College
- Special event venues (entertainment)
- University of Montana
- Visitor information centers
- Wedding venues
- Wineries

#### Abundant lodging and camping (independent, brand and boutique)

- Bed-and-breakfasts
- Bicycle accommodations
- Boutique accommodations
- Cabins
- Camping/RV
- Chalets
- Condominiums
- Geodomes
- Glamping
- Hostels
- Hot springs
- Hotels and motels

- Lodges
- Ranches
- Resorts
- Tiny homes
- Teepees and yurts
- Treehouses
- University residence halls
- Vacation homes and short-term rentals

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

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

Glacier Country Tourism’s brand is firmly integrated with the Montana brand. Our offerings—specifically nature, communities and welcoming residents—blend together to provide services and experiences that help share our marketing messages, while effortlessly aligning with our three brand pillars.

- More spectacular unspoiled nature than anywhere else in the lower 48 states
- Vibrant and charming small towns that serve as gateways to the state’s natural wonders
- Breathtaking experiences by day and relaxing hospitality at night

More importantly, it is the many Montanans who deliver genuine and authentic experiences that help turn our first-time visitors into return visitors.

- We are simple, but not unsophisticated.
- We are confident, but not arrogant.
- We are genuine, but not old-fashioned.
- We are grounded, but not stuck in our ways.

Our storytelling allows the imagery of Montana to do the talking. We support the spectacular landscape with subsets of charming towns, approachable activities and distinctive things to see and do.

## **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 Stewardship, Destination Development

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

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

## **OUR STRATEGIC ROLE**

Before the pandemic, most destination organizations across the world mostly did what we call destination marketing, which is a type of marketing that promotes a destination (town, city, region, country) with a purpose to increase the number of visitors. This role met the mission we were tasked with by the industry and legislature in 1987 when the Lodging Facility Use Tax was created to promote Western Montana to stimulate the economy by bringing in tourist dollars.

While destination marketing helps in positioning a particular destination as an attractive brand, the role of destination management is to ensure its sustainability over a prolonged period of time. Destination management involves taking a strategic approach to link up sometimes very separate components for the better management of the destination. “Components” refers to organizations and interests that work toward a common goal that ensures the competitiveness and sustainability of the destination.

Five years ago, Glacier Country Tourism stopped marketing Glacier National Park in the summer and pivoted toward shoulder-season promotions that include fall, winter and spring. We did this as a result of the incredibly successful campaign called “Find your park,” which was an effort by the National Park Foundation and National Geographic. People across the nation and the world “found” our parks—both federal and state. Working with Glacier National Park and partner DMOs, we shifted our focus to things to do outside the park and increased awareness of all eight counties throughout the region. It was our first step toward beginning to manage the visitors on the ground during a specific time of year.

This pivot transitioned us from a destination marketing organization to a destination marketing and *management* organization—a roll we have embraced and one that is reshaping our strategic plan, goals and objectives specifically as we now look at another phase of evolution.

In 2020, rural America saw an influx of visitors as people sought an escape from the pandemic and flocked to destinations with wide-open spaces and low population densities. Outdoor recreation became the activity of choice for experienced and novice recreationists, and Western Montana became one of many top destinations.

Over the past two years, we organically began to move toward destination stewardship. Destination stewardship is the process by which we work with local communities, governmental agencies and businesses in and outside of the tourism industry—including residents—toward developing a strategy to address an imbalance of residents, visitors and community capacity. Destination stewardship is an approach that balances the needs of communities while supporting a thriving visitor economy. It is about protecting the very qualities that make a place first and foremost a wonderful place to live, with the added benefit of being a wonderful place to visit. It is a shift from solely promoting visitation to communities to engaging and stewarding communities, which, in turn, provides more livable, desirable and sustainable destinations.

Today, some communities no longer need summer promotion—visitation has grown exponentially, communities are bustling with traffic, and hotels and restaurants are at or near capacity during the peak summer months. We are working with residents, government, stakeholders, public land managers, tribal entities and community organizations to support initiatives designed to improve social issues and local quality of life and fuel sustainable destination development to elevate our brand beyond a tourism lens.

