

Application Summary

Application: FY26 DMO Plan - Red Lodge Area Chamber of Commerce/CVB

Applicant: Red Lodge Area Chamber of Commerce/CVB

Funding opportunity: FY26 DMO Plan

Application Responses

Organization Name: Red Lodge Area Chamber of Commerce/DMO

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City: Red Lodge

State: MT

Zip: 59068

Funding Opportunity: FY26 DMO Plan

Amount Requested: 46821

TAC Approved Budget: 46821

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:

Nestled in Montana's magnificent Beartooth Mountains and surrounded by Custer Gallatin National Forest, Red Lodge delivers world-class outdoor recreation and access to Yellowstone National Park via the world-renowned Beartooth Highway. In our historic downtown, you'll enjoy locally owned shops, quality restaurants and plenty of first-class accommodations and entertainment. No matter what the season, Red Lodge is your Base Camp to the Beartooths.

The Red Lodge visitor arrives here looking forward to its natural beauty and quaint charm. What they discover is its magic. And for that, they return again and again, over a lifetime. Like so much of Montana, Red Lodge is surrounded by natural splendor -- Montana's highest peaks frame our back yards, its crystal-clear waterways tumble down our valleys, and that unique combination of pine and aspen scents invigorate our air. But as the Red Lodge visitor knows, we have something special going on here; we're just far enough off the beaten path that locals truly appreciate visitors, we want to say "Hello" when we see someone new in town, and we do not just throw out the welcome mat for you, we show you why we love living here.

Today's travelers are looking for that one of a kind of experience, and it's one Red Lodge excels at delivering.

A year-round population of just over 2,300 and an historic Main Street business district with great restaurants, shopping, entertainment, and accommodations means a stay in Red Lodge is an opportunity to make friends with locals.

Red Lodge, Montana, 2016 Gateway Community of the Year, anchors the most scenic route into Yellowstone

National Park: the 68-mile alpine and structural wonder of the Beartooth Highway, an “All-American Road”. Open late May-October, visitors come from around the world to experience its summer snowfields, high-mountain vistas, and legendary curves.

Sitting on the edge of a National Forest, Red Lodge lays claim to almost 1 million acres of uninterrupted and unspoiled wild country as our “backyard.” Much of that is easily accessible with well-marked trails for hikers, horseback riders, and many near town are even open to bicyclists. Whatever the day’s adventures entail, Red Lodge is the perfect Base Camp to the Beartooths.

1b. Strengths:

Gateway to Yellowstone National Park

The Most Scenic Route to Yellowstone Park, over the Beartooth Highway

The Beartooth Highway

Dubbed “the most beautiful roadway in America” by On the Road correspondent Charles Kuralt, the Beartooth Highway climbs to an astounding 10,947 feet above sea level. As it winds its way from Red Lodge to Yellowstone National Park, the Highway traverses an impressive range of ecosystems and geological wonders. At the highway’s summit, travelers find themselves in a sky-high world of glacial cirques, clear alpine lakes, and snow that lingers through the summer months.

Gateway to the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness

Our backyard consists of millions of acres of high-country wilderness. As early as 1897, trails began snaking their way up the West Fork canyon, cleared by hand with saws and pickaxes. Today those same trails can take you to pristine country where visitors can enjoy a variety of outdoor activities.

Great Shops, Restaurants and Music Entertainment

Charming historic downtown hosts a variety of locally owned stores run by helpful, knowledgeable staff. Pop into one of the many restaurants for a quick burger and a locally brewed beer, or experience fine dining featuring wild game and other local fare. In 2018, eight of our local restaurants were selected to participate in Taste Our Place which is a program launched by the State of Montana. The Taste Our Place logo is a declaration of authentic Montana Quality. Relax and listen to some great music from our many local musicians or attend a first run movie at the historic Roman Theater.

Year-round Skiing

During the winter months enjoy bountiful snow, shimmering blue skies and terrain for all abilities that make for great fun on the slopes. Open from mid-November through mid-April.

