

# Application Summary

**Application:** FY26 DMO Plan - Sidney DMO

**Applicant:**

**Funding opportunity:** FY26 DMO Plan

## Application Responses

**Organization Name:** Sidney Area Chamber of Commerce & Agriculture

**First Name:** Kali

**Last Name:** Godfrey

**Street Address 1:** 909 South Central Avenue

**Street Address 2:**

**City:** Sidney

**State:** MT

**Zip:** 59270

**Funding Opportunity:** FY26 DMO Plan

**Amount Requested:** 19,388

**TAC Approved Budget:** 19,388

## 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:

Sidney, located in the heart of the Yellowstone River Valley, stands as a vital economic and cultural hub in Northeast Montana. Nestled between the iconic badland hills and the expansive Great Plains, Sidney is a dynamic small town with deep agricultural roots and a diversifying economy. Today, it attracts visitors and workers from a range of industries including healthcare, energy, and advanced agriculture—making it a key center of regional activity.

Despite its rural setting, Sidney offers amenities and infrastructure that rival much larger communities. With a tradition of friendly hospitality, the town features over 40 restaurants, coffee shops, and bars, fostering a welcoming and vibrant community atmosphere. The lodging sector is well-equipped to handle seasonal tourism, business travel, and event attendees, offering more than 600 hotel rooms across eight properties.

Small businesses thrive in Sidney's supportive environment. The local economy is enriched by a variety of boutique shops, personal care services, and hands-on experiences such as candle-making, cooking classes, and artisan workshops hosted at the MonDak Heritage Center. These businesses reflect Sidney's entrepreneurial spirit and add to its appeal as a tourism and lifestyle destination.

Sidney is also a hidden gem for outdoor recreation. The surrounding region is renowned for hunting and fishing, attracting

sportsmen in pursuit of whitetail and mule deer, pheasants, and the unique paddlefish. The nearby Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers are central to local life, offering kayaking, agate hunting, birdwatching, and nature photography opportunities. These waterways not only sustain agriculture and wildlife but also serve as lifelines for recreational tourism and environmental stewardship.

Crucially, Sidney's local government, businesses, and nonprofits have collectively invested in building significant event capacity, transforming the town into a premier location for concerts, reunions, demolition derbies, and regional conventions. The Richland County Fairgrounds stands out as a multi-functional event campus, offering several venue spaces equipped with advanced technology, a commercial kitchen, and three arena areas to accommodate a variety of gatherings. Additionally, the Yellowstone Mercantile—a beautifully restored historic building in downtown Sidney—offers a charming event space suitable for up to 350 guests. Supporting this infrastructure is a community-managed, centralized events calendar, which promotes collaboration and visibility for local happenings and a vital Tourism Business Improvement District acting as a funding source for promotion.

## **1b. Strengths:**

### **Retail & Hospitality Industry**

The Sidney area features a well-established hospitality sector, including six nationally recognized hotel chains and nearly 40 dining and bar establishments. The community also supports a vibrant retail environment, with offerings that include outdoor recreation outfitters, boutique shops, hobby stores, and specialty retailers.

### **Event & Cultural Facilities**

Sidney is equipped with a wide range of venues suitable for tourism and community events. The Richland County Fairgrounds has recently expanded with two modern Event Centers, each accommodating over 700 attendees. Additional fairgrounds facilities include two arenas, a spacious midway, and several buildings that each host up to 300 guests. Ongoing renovations at the historic Yellowstone Mercantile Co. aim to repurpose the building as a multipurpose event venue. Public school facilities are also available for rental, supporting large-scale events such as sports tournaments that contribute to local tourism.

The MonDak Heritage Center, Sidney's local museum and cultural hub, doubles as a venue for concerts, weddings, and exhibitions, enhancing both tourism and community engagement.

### **Transportation Access**

The Sidney-Richland County Airport provides critical air connectivity with an average of five daily flights to and from Billings including car rentals, improving accessibility for both business and leisure travelers.

### **Historical & Cultural Assets**

Sidney is located along the historic Lewis and Clark Trail and is in close proximity to significant heritage sites, including Fort Union, Fort Buford, the confluence of the Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers, and a World War II-era prisoner-of-war camp. These assets present opportunities for heritage tourism and educational programming.

## **Natural Resources & Economic Base**

Currently, 95% of Richland County lands are composed of farm and ranch production. Richland County also overlays a key section of the Bakken Formation, one of the largest contiguous deposits of oil and natural gas in the United States. Since the discovery of the Elm Coulee Oil Field in 2000 and the advent of hydraulic fracturing, the region has experienced substantial growth in energy production, contributing to the area's economic resilience.

