



Grant Details

125123 - FY24 DMO Plan

128723 - FY24 Miles City Marketing Plan

DOC Office of Tourism

Grant Title: FY24 Miles City Marketing Plan
Grant Number: 24-52-OOT-DMO-022
Grant Status: Underway
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Applicant Organization: Miles City Area Chamber of Commerce
Grantee Contact: John Laney
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Grant Administrator: Barb Sanem
Contract Number 24-52-OOT-DMO-022
Award Year FY24

Contract Dates

Contract Sent	Contract Received	Contract Executed	Contract Legal
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Project Dates 07/01/2023
 06/30/2024

Project Start	Project End
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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.

Miles City is the "Old West". A charming small town that is located at the confluence of the Tongue and Yellowstone rivers. Miles City is rich in history. It has been a resting place for the likes of General George Armstrong Custer and Teddy Roosevelt. Miles City was also the birthplace of the Montana Stockgrowers Association back in 1884. So much of our history still exists. Historic Hotels and bars are still open for business to offer that true old west experience, making Miles City such a great place to visit.

Miles City is the largest city east of Billings but with the population less than 10,000 people, we still offer that small town charm. We have a unique landscape for visitors, offering everything from rolling hills to the rough cuts of the badlands. Farmland and cattle ranches along your drive offer an advertisement of what Miles City has to showcase.

Miles City has so many strengths. The beauty of the surrounding landscape, as you get closer to town, is a theatre of the mind. You can visualize what life would have been like for the pioneers as you gaze at the vastness of the land. Seeing the large herds of cattle or the sprawling grain fields assure you that you are not in the city anymore.

Herds of antelope grazing in the cut fields and the deer along the roadside make the hunters hearts beat a little faster just thinking of coming to the area to bag that big buck. A corn field littered with a gaggle of geese, ducks flying overhead, or sharptail grouse nestled on a hill, call to the avid bird hunters. The area around Miles City is a mecca for hunters whether you use a bow, a gun, or a camera.

Once in Miles City your life begins to change. Relaxation and a slower pace of life begin to take over. You are still in the "Old West" but now it has a more modern flair with all of the amenities of a big town but on a smaller scale. You will see old west bars next to upscale dining facilities and lovely vintage diners next to fast food eateries. What sets us apart are the PEOPLE. Always willing to share a story, to make a new friend, or to tell the family history. Most of the residence of Miles City are self proclaimed trip advisors. They will always recommend the history on display at the Range Riders Museum, the culture of the Waterworks Art Museum, and of course they will always invite you to The World Famous Miles City Bucking Horse Sale. On the third full weekend of May our town doubles in size as visitors from all 50 states and numerous foreign countries come for one of the greatest old west rodeos in the world. When you say Miles City to anyone the next thing you will hear is "That's where the Bucking Horse Sale is, right?"

Miles City is located on I-94, as well as the intersections of HWY 59 north and south making it a great resting stop for travelers going to Glacier and Yellowstone Parks from the east. The driving tourists are one of our many strengths but it also points to one of our biggest issues. This is pointed out year after year and we still haven't found a solution. Miles City has no commercial air service and sees none on the horizon. As sited in the past, weather conditions have caused us problems with the dry countryside, and we have seen people close their places to hunting. We are seeing more moisture, but we have also seen reductions in the deer population so hunting is still a questionable market. Hopefully we can get a balance of nature because it does have a direct effect on our fall economy.

Miles City will always be a charming small town because that is who we are. As good stewards of the land we will always maintain and share the beauty of the land around us. Whether it be the rolling hills, the rough badlands, or the red hues

of the scorio bluffs we will always work to provide public access that after you have experienced the beauty of Miles City's surroundings we will have a great experience waiting for you back in town.

2. Align with Montana Brand

Briefly describe how your destination aligns with the Montana Brand.

