

Application Summary

Application: FY26 DMO Plan - Miles City DMO

Applicant:

Funding opportunity: FY26 DMO Plan

Application Responses

Organization Name: Miles City Chamber

First Name: John

Last Name: Laney

Street Address 1: 511 Pleasant Street

Street Address 2:

City: Miles City

State: MT

Zip: 59301

Funding Opportunity: FY26 DMO Plan

Amount Requested: 48,182

TAC Approved Budget: 48,182

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:

As a part of the I-94 Corridor, Miles City's beauty is presented in a unique way. Unlike the mountains and forestry of the western side of the state, we feature rolling hills, badlands, we honor the history of the area while offering the amenities that most modern-day travelers seek. Miles City offers those followers of Lewis and Clark's adventures, the General Custer path to the Little Bighorn, as well as the beginning of the Montana Stockgrowers Association sparking huge cattle ranches back in the 1800's. We embrace our history, while always keeping an eye on the future. We view history as our future. It is a piece of Americana that we not only live but are willing to offer to visitors daily. The Range Riders Museum make life in the old west easy to visualize with thirteen buildings depicting the life and times of the early settlers. The Waterworks Art Museum documents early times with old west and native art exhibited along with many modern offerings.

We are more than just the "Old West". Miles City some of the best hunting facilities, with trophy whitetail, mule deer, and antelope harvested annually. Elk herds that roamed this area years ago are coming back to the area increasing the big game hunting inventory. For the bird hunting visitor, we have numerous species of upland birds as well as migratory waterfowl for both the gun hunter and the photo enthusiast. If shooting things, either with a gun, bow, or camera isn't your idea of outdoor fun just put on comfortable shoes and hike, the trails are endless. We give away fresh air to anyone requesting it.

1b. Strengths:

Miles City is the trade hub for Eastern Montana as stated before, so we enjoy shoppers from all over our end of the state as well as the three contiguous states trying to avoid sales tax. Our location lends well to hosting all classes of sports tournaments and region meetings and conventions. Our two museums bring offerings for education, sight-seeing, as well as the traditional history buff. And as with every town in Montana we feel that our people are one of the best features of our community and find them to be one of the biggest strengths we possess. Our people know we need tourism, and we strive to open our town up to everyone when the chance occurs.

The list above is the tangible aspects that we consider strengths. It's the things we take for granted that we forget to market because we see it every day. The Cowboy way of life is on display daily. Boots aren't a fashion statement; they are worn for a reason. A cowboy hat doesn't make the outfit; it keeps the weather off your head while you are outdoors in the elements. The outdoor experience is on display daily to a visitor, but we see it 365 days a year. Rivers and streams for fishing, trees full of birds to see, hills and draws full of big game are everyday things. Old homesteads to the historic homes are commonplace, as is the small-town life. I think we will realize all of this when we begin mapping and actually see it as we hope someone else will see it.

1c. Opportunities:

We are seeing an increase in visitors that are coming to town for a lower cost of living as well as numerous job opportunities. We now have, with the development of two major housing projects a much larger inventory of housing of all types and price ranges. Lifestyle and jobs are a new opportunity for Miles City.

Medical tourism is a growing opportunity also. We have a nationally registered dialysis clinic offering travelers necessary treatment as they travel. A new cancer treatment center is bringing in radiation and infusion patients from all over the region that cause overnight and weekly stays.

Weather has proven to be a huge opportunity for Miles City. We have had dry springs for the last two years making for grass on our sports fields before anyone else. The NJCAA Mon-Dak conference has been forced to play their entire spring schedule in Miles City meaning we have had seven teams of baseball and softball playing amongst themselves for eight weeks each of the last two springs.

It goes without saying that the Bucking Horse Sale is always a big opportunity, but this year is the 75th anniversary so we are expecting big things next spring.

1d. Potential Challenges:

Miles City still doesn't have commercial air service, and we do not see that happening in the near future. We are actively seeking a fixed wing operation, but to date we have been unsuccessful. Through no fault of the community, we are forced to settle for drive by business. We have all the economic and tourism

entities working on this problem, but it will take the right partner to get us on track with this need. Thankfully, being a mid-way point better the twin cities and the parks we continue to have constant traffic from the east and south. Weather fits into the challenge category also as any town in Montana. Bad roads mean no travelers and that equates to empty rooms.

Low game counts have proven to be a challenge. Chronic Wasting Disease in our deer population has lowered the deer numbers and also the number of hunters we have grown to expect yearly. This has been a two-year issue, but it appears the population is on the increase.

