

Application Summary

Application: FY26 DMO Plan - Great Falls Montana Tourism

Applicant: Great Falls Montana Tourism

Funding opportunity: FY26 DMO Plan

Application Responses

Organization Name: Great Falls Montana Tourism

First Name: Rebecca

Last Name: Engum

Street Address 1: 15 Overlook Drive

Street Address 2:

City: Great Falls

State: Montana

Zip: 59405

Funding Opportunity: FY26 DMO Plan

Amount Requested: 242,608

TAC Approved Budget: 242608

General Description Information

1. Describe your destination (who you are, who you wish to attract and why would they come) addressing your strengths, opportunities, and potential challenges.:

1a. Destination:

Great Falls, Montana is an unassuming community rooted in history and grounded in hard work. Nestled between the Missouri and Sun Rivers and surrounded by four mountain ranges, it offers diverse landscapes and outdoor activities. Known as Montana's Museum Capital, it is a hub for arts, culture, and industry. The city is both blue-collar and sophisticated, effortlessly blending the beauty of the outdoors with a rich agricultural tradition with world-class manufacturing and art.

Great Falls is a place for **tenacious, bold people** who appreciate **quality over quantity**, thrive in an environment where they can **make an impact**. Residents want to be part of a community that **values hard work, creativity, and a deep connection to the land**.

1b. Strengths:

Art - In the broadest sense of the term, Great Falls has art—from statues and murals on the River's Edge Trail and downtown, to state parks and museums that capture our history and culture, to restaurants who source local food, to residents who create masterpieces on canvasses or using batik, and our entrepreneurs who create industry changing products. Great Falls is creative, innovative, and full of art.

Seasonal Outdoor Recreation - Great Falls offers travelers a mixture of landscapes in which to recreate. Our community is in the river valley, where the Sun River meets the Missouri River. It is surrounded by the Little Belt, Highwood, Big Belt, and Rocky Mountains. Comparative to mountain communities, Great Falls' seasons are a bit longer and more defined, with spring activities beginning ahead of other areas in Montana, and the same for winter.

Historic - Great Falls sits on the homelands of the Northern Plains Tribal Nations, is currently home to the Little Shell Tribe, and Great Falls Montana Tourism offers its respect for the history, culture and wisdom that preceded our community's creation. Part of the tribal history is told at North America's largest buffalo jump and historic landmark, First Peoples Buffalo Jump. Another part of that history is told in conjunction with Lewis and Clark Expedition at North America's most extensive collection of the Corps of Discovery at the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center. Another piece of the story is told alongside Charlie Russell and the C.M. Russell Museum Complex.

Affordable - Great Falls' average daily rate in 2024 was \$122.79, a modest 2.5% increase over last year, and still ranging 20% (or more) below its Montana peers.

Uncrowded - The wait lines at trail heads, ski lifts, and restaurants remain non-existent or short and museums, events, trails, and lodging facilities have capacity for more.

Available - Great Falls, Montana has capacity in lodging facilities year-round. Very few of our days are at 80% occupancy or above.

1c. Opportunities:

Air Service - United, Delta, Alaska, and Allegiant are great partners, however, there are opportunities to add carriers and direct flights.

In-Market Experience -We are missing the ability to provide easier access to outdoor recreation and to further the culturally historic stories of Great Falls. Great Falls can benefit from easy access equipment rentals, tour guides, facilitated experiences, and review worthy interactions.

Contract Labor - Great Falls will see more workers coming into the market to help with the Sentinel missile upgrade at Malmstrom Air Force Base, growth of medical services in Great Falls, and new housing developments. In 2023, 42% of overnight stays were connected to business or skilled workers. These workers could be return leisure travelers.

1d. Potential Challenges:

National Economy - Changes under National leadership connected to trade policies and funding for Federal agencies could impact visitation and disposable income available for travel. Canadian travel accounts for 15% of Great Falls' overall visitation, top activities by visitors include public lands managed by the Forest Service, National Park Service, and access to the public lands can be hindered by fires and containment

efforts could be impacted by cuts to red card personnel.

Funding Redirection - Montana Lodging Facility Use and Sales Tax Funding continues to be a focus to support other priorities within the State and be diverted away from supporting urban communities, like Great Falls.

Heritage Events - Great Falls has been fortunate to host long-standing signature events, some established over 40 years. As mature events, there is a potential for the end of their lifecycle or for interest to decline, reducing or eliminating overnight visitor attendance.

Impression - Immediate thoughts of Montana include mountains, roaming wildlife, and backpacking adventures, and Great Falls is a modern community on the Missouri River with an industrial history. Additionally, high ADR's in other parts of Montana have pushed travelers to assume all of Montana has high lodging prices and limited availability. This leads many travelers to opt to camp instead of staying in local properties.

