

Montana Grants and Loans

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Application

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41744 - FY17 Region/CVB Marketing Plan - Final Application

**42331 - Utilizing the Gardiner Brand-applications in marketing strategy
DOC Office of Tourism**

Status: Under Review

Submitted Date: 05/06/2016 4:42 PM

Applicant Information

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Ext.

Alternate Phone**Fax:****Comments:****Organization Information****Name:***

Gardiner Chamber of Commerce

Organization Type:

Non-Profit Organization

Organization Website:

www.gardinerchamber.com

Address:*

Gardiner Chamber of Commerce

PO Box 81

222 Park Street

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Gardiner

City

Montana

State/Province

59030

Postal Code/Zip

Phone:*

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Ext.**Alternate Phone****Fax:****Email address**director@gardinerchamber.com**Alternate Email****Comments:****Community & Brand Support**

1. Describe your destination.

Describe your destination (who you are, who you wish to attract and why would they come) addressing your strengths, opportunities, and potential challenges. How does your destination align with Montana's brand pillars?

The small hamlet of Gardiner is located in southwest Montana at the north entrance to the world's first national park, Yellowstone. In the early 1880's, Gardiner's northern boundary was laid by the cantankerous Yellowstone concessionaire James McCartney. Since then, Gardiner has served as the original entrance to Yellowstone and is graced by the historic Roosevelt Arch, which was dedicated by President Theodore Roosevelt

in 1903.

Our communities' small town Montana charm, natural splendor, and abundant wildlife truly make it a unique "home on the range" for our nearly 900 residents. Year-round access to America's Serengeti—Yellowstone's Northern Range truly differentiates Gardiner from other Yellowstone gateway communities. Gardiner is not only surrounded by some of the most beautiful landscapes in the lower 48. It also boasts a colorful history sprinkled with trappers, miners, mountain men and hunters including well know westerners like Jim Bridger and Calamity Jane.

Nestled between the Absaroka-Beartooth and the Gallatin Mountain Ranges—Gardiner lays claim to approximately 10 million acres of public lands. We also enjoy Montana's first access to the wild and scenic Yellowstone River – the longest free flowing river in the lower 48. Potential challenges of Gardiner's remote location include: limited public transportation, residential housing shortages, and public/private wildlife controversy.

Our charming small town offers relaxing hospitality while providing full service amenities. Many Gardiner restaurants offer local and sustainably grown produce and Montana raised beef and poultry. Our community offers a diverse selection of accommodations including modern hotels and inns, rustic cabins, quaint cottages, relaxing B&B's and vacation rentals. Our all-inclusive guest ranches give the visitor a true western experience, horseback riding and fishing by day, cowboy cookouts and campfires by night. Recreational activities available within Gardiner Basin include whitewater rafting, ziplining, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, fishing, photography, hiking, and soaking in hot springs.

Gardiner currently has \$24 million dollars of infrastructure improvements underway as part of the nationally recognized Gardiner Gateway Project www.gardinergatewayproject.org. When completed, the project will provide visitors vital amenities such as walkways, safer traffic routes, a Gardiner Welcome Center (including public restrooms), and the Roosevelt Stage (in Arch Park). These enhancements are slated for completion in time for a National Park Service centennial event on 8/25/16 in the shadow of the Roosevelt Arch. The national exposure of this event is the perfect catalyst to increase tourism promotion and marketing efforts for the State of Montana.

The largest opportunity for tourism growth in Gardiner is in the shoulder season (fall & spring), as well as, the winter season. According to National Park Service Gate counts, October through May only contributes approximately 30% of the total north entrance visitation. The primary goal of our long-term marketing efforts continue to be to attract more overnight visitors during this time.

Gardiner aligns perfectly with the state's brand pillars. Located at the heart of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, our charming western town is surrounded by unspoiled nature with beautiful vistas and landscapes that are home to the most diverse wildlife in Montana. Gardiner prides itself as the historic gateway to Montana's natural wonders. The development of the 'Gardiner Brand" will aid us significantly in positioning ourselves to acheive our goals. According to the Office of Tourism, 67% of first-time visitors travel to the state because of Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks. The more positive experiences visitors have in Gardiner the more visitors return to Montana.

Optional: Include attachments here

2. How will your marketing plan address the three phases of the travel decision process of inspiration, orientation and facilitation?

In FY 16, with funds from MTOT, supplemented by CVB and partner funds, the Gardiner CVB built on the Montana State Brand to develop our own brand strategy that would position Gardiner to promote tourism, particularly during the shoulder and winter season. Audience research and message testing revealed that the most powerful messages leveraged the Paradise Valley, the daily presence of wildlife, the historic entrance to Yellowstone and the character of Gardiner. Based on that research, the brand was developed, and can be summarized through three expressions:

- The Brand Story: Follow the beautiful Paradise Valley along the Yellowstone River and you'll come to Gardiner Montana, home to the historic Roosevelt Arch. Where elk, bison, big horn sheep, antelope, bear and dozens of other wildlife species roam in and out of Yellowstone National Park. Since 1880, family owned lodging, restaurants and shops have been welcoming wildlife and visitors alike.

- Brand Imagery: images of the Paradise Valley, elk and bison literally coming through the Roosevelt Arch, wildlife roaming the streets of Gardiner, etc.

- The Brand Tagline: Gardiner Montana: Nature's favorite entrance to Yellowstone National Park

The brand strategy is built on what the research revealed would be most inspiring to visitors and what aligns with the first pillar in the Montana brand – spectacular unspoiled nature. The brand strategy also explicitly leverages the vibrant and charming small towns, and over time we will be developing content that conveys the nature of the experience on can find here.

With the brand strategy in place, our next step is implementation which will directly address orientation and facilitation. We are requesting funding to accomplish the major next steps in implementing the new brand:

- Consumer facing website - the current Gardiner website, several years old and built on an outdated platform, does not give us the ability to convey the brand in a way that inspires potential visitors, or have the functionality to provide orientation and facilitation. With the requested funds we will build a website that is a mobile ready state of the art platform for content, including photos and video; extensive and easy to find sections on each shoulder season and the winter season; full integration with our growing social media presence; and easy navigation and click through to tourism services in Gardiner. As part of this project we will also develop an iconic logo that will be used across all our marketing tactics.

- Cross Marketing – While Gardiner enjoys strong partnerships with the network of Montana CVBs, we currently do not have any capacity to leverage those partnerships because we lack the basic rack card. In FY 17 we will develop a rack card focused on the winter and shoulder season experience, and place that with our partner CVBs across the state of Montana, as well as, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota and Idaho.

- Leveraging peak season visitation – one of our top priorities is to leverage the 750,000+ visitors [gate counts](#) who come through Gardiner each summer, and provide them information and a very compelling invitation to return for the winter or shoulder seasons. Working with our members and stakeholders we will develop Point Of Sale products (table tents, window clings, etc.) that provide a consistent branded invitation to return, delivered at every consumer touchpoint throughout Gardiner.

- Ongoing Implementation – over the course of FY 17 we will be further developing the marketing plan, including building out unique sub-branding for the two shoulder seasons, developing tools for our members and stakeholders to implement the branding themselves and building partnerships that can extend our messaging to the audience of our partners.

- Opportunity – with the new brand strategy we are confident that significant opportunities will emerge over the course of FY 17 to partner with neighboring CVBs, with National Park Service concessioners, with online travel sites, and with MTOT as it rolls out its new marketing. We are requesting an opportunity fund for that reason.

- Social Media Buys – The Gardiner CVB, and its members have significant untapped potential through combined and coordinated social media reach. An initial test of the new brand yielded dramatic results with a post about the Paradise Valley going quickly viral. In FY 2017, we will conduct joint social media campaigns, and on a selected basis, invest in boosting particular posts. Based on real time tracking of results we will adjust our buy throughout FY17 and look to increase this investment substantially in FY 18.

With these strategic investments in implementing our new brand strategy, we will be well positioned to inspire, orient and facilitate visitation, particularly during the shoulder and winter seasons when we have both capacity and a unique experience to deliver.

Optional: [Include attachments here.](#)

3. Who is your market?

MONTANA.GOV
OFFICIAL STATE WEBSITE
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