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

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 shows the pioneer spirit and necessity to create the travel paths to a better life. The vast flatland and rolling hills gave hope to the original tourists coming to the west searching for that new start. All of this is on display every day for the modern pioneer looking to chronicle life in the earlier times. Miles City is a vibrant and charming small town that serves as a gateway to natural wonders. Miles City is located in a place that within a 10 mile drive you can find a spot that as far as the eye can see you will see nothing but nature. When it's time to go back to town you can find the best steak in Montana in a modern setting giving you the best of all worlds within minutes. When you wake up the next morning with that new attitude about life go down to the local cafe and share your experiences with your soon to be "new friends"

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Destination Marketing: ☒

Destination Management: ☒

Destination Stewardship: ☒

Destination Development: ☒

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

Based on research and data collected from Datafy, Visaview, and ITRR we see a more blue-collar visitor along with an older history-based traveler. The demographics have been the same for several years. Any subtle changes we see are a reflection of the oil boom and the current construction of the wind farms north of town. We have seen a large influx of visitors from Texas in the last few years that are a result of the Nextera windfarm. The ups and downs we see from Mississippi and Louisiana are a reflection of oil production. I believe that we embrace these job-related tourists but fully look forward to our return visitors both for numbers and the confirmation that we are doing our jobs as a community right.

3b. What research supports your DMO strategy? :

We rely on Datafy and ITRR for numbers and trends. We look to Visaview for a more dialed down event listing. We also rely heavily on word of mouth and collected numbers from our event planners. We have been watching over the last few years and have reached the conclusion that we are a city divided. The hotel and fast food/fine dining is on the south end of town and what we list as our pillars are to the northwest. As a result of this research, we are planning to launch a virtual map of the city so that we can give a visual direction to the visitor. As you will see we are dedicating a very large part of our budget to accomplish this but with RAP funds combined with TBID funds we feel we can do this without any backslide of our traditional marketing.

Our feeling is we have to fight a "You don't know what you don't know" mentality with a visual education.

3c. What are your emerging markets?:

Our emerging markets will be whomever goes down the road this year. That sound pretty simplistic but in the current state of the world and the economy I don't feel I can predict what we will see, I think people will be seeking a quiet, low stress, lower cost area with lots of open space, fewer lines, and relaxing day trips to see the world by themselves. We will always greet that return visitor that seems to keep our lights on for us. My hope is that we are going to see people that want to surround themselves with the outdoors at a pace that differs from the norm.

Medical tourism will always be, unfortunately, an emerging market. We plan to work with the health care community and the hoteliers to make affordable housing available to these people that find themselves in Miles City due to the need for overnight or longer medical care.

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

The FY26 budget shows a very targeted plan to try to redefine Miles City. We have let the history and culture of our small-town fall victim to a faster pace. We need to slow our visitors down and get back to what we brag about on a daily basis. By mapping our inventory and their locations we hope to increase time spent in town in turn increasing length of stays. The longer we can keep our audience in front of us the more we can expose them to. Our maps will also point out day trip availabilities which will also leverage that extended stay.

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

These funds will give us a leg up on continued marketing dollars as we create the mapping we are proposing. These funds along with TBID dollars still keep all options open when it comes to marketing

while we try to plug a hole in our current situation. It is a small boast, but it is enough to allow for the small risk we need to undertake.

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
We plan to create a virtual map of Miles City by increasing the website development budget dramatically from years past. We will use funds usually budgeted for Paid Media to accomplish this.	Analytics will show what we hope to achieve, as well as documented visitations in key tourism sites. We will work with stakeholders to see the impact of our efforts We hope that this will show a direct impact on length of stay. Our goal is a 5% increase in overnights and a 2% increase in length of stay in FY26		
With the reduction in the budget allocated for Paid Media and those funds moved to website enhancement we want, for this year to hold our own in overnights and extended stays.	I am not one to except status quo, but I believe that our plan implementation and the current uncertainty of the market this would be a comfortable result.		
It will be the 75th anniversary of the Bucking Horse Sale next spring. Plans are already in the works to make it huge. We hope that we can engage the state in our plans for this endeavor.	Our goal in this plan is to fill the town. We want to grow the party to 5 or 6 days with the expectation of 100% occupancy for the entire time.		

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DMO Budget:

Miles City DMO

Allowable Method	Budget	% Budgeted	Amend +/-	Updated Budget	% Budgeted
Lodging Facility USE Tax (LFUT) Budget					
Administration	\$10,252.00	20.00%		\$10,252.00	20.00%
Paid Media	\$8,916.00	17.39%		\$8,916.00	17.39%
Education/Outreach		0.00%		\$0.00	0.00%
Opportunity Marketing	\$14.00	0.03%		\$14.00	0.03%
Website Development (Online, Website, Mobile)	\$29,000.00	56.57%		\$29,000.00	56.57%

		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	\$48,182.00	93.98%	\$0.00	\$48,182.00	9

Lodging Facility SALES Tax (LFST) Budget					
Paid Media	\$1,084.00	2.11%		\$1,084.00	
Education/Outreach	\$2,000.00	3.90%		\$2,000.00	
		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	\$3,084.00	6.02%	\$0.00	\$3,084.00	

TOTAL LFUT & LFST BUDGET	\$51,266.00	100.00%	\$0.00	\$51,266.00	10
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LFST Revenue Projection	3,084.00
LFUT Revenue Projection	48,182.00
Funds not spent during previous fiscal year	0.00
LFST Rollover Funds at Commerce	0.00
LFUT Rollover Funds at Commerce	0.00
Allocated Following Audit	0.00
Budget total	51,266.00

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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.: