



MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Effectively and efficiently deliver programs and resources through technical assistance, funding/investments, training/consulting, promotion, research, reporting, and outreach to provide affordable housing, create sustainable business and economic growth to enhance community vitality to benefit the citizens of Montana.

ANNUAL REPORT

FY2024

The Montana Department of Commerce works with statewide and local partners, private industry, and small businesses to enhance and sustain economic prosperity in Montana. The Department works to improve the state's economy through business creation, expansion, retention, and diversification of the state's economic base; provides direct technical assistance, grants and loans for Montana's entrepreneurs, businesses and their employees; strengthens the economy through the promotion of tourism development, promoting and protecting historic sites, and marketing Montana as a travel and filmmaking destination; promotes access to new markets, both foreign and domestic, for Montana goods and services; provides financing for homeownership and rental assistance opportunities for Montana families; and develops and improves public infrastructure and housing for Montana citizens by providing grants and technical assistance to Montana communities and counties.

DESTINATION MT DIVISION

The marketing, communications, film and tourism programs are all part of a versatile and cohesive Destination MT team that works to sustain and grow Montana's economy. The programs develop and use communications, advertising, development and promotional campaigns to showcase Montana and create awareness about the state as a place to visit and do business. Through data-driven strategies and grant programs, the team aims to preserve and promote the genuine character of Montana and partners to achieve a sustainable economic future for all.

BUSINESS MT DIVISION

Business MT's goal is to be the lead business development division for the State of Montana by supporting business growth and the prosperity of Montana communities. Our mission is to retain, expand and attract businesses that provide an economic impact for Montana communities through public/private partnerships, leveraged funding and support of economic opportunities for Montana businesses and entrepreneurs. The Business MT Division administers programs that provide technical assistance (finance, marketing, export, planning) and financial assistance (grants and loans) to Montana's businesses with specific emphasis on projects that have business development, growth of revenue and job creation opportunities.

COMMUNITY MT DIVISION


The Community MT Division helps Montana communities offer safe, efficient and quality public facilities, including streets, water and sewer services, schools, excellent health care facilities and social services, a vibrant economy, and job opportunities. The Community MT Division has resources, including financial and technical assistance, to help your community attain its goals.

HOUSING MT DIVISION

The Housing MT Division strengthens our vibrant communities by supporting access to safe, affordable and sustainable homes for Montanans whose housing needs are not met by the market. Our professional and courteous staff work to create a variety of housing opportunities for Montanans by partnering with local organizations across the state and leveraging federal housing funds available to Montana. Housing staff can assist with buying a home, down payment assistance, mortgage servicing, reverse annuity mortgages, rental housing assistance, and multifamily rental development.


DIRECTOR'S OFFICE – CENTRALIZED SERVICES

The Commerce Director's Office provides centralized finance, budget, communications, marketing, legal, IT and HR services and resources for the Department Divisions and attached boards.

 <p>Strategic Outcome</p> <p>#1</p>	<p>IMPROVE CUSTOMER SERVICE, ACCOUNTABILITY AND EFFICIENCIES</p>	
	<p>Improve stakeholder and customer knowledge of our programs, timelines and guidelines through improved communications, marketing, and roll-out of new programs for tourism, economic development, infrastructure and affordable housing.</p>	
	<p>Key Measures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful roll-out of revised tourism grant and loan programs with focus on pilot communities, determined on readiness for additional tourism capacity. Goal to have guidelines completed and programs rolled out. • Successful roll-out of new Community MT programs from both legislative session and ARPA reverted funds. Goal to have guidelines completed and programs rolled out. • Proactive community assistance for grant, planning and loan programs managed within Community MT. Utilize outreach coordinator and specialist positions to proactively reach at least 95% of eligible communities and improve application numbers over LY by 5%. • Department wide rebranding and website redesign completed Spring 2024.

FY 24 ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

1. Pilot Communities, Tourism Event Grants, Montana Film Grants, Regional Assistance Program and Emergency Service Grants all successfully rolled out. Tourism Revolving Loan Fund Grant program and Agritourism Grant program guidelines and ARMs completed, programs rolling out in early FY25.
2. State-Local Infrastructure Partnership Act, HB 819 planning grants and ARPA reverted planning grant all rolled out. ARPA reverted dollars to be finalized in early FY25.
3. Proactive outreach to 95% or greater of eligible communities completed. Team will begin to measure year-over-year applicant growth in FY25.
4. Department rebranding and website design completed Summer 2025.

 Strategic Outcome #2	PROGRAM PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS	
	<p>Improve application processes for housing, economic development, infrastructure, planning and tourism grant and loan programs through a digitized process. Review internal processes to determine viability for moving specific tasks and workload to third-party vendors.</p>	
	Key Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of mortgage servicing processes and RFP to begin moving processes to third-party vendor. Release and award RFP by December 2023. • RFP awarded and contracts in place for local housing field agency services. Within the contract, there are bi-annual metrics and vendor accountability reviews completed. • Roll-out of ServiceNow online grants and loans application process. All grant and loan programs transitioned by Spring 2024. • Review and update centralized services internal processes, procedures and policies to update by Spring 2024. Work with DOA where there are opportunities for enterprise improvements.

FY 24 ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

1. RFP completed and third-party vendor selected. Work is in progress to move new and existing mortgage servicing portfolios over (as applicable and able to by law). This move will begin in Fall 2024.
2. RFP completed and bi-annual metrics reviews completed.
3. All new grant and loan programs have moved to ServiceNow platform. Enhancements and additional functionality will be worked on throughout FY25.
4. Internal processes and policies have been updated and are reviewed bi-annually. Metrics measured included time-to-fill for vacancies, turnover and turnaround time for other centralized services tasks.



BUSINESS ATTRACTION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Enhance the Montana economy through business growth, job creation and business attraction.

Strategic
Outcome
#3

Key Measures

- Minimum of 5 Red Carpet visits per quarter.
- Minimum of 10 press announcements on businesses moving to or expanding in Montana.
- Successful roll-out of Montana Growth Fund (replacing Big Sky Trust Fund). Obligate all annual funds in first year.

FY 24 ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

1. Exceeded 5 Red Carpet visits each quarter.
2. Completed 12 announcements in FY24, including 8 from January-June. Goal increased to 20 for FY25.
3. This goal was changed after a change in leadership. Instead of Montana Growth Fund, the Big Sky Economic Development Revolving Loan Grant program was rolled out and funds awarded to local economic development organizations to provide local low-cost loan assistance.