The landscape of Miles City and Eastern Montana is as unique to Montana as it is to any other place in the lower 48. The terrain of the Badlands offers a spectacle of life in a tougher time. The rock bridge of the Calypso Trail speaks to the pioneer spirit and nessecity to create travel paths to a better life. The vast flatland and rolling hills gave hope to the visitors coming to the old west searching for that new start. All of this is on display every day for the modern visitor looking to chronicle life in an earlier time. These experiences are not exclusive to the visitor, the locals happen upon historic sites as they travel the open spaces around Miles City. Miles City is a vibrant and charming small town that serves as a gateway to our natural wonders. Miles City is located in the middle of the natural wonders mentioned above. In less that a 10-minute drive, you can find yourself able to look as far as the eye can see and not see any sign of humanity. The peace that you get from this experience is breathtaking. Sit down and let the quiet take your mind to places you have never experienced.

Now it's time to get up and come back to town. Don't worry, your spot will be there tomorrow, and the next day. It's time for a locally-brewed beer and a chance to make new friends before you head to one of the local dining establishments for that steak you have been dreaming of since breakfast. We sell a way of life not just a place to experience it. That's Miles City!

3. What is the strategic role of your DMO?

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

Destination Marketing

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

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

Our audience based on research from Datafy and Visaveiw fit the following categories are:

Ages - 45 to 64 is first, followed by 25 - 44

Income - under 50K is first followed by 50K to 150K

Education - High School/ No Degree

Household - 1-2 is first, followed closely by 3-5

These stats are the same as last year, with a small percentage change. It would seem that the energy developement sector drives these numbers. We have 2 transmission lines being built as well as a huge wind farm.

Miles City tracks Psycho-graphic analytics using a combination of Demographics and Marketing Analysis.

The difference in age is small, again, between 44 and 65 with the income pattern being similar from under 50K to 150K. Education is very close in High School/No Degree and some college, but Bachelors 4-year/grad lagging far behind. Household size is very close. As our research base, we use Datafy and VisaView. Based on a quarterly basis, we can see how the breakdowns play out. Winter brings sports tournaments for basketball and hockey. The family size grows, but education drops. Income spreads the entire option set. as we move to spring. The Bucking Horse Sale really tip the scales to younger less economically comfortable to the widespread older and more comfortable. I think this is a perfect example of how we see the under 50K group being the younger sampling to the older more established visitor in the higher income category. It also holds true for the smaller family sizes in our visitors. Summer brings a spot for everyone. The family size is larger with family trips to the national park from the larger wage earners from the east. This is a top-end season. Fall drops to the off season traveler or the outdoors visitor. Hunters are usually less educated, younger, and often times on a lower end of the pay scale. It is important to point out that this past year we saw a older, higher end hunter. I think this is because the lack of deer made outfitted hunts more desirable. Also of note is we don't see the pandemic visitor like in the past 2 years. We see a more relaxed visitor. As mentioned in the review we sometimes take in state visitors for granted. We do market to Billings and Bozeman, primarily on TV for our bigger events. We tend to look at Bozeman and Billings visitors as being brand new. Bucking Horse Sale crowds are 1/2 Montana, then Wyoming, South Dakota, North Dakota, Minnesota, Texas making up the other half according to Pre-Sales in our office.

3b. What research supports your DMO strategy?

To briefly describe the reasoning for declaring ourselves as a destination marketing organization is because that is the avenue chosen for the Miles City CVB, now DMO. The Miles City Chamber of Commerce Board directs the DMO budget and plan, we utilize funds from our TBID for a more manageable approach because of the diverse ways we can utilize funds. We are also the management agency for the Economic Development Council so the stewardship of all these marketing funds are research driven. We use Datafy and Visaview along with ITRR and Travel Montana for direction, as well as being privy to news and action in Miles City before it is public, so we can market accordingly. We often refer to our research as "Owned" research because we purchase both Datafy outright and Visaview in a joint venture with the state. We receive some great stats from Datafy that shows visitor location, length of stay, spending patterns, even family size and income and education data. We know more about our visitors than we ever have before making target marketing so much more precise.

3c. What are your emerging markets?

It seems on the surface that our emerging market is really returning to our old market we marketed to in the past. We see visitors that want to stay and experience Miles City and the area. They seem to be willing to get out and "live". We have also seen our hoteliers bring their ADR back to reality, making the 'visitor that shops' rate more inclined to stay in our town, versus the bigger and maybe more expensive cities down the road. We market what we can control making some of what we saw as an emerging markets problematic. Hunting looked like a target but we have seen drought cause landowners to close block management. This past season, we also saw Blue Tongue devastate the deer population causing the season to fall apart. Hopefully this year will be better but we need to hold off until late spring to see herd counts and weather patterns to plan a strategy. We utilize data from FWP from year to year to see harvest counts that make decisions on marketing easier. Hunting is very volatile but it has such an impact when we have successful season

that we need to stay this course. We see our marketing being directed to that visitor that is looking to relax, get away from it all. Of course we will push our way of life because that will always be our best draw. We will also be marketing back to the Park visitors that we missed so much last year. Dino seekers will be on our radar as well based on so many activities held close to us.

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 goals for this year will be to get back to what made Miles City and Eastern Montana a tourism destination in the past. History, the outdoors, the western way of life, our pace of life are the things we need to bring back. With marketing that shows the old west beauty and the relaxed way of life coupled with the modern amenities we have to offer we need to show that we can offer you a vacation. We plan to utilize our community events as our draw to our destination. With a mix of marketing directions we want to invite our visitors to us. We offer events for year round enjoyment such as sports events, street music, rodeo, the Bucking Horse Sale, live horse racing, hiking, and many events range from very affordable to free. Our way of life is always free.

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

We will hold our focus on visitor attractions. We primarily stick with local events because with such a small budget it is very costly to go fishing in a new hole. We will market to the group according to the research and what knowledge we have acquired over the years. All of the branches of our DMO have a set job or objective, all designed to attract visitors to Miles City. We have coined the phrase "Discover Miles City, for a day, a week, or a lifetime". That is how we will approach everything we do. We will use this budget to bring people to Miles City with a goal of overnight stays. The others are designed to enhance longer stays that bolster the economy and create other offerings for future visitors. Four separate budgets all aimed at the same target audience.

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Objectives/Metrics/Evaluation

Objectives	Measurable Metrics for Success	Report the Metric Achieved	Evaluation of Measurable Metrics for Success
Monitor with owned Data (Data we have purchased) the uptick of visitors to get us back to 2021 numbers.	Increase 1st quarter by 5% by a stronger push from East to West to draw visitors to stop here on the way to the Parks.		
Owned data and game checks will show the success of this approach. We can also see the variables that will bring success early enough to alter strategies in our plan. Game checks are done every season and kept by the FWP so we can monitor the numbers we need to see following harvest.	Increase 2nd Quarter by 7% with increased marketing to hunters. Above average moisture this spring and what appears to be a good increase in game population should lead to a great hunting season for both big game and birds.		
Owned data will be one indicator but we will know earlier based on successful tourney bids how will proceed. We will have enough time to adjust plans for success by mid 1st Quarter.	3rd Quarter we plan to have very moderate growth, if any. This quarter is up in the air to date due to sports tournaments not being awarded yet. We have bid numerous hockey and basketball tournaments that will dictate our 3rd Quarter growth. We bid most of the hockey but our basketball tournament are awarded by the conferences for district tournaments and by the divisional schools for divisional tournaments and we are made aware of those in the spring. District and Divisional basketball are awarded in the spring by the conferences.		
Owned data along with monitored crowd size will give us a good view of succes.	4th Quarter we plan to see a 4% growth based on a stronger event calendar. We are working hard to get more live horse racing dates which will bring more visitors to Miles City.		

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DMO Budget

Allowable Methods	Amount Budgeted	% of Budget Allocated	Amount Expended	% of Budget Expended
Administration	\$8,580.00	20.0	\$0.00	0
Cooperative Marketing	\$1,000.00	2.0	\$0.00	0
Education/Outreach	\$3,000.00	7.0	\$0.00	0
Joint Venture	\$6,000.00	14.0	\$0.00	0
Opportunity Marketing	\$437.00	1.0	\$0.00	0
Paid Media	\$21,000.00	49.0	\$0.00	0
Website Development (Online, Website, Mobile)	\$2,890.00	7.0	\$0.00	0
	\$42,907.00	100.00	\$0.00	0.00

Narrative Evaluation

DMO Plan Attachments

Description	File Name	File Size
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Reg/CVB Required Documents

Description	File Name	File Size
Board Vote	board approval.docx	12 KB
By-Laws	BY-LAWS 2010 VERSION updated Jan2015.doc	53 KB
Compliance	FY24 Certificate of Compliance.pdf	960 KB

