



## Grant Details

### 125123 - FY24 DMO Plan

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128707 - FY24 West Yellowstone DMO Plan

DOC Office of Tourism

Grant Title:	FY24 West Yellowstone DMO Plan		
Grant Number:	24-52-OOT-DMO-025		
Grant Status:	Underway		
Comments:			
Applicant Organization:	West Yellowstone Chamber of Commerce		
Grantee Contact:	Katrina Wiese		
Award Year:	FY24		
Program Area:	DOC Office of Tourism		
Amounts:			
Contract Dates:	Contract Sent	Contract Received	Contract Executed
Project Dates:	06/13/2023 Proposal Date	07/01/2023 Project Start	06/30/2024 Project End
Grant Administrator:	Barb Sanem		
Contract Number	24-52-OOT-DMO-025		
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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

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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.*

As the closest entrance to Old Faithful and Grand Prismatic in Yellowstone National Park, West Yellowstone has identified itself as the central location, and the closest 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 is the heart of amazing adventure, in all seasons. Clean air and water, abundant wildlife, scenic beauty, geothermal wonders, abounding outdoor recreational opportunities, and historical reference have made West Yellowstone a national and international destination of small-town charm and welcoming hospitality.

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

**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 a world-renowned riparian exhibit with river otters and other native wetland species in their own natural habitat. We like to say, this is the only place we can guarantee that you will see a live grizzly! Seasonal events like the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, Music in the Park concerts, the Annual Rod Run, Nordic Ski Races, Dog Sled Races, Kids'N'Snow and an 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 – just follow the green bear tracks through Town! Nearby other historic 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. One way we secure visitor experience and entice those visitors to enjoy all that West Yellowstone has to offer is through our Visitor Information Center, where visitors can speak directly with local residents, pick up printed planners, plan their trip and experience the genuine hospitality our Town offers. Our VIC plays host to over 200,000 visitors annually – making it the busiest VIC in the state!

### STRENGTHS & OPPORTUNITES

- 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, rivers and trails, all which provided amazing outdoor recreation opportunities
- A nationally recognized, well-developed groomed system of winter snowmobile and Nordic ski trails, many of which have both Regional and International recognition
- 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 Yellowstone International Airport with year-round service.
- Home of the Museum of the Yellowstone
- A host of year-round and annual events
- Central location to area downhill ski resorts
- Additional community marketing resources and partnerships. 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

## CHALLENGES

- Perception that West Yellowstone is only a gateway into the Park and not a destination
- Perceived distance and lack of easy access from major population centers
- National and world event impacts on tourism (ex: terrorism, infectious diseases, and natural disasters)
- Negative press (ex: wildlife, climate, natural events and Park access)
- Perceived limited or lack of restaurants, nightly entertainment & family friendly activities/events
- Visitors and traffic flow management during peak warm season
- Campgrounds, trails, and public lands access 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, resulting in limited community involvement
- Public transportation regionally and through the Park
- Market competition in neighboring communities and states
- Affordable housing
- Workforce shortages
- Childcare service shortage
- Slow recovery of international travel

## 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.

### 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).*

**Destination Management & Development Target Audience:** hotel developers, tour operators, business owners, government officials, local, regional and state partners including the town staff and council, downtown development advisory board, TBID, West Yellowstone Foundation, Custer-Gallatin National Forest, Yellowstone Airport, Yellowstone National Park and others concerned with the sustainability and competitiveness of tourism destinations.

**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.

## 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). 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
- 39.6+% Homeowners
- Mostly with 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
- 88.1% 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
- 78.2% 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**

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

- Top states: Utah, Wyoming, Montana, Texas, Idaho, North and South Dakota, Washington, Oregon, Florida, and Minnesota. (Fluctuates seasonally)

- Top countries: Canada, UK, France, Germany, Australia, Mexico & China.