Detractors - Great Falls residents hold a low-self image of and are negative about the community being a great place to visit.

Workforce - Great Falls has more jobs available than people to secure, housing for the jobs to sleep at, and day care to keep people working. The lack of people causes businesses to adjust hours of operation and the way customers are served, which impacts availability for traveler engagement.

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2. Briefly describe how your destination aligns with the Montana brand or describe the Brand strategy for your DMO.:

The Great Falls, Montana Brand is currently in draft, awaiting partner approval and is a collective community brand with the following mission: Collectively be consistent in portraying Great Falls to further the efforts of all in Great Falls, Montana.

The pillars of the Great Falls, Montana brand align with the current adopted Montana brand in pillars one, three, and four.

PILLARS

1. MONTANA - Authentic Montana Spirit, Grounded, and Unhyped

Great Falls is where hardworking, straightforward individuals build community. Its blue-collar roots create a place where people are genuine, honest, and take pride in their land and work. It's where the pioneering spirit of Montana thrives in every aspect of life. The city is evolving with future-focused industries, such as research in food production and healthcare, creating space for both established professionals and up-and-coming talent. Great Falls believes in making things right, not fast. Whether it's the quality of life, the art, the food, or the work done, the community prioritizes enduring excellence over superficial growth.

2. ART - Cultural and Artistic Excellence

With a unique blend of history, art, and culture, Great Falls embraces its creative side while staying true to its roots. The city offers world-class museums, murals, symphony performances, and western art events like Western Art Week. Its local artists and musicians contribute to a vibrant, authentic cultural scene that resonates with the community's gritty spirit. Our art expands into how business owners source ingredients and inventory and express that in the food that is served at restaurants, the drinks served at cocktail lounges, and how inventory is featured in our boutiques.

3. RIVER & FALLS - Outdoor Adventure and Natural Beauty

The city is surrounded by unparalleled natural beauty and provides access to year-round outdoor recreation. From river activities to mountain hiking, fishing, and skiing, Great Falls is an outdoor enthusiast's playground. The River's Edge Trail and public art installations along its shores make the outdoors feel like an extension of the city's cultural landscape. With abundant rivers, trails, and outdoor opportunities, Great Falls hangs its hat on its deep connection to nature. The beauty of the landscape is both a backdrop for daily life and an integral part of the city's identity.

4. PEOPLE - Welcoming and Connected Community

The people of Great Falls are its greatest asset. It is a place for individuals to grow, contribute, and find their purpose. The community embraces newcomers, offering a sense of belonging and a slower pace where connections are made, ideas are nurtured, and local leadership thrives. It's a place where opportunity meets a slower pace of life. It is an economic hub for agriculture, healthcare, manufacturing, and education, where innovation thrives alongside tradition.

VALUES

These Brand Values help capture the essence of Great Falls and the community's guiding principles.

1. Honest

Great Falls values its genuine, straightforward character. It's a place where people are true to themselves and their roots, embracing both their hard-working history and their artistic spirit with honesty and pride.

2. Resilient

Built by people who work hard and persevere, Great Falls embodies the strength to overcome challenges. The community is resilient, with a tenacious spirit that drives its growth, from industry to art, and makes it an enduring place.

3. Bold

The future is built on the strong foundation of Great Falls' industries, from manufacturing to agriculture, healthcare, and beyond. Innovation thrives here, pushing the community forward while staying grounded in its traditions.

4. Collaborative

In Great Falls, working together is key. The greatest successes don't come from going alone. It's a close-knit community that embraces newcomers, cherishes its small-town vibe, and fosters meaningful connections. Whether in business, art, or community initiatives, people come together here to build

something greater than themselves.

5. Confident

Grounded by our roots, there's a profound pride in being from Great Falls. It's a modern community that honors its history, celebrates its successes, and is committed to building a stronger future together, fostering a supportive environment for all, while respecting its past.

VOICE AND TONE

In essence, Great Falls' Brand Voice and Tone should communicate a community that is confident, friendly, authentic, and proud—one that's deeply rooted in its history but looking forward with ambition and warmth.

Brand Voice

The voice used when talking about Great Falls, Montana, should reflect these attributes:

- **Authentic & Genuine:** Great Falls embraces a straightforward, no-nonsense attitude. It speaks honestly about the city's strengths, challenges, and opportunities without exaggeration or pretense.
- **Bold & Confident:** Great Falls is proud of its identity—the history, culture, and the hardworking people who define it. We embrace a sense of pride, strength, and determination, with a belief that Great Falls is a hidden gem ready to be discovered.
- **Warm & Welcoming:** Great Falls is a place where community matters. Communications about the city should be approachable, down-to-earth, and eager to invite people into the story, whether they are visitors, new residents, or businesses.
- **Inspirational & Future-Focused:** The city has a vision for growth and innovation. It speaks to the future with optimism, encouraging people to see the possibilities in Great Falls and to be part of shaping what comes next.