## **Outdoor Recreation**

Richland County offers abundant outdoor recreation opportunities, including hiking, camping, kayaking, bird watching, hunting, fishing and the only 18 hole golf course in Eastern Montana. Sidney provides access to seven public entry points along the Yellowstone River, a renowned destination for paddlefish and other warm-water fish species. The area also supports big game hunting, with populations of mule deer, antelope, and elk, attracting outdoor enthusiasts year-round.

### **1c. Opportunities:**

Sidney presents a compelling opportunity for tourism development, with several strategic areas ideal for tourism grant funding.

First, the region's rich historical and cultural assets offer potential for heritage tourism expansion. Located along the Lewis and Clark Trail and in close proximity to Fort Union, Fort Buford, and a World War II-era prisoner-of-war camp, Sidney could become a hub for educational and cultural tourism. Grant support could fund the development of interpretive signage, guided historical tours, and curriculum-linked programs in partnership with the MonDak Heritage Center, which already serves as a local museum and event venue.

Event-based tourism is another promising area. Sidney features a robust infrastructure for hosting events, including the two newly expanded event centers at the Richland County Fairgrounds, multiple private businesses and adaptable public school facilities. With additional funding, these venues could anchor a year-round schedule of festivals, regional sports tournaments, cultural celebrations, and trade shows that would draw visitors and generate significant economic activity.

Outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism are also key pillars of Sidney's tourism potential. The community offers access to seven public entry points along the Yellowstone River, which is known for paddlefish and warm-water species, and supports year-round activities such as hunting, fishing, kayaking, and bird watching. Grant funding could support the development of a river-based adventure program, improved access infrastructure and marketing campaigns that position Sidney as a gateway to Montana's natural beauty. Additionally, an outdoor recreation visitor center or interpretive kiosks could enhance visitor orientation and safety.

Marketing and branding represent critical components of any successful tourism strategy. Despite its strong mix of offerings, Sidney lacks a unified tourism identity. A grant-funded "See you in Sidney" campaign could include brand development, digital and print marketing materials, an updated tourism website, and partnerships with regional tourism boards to extend outreach. This campaign could highlight Sidney's unique blend of culture, history, recreation, and

hospitality to targeted audiences, from heritage travelers to outdoor enthusiasts.

Finally, investments in hospitality and visitor services would support the long-term success of these tourism initiatives. With six national hotel chains and nearly 40 dining establishments, Sidney is already a hospitality hub. Grant opportunities exist to provide workforce training in tourism and hospitality, enhance customer service standards, and create visitor amenities such as information kiosks, trail maps, and local discount passes. These enhancements would not only improve the visitor experience but also strengthen the capacity of local businesses to benefit from increased tourism traffic.

Together, these strategies offer a holistic vision for sustainable tourism development in Sidney, grounded in its existing assets and aligned with broader economic, cultural, and community goals.

### **1d. Potential Challenges:**

Our region offers breathtaking Montana skies, rugged badlands, and genuine hospitality, yet we face several challenges that limit sustainable tourism development. Compared to well-established destinations in Western Montana, we lack the infrastructure, visitor services, and funding necessary to attract and retain tourists. Additionally, limited marketing funding leaves us unable to effectively promote our unique offerings. As a result, we are often overlooked in statewide and national tourism discussions, with iconic destinations like Glacier and Yellowstone dominating the spotlight.

Our remote location, which locals cherish for its small-town charm and tranquility, can also be a barrier to tourism, with long travel distances, limited public transportation, and fewer centralized attractions. Seasonal fluctuations in tourism further complicate growth, with peak activity concentrated in the summer months and steep declines in the winter due to weather-related challenges.

We also face workforce shortages and funding barriers that hinder our ability to improve tourism infrastructure, promote the region, and develop competitive attractions. Without investment in these critical areas, including marketing, we risk missing the opportunity to fully realize the potential of our unique offerings.

Despite these obstacles, we remain committed to cultivating a tourism economy that reflects our values and strengths. Our region may not boast towering peaks, but it offers something just as valuable: wide-open spaces that outdoor enthusiasts venture to discover. We also have a deep connection to history and land, and the authenticity of small-town America. We believe that by addressing our challenges with creativity, collaboration, and investment, we can unlock the full potential of tourism in our corner of the state.