## **BASED ON OUR STRATEGIC ROLE...**

### **OUR AUDIENCES**

Glacier Country wants to attract people who first and foremost respect the people who live here and the lifestyle we treasure. We welcome those who seek to enjoy the experiences available in our region as long as they value and take care of them as we do. Our communities enjoy the visitor spending, which stimulates our economy and provides

opportunity for growth. Sustainable growth relies on the alignment of interests and characteristics of those who live here and those who are visiting.

Based on season and community capacity, the following visitor segments are who we will actively message:

- Sustainable traveler
- Leisure traveler
- Geo-tourist
- Active mature
- Families
- Repeat visitors to Montana
- International traveler
- Domestic group tours
- Business
- Meetings and conventions
- Reunions and weddings
- Higher education
- Health care
- Winter enthusiasts
- Music lovers
- Filmmakers
- Seasonal visitors

#### **DEMOGRAPHICS:**

- Individuals – Mid-30s+, HHI \$50,000, active and affluent, take at least two vacations per year, may be traveling in groups of two or more
- Mature geo-traveler couples – 55+, HHI \$70,000, active and affluent, high-value low-impact couples, may be traveling as groups with other friends and/or extended family
- Families – Multigenerational travelers, 1+ children, HHI \$75,000, active and affluent
- Groups – Affinity or corporate groups that are active and appreciate gathering and taking part in our unique environment

#### **GEOGRAPHICS:**

- Residents: Montana
- Drive markets within 600 miles: Idaho (Coeur d'Alene), Washington (Spokane), Wyoming,
- Canada: Calgary and Edmonton, Alberta, Vancouver, British Columbia
- Domestic: Direct-fly markets of Washington (Seattle), Oregon (Portland), Minnesota (Minneapolis), Illinois (Chicago), Texas (Houston and Dallas), California (San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego)
- International (outside Canada): UK, Germany, France, Italy, Benelux, Nordic, Australia/New Zealand

#### **PSYCHOGRAPHICS:**

- Responsible visitors and recreationists who are respectful and kind to our residents and good stewards of our destination
- Authentic experiences—shopping, local cuisine, breweries, distilleries, relaxing spa getaways, western offerings
- Outdoor recreation—hiking, biking, camping, skiing, snowmobiling, water sports, golfing, fishing, wildlife viewing, RVing, motorcycling, scenic road tripping
- Culture—history, galleries, museums, live theater, festivals, live music, photography
- Adventure—experiential, independent, low-impact

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

The tourism industry is rapidly changing. To remain successful, tourism stakeholders must be even more strategic when understanding their market and competition, planning their operating strategies and ensuring their sustainability. To do this, one of the key building blocks is research.

Research is the process of finding and analyzing information. Among other things, it consists of gathering information about people's behaviors, ideas, attitudes and preferences regarding various topics or concepts. Research also aims to measure and assess this information for decision-making purposes. When a decision is based on reliable facts and relevant information, it is usually far more effective and credible. Through research, community leaders can gain a better understanding of visitors. By understanding visitors' references and motivations, you can more easily define and solve business problems, set priorities, increase the demand for your services and strengthen profits. Good research information also benefits the entire tourism industry, including business owners, operators, visitors, communities, associations, governments and residents who call the destination home.

Research informs our solutions. It helps us understand local tourism issues and identify key sustainability needs. It provides the knowledge to devise solutions that are grounded in reality and address the most pressing threats to local environments, people and economy.

#### **2021 NONRESIDENT VISITATION, EXPENDITURES & ECONOMIC IMPACT ESTIMATES by Kara Grau, Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research**

- In 2021, nonresident visitors to Montana spent an estimated \$5.15 billion in the state.
- This \$5.15 billion in local spending directly supports \$4.42 billion of economic activity in the state, and supports an additional \$3.14 billion of economic activity, indirectly.
- The estimated total contribution of nonresident spending to Montana's economy was \$7.56 billion in 2021.

#### **2020 CONTRIBUTION OF NONRESIDENT TRAVELER EXPENDITURES IN GLACIER COUNTRY TRAVEL REGION by Kara Grau, Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research**

- 2020 estimates of spending in Glacier Country by nonresident visitors to the state totaled nearly \$814 million.
- This \$814 million in local spending directly supports \$607.4 million of economic activity in the region and supports an additional \$456.5 million of economic activity, indirectly.
- The total contribution of nonresident spending to the regional economy was \$1.06 billion.

#### **2021 GLACIER COUNTRY VISITOR CHARACTERISTICS by Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research**

Average Length of Trip: 6.4 nights

- Hotel/Motel: 36%
- Home/Condo/Cabin of Friend/Relative: 18%
- Private Campground: 16%
- Public Land Camping: 11%
- Rented Entire Cabin/Home: 8%
- Average Group Size: 2.3 people
- Average Age: 54 years old

## Reasons for Trip

- Vacation, Recreation, Pleasure: 62%
- Visit Friends/Relatives, Attend Family Event: 20%
- Just Passing Through: 12%
- Business Travel: 4%

## Activities on Trip

- Scenic Driving: 57%
- Day Hiking: 57%
- Wildlife Watching: 39%
- Nature Photography: 37%
- Car/RV Camping: 33%
- Recreational Shopping: 25%
- Visit Local Brewery: 26%
- Visit Historical Sites: 21%
- Visit Museums: 17%
- Lewis and Clark Sites: 17%
- Visit Indian Reservations: 11%
- Farmers Markets: 10%
- Fishing/Fly-Fishing: 7%

## Attracted to Montana for

- Glacier National Park: 36%
- Open Space/Forests: 16%
- Mountains/Forests: 12%
- Family/Friends: 8%
- Yellowstone National Park: 6%
- Skiing/Snowboarding: 4%

## First-Time Visitors

- No First-Time Visitors: 69%
- All First-Time Visitors: 19%
- Some First-Time/Some Return Visitors: 12%

## Trips Characteristics

- Flew on Portion of Trip: 15%
- Hired an Outfitter: 6%
- Own a second Property in Montana: 3%
- Plan a Return Visit in Next two Years: 79%

## Residency of Travel Groups

- Washington: 21%
- California: 6%
- Oregon: 6%
- Idaho: 6%

- Florida: 5%
- Ohio: 5%
- Minnesota: 5%
- Wisconsin: 4%
- Colorado: 3%
- Arizona: 3%
- Texas: 3%

### **Regional Visitor to Resident Ratio (2021)**

#### Zartico

- Yearly Average: 2.4 visitors to 1 resident
- Seasonal Average:
  - January to March – 1.96 visitor to 1 resident
  - April - June – 2.08 visitors to 1 resident
  - July to September – 2.37 visitors to 1 resident
  - October to December – 1.14 visitor to 1 resident

### **Regional Lodging Data (2021)**

#### Smith Travel Reports

- Average Daily Rate: \$122
- Occupancy: 61%

#### Key Data

- Average Daily Rate: \$276
- Occupancy: 45%

### **Regional Airport Data (2021)**

#### Missoula Montana Airport (MSO)

- Enplanements: 385,818
- Deplanements: 380,236

#### Glacier Park International Airport (FCA)

- Enplanements: 416,224
- Deplanements: 409,872

### **THE STATE OF THE AMERICAN TRAVELER IN APRIL 2022—CHANGED BUT HIGHLY MOTIVATED by Destination Analysts**

Despite concerns about inflation and gas prices potentially impacting trip volume, Americans' strong excitement for travel sustains. 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.

**The Outlook for Travel:** COVID-19 continues to retreat, while Americans' strong excitement for travel sustains.



- 87.6% have current trip plans.
- The months of May, June and July show 2-point increases in the percent of Americans reporting trip plans in them since last month.
- 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.
- 71.8% of Americans did some trip dreaming and planning in the past week.
- A record high 57.9% feel we are closer to normal in the U.S.
- Americans perceived impact of COVID-19 on their ability to have meaningful travel experiences is at a record low (35.9%).
- Avoidance of conventions and conferences reached a record low (40.9%).

**International Travel and the Impact of War in Ukraine:** Even with the heartbreaking war in Ukraine, Americans' current propensity to seek new travel experiences has kept up interest in international travel, while aspiration for Europe has not been disrupted.

- Americans saying they are avoiding international travel is down to a record low 52%.
- Nearly 30% of American travelers say they are likely to travel internationally this year. In fact, 28% of American travelers say they are more interested in traveling outside the United States right now than domestically—up 3 points in the past month.
- Europe still makes up seven of the top 10 foreign destinations that Americans name as where they most want to visit this year, and Europe remains the top region Americans say they are likely to visit in the next three years.

**Financial Sentiment:** Inflation and gas prices are an issue for trip volume, but Americans still plan to spend on travel.

- 24.7% said that recent inflation in consumer prices has led them to cancel an upcoming trip.
- 55.8% agree that recent inflation in consumer prices will likely cause them to rethink their budgets for upcoming travel.
- 55.8% say that if gasoline prices don't come down, they will be taking fewer road trips this spring/summer.
- 59.8% agree that if gasoline prices don't come down, they will be staying closer to home on road trips this spring/summer.
- 61.3% still say travel is a high-budget priority for them.
- 40% still say luxury travel experiences are an important part of their trips.

**The Post-Pandemic Traveler:** 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.

Americans will be seeking out new experiences for travel. 55.7% prefer places they have not been to before—up over eight points since February.

Compared to pre-pandemic:

- 23.2% take trips shorter in length, 17% take trips longer in length.
- 32% take trips closer to home, 13.7% take trips further from home.
- 56.5% more carefully plan trip details, 3.1% are less careful in planning.
- 46.9% are more motivated to travel, 17.1% are less motivated.
- 24.2% are more interested in visiting cities, 20% are less interested.
- 42.2% are more interested in outdoor destinations, 6.3% are less interested.
- 64.2% more sympathetic to frontline travel/hospitality staff.

## **DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP by Samantha Bray, MARCH 26, 2021**

As we look to a post-COVID-19 recovery, care for communities that make up the fabric of destinations is critical. But how? A destination stewardship approach can help tourism stakeholders—including community members—create their shared future in a collaborative and mutually beneficial way. Translating the concept of destination stewardship to action requires a structure that supports bringing all of the stakeholders around the table. It also requires giving them a real voice in tourism planning, policy and management.

## **AMERICAN RESIDENT SENTIMENT TOWARDS TOURISM – HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2021 AMERICAN RESIDENT SENTIMENT STUDY by Longwoods International**

The travel and tourism industry has been challenged by the coronavirus for nearly two years, with the impact of the pandemic ranging from challenging to catastrophic. But even before the pandemic, the industry was increasingly in the spotlight, as communities debated the pros and cons of hosting visitors, weighing the jobs and revenues tourism provides against potential overcrowding and even environmental concerns.

The pandemic has presented an opportunity for the tourism industry to demonstrate the importance of travel and tourism to local economies. Americans favor tourism development and growing the number of tourists coming to their areas, with half supporting an increase in the number of visitors while a quarter do not favor more visitation.

Americans generally support adding new events and new facilities in an effort to attract more visitors. But they are concerned that residents are not informed when such plans are underway, with 42% saying they are not consulted when major developments are underway, while 32% say they are in the loop on such developments.

The major takeaways from this research are that first, there is broad support for the travel and tourism industry across the country. However, there exist areas for attention by the industry:

- The need for better resident engagement around topics of public concern
  - The industry should pay attention to public concerns about specific issues, including opinions on the public use of lodging tax revenues, disruptions to neighborhoods by lodging sharing services.
- Residents feel largely left out of the conversation on tourism development
  - There is a need to grow communication with residents to ensure they are part of the conversation about tourism development and feel informed.
- Gen Z needs to be included in the conversation and engaged with the tourism industry to develop an understanding of the value of travel and tourism.