During the summer months, the Beartooth Highway is your chair lift to acres of open terrain for skiing and snowboarding. For those that are not much interested in hiking there is Beartooth Basin with two permanent poma lifts for skier access to the Twin Lakes headwall.

Arts and Culture

Catch the spirit of today at one of the many art and photography galleries in town or experience various styles of art at the Carbon County Arts Guild & Depot Gallery and the Red Lodge Clay Center. For history enthusiasts, Red Lodge is home to the Carbon County Historical Society and Museum where visitors can learn about the colorful history of Red Lodge and the surrounding areas.

Events and Attractions

Red Lodge is home to many events and year-round attractions. Yellowstone Wildlife Sanctuary - Home of Champions Rodeo - Beartooth Rally - Montana Renaissance Festival - National Finals Ski-Joring - Christmas Stroll - Fun Run - Iron Horse Motorcycle Rodeo - Red Lodge Songwriter Festival - Bearcreek Downs Pig Races - Beartooth Run – Red Lodge Car Show and many more.

Proximity to Billings

Billings is the largest city in Montana with a population of over 110,000 and a major transportation hub for South Central Montana. Travelers can reach Billings by air, bus, or car on two east and west and north and south Interstates highways. Billings Logan International Airport is served by four major airlines United, Delta, Alaska, and American.

Amenities

Red Lodge may seem like a remote destination to some visitors, but they will be pleased to find we have the same amenities and comforts as they have at home, and more than adequate cell phone coverage and broadband internet in most areas.

1c. Opportunities: Motorcycle/Auto Groups

The Beartooth Highway was recently voted the *Number 1 Motorcycling Road in America* by the American Motorcyclist Association. It is a “bucket list” item for many motorcycle enthusiasts.

Small Groups

Red Lodge is the perfect destination for small groups. RV clubs, executive retreats, conventions of 100 people or less, craft clubs, all find the comfortable meeting spaces and hospitality of Red Lodge a great place to spur creativity, make new friendships and renew old relationships.

Rock Creek Resort was purchased in 2023 and the owners and hospitality group representing the owners have agreed on updates to that property as well as Old Piney Dell. We look forward to the re-opening of this beautifully refreshed hotel during late summer 2025.

Weddings/Reunions

Picturesque venues, quality lodging options and numerous recreational opportunities in the surrounding area make Red Lodge the perfect setting to gather family and friends for your wedding or reunion.

Tournaments/Community Events

The newly revamped Roosevelt Center, our modern high school auditorium, and other historic venues provide the opportunity to house tournaments as well as larger community events.

Outdoor Competitions

Challenging, yet stunningly beautiful terrain attracts competitors from around the country to a multitude of outdoor events. Included among these events are the Beartooth Run, Nitty Gritty Road Race, Collegiate Ski Races, Red Lodge Randonnée Race, National Finals Ski Joring Championships, and the summer Gravel Tour Bike tour are helping make Red Lodge a destination for outdoor competitions consideration.

Media Partnership Opportunities

Billings has a wide reach with television, radio and print media that we can better utilize with positive and timely press releases and promotional partnering. More can be done with KTVQ, NonStop Local, YPR and the

print media options in Billings, Yellowstone Valley Women, and Simply Local, among others. We are fortunate that our local radio reaches almost entirely to Bozeman.

Annual Events

Red Lodge has a growing number of competitive, recreational and cultural events. Many of these events take place during the summer months but winter events such as the Alpine Ski Races, National Ski Joring Championships, and Winter Fest also attract visitors from in state and out of state locations. In the Summertime we have Red Lodge Music Festival, Montana Renaissance Festival, Red Lodge Songwriter Festival, Fourth of July Rodeos and Parades, Beartooth Basin Summer Ski Area, Beartooth Bike Rally, Red Lodge Car Show, and Labor Day Fun Run just to name a few.