Brand Tone

- **Confident and Direct** - The tone is clear and direct, without fluff. Whether describing the city's opportunities or its cultural offerings, the message is communicated in a way that builds trust and conviction.
- **Friendly but Professional** - The tone should balance the city's approachable, friendly nature with the professionalism that reflects its role as an economic and cultural hub. It's welcoming but also communicates the serious opportunities available in the city.
- **Grounded but Aspirational** - While the brand voice is authentic and grounded in the city's roots, the tone can also be aspirational. It speaks to the potential of the city—both its rich past and its bright future—with a sense of pride in the work being done to elevate the community.
- **Lively & Creative (when appropriate)** - In creative endeavors (e.g., marketing campaigns, social media, or event promotions), the tone can be more playful, reflecting the artistic, vibrant, and fun aspects of the city, without losing the brand's authenticity.

Destination Marketing: ☒

Destination Management: ☐

Destination Stewardship: ☐

Destination Development: ☐

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

Geographic Target Markets

Great Falls Montana Tourism's leisure marketing will be focused on the following drive markets:

- Montana, primarily Billings, Kalispell, Missoula, & the Hi-line
- Alberta, primarily Lethbridge, Calgary

And the following fly markets:

- Chicago
- Los Angeles
- Dallas

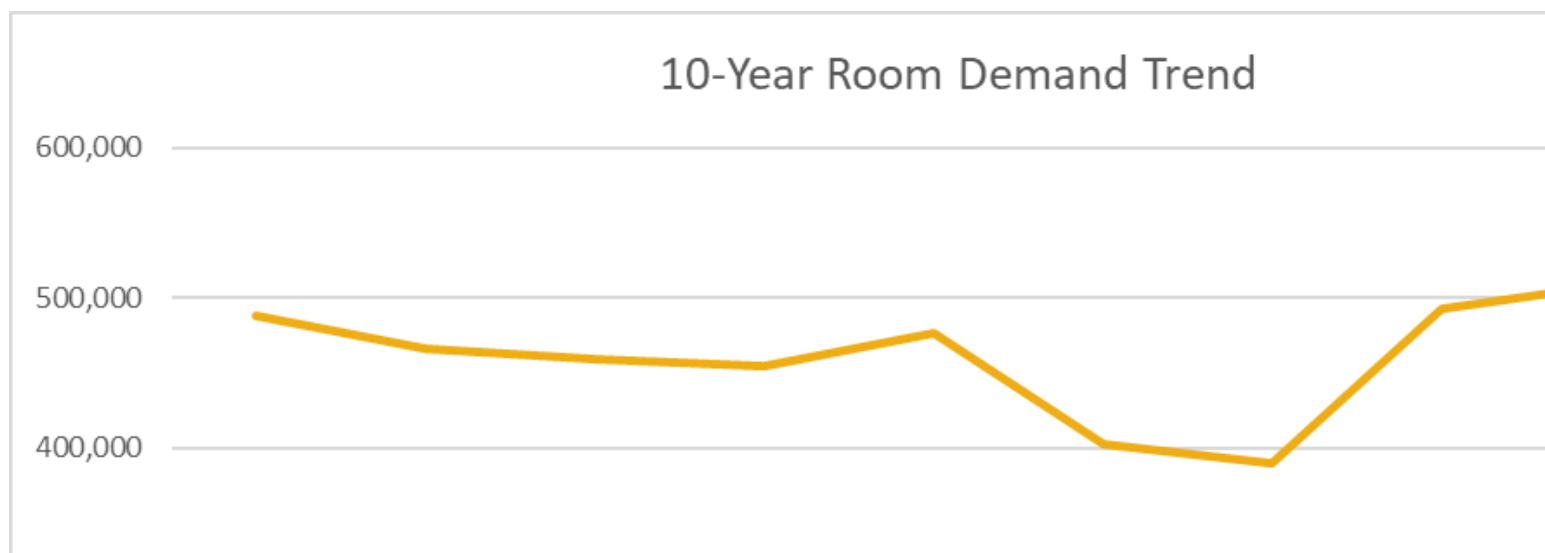
Psychographic Targets

Within the geographic targets, we will target groups that are active by day as they are most likely to be active in the evening. The targets would be:

- DINKs
- Active Outdoor Enthusiasts
- Solo Traveler

3b. What research supports your DMO strategy? :

According to Smith Travel Research, the Great Falls, Montana market room demand has fluctuated year to year over the past 10-years, including the dip and rebound during COVID-19; however, over the course of 10 years, has grown 4%.