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

Destination Yellowstone DMO utilizes many different research resources when planning and executing our DMO Marketing Plan. The different resources listed below help us to gauge campaign engagement and statistics, verify our demographic, geographic and psychographic markets and gain insights on new industry trends. This list includes, but is not limited to:

- **Destination Yellowstone.com Website** – Analytics measure users (current and new), session times, campaign stats, email leads and travel planner downloads.
- **Local Resort Tax Collection Reports**
- **Yellowstone National Park Service Visitation Statistics**
- **Yellowstone Airport & Bozeman Yellowstone International Airport Monthly Visitor Data**
- **Google Analytics**
- **Zartico** – Provides spending, traffic and travel origination & patterns of visitors
- **Placer.ai** – Provides real time geofencing for data capture
- **Institute of Tourism & Recreation Research**
- **Montana Office of Tourism & Business Development**
- **Destination Analysts** – State of the American Traveler Yearly & Monthly Reports provide travel insights, outlook and industry updates
- **Destination Marketing Association of the West**
- **Center for Responsible Travel**
- **Leave No Trace**
- **Destination Think**
- **Longwoods International** - Travel Sentiment Surveys & Research
- **Skift Travel Research** – Global Travel Outlook
- **Smith Travel Research Report** – Monthly STR Reports
- **US Department of Commerce, Office of Travel & Tourism Industries**
- **US Travel Association**
- **Voices of Tourism**

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

A few factors are front and center for FY24 that we are giving extra consideration to when looking at new markets:

- Flood aftermath continues, resulting in us marketing during the summer to continue to help support our businesses and help support and drive local traffic and bookings.
- Geographic markets continue to fluctuate with international travel starting to come back finally after the pandemic. New international market: India & new domestic/regional markets: California, Colorado & Georgia.
- New residents to the state and region, plus those from urban areas have continued to expand our niche activity-based outdoor enthusiast markets, including this year, fall season motorcyclists.

#### **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.*

Destination Yellowstone's overarching goal is to attract visitors by communicating an image consistent with our long-term vision as a vacation destination and one that places high value on existing assets, amenities and natural resources of the region. This year especially we need to continue to communicate that we are open and focus our attention on actively marketing to eliminate the passthrough town impact that we have begun to see. We set these goals to help us balance our focus between destination marketing, destination development and destination management. We continue to encourage both residents and visitors alike to travel safe, recreate responsibly, leave no trace, focus on wildfire safety, and of course continue our "Be Patient, Be Kind, Be Cool, Be Responsible" campaign.

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

Tactics include:

- Expanding our marketing effectiveness and social media reach and interaction by joining our efforts with those of marketing partners. Incorporate the Montana brand pillars and initiatives whenever possible. We will continue to participate in joint ventures, leveraging our funds.
- Creating media and messaging around traveling respectfully and responsibly, leaving no trace and overall wildland fire safety. We are incorporating the Leave No Trace principles into our messaging.
- Provide support and funding to our visitor information center both in staffing and projects to improve both the services available and the visitor experience. If we see more funds during the year, over our original forecast, this is an area where we will increase funding, as visitor experience enhancements is an important part of our plan.
- Enhance the visitor experience and educate them on the activities and events taking place within West Yellowstone. Help visitors route in and around West Yellowstone and the surrounding areas of Montana to experience all that our State has to offer.
- Educate staff through professional development & educational opportunities, including seminars, trainings on emerging trends and new products, and conferences.

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## Objectives/Metrics/Evaluation

Objectives	Measurable Metrics for Success	Report the Metric Achieved	Evaluation of Measurable Metrics for Success
<b>#1 - Destination Marketing:</b> Track the effectiveness of our marketing programs by monitoring and reporting on our paid and earned media, social media, website usage, travel planner distribution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>3% increase in Lodging Tax Collections over FY2019 – the last year of a “normal” collection, before the pandemic and flood.</li><li>Increase website usage by 10%</li><li>Social Media growth of 5%</li><li>Increase Travel Planner digital downloads by 10%</li><li>Increase email subscribers (leads) by 8%</li></ul>	<b>LODGING &amp; RESORT TAX COLLECTIONS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>13.54% increase</b> in Lodging Tax Collections over FY23</li><li><b>11.34% increase</b> in West Yellowstone Resort Tax Collections over FY23</li></ul> <b>WEBSITE:</b> Total website sessions this year reached an impressive 367,773 sessions, a <b>20.62% increase</b> . <b>SOCIAL: Over 20% Increase</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Facebook: <b>5,520,771 Reach</b> (28.65% increase over FY23) <i>84.75% of the reach is from organic search!</i> <b>23,596 Follows</b> (28.49% increase over FY23)</li><li>Instagram: <b>126,500 Reach</b> (Slight decrease from FY23, however our content interactions are up 3,500 over FY23)</li></ul>	<p><b>Yes, we met all metrics for this objective and this objective was successful.</b></p> <p><b>LODGING &amp; RESORT TAX COLLECTIONS:</b> While using resort tax collections and lodging tax collections are a good gauge on visitation, we have seen that many factors can impact these numbers. However, we will still use these collections going forward, as we look at the trends that the numbers present.</p> <p><b>WEBSITE:</b> This achievement reflects our ongoing efforts in driving traffic and engaging users across various channels. We will always continue to invest in our website.</p> <p><b>SOCIAL:</b> We will continue to utilize social media as a driving force in paid media and ultimately user engagement.</p> <p><b>TRAVEL PLANNERS:</b> Travel Planners continue to be a driving force to and for our website and a valued product for our visitors. We will continue to utilize this.</p> <p><b>EMAIL MARKETING:</b> Our email marketing is strong and is a tactic we will continue to utilize.</p> <p><b>PAID MEDIA:</b> We will continue to utilize paid media in many forms such as print, PPC, paid search, Youtube True View, Connected TV/OTT, targeted</p>



		<p><b>9,076 Follows (24% increase over FY23)</b></p> <p><b>TRAVEL PLANNERS: 20% Increase</b> 4,534 PDF downloads &amp; 12,578 views of the viewable IZZU flipbook travel planner</p> <p><b>EMAIL MARKETING:</b>  40,860 email subscribers, up 4.45% from FY23.  596 organic email sign-ups through both online prompts and Visitor Information Center sign-in sheets.  635,531 sends  198,478 opens  5,680 clicks  32% overall open rate  Monthly HTML Emails: 38,000 list, 28-29% open rate  Local Marketing Emails: 352 list, 47-48% open rate</p> <p><b>PAID MEDIA CAMPAIGNS:</b>  Winter Digital Campaign 2,065,633 impressions and 8,071 activities  Winter Social Campaign 407,317 impressions with 17,944 activities  Video completion rate of 77.25% (benchmark for Wendt is 65-70%)</p> <p>Spring Digital Campaign 948,224 impressions and 5,245 activities  Spring Social Campaign 717,555 impressions with 27,583 activities  Video completion rate of 84.42% (benchmark for Wendt is 65-70%)</p> <p>Targeted Fall Campaign with Amplified 1,103,392 impressions with 17,161 activities</p> <p>Visit USA Parks  Impressions: 813,00 (over double the contracted estimate of 300,000)  Engagement Rate: 22% (almost double the industry average 8-12%)  Link Clicks: 19,400 (almost triple the contracted estimate of 6,500)  CPC: \$0.11 (significantly lower than the industry average of \$0.63)</p>	<p>geofenced display, mobile location display and targeted email marketing.</p> <p>With all of our paid media we have seen growth in our reach and engagement as well as a unified branding and messaging between the CVB and TBID – the main marketing partners of West Yellowstone.</p>
#2 – Destination Management: Promote responsible travel and recreation messaging to both visitors and residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Host two Leave No Trace trainings for local residents and businesses.</li> </ul>	<p>Partnered up with the Town of West Yellowstone to promote responsible behaviors such as, but not limited to, trash removal and proper disposal through</p>	<p>Yes, we met our objective and these metrics were successful. We will continue to utilize these tactics, as promoting responsible travel and recreation is essential to the viability of our community and surrounding forests.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporate "Travel Like a Local" messaging and graphics into our website, write 2 blogs and into our 45,000 Travel Planner.</li> <li>• Incorporate the Leave No Trace principles into our printed materials and distribute them into our community to educate residents and visitors.</li> </ul>	<p>social media posts and messaging in newsletters and emails.</p> <p>Included Recreate &amp; Travel Responsible as well as Animal Safety messaging in 45,000 printed Travel Planners &amp; online planners.</p> <p>Incorporated updated information onto our Recreate Responsibly website page and pushed out this info through our social channels.</p> <p>Wrote several blog posts, examples: Staying Safe in Bear Country: Be Bear Aware! AND Explore Offline with Google Maps</p> <p>Partnered with Wildlife Restoration Foundation to promote the "I Am Bear Safe" program as a Park Gateway Partner.</p> <p>We continued our Be Patient, Be Kind, Be Cool, Be Responsible campaign. We produced thousands of stickers that we gave out to visitors at the VIC throughout the year. Added messaging to 12,000 printed snowmobile maps and 10,000 printed ATV/OHV maps.</p>	
<p>#3 – Destination Development: Improve the visitor experience by providing exceptional visitor interface with the staff of local businesses and the visitor information center, provide accurate and consistent information through our website, printed materials and brochures and maintain and improve the visitor information center.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5% increase in participation at the Front Line Training.</li> <li>• Create 10+ short form videos to help expand visitor experience and education.</li> <li>• Help begin the process of the visitor information center bathroom remodel.</li> </ul>	<p>Visitor Information Center Bathrooms have now been completely remodeled.</p> <p>Handled multiple Crisis-mode situations during the summer: YNP Biscuit Basin Explosion and YNP July 4<sup>th</sup> Law Enforcement Involved Shooting with the use of our website, social media channels and emails; making sure to get correct information to residents and visitors.</p>	<p>Yes, the objective was successful, even if all of the metrics originally put forth weren't finalized and shifted a bit during the course of the fiscal year. Due to the cost and time needed for project management, we concentrated our efforts and budget on the remodel of the Visitor Information Center bathroom. This restroom, one of the only two public restrooms within the Town of West Yellowstone, has not been updated since it was built over 20 years ago and sees nearly 1.5 million visitors a year. Due to the amount of work needed, this project became a much larger undertaking than originally anticipated and stretched into FY25 for completion but is now complete.</p> <p>We also switched focus a bit through the year, putting top priority on our website to ensure that we were not only providing accurate and consistent information , but to make strategic changes and enhancements to ensure website traction.</p> <p>We do plan to continue our efforts on customer service training for our residents, staff and visitors alike, just packaged in a different form than what we historically have been doing - a front-line training session. We have found that the staff of our</p>