Location and Way Finding Signage

Red Lodge is miles from a major highway. Montana Highway signs point Yellowstone Park travelers past Red Lodge exits or towards the Chief Joseph Highway in Wyoming. Location and Way Finding Signage has finally come to fruition and the first round of signage has been installed and we continue to work on the installation of Phase II Way Finding "Welcome" signs that will help "catch" pass through traffic. The locations of these "Welcome" signs have been identified following a setback due to flooding in 2022 that devoured the locations for 2 of these signs. We have worked in cooperation with the City of Red Lodge, our TBID, and MDOT to ensure the proper placement of the 3 new "Welcome" signs at the entrances to Red Lodge (212 South of Red Lodge, 212 North of Red Lodge, and Hwy 78 West of Red Lodge). The contract is signed with the contractor and construction of those welcome signs will begin in the spring of 2025!

Tourism Pilot Community Grant

Red Lodge was one of 7 rural communities in Montana to receive the 2nd Cohort of Tourism Pilot Community Grant.

This is a big win for Red Lodge as we look forward to amplifying Red Lodge's presence across key regional and national markets by being able to offer more experiences during both peak and shoulder seasons by investing in sustainable and less weather dependent activities.

1d. Potential Challenges:

Making Red Lodge a Destination

Red Lodge is used as a 'Pass Through' for the Beartooth Highway and Yellowstone Park in the summer. If we can influence a small percentage of summer travelers to stay one additional night in Red Lodge and enjoy all the offerings of our town and surrounding area, it will make a significant impact on our local economy. In the winter months we need to reinforce Red Lodge as a winter destination for skiers and non-skiers alike. First class restaurants, comfortable accommodations, great shopping, restful relaxation, ice-skating, Nordic skiing, wildlife viewing, and hiking are a few of the wintertime activities available in Red Lodge. Red Loge Mountain is a fabulous, family-oriented alpine ski area.

The Phase I Wayfinding signage directing visitors to "Attractions" and "RV Parking/Additional Parking" has helped catch some of the "pass through" traffic/visitors, but last-minute lodging vacancies are difficult to come by during our busy warm season.

As Red Lodge has gained popularity because of the space and activities visitors are seeking, there are concerns about the sustainability of tourism around the area. Therefore, the Red Lodge Area Chamber has stepped in/up to offer materials to businesses that will help educate and encourage visitors to the area to visit and recreate responsibly.

Marketing Red Lodge, Montana, to potential visitors presents several challenges, influenced by seasonal patterns, competition, and resource limitations. Research and industry data highlight the obstacles smaller, rural destinations face when attracting and retaining visitor interest.

Seasonal Fluctuations & Limited Year-Round Appeal

Red Lodge experiences strong summer visitation due to outdoor activities, events, and proximity to Yellowstone National Park. However, the winter and shoulder seasons see a significant drop in tourism.

- According to the Montana Office of Tourism, more than 70% of visitors travel to the state between May and September, leaving Red Lodge and other destinations with fewer visitors during the off-peak months.
- Challenge: Promoting Red Lodge as a year-round destination requires creative marketing that highlights winter activities (skiing, snowshoeing) and shoulder-season experiences.

Competition with Larger, More Recognized Destinations

While Red Lodge offers a unique and authentic Montana experience, it competes with well-known regional destinations like Bozeman, Big Sky, and Yellowstone National Park.

- According to the National Park Service, Yellowstone welcomed over 4.5 million visitors in 2023, making it a major draw for tourists, which can overshadow nearby towns.
- Challenge: Standing out requires differentiated messaging that emphasizes Red Lodge's small-town charm, outdoor recreation, and local culture as an alternative to larger, busier destinations.

Limited Marketing Resources & Budgets

Smaller communities like Red Lodge often face budget constraints when it comes to marketing.

- The U.S. Travel Association reports that rural and small-town destinations have, on average, 33% less funding for tourism marketing compared to larger cities.
- Challenge: With fewer resources, Red Lodge must maximize the impact of its marketing campaigns by leveraging digital marketing, social media, and strategic partnerships.

Weather-Related Accessibility Issues

Red Lodge's mountain location makes it vulnerable to winter storms and road closures, which can deter travelers as well as not receiving enough snowfall for winter sports such as skiing, cross country skiing and snow shoeing.