## **GLACIER COUNTRY RESIDENT SURVEY (2021) by MMGY NextFactor and Better Destinations Glacier Country Tourism Destination Stewardship Strategic Planning**

Residents were surveyed on a scale of 1 (poor) to 10 (excellent). When asked how they would rate their quality of life compared with other places in Montana, respondent's average answer was 8.5. When asked how they rate their quality of life compared to other places in the United States, the average answer was 8.9. While the majority of respondents agreed that tourism creates good employment opportunities for residents and opportunities for new businesses, creates revenue for local businesses, brings diversity to the region, is important factor in making communities a great place to live and supports amenities and attractions that local residents also enjoy, they also equally agreed that it makes property and housing prices more expensive, and negatively impacts our natural resources and infrastructure.

Overall, most agree that Glacier Country has too many visitors during the summer and about the right amount in fall, winter and spring, with those numbers varying by county.

**MONTANA RESIDENTS: ATTITUDES TOWARDS TOURISM 2021 by Carter Bermingham, Megan Schultz and Matthew Pettigrew, Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research**

Results from this survey indicate residents have a nuanced attitude and understanding of the tourism industry within the state. A majority of respondents agree that the promotion of the tourism industry by the state benefits their community economically (83%), while also agreeing that the overall benefits outweigh the negative impacts (71%). At the same time, a majority of respondents also agree that the state is becoming overcrowded because of more tourists (56%), while just 38% of respondents agree that if tourism were to increase, that the quality of life for residents would improve. It appears that residents are fully aware of the economic benefits tourism provides, while also recognizing the social cost from which those economic gains are derived. In addition, comments provided by residents also indicate that a portion of the crowding they perceive is not coming solely from tourists, but from the influx of new Montana residents who have moved to the state in recent years—likely as a result of changes brought on from COVID-19.

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

We view emerging markets a little differently these days. During 2020, we saw a new visitor to our region—one that was new to rural Montana and outdoor recreation. We also saw an influx of people moving to Montana who are new to living and working in rural communities. Both these markets are targets of our recreate responsibly messaging.

Our communities have changed their target customer a bit—they seek “preferred” visitors over “high value” visitors, with each community/county identifying the preferred visitor a little differently. For example, no longer is a high-spending visitor on the preferred list; preferred visitors are respectful of the people who live here and respect our natural resources and high spending visitors are perceived less likely to be so. We also heard loud and clear that Montanans, Canadians and international visitors are viewed as preferred visitors. International travel has lagged along with business travel including meetings and conventions. We will work hard to increase the rate of return for these segments.

**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.*

Our goal is to balance a thriving visitor economy with the long-term health and vibrancy of our communities.

1. Build and/or maintain awareness of Glacier Country and its communities as a recognized tourism destination in identified markets and audiences in a way that balances and sustains visitation among resident, nonresident, domestic and international travelers based on seasonal capacity
2. Encourage residents and visitors to be good stewards of our home by traveling responsibly, leaving no trace, practicing wildland fire safety, by being kind, respectful and patient with one another and by recreating responsibly
3. Monitor and track characteristics and behaviors of visitors to Glacier Country
4. Sustain and increase resident sentiment toward tourism

5. Identify, monitor, participate in and support efforts around the social, economic and environmental impacts of tourism on our communities and region
6. Develop and execute community relations and engagement program
7. Track values-based marketing performance

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

## **DESTINATION MARKETING 50% TIME INVESTMENT**

Consumer Messaging: Glacier Country Tourism's messaging strategy is based on season, capacity of the community/travel corridor and visitor experiences available. Depending on the targeted audience, our message will vary. A common theme of our messaging is to recreate responsibly. As an example, our 2022 winter campaign was Winter Wisely. It promotes Western Montana as a vacation destination, while reminding visitors to plan ahead and play it safe. "You can shred the slopes and have a ball in the snowfall, but stick to activities that match your skill level, tread lightly, and be kind and respectful in our communities. Go wisely, recreate responsibly, and leave nothing but tracks in the snow." Our in-state campaign, encouraged Montanans to explore their own backyard. The campaign, We Live in a State of Awe, acknowledges the economic impact resident visitors contribute to Montana communities. Additionally, residents are often welcomed visitors to our small towns, which appreciate the friendliness and the respect for the community, people and natural resources that in-state travelers tend to have. Our meeting campaign invites meeting planners to, Meet in Montana, Experience a State of Awe. Our destination weddings campaign inspires couples to, Get Married in a State of Awe. All campaigns are promoting activities during a time when our communities desire visitation, but each has a slightly different message based on the intended audience.