			businesses don't have time to attend as we are already tremendously busy in May when new seasonal staff are arriving and being hired. We are pivoting and now working to create an online form of training with videos that can be utilized at the staff's convenience, year-round.
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## DMO Budget

Allowable Methods	Amount Budgeted	% of Budget Allocated	Amount Expended	% of Budget Expended
Administration	\$90,500.00	19.0	\$86,813.68	95.9
Agency Services	\$10,000.00	2.1	\$4,039.70	40.4
Earned Media/Tourism Sales	\$8,000.00	1.68	\$1,641.95	20.5
Education/Outreach	\$10,000.00	2.1	\$4,649.49	46.5
Joint Venture	\$5,000.00	1.04	\$1,500.00	30.0
Opportunity Marketing	\$100.00	0.02	\$0.00	0
Paid Media	\$185,725.00	38.99	\$151,563.91	81.6
Marketing Personnel	\$25,000.00	5.25	\$20,272.53	81.1
Product Development	\$19,000.00	3.98	\$18,099.50	95.26
Research	\$23,000.00	4.82	\$22,344.00	97.14
Travel/Trade Shows	\$15,000.00	3.15	\$8,805.05	58.7
Visitor Services	\$55,000.00	11.55	\$53,478.77	97.2
Website Development (Online, Website, Mobile)	\$30,000.00	6.3	\$23,884.51	79.6
	\$476,325.00	99.98	\$397,093.09	

## Narrative Evaluation

West Yellowstone DMO/CVB Narrative Evaluation

### Destination Marketing, Management and Development

Destination Yellowstone's overarching goal is always to attract visitors by communicating an image consistent with our long-term vision as a vacation destination and one that places high value on existing assets, amenities and natural resources of the region. This year especially we need to continue to communicate that we are open and focus our attention on actively marketing to eliminate the passthrough town impact that we have begun to see. We set these goals to help us balance our focus between destination marketing, destination development and destination

management. We continue to encourage both residents and visitors alike to travel safe, recreate responsibly, leave no trace, focus on wildfire safety, and of course continue our “Be Patient, Be Kind, Be Cool, Be Responsible” campaign.

The tactics that we focused on this year:

- Expanded our marketing effectiveness and social media reach and interaction by joining our efforts with those of marketing partners.
- Created media and messaging around traveling respectfully and responsibly. We incorporated the Leave No Trace principles into our messaging.
- Provided support and funding to our visitor information center both in staffing and projects to improve both the services available and the visitor experience with the remodel of our Visitor Information Center restroom.
- Enhanced the visitor experience by educating them on the activities and events taking place within West Yellowstone. Helped visitors route in and around West Yellowstone and the surrounding areas of Montana to experience all that our State has to offer.
- Educated staff through professional development & educational opportunities, including seminars, trainings and conferences to learn of emerging trends and new products.

One of our top priorities of marketing the Town of West Yellowstone is always to increase our lodging tax collections over the prior year. This past fiscal year we saw our lodging tax collections increase 13.54% and our resort tax collections increase 11.34% over prior year. This is encouraging after a year that we saw decreases in both resort and lodging tax collections due to the flood during the summer of 2022.

Expanding our marketing effectiveness and social media reach and interaction this year was a huge focus for us, and we strategically set ourselves up for success by joining our efforts with those of marketing partners; Wendt for our main paid media and social campaigns as well as email and influencer marketing, Bowstern for our website, SEO and blogs and Amplified for marketing focused on specific events that we partner with and support within our community, helping boost their advertising and reach, such as West Yellowstone Ski Festival, Kids N Snow, West Yellowstone Ice Fishing Tournament, Music in the Park, etc.

**Paid Media:** We ran a few main campaigns through the year with a Winter Media Campaign and a Spring Media 2024 campaign as well as a Targeted Fall Campaign. Our goals overall were to increase awareness of West Yellowstone as a vacation destination during fall, winter and spring, encourage travel for both families and outdoor recreationalists, position West Yellowstone as a destination and not a passthrough community, the gateway to Yellowstone with lodging options and recreation opportunities and to always drive website traffic.

Our campaign markets were Montana, Salt Lake City, Boise, Idaho Falls, Pocatello, Denver and Wyoming. Our Winter campaign markets focused on the same markets but also included Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota, Atlanta, Austin, Dallas, San Diego, San Francisco & Phoenix. The tactics used throughout all campaigns included online video, paid search, digital display, native content, paid social media, Google ad words and streaming television. We also focused on a targeted Influencer Campaign with influencers from Montana, Utah, Dallas and Atlanta using the Instagram platform.

Our Winter Digital Campaign generated 2,065,633 impressions and 8,071 activities and the Winter Social Campaign generated 407,317 impressions with 17,944 activities. The campaign also saw a video completion rate of 77.25% (benchmark for Wendt is 65-70%).

Our Spring Digital Campaign generated 948,224 impressions and 5,245 activities and the Spring Social Campaign generated 717,555 impressions with 27,583 activities. The campaign also saw a video completion rate of 84.42% (benchmark for Wendt is 65-70%).

Our Targeted Fall Campaign with Amplified contained PPC, digital display ads for drive market and targeted fly markets in both Los Angeles and San Francisco. This campaign generated 1,103,392 impressions with 17,161 activities.

Our Visit USA Parks campaign was a blend of 50-50 international and domestic markets, targeting the US, UK & Germany. We focused on winter and spring experiences within West Yellowstone. We used 2 itinerary-based stories and pushed out social posts through FB & IG with two rounds of Meta retargeting. The campaign was successful because the impressions and clicks both exceed the campaign deliverables of 300,00 and 6,500. Cost per click of \$0.11 is well below the industry average of \$0.63. Our best performing content was the story ads, they outperformed in both rounds of ads, with the winter campaign having the best results. The domestic market came in with the lowest CPC with \$0.10. The best performing CTR was Germany with 3.14%. We have partnered with Visit USA Parks for many years. They always over-deliver on our campaigns and provide added additional value, this year in the form of Pinterest pins – a social platform that we are now strategically working to grow.

**Social Media:** Throughout FY24 our goal was to increase our social media engagement of current followers while also attracting new followers for both Facebook and Instagram, while also concentrating on elevating the content that we were putting out. Facebook saw a **5,520,771 Reach** (28.65% increase over FY23) *84.75% of the reach is from organic search!* **23,596 Follows** (28.49% increase over FY23). Instagram saw a **126,500 Reach** (slight decrease from FY23, however our content interactions are up 3,500 over FY23) **9,076 Follows** (24% increase over FY23). We utilized user-generated content from the Crowdriff platform to help us stay fresh and relevant.