- The Beartooth Highway, a key scenic route is open seasonally and has the potential to close due to weather related conditions at any time during its typical "season."
- Challenge: Marketing Red Lodge in the winter requires emphasizing accessible activities (Red Lodge Mountain skiing, snowshoeing) and highlighting the town's cozy, welcoming winter ambiance.

5. Balancing Growth with Sustainability

As Red Lodge attracts more visitors, it faces the challenge of maintaining its charm and protecting its natural resources.

- According to Destination Analysts, 66% of travelers prefer to visit destinations that promote sustainable tourism practices, making it essential for Red Lodge to highlight its stewardship and conservation efforts.
- Challenge: Marketing must balance growth with sustainability messaging, encouraging responsible recreation and support for local businesses.

COMPETITOR ANALYSIS:

Jackson Hole, WY

Popular tourism destination because of its proximity to Yellowstone & Grand Teton National Parks. Website, mobile, social media, and internet advertising resources.

Livingston, MT/Gardiner, MT

Way finding signage on I-90. Year-round entrance to Yellowstone Park.

Bozeman, MT / Big Sky, MT

Greater variety in lodging, dining and shopping opportunities, including groups, conventions and conferences. Proximity to Yellowstone Park. Four-season activities. Popular ski area. Cultural, historic, and educational activities, events, and attractions. Significantly greater marketing dollars.

West Yellowstone, MT

West entrance to Yellowstone Park. The name West Yellowstone. More lodging and dining options. Significantly greater marketing dollars.

Cody, WY

Eastern gateway to Yellowstone Park, access to five scenic byways including Chief Joseph Highway is a second route to Beartooth Highway and Northeast entrance. Lodging options, Buffalo Bill Center of the West, regional airport. By partnering with Wyoming Tourism, Cody has successfully marketed itself as “Yellowstone Country” and its airport “Yellowstone Airport.” Significantly more funding for promotion is directed to Cody by local, county and state monies.

Colorado

Travelers’ perceptions make Colorado Montana’s top competitor. In addition to awareness, demand, excitement for and visitation at significantly higher rates than Montana, research illuminated the directly competitive relationship Colorado represents. In discussing where to go in the West and Montana specifically, it was clear that most research participants viewed Colorado as the destination they would be heavily weighing Montana against, and a more persuasive one at that. These travelers felt Colorado had similar offerings on a basic level—spectacular natural beauty, abundance of outdoor recreation, outdoor culture, winter sports. Very importantly, Colorado’s cities, infrastructure and mature tourism product were seen as providing more of a “safety net,” something that was keenly on the minds of those who were less on the outdoor spectrum and/or less familiar with traveling in this region of the U.S.

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

Nestled in the Beartooth Mountains, with Yellowstone Park just up the road, and the Beartooth All American Highway at our doorstep, we truly offer more spectacular unspoiled nature than anywhere else in the lower 48.

A little off the beaten path Red Lodge, a historic mining town, is a vibrant and charming community that serves as a gateway to many natural wonders.

From art walks to downhill mountain bike rides, from reading a good book by the fire to skiing fresh powder, Red Lodge is a friendly, welcoming town offering a wide range of activities in every season. Enjoy breathtaking

experiences by day and relaxing hospitality by night. Regardless of your choice of activities, our people work hard to make your visit an experience to remember.

Tourism Regions, Destination Marketing Organizations (DMO), communities and organizations must all work together to make visitors aware of the full array of experiences available to guests.

The Red Lodge Area Chamber of Commerce/VIC/DMO is well marked via our Wayfinding Signage. During our busy summer visitor season, we are open from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday and 9 am to 1 pm on Saturday. The goal is for each visitor to have a positive experience and plan their return visit to Red Lodge. Visitors are always happy to see we offer public restrooms, current conditions of Beartooth Highway, and local hiking (trail conditions), as well as offer them our Destination Red Lodge Travel planner to take with them to help guide them once they leave the Visitors Center.

We work closely with our tourism partners, TBID, the City of Red Lodge, and the Red Lodge Business Alliance.

Our content will focus on the three core elements travelers are looking for when deciding on an outdoor destination such as Red Lodge:

1. unique natural encounters without giving up modern comforts
2. comfortable isolation that attracts free-spirited adventurers,
3. a place for entirely new experiences and a place for new ways of experiencing the familiar.