We employ a full array of tactics that inspire an emotional connection using strong creative messaging for the potential visitor. We then provide them with the tools they need to take that first step toward action, which is to start thinking about a trip to Western Montana's Glacier Country. This may be a print or digital ad or meeting with a tour operator, travel agent or meeting planner at a trade show; it could be by an earned media article in a magazine, webpage or blog, or it could be on social media.

We then provide several ways to learn more about the region, making orientation intuitive by reaching people in the way they want to interact. Everyone reacts to different forms of promotion, so we employ a diverse marketing mix of methods, including ordering a travel guide from a print ad offer, clicking a banner ad directing to a landing page on our website specific to their interests, signing up for our consumer and B2B blogs and e-newsletters.

We want facilitation to be easy and enjoyable, so we have several hands-on ways for our visitors to plan their trips, including requesting a free travel guide—available in print and digital versions—and exploring our webpage and supporting microsites (consumer leisure, group and international tour operators, meetings and conventions, film production, destination weddings) where we help them really discover what they want to do by making it easy to interact with communities, business and attractions directly. If the leisure traveler needs a little more help, we provide in-person assistance via our call center staffed with trained professionals who are available via live chat, email or phone for visitor assistance. For meeting planners, we assist with venue RFPs, site visits and vendor referrals. Itinerary assistance is provided to tour operators for both group and international. Logistics help and referrals are offered to those planning destination weddings.

**Film Promotion:** The production of feature films, television series and commercials can generate significant economic activity for their host communities, drawing out-of-town spending, generating jobs and supporting local businesses.

The benefits to local communities from the film and entertainment industry are considerable. When a production shoots on location, it brings jobs, revenue and related infrastructure development, providing an immediate boost to the local economy. Beyond these immediate impacts, productions that take place in Montana play a critical role in helping to shape the cultural image of the state. Film-induced tourism can affect travel decisions when potential tourists plan their upcoming holiday or visit to a destination. Films, documentaries, TV productions and commercials inspire people to experience locations seen in the content screened and explore new destinations.

**Tourism Sales:** Our tourism sales program goal is to help develop, promote, manage and monitor domestic group tours, meetings and conventions, destination reunions and weddings, and international FIT sales and marketing programs. Glacier Country Tourism has, for several years, been developing a collaborative and broad-based approach to group travel: group tours, foreign independent travel (FIT), incentive travel, sports, meeting and conventions. Group marketing is complex and requires a personal relationship to be built and maintained with industry representatives on a business-to-business level. Building that relationship with planners and tour operators takes time (domestic is two to three years, international is three to five years). We have had consistent attendance at travel trade shows and meetings and convention trade shows and strong relations with these markets for many years, and we plan to continue this program and prepare to welcome visitors as these markets build back after pandemic restrictions. We support this program with a B2B blog, both a tour operator and meetings and convention newsletter, paid advertising campaigns and earned media, along with targeted familiarization tours.

**Communications:** Our communications program develops, manages and monitors our publicity and earned media projects and programs. Every year, our publicity efforts result in strong performance with both travel writers, travel bloggers and digital influencers. We plan to continue our efforts with a support budget for trade media shows, media events, press trips and familiarization funding to be flexible and responsive for those we host and those we promote.

Travel media relations efforts are focused on sharing information about regional stakeholders in promoting key messages and experiences to the traveling public with travel writers, TV show producers, documentary film crews, social media content creators and others. In some cases, this is done by collaborating with partners to bring these people to our region, and in other cases we gather and send assets like editorial, images and video content or links to various travel media outlets. Earned media refers to media exposure earned through these relationships with key media outlets who feature our story or tourism experience as a result of hosting a media trip or pitching a story.

## **DESTINATION MANAGEMENT 11% TIME INVESTMENT**

**Crisis Communications:** Our crisis communications strategy ensures we are ready to share a clear, concise and accurate message with our visitors. This plan includes our efforts working directly with media as well as sharing a communication tips sheet with our businesses so they can better understand the do's and don'ts when talking with visitors, including social media posts and messaging. We will continue to have an updated crisis plan that can be implemented if and when necessary. We plan to evaluate it by monitoring if we were able to effectively implement it and minimize negative effects from the crisis that triggered it.

Being prepared for harmful situations is imperative. It is important to map out potential negative scenarios and have a PR plan for each one helping to minimize the negative effects of the situation or event.

During this public health crisis, spending time in outdoor spaces became more popular than ever. We joined the Recreate Responsibly movement, which provides guidelines that offer a starting point for getting outside and minimizing impact on natural resources. Together with Glacier National Park; Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks; Flathead National Forest; Montana Office of Tourism; Discover Kalispell and Explore Whitefish; Glacier Country Tourism launched "Recreate Responsibly in MT," an initiative that guides and informs those recreating in our state to be good stewards of Montana's people, culture and land. The messaging targets visitors, residents and businesses, providing education and tools for best practices on how to minimize impact, leave no trace, know before you go, prevent wildland fires, stop aquatic invasive species, and travel safely. Building upon messaging from

RecreateResponsibly.org, the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics, and Tread Lightly, our efforts include resources available to businesses throughout the state as well as marketing and messaging targeted at travelers and recreators. This messaging is included on webpages, airport signage, statewide television and radio advertising, billboards, fuel media video PSAs, rack cards, trailhead signage, social media advertising and posts, videos and a Recreate Responsibly “tourism pledge” visitors and residents can sign.

## **DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP 32% TIME INVESTMENT**

Traditionally, the tourism sector has defined itself with a single tactic—marketing. It has also defined overall success as a single metric—volume. There are few other sectors beyond tourism where the organizations stewarding their industries spend so much more effort and resources on marketing a product than they do developing and managing a product. Addressing that in recent years, the world’s most progressive organizations in tourism have been expanding from destination marketing to destination management. It’s a shift from solely promoting communities to engaging and stewarding communities, which in turn, provides a more livable, lovable and sustainable destination.

In this new paradigm, the impact of tourism can no longer be measured solely in economic terms. We must also measure success against the well-being of our destination, considering nature, human health and community identities. We must be thoughtful about how the quality of the visitor experience can be balanced with the quality of life for residents; about the types of visitors who would provide maximum financial value to our local communities while having the optimal social and environmental impact; and how we can responsibly grow our tourism industry for the benefit of all in our communities.

Community Outreach Program: Glacier Country Tourism will continue to develop our community relations and outreach plan to build public support around a shared vision for the destination—balancing economic development, sustainable tourism and quality of life. We will create a program with dedicated staff to implement the completed destination stewardship plan. As awareness of the tourism industry grows, positive and negative perceptions of it also grow. Montana’s destination organizations, including Glacier Country Tourism, have mostly operated behind the scenes without telling our own story—sharing what we do, how we do it, why we do it and how we measure our success with qualitative and quantitative metrics.

Going forward, this program will work with a much broader audience to ensure our shared efforts are inclusive, thoughtful, accurate, trusted and empowering. We will provide staff and program support to foster community engagement and involvement as well as establish project funding to not only develop projects but implement them when and if appropriate.

## **DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT 7% TIME INVESTMENT**

Combined with our existing cooperative grant program, VIC staffing grants, community event promotion program, and education and outreach programs, we are expanding to provide collaborative opportunities to leverage projects, programs and funding for activities that increase and improve the quality of a visitor’s destination. To make tourism a vibrant, healthy and manageable component of the local economy, we will work with our communities to craft and implement tourism management strategies that are locally driven, authentic and desirable. Every community can benefit from destination development. Destination development improves the visitor experience, leading to increased spending and tax revenues; diversifies and strengthens urban and suburban economies; enhances the recreation and support service infrastructure in emerging, rural tourism destinations; and increases support services, capacity and visitor season for developed gateway communities. Our destination stewardship plan will outline many of these development needs at the community level, which will provide a project work list we can begin to work on in FY 2023.

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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
<p>Destination Marketing + Destination Management Objectives</p> <p>It is important to track effectiveness of our sales and marketing programs so we will monitor the performance of our paid media, social media, webpage analytics, earned media/digital influencer reach and ad value, B2B leads, call center and travel guide performance.</p>	<p>We will measure performance of messaging tactics and track year-over-year comparisons against FY2022.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase use of responsive webpage by 10%</li> <li>• Continue social media audience growth by 2%</li> <li>• Increase consumer leads database by 2%</li> <li>• Increase blog readership by 5%</li> <li>• Increase digital travel guide readership by 5%</li> <li>• Track overall paid media performance using KPIs of impressions delivered, engagement rate and cost per engagement</li> <li>• Increase B2B leads by 4%</li> <li>• Track earned media ad value and readership/impressions delivered</li> <li>• Track conversion rate of people who both visited our website and physically visited Glacier Country</li> </ul>	-	-	

	<p>We will continue recreate responsibly messaging to minimize the negative impact of visitation on our communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Track overall media performance using KPIs of impressions delivered, engagement rate and cost per engagement</li> <li>• Conduct a biannual survey to residents of Glacier Country to track if we are building awareness of the message</li> </ul>			
<p>Destination Stewardship, Destination Development + Destination Management Objectives</p> <p>We will create a destination stewardship program. A critical part of destination stewardship is community engagement. To ensure the level of engagement we have done continues, we will create a program that is focused on the execution of the community driven destination stewardship strategic plan (completed in FY 2022). This program will take what we learn and put the destination development funding to work to tackle the challenges and opportunities that exist. Much of the work under this program is based on what our communities have identified they need from us for creating solutions.</p>	<p>We will track the activities of this program to ensure we are engaging in meaningful ways across all our counties and communities and provide data, research and or funding (when appropriate) to assist them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hire a Director of Community Engagement and Stewardship</li> <li>• Beginning in FY 2023, we will use Zartico to track and visually display various data sets that Glacier Country Tourism and our communities have identified as useful and critical. The data from FY 2023 will provide baseline data we can compare against moving forward. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Track workforce trends by monitoring jobs available, unemployment rate and average income</li> <li>◦ Track affordable housing by monitoring median household income compared to median residential home price and median rent by county</li> <li>◦ Track impacts of short-term rentals on our communities by tracking the rate of short-term rental growth in the region, number of available units, occupancy and average daily rate by region and county</li> <li>◦ Track resident sentiment toward</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	-	-	





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## ***DMO Budget***

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<b>Allowable Methods</b>	<b>Amount Budgeted</b>	<b>% of Budget Allocated</b>	<b>Amount Expended</b>	<b>% of Budget Expended</b>
Administration	\$730,000.00	16.0	\$0.00	0
Agency Services	\$500,000.00	11.0	\$0.00	0
Cooperative Marketing	\$50,000.00	1.0	\$0.00	0
Earned Media/Tourism Sales	\$425,000.00	9.0	\$0.00	0
Education/Outreach	\$170,000.00	4.0	\$0.00	0
Joint Venture	\$150,000.00	3.0	\$0.00	0
Marketing Resources	\$80,000.00	2.0	\$0.00	0
Opportunity Marketing	\$150,000.00	3.0	\$0.00	0
Paid Media	\$930,000.00	20.0	\$0.00	0
Marketing Personnel	\$310,000.00	7.0	\$0.00	0
Product Development	\$430,000.00	10.0	\$0.00	0
Research	\$115,000.00	3.0	\$0.00	0
Travel/Trade Shows	\$100,000.00	2.0	\$0.00	0
Visitor Services	\$260,000.00	6.0	\$0.00	0
Website Development (Online, Website, Mobile)	\$150,000.00	3.0	\$0.00	0
	\$4,550,000.00	100.00	\$0.00	0.00

## ***Narrative Evaluation***

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At the end of FY 2023, we will provide an evaluation of our DMO plan based on our goals and objectives.

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

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<b>Description</b>	<b>File Name</b>	<b>File Size</b>
FY23 Annual Certificate of	FY23 Annual Certificate of	342 KB

Compliance, Board Minutes and  
Bylaws

Compliance+Board  
Minutes+Bylaws.pdf