**Email Marketing:** We have a very healthy newsletter subscription base of 40,860, up 4.45% from FY23. We saw 596 organic email sign-ups through both online prompts and Visitor Information Center sign-in sheets. In February 2024 we had Wendt, our agency, begin working on an email content strategy which included assessing and reviewing our current strategy. After this review we strategically created geographic segments within our current lists to help us define our drive markets vs. fly markets, so that we can send more targeted smaller lists emails for specific campaign elements. We also standardized our email sign-up forms to include geographic location, traveler interest and season preference. And lastly, we added a “Subscribe Pop-Up” to our website to directly prompt visitors to sign up for our emails.

**Website:** Our total website sessions this year reached an impressive 367,773 sessions. This achievement reflects our ongoing efforts in driving traffic and engaging users across various channels. Notably, organic search emerged as the leading source, contributing 163,987 sessions, showcasing the effectiveness of our SEO strategies that we have been focusing on this year. While some of this growth can be attributed to seasonal factors driving organic traffic, the substantial improvement underscores the effectiveness of our targeted SEO strategies. This success demonstrates the importance of continually refining and optimizing our content to meet user needs and search engine criteria. Additionally, our conversion rates are on the rise, with a total of 4,052 conversions as well as a resounding 17,000+ downloads/views of our online travel panner, indicating that our audience is not only visiting, but also taking action. Our Authority Score climbed three points from 36 to 39. Authority Score is a comprehensive metric (rated 1-100) that measures a website's overall quality and domain reputation by analyzing backlink quality, organic traffic patterns, and potential spam indicators. Think of Authority Score as a domain's "credit score" for the internet - it tells us how trustworthy and influential our website is in the digital world. When our Authority Score increases, it signals that major search engines and other websites view us as more credible and authoritative, which directly impacts our visibility in search results and our ability to attract quality traffic. This improved reputation not only helps drive more organic traffic to our site but also makes us a more attractive partner for high-value business relationships, ultimately contributing to stronger brand perception and potential revenue growth through improved digital presence.

**Travel Planners:** We once again printed 45,000 Travel Planners and distributed them throughout Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, and Utah. We had 4,534 PDF downloads and 12,578 views of the new viewable flipbook travel planner created with the IZZU software – this allows for an immediate viewable planner that visitors can flip through, essentially an online live book. This did affect direct downloads, and we saw a decrease, however when you factor in

the PDF downloads and the views of the flipbook, we saw a 20% increase over last year. This year we also added pop-ups strategically on a few landing pages to prompt conversions, which created 4,052 conversions. Travel Planners continue to be a driving force for our website.

**Destination Management**

The ability to educate staff through professional development & educational opportunities, including seminars, trainings and conferences to learn of emerging trends and new products has helped us to learn more about managing our destination correctly with responsible and sustainable travel and has allowed us the opportunity to pass that knowledge onto our community. This year staff attended the Destinations International Annual Convention, the destination organization industry's premier event to meet peers and gain cutting-edge knowledge to tackle the challenges of tomorrow, the ESTO Annual Conference put on by the US Travel Association, a learning and knowledge-sharing forum for destination marketing professionals, and the TTRA (Travel and Tourism Research Association) Annual Conference, “**Global Insights, Local Stories Shaping Tourism Research**,” set the stage for an engaging exploration of the latest travel and tourism research trends, data, and technology.

Also, being able to provide support and funding to our Visitor Information Center both in staffing and projects to improve both the services available and the visitor experience has become essential, as seen with the large remodel project that we went through this past summer with the Visitor Information Center restroom; a restroom that sees over 1.5 million visitors throughout the year.

Handling multiple crisis-mode situations throughout the year has become second nature to our organization, this year with the YNP Biscuit Basin Explosion and the YNP July 4<sup>th</sup> Law Enforcement Involved Shooting. We have found that by using our website, social media and emails as soon as a crisis appears, we are able to own the narrative and get correct information out in a timely fashion to both residents and visitors here in West Yellowstone and potential visitors that are in the process of traveling. This has enhanced the visitor experience by educating them on the activities and events taking place within West Yellowstone, providing essential communication throughout crisis periods, as well as a sense of ease in knowing the truth of the situation.

Overall, FY24 was a successful year for us; we saw significant increases in all our metrics, especially those that enhance the visitor experience by helping to educate them on the activities and events taking place within West Yellowstone such as our website, social media and travel planners. When coupled with pushing out Recreate and Travel Responsible messaging, we saw tremendous positive engagement.

***DMO Plan Attachments***

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