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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):

The High Value/Low Impact Potential Visitor

This group is clearly a high-value audience; it is different from other travelers in important ways. Behaviorally and demographically, the survey shows that high potential Montana visitors have a remarkable and distinctive profile. This group of heavy travelers is not only attracted to Montana, they see the destination as more attractive and competitive when compared to the regional competition. In brief, high potential Montana visitors are:

- City dwellers (i.e., not rural and not suburban)
- Married with children
- Well-educated, Affluent
- Younger
- Frequent travelers
- Male-oriented (54.3% male and 45.7% female)
- Strongly attracted to Montana's tourism offering

- Familiar with Montana's tourism offering
- Likely repeat visitors
- Outdoor-oriented travelers

These high value potential Montana visitors are also heavy consumers of recreational activities. This group is interested in a diverse array of Montana activities, centered around day hiking and visits to the National Parks.

Family travelers are a natural fit with Montana's travel product, including that available in the Eastern portion of the state. They are a large and lucrative segment. In the Montana Brand Exploration Survey, approximately one-third, 32.0 percent, of travelers reported having children under the age of 18 in their homes. Like high potential visitors, family travelers index high on outdoor psychographics, have high incomes and would expect to spend more and stay longer in the state than other travelers. Family travelers are interested in a variety of Red Lodge experiences, but their ideal trips would appear to center around Yellowstone National Park, day hiking, horseback riding, and driving scenic byways. This niche market also expresses significant interest in child-friendly activities related to history, culture, and geology.

Red Lodge offers affordable vacation opportunities to families visiting Montana for the first time or coming back on a repeat visit. 85% of visitors surveyed responded they will return to Montana within the next two years. These returning visitors are a significant target for our DMO.

Geo-tourism is defined as tourism that sustains or enhances the distinctive geographical character of a place—its environment, heritage, aesthetics, culture, and the well-being of its residents. Geo-travelers are high-value, low impact visitors who appreciate the unique characteristics, eccentricities, and natural qualities of Red Lodge. They place high value on travel experiences that respect and support the local character of place and are less likely to become discouraged in their travel experiences by travel distances/difficulties and vagaries of weather.

Our Traveler at a Glance

- Healthy, Active, Outdoor Enthusiasts
- Arts, Crafts, Entertainment Enthusiasts
- Motorcyclists and Auto Enthusiasts
- RV Enthusiasts
- Empty Nesters/Active Retirees
- Income: AHI of \$50,000+
- Education: Bachelor's Degree
- Age: 35-65

Core Geographic Markets

Red Lodge is located in the South-Central portion of Montana. We are the gateway to the Northeast Entrance to Yellowstone Park via the Beartooth Highway. Because of our geographic location, most visitors come from east of us.

Winter

California, Florida, Wyoming, North Dakota, Minnesota, and SK/MB Canada are key winter markets.

Key Psychographic Markets for Red Lodge.

- Social Class - middle to upper class (in terms of disposable income)
- Lifestyle - active, outdoor recreational oriented, frequent travelers
- Opinions - interested, but primarily influenced by desire to experience things for themselves
- Attitudes & Interests - outdoor activities, history & culture, foodies

- Attitudes & Beliefs - environmentally conscious, has an adventurous spirit, likes nature
- Technology - savvy - using mobile devices in all stages of planning & travel

3b. What research supports your DMO strategy? :

Demographic Research

(ITRR 2022 Interactive Data Non-Resident Travel Survey Report) *

- Average Age - 60
- Age Groups –16% 35-44 years, 19% 45-54 years, 35% 55-64 years, 50% 65-74 years
- Gender - 64% Male, 35% Female
- Group Size - 52% Couple, 5% Self, 31% Immediate Family
- Average Group Size - 2.24
- Household Income – 21% \$100,000 to less than \$150,000, 20% \$200,000 or greater, 20% \$75,000 to less than \$100,000
- 23% First time visitor

**All percentages taken from online ITRR reports with 72 respondents*

Facebook Demographics – Top 4 Categories, 65%, are women

- 15% Women 35 to 44 Years
- 16% Women 45 to 54 Years
- 10% Women 25 to 34 Years
- 13% Women 55 to 64 Years
- 9% Women 65+ years

Geographic Research – Non Resident

ITRR – Non Resident

- ITRR 2019 – Texas, Minnesota, Missouri, Kentucky, Arizona
- ITRR 2020 – Wyoming, Minnesota, California, Colorado
- ITRR 2021 – Wyoming, Minnesota, Washington, Colorado
- ITRR 2022 – Texas, California, Idaho, Washington, Minnesota, Wisconsin
- ITRR 2023 - Texas, California, Washington, New York, Wyoming

RedLodge.com Travel Planner Requests

3082 Travel Planners were requested during FY24. One of our most popular pieces of literature is our Destination Red Lodge Travel Planner. Red Lodge continues to become an increasingly popular destination for travelers as Red Lodge offers so much of what the pandemic traveler and travelers in general are looking for: great outdoor recreational opportunities, wildlife viewing, close proximity to Yellowstone National Park, a variety of lodging options, shopping, and many delicious eateries to choose from. The Midwest accounted for 40% of all requests. Top states were Minnesota with 7%, Texas with 6%, and Florida with 6%

Visitor Tracking Sheet vs Placer ai

3685 people visited the Red Lodge DMO requesting information or to use our restrooms, according to our Visitor Tracking sheet. Placer ai counted 6200 visitors to our building. Our Visitor Tracking Sheet also showed 152 visitors from Canada, 48 from France, 27 from Switzerland and 26 form England & Germany each. Placer ai indicated visitors were coming to our DMO on Monday, Thursday & Friday between the hours of 10 am and 3 pm. The top 3 requests we receive at our DMO are 1. Do you have a restroom? 2. Is the Beartooth Highway open? 3. Where can I hike/camp?

ITRR

ITTR 2023 non-resident study data showed the average length of stay for non-resident visitors to Montana was 8 nights with 74% of in Yellowstone Country. 49% of the Non-resident travelers stated their primary reason for coming is vacation/recreation/pleasure, which leads to the supposition that they want a broader experience than just visiting Yellowstone Park.

The following 2023 ITTR data outlines what visitors are doing while in our area.

Activities	
57%	Scenic driving
51%	Wildlife watching
51%	Nature photography
49%	Day hiking
38%	Viewing art exhibits
38%	Visiting museums
28%	Recreational shopping
24%	Visit local brewery
21%	Visit farmers market
20%	Attend wedding
20%	Car / RV camping
15%	Visiting other historical sites
14%	Bicycling
13%	Visiting Indian reservations
8%	Fishing / fly fishing
7%	Skiing / snowboarding
6%	Motorcycle touring
2%	Visiting Lewis & Clark sites
2%	Canoeing / kayaking
1%	Cross-country skiing
1%	Snowmobiling
1%	Attending festivals or events
1%	Horseback riding
1%	Road / tour bicycling

1%	Geocaching
1%	Rock climbing
1%	River rafting / floating
1%	Birding
1%	OHV / ATV
1%	Golfing

Beartooth Highway Economic Impact Research

During the winter season, Red Lodge, MT is not considered a gateway community because of road closures limiting access only to Cooke City/Colter Pass/Silver Gate, MT and Cody, WY (via the Chief Joseph Scenic Byway).

According to an ITRR 2019 Economic Contribution of Nonresident Travel Spending in Montana Travel Regions and Counties Nonresident visitor expenditures contributed to over \$43.7 million in economic activity to Carbon County in 2019, the vast majority being spent in Red Lodge. The economic impact for this region from nonresident travelers is substantial to local communities. Furthermore, results identified that nonresidents perceive the Beartooth Highway as a destination in and of itself, not simply a highway.

2020 average spending in Carbon County by nonresident visitors to Montana totaled \$53.5 million. This \$53.3 million in local spending directly supports \$43.7 million of economic activity in the region, and supports an additional \$19.6 million of economic activity, indirectly.

Source: http://scholarworks.umt.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1352&context=itr_r_pubs

Placer ai

According to Placer ai, from May 24th to October 14th, 2024, 169,000 people visited the Beartooth Highway (compared to 150,000 for the open/close dates in 2023). This was tracked via a traffic pin on the Beartooth Highway where there is still cell phone service. The majority of visitors are traveling the highway on Saturday and Sunday between 10 am and 5 pm. They are visiting from over 250 miles away.

Our downtown hosted 583,000 people in 2024 which was a 2.2% increase over 2023 and 12% increase over 2022 (flood year). They are staying downtown on average 115 minutes, and they are mostly visiting Friday, Saturday and Sunday between 10 am and 8 pm. They are originating from over 100 miles away.

3c. What are your emerging markets?:

Art/Culture

Red Lodge is becoming a destination for visitors seeking authentic creative experiences. Investments in public art, live performances, and heritage preservation not only enrich the town's character but also attract new visitors, stimulate local businesses, and support year-round tourism. As this sector continues to grow, it presents a unique opportunity to diversify the local economy while celebrating Red Lodge's rich artistic and cultural heritage.

Experiential Tourism

Creating an experience for the potential visitor rather than approaching them through traditional marketing methods. Creating a fun and unique experience is one of the best ways to connect with customers to ensure they want to learn more about an area and what it offers. For example, agritourism or dark skies viewing.

Two Wheel travelers

Motorcyclists and bicyclists are attracted to the Beartooth Highway for its beauty and challenge. This segment of the tourism market is growing and important as they view the Highway as a destination and spend multiple nights in our area.

Foodies

Red Lodge has an array of excellent restaurants, an award-winning craft beer brewery, gourmet food and wine shops, for those travelers that seek unique dining experiences. Adventure is food for the soul, and food is fuel for the adventure. After a long day in the great outdoors, there is nothing quite like a warm meal. But not just any warm meal...a world class warm meal with good company. Whether visiting the local burger joint or enjoying an elegant, farm-to-table meal, dining in Red Lodge is sure to please everyone. With a rich agricultural heritage, Red Lodge has a wonderful selection of locally grown products that translates to a thriving dining scene.

Entertainment/Music Seekers

On any given night there are a number of bars and restaurants that feature live music, both local artists and touring bands. During the course of the year, events such as The Red Lodge Music Festival and the Red Lodge Songwriter Festival bring world class musicians to Red Lodge to share their art. Additionally, the Roosevelt Center, through a generous donation has been able to add an all ages open mic night monthly.

Billings

Billings is 60 miles away and has a population base of approximately 160,000. The Billings Convention and Meeting market is growing and we will continue to develop our relationship with the Billings DMO, Visit Billings. The Billings market is the perfect target to strengthen our winter destination business, especially on non-holiday weekends.

Corporate Retreats

Red Lodge is the perfect place for executive retreats and small group gatherings for associations, social clubs and private companies located in Billings and Bozeman.

Areas to the East

Eastern Montana, North Dakota, and Minnesota continue to be strong markets and will be the focus for our Winter destination marketing.

Colorado & other Mountain States

We have listed Colorado previously as a competitor for non-resident visitors. However, state tourism data and our own

information indicate a rising interest in visiting Montana and specifically Red Lodge from Coloradans. As their own tourism industry continues to grow and their population continues its rapid growth, the competition for outdoor space grows in equal proportion. Many Colorado residents especially those from major metropolitan areas are looking for less crowded, less expensive, simpler destinations, much the way Colorado used to be. Red Lodge is the perfect fit, an 8-9 hour drive or a one-hour direct flight from Denver, their largest metropolitan area.

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

To increase year-round visitation and sustainable tourism growth by strategically promoting Red Lodge’s outdoor recreation, arts and culture, historic charm, and community events—driving economic benefits for local businesses while preserving the town’s unique character and natural beauty.

This will be achieved through targeted digital marketing, regional partnerships, visitor experience enhancements, and responsible tourism initiatives to attract new and returning visitors, extend stays, and encourage off-peak travel.

Strengthen the visitor experience in Red Lodge by finishing construction of Phase II wayfinding as well as provide accurate information through print pieces such as Destination Red Lodge and the Beartooth Highway map, depending on what it is each visitor is requesting. By creating a more immersive and seamless experience, visitors will be more likely to extend their stays, return in future seasons, and share their experiences—helping to sustain steady long-term tourism growth.

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

The addition of LFST funds will significantly enhance our ability to effectively manage and distribute the Beartooth Highway brochure, ensuring it reaches a wider audience and serves as a key resource for potential visitors. These funds will support the strategic production, promotion, and distribution of the planner—both in print and digital formats—helping to attract, inform, and inspire travelers while aligning with our broader marketing and visitor engagement goals. Additionally, it will enhance our administration budget staying within the 20% as outlined in the Rules and Regulations.

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
Red Lodge will use Placer.ai to geo-fence venues to view past traffic for annual events to determine audience demographics for promotion.	Utilize Placer.ai to analyze past-year event attendance (Christmas Stroll, Rodeo, Car Show) trends and implement targeted marketing strategies, resulting in a 2% increase in		

	event attendance in FY26 compared to FY25.		
Increase website visitation to redlodge.com by further developing the website's SEO.	Increase visitation to redlodge.com by 2% in FY26 over FY25 visitation (KPI, unique visitors, page views & bounce rates) using website analytics.		
Through targeted marketing, the Red Lodge DMO will increase contact database through travel guide requests.	Increase annual travel guide requests from 3082 in FY25 to 3200 in FY26 through targeted marketing.		

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Budget Form: Red Lodge DMO FY26 budget.xlsx

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DMO Budget:

Red Lodge DMO

Allowable Method	Budget	% Budgeted	Amend +/-	Updated Budget	% Budgeted
Lodging Facility USE Tax (LFUT) Budget					
Administration	\$9,365.00	18.80%		\$9,365.00	18.8
Agency Services	\$4,990.00	10.02%		\$4,990.00	10.0
Earned Media/Tourism Sales	\$100.00	0.20%		\$100.00	0.2
Education/Outreach	\$3,246.00	6.52%		\$3,246.00	6.5
Joint Ventures	\$2,000.00	4.01%		\$2,000.00	4.0
Opportunity Marketing	\$100.00	0.20%		\$100.00	0.2
Paid Media	\$9,900.00	19.87%		\$9,900.00	19.8
Product Development	\$4,995.00	10.03%		\$4,995.00	10.0
Research	\$4,125.00	8.28%		\$4,125.00	8.2
Visitor Services	\$8,000.00	16.06%		\$8,000.00	16.0
		0.00%		\$0.00	0.0
		0.00%		\$0.00	0.0
		0.00%		\$0.00	0.0
		0.00%		\$0.00	0.0

TOTAL LFUT Budget	\$46,821.00	93.98%	\$0.00	\$46,821.00	93.9
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Lodging Facility SALES Tax (LFST) Budget					
Administration	\$599.00	1.20%		\$599.00	1.2
Visitor Services	\$2,398.00	4.81%		\$2,398.00	4.8
		0.00%		\$0.00	0.0
		0.00%		\$0.00	0.0
		0.00%		\$0.00	0.0
		0.00%		\$0.00	0.0
		0.00%		\$0.00	0.0
		0.00%		\$0.00	0.0
		0.00%		\$0.00	0.0
		0.00%		\$0.00	0.0
		0.00%		\$0.00	0.0
TOTAL LFST Budget	\$2,997.00	6.02%	\$0.00	\$2,997.00	6.0

TOTAL LFUT & LFST BUDGET	\$49,818.00	100.00%	\$0.00	\$49,818.00	100.0
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LFST Revenue Projection	\$2,997
LFUT Revenue Projection	\$46,821
Funds not spent during previous fiscal year	\$0
LFST Rollover Funds at Commerce	\$0
LFUT Rollover Funds at Commerce	\$0
Allocated Following Audit	\$0
Budget total	\$49,818

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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.:

To be completed at the conclusion of FY26