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**2. Briefly describe how your destination aligns with the Montana brand or describe the Brand**

**strategy for your DMO.:**

Sidney’s brand strategy for its Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) emphasizes its growth and the vibrant community atmosphere while remaining true to its small-town roots. The focus is on positioning Sidney as a key regional hub that offers both a high quality of life and an exceptional destination for visitors. This strategy includes the following elements:

1.  
Highlighting the Natural Beauty and Outdoor Recreation: Sidney’s location near the Yellowstone and Missouri I
2.  
Community and Cultural Vitality: The region's blend of history, culture, and local entrepreneurship adds an enri
3.  
Heritage and History: Sidney’s proximity to historical landmarks such as the Lewis and Clark Trail and Fort Uni
4.  
Building on Local Industry: Sidney’s agricultural and energy sectors form a robust economic foundation, offerin
5.  
Community Engagement and Support for Local Businesses: Sidney has cultivated a supportive environment for
6.  
Strategic Marketing and Infrastructure Development: The local government and business entities have strategica

Sidney’s marketing efforts underscore the authenticity of the area, where visitors can experience the unspoiled nature and frontier spirit of Montana while enjoying the comforts and amenities of a modern, welcoming community. Through this blend of rugged outdoor adventure, local history, and vibrant community life, Sidney authentically embraces the spirit of Montana, making it a compelling destination for a wide range of travelers.

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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):**

Sidney's target audience is diverse, encompassing a range of demographics, geographics, and psychographics. The town attracts middle to upper-middle-class families, retirees, and young adults, particularly those aged 30-50, who value outdoor recreation, local culture, and historical exploration. Sidney's appeal extends to regional visitors from Montana and neighboring states, as well as national and international tourists seeking adventure, tranquility, and a connection to nature. Outdoor enthusiasts, including those passionate about fishing, hunting, and hiking, are drawn to Sidney's rugged landscapes, while heritage seekers are attracted by its historical landmarks, such as the Lewis and Clark Trail and Fort Union. Business travelers connected to the area's agricultural and energy industries, particularly the Bakken oil formation, also form a key demographic. Sidney's emphasis on community, sustainability, and local businesses resonates with visitors who appreciate authentic, farm-to-table experiences and smaller-scale events. The town's combination of modern amenities, a vibrant local atmosphere, and a spirit of adventure makes it a compelling destination for those looking to experience both outdoor thrills and a slower-paced, community-driven lifestyle.

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

1. 87% of leisure travelers aged 45+ have taken at least one road trip in the past year. 70% of this age group consider road trips their favorite mode of travel, valuing the flexibility to explore local attractions and scenic routes. (AARP Travel Road Trip Report)
- 2) 21% of travelers embarked on multi-generational family trips, indicating a trend toward family-inclusive vacations. (2024 New York Post)
- 3) Heritage Tourists spend 2.5 times more per trip on average. (National Trust for Historical Preservation)
- 4) Every dollar invested in downtown revitalization results in a return of \$20-\$40 in private investment. Many communities report double digit increases in tourism traffic after improving their downtowns. (Main Street America Program)

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

#### **1. Eco-Tourism and Sustainable Travel**

**Sidney's pristine natural environment, including its access to the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers, presents opportunities in the growing eco-tourism sector. As travelers seek sustainable and nature-focused experiences, Sidney can develop eco-friendly tourism initiatives such as wildlife tours, bird watching, kayaking, and fishing expeditions. These activities would appeal to visitors seeking an eco-conscious way to connect with the land. Offering green accommodations, farm-to-table dining, and**

partnerships with local environmental organizations would further position Sidney as an attractive eco-tourism destination.

## **2. Heritage and Cultural Tourism**

Sidney's historical landmarks, like the Lewis and Clark Trail and Fort Union, position it well for heritage tourism. As travelers increasingly seek destinations that offer rich historical narratives, Sidney can tap into this market by promoting its frontier history, Native American heritage, and pioneer past. Expanding educational programs, creating historical tours, and hosting cultural events at local venues like the MonDak Heritage Center could attract history buffs and educational groups. Additionally, Sidney's connection to the agricultural roots of Montana offers opportunities for agri-tourism, such as farm tours, harvest festivals, and food experiences that highlight its farming heritage.

## **3. Adventure and Outdoor Recreation**

Sidney is already positioned as a destination for outdoor recreation, and there's significant growth potential in the adventure tourism market. Sidney's proximity to hunting, fishing, hiking, and kayaking opportunities on the Yellowstone River makes it an ideal year-round destination for outdoor enthusiasts. By expanding recreational offerings like adventure packages, guided outdoor experiences, and wildlife safaris, Sidney could attract visitors from across the country and internationally. Targeting activities like big game hunting in the fall or spring fishing tournaments could further enhance its appeal to adventure-seekers.

## **4. Health and Wellness Tourism**

Sidney's rural, tranquil setting and outdoor activities provide a perfect backdrop for health and wellness tourism. Travelers looking to escape the stress of urban life and engage in activities focused on mental health and physical well-being could be drawn to the area. Offering wellness retreats, yoga weekends, spa treatments, and outdoor fitness programs could cater to health-conscious tourists. Combining Sidney's serene landscape with activities like hiking, meditation, and detox retreats could further appeal to those seeking relaxation and rejuvenation.

## **5. Event and Conference Tourism**

With growing infrastructure and venues such as the Richland County Fairgrounds and Yellowstone Mercantile, Sidney has the potential to develop a robust event tourism

market. By hosting conventions, business retreats, agriculture-related events, festivals, and music concerts, Sidney could draw regional and national visitors. The region's blend of historical significance and outdoor recreation also positions it as a unique venue for hosting small conferences and corporate retreats, particularly for industries related to agriculture, energy, and tourism.

## **6. Agriculture and Agri-Tourism**

Sidney's agricultural roots provide opportunities to develop agri-tourism. Sidney can promote local agriculture through farm tours, local food festivals, and farm-to-table dining experiences that highlight the area's agricultural heritage.

## **7. Energy Tourism**

Sidney's and its connection to the Bakken oil field provide opportunities to develop energy tourism. The energy sector, specifically related to the Bakken Formation, also offers a niche market for energy-themed tourism, including oil field tours or educational programs about the energy industry, attracting those with an interest in energy development and sustainability.

## **8. Business and Corporate Tourism**

With Sidney's economic growth, particularly in agriculture and energy sectors, there is an emerging opportunity for business tourism. Sidney could target corporate retreats, conferences, and industry-specific events for businesses in the energy, agriculture, and technology sectors. Its proximity to major energy hubs like the Bakken oil formation makes it an ideal location for business travelers and executives to attend regional conferences, seminars, or strategy sessions, all while enjoying the town's outdoor activities and small-town charm.

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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 2026 Sidney CVB Plan focuses on revitalizing and promoting the downtown district of Sidney, Montana through a marketing campaign titled "*See You in Sidney*." This initiative will enhance wayfinding throughout the area, highlighting key points such as historical sites, local landmarks, and major gathering spots. A historical walking tour will guide visitors through significant locations with signage and QR codes offering deeper context. A mobile-friendly interactive map can help users navigate Sidney while discovering businesses and attractions. Consistent, branded signage that reflects Sidney's identity will



make the district more welcoming and memorable. Coordinating events with the campaign can help drive traffic downtown and boost community involvement. Partnering with local businesses will also be key, offering visitors incentives to explore everything Sidney has to offer.

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

LFST funding significantly enhances the Sidney CVB budget, enabling us to take on larger initiatives and invest in meaningful tourism infrastructure. This support allows us to improve the functionality of the visitor center and complete key brick-and-mortar projects that strengthen the connection between our existing assets and tourism development

**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
Market Downtown Sidney. This will include historical assets, large gather areas (sporting/event venues), and local landmarks.	1) Increase bed tax collections by 2% 2) Create a photo library of 30 assets by May, 2026.		
Create and Promote products that enhance the visitor experience by developing wayfinding with a walking trail for downtown Sidney.	1) Establish 12 Key Points of Interest for Wayfinding. 2) Establish 1 Walking Trail Route		
Create business partnerships to promote downtown Sidney.	1) Obtain 5 MOU's from businesses who will host elements of walking trails or wayfinding.		

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**Budget Form:** Sidney DMO Budget Form LST LFUT 2 - 2026.xlsx

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**DMO Budget:**  
**Sidney DMO**

Allowable Method	Budget	% Budgeted	Amend +/-	Updated Budget % Bu
Lodging Facility USE Tax (LFUT) Budget				
Administration	\$4,126.00	20.00%		\$4,126.00

Marketing Resources	\$5,000.00	24.24%		\$5,000.00	2
Product Development	\$7,503.00	36.37%		\$7,503.00	3
Website Development (Online, Website, Mobile)	\$2,759.00	13.37%		\$2,759.00	1
		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	
<b>TOTAL LFUT Budget</b>	<b>\$19,388.00</b>	<b>93.98%</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$19,388.00</b>	9

<b>Lodging Facility SALES Tax (LFST) Budget</b>					
Website Development (Online, Website, Mobile)	\$1,241.00	6.02%		\$1,241.00	
		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	
<b>TOTAL LFST Budget</b>	<b>\$1,241.00</b>	<b>6.02%</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$1,241.00</b>	

<b>TOTAL LFUT &amp; LFST BUDGET</b>	<b>\$20,629.00</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$20,629.00</b>	10
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LFST Revenue Projection	1,241.00
LFUT Revenue Projection	19,388.00
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
<b>Budget total</b>	<b>20,629.00</b>

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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.:**