Based on previous budgets, Great Falls Montana Tourism has increased the amount of lodging tax dollars spent on paid media 142% and now leverages the paid media with assessment funds to over double the total paid media spend.

The marketing efforts in FY19 generated a 0.3% click-through rate and has increased each year over year, since then, with Great Falls Montana Tourism's total campaign click through rate, year to date, at 2.04%. See our paid media performance dashboard here:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1J4FU0JHxXHyQTh9RwGZ43rrDBvSCjk5D/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=1119>

The Institute of Tourism and Recreation Research non-resident intercept survey data indicates overnight visitation in Great Falls has grown 90% in 10 years, with steady year over year growth since 2022. See Great Falls Montana Tourism's annual report here: https://visitgreatfallsmontana.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/GFMT-25801_2024AnnualReportOnePager_FIN.pdf

3c. What are your emerging markets?:

Great Falls' emerging market is Texas. We've seen Texas grow as an origination market by 6% year over year. Additionally, we are seeing an increase in travelers coming to Great Falls through BZN, which supports the Texas growth by the direct American Airlines flight from DFW.

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

GOAL: GENERATE OVERNIGHT STAYS AT GREAT FALLS LODGING PROPERTIES WITH MARKETING

Tactic 1

Great Falls Montana Tourism will work with Banik to implement a paid media strategy that will focus on placements that generate the best return on investment. Placements will take into account:

- Joint Venture Opportunities with Destination Montana and Central Montana Tourism
- Off-Peak promotion campaigns
- Placements that leverage video
- Placements that leverage storytelling
- Placements that provide tracking of in-market visitation
- Leverage National Park travel

Tactic 2

Update and reprint Montana's Basecamp, the official visitor guide of Great Falls, Montana. Great Falls Montana Tourism moved to an evergreen visitor guide in 2022 and it has been a valuable resource that is

updated and enhanced before each new print run.

4b. How will the addition of LFST funds enhance your overall goals?:

The LFST funds will enable Great Falls Montana Tourism to increase its paid media efforts by 9%, overall, where without it, our organization would have seen a decrease in the amount of funds it could have devoted to paid media tactics.

5. Define and describe your overall objectives. Objectives are formed from your goals. They are logical, attainable steps to achieve the goals and are able to be measured.:

Objectives/Metrics/Evaluation:

OBJECTIVES	MEASURABLE METRICS FOR SUCCESS	REPORT THE METRIC ACHIEVED	EVALUATION OF SUCCESSFUL METRICS
Grow market room demand	3% growth, year over year		
Grow market room demand in the shoulder season months of January, February, April, May, November, and December	2% growth, year over year		

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Budget Form: DMO Budget Form LST LFUT 2.xlsx

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DMO Budget:

DMO

Allowable Method	Budget	% Budgeted	Amend +/-	Updated Budget	% Budgeted
Lodging Facility USE Tax (LFUT) Budget					
Administration	\$48,522.00	18.87%		\$48,522.00	18.87%
Paid Media	\$124,000.00	48.21%		\$124,000.00	48.21%
Agency Services	\$47,485.00	18.46%		\$47,485.00	18.46%
Opportunity Marketing	\$500.00	0.19%		\$500.00	0.19%
Visitor Services	\$22,101.00	8.59%		\$22,101.00	8.59%
		0.00%		\$0.00	0.00%
		0.00%		\$0.00	0.00%
		0.00%		\$0.00	0.00%

		0.00%		\$0.00	
		0.00%		\$0.00	
		0.00%		\$0.00	
		0.00%		\$0.00	
		0.00%		\$0.00	
		0.00%		\$0.00	
		0.00%		\$0.00	
TOTAL LFUT Budget	\$242,608.00	94.33%	\$0.00	\$242,608.00	9

Lodging Facility SALES Tax (LFST) Budget					
Administration	\$2,919.00	1.13%		\$2,919.00	
Paid Media	\$11,674.00	4.54%		\$11,674.00	
		0.00%		\$0.00	
		0.00%		\$0.00	
		0.00%		\$0.00	
		0.00%		\$0.00	
		0.00%		\$0.00	
		0.00%		\$0.00	
		0.00%		\$0.00	
		0.00%		\$0.00	
TOTAL LFST Budget	\$14,593.00	5.67%	\$0.00	\$14,593.00	

TOTAL LFUT & LFST BUDGET	\$257,201.00	100.00%	\$0.00	\$257,201.00	10
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The Narrative Evaluation report is used to a) provide a written evaluation of the Objectives and Metrics section and b) provide a written summary of how the LFST Funds were spent and the metric(s) achieved.: