

# Montana Grants and Loans

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## Application

### Instructions

**Print to PDF** will convert the application plus any PDF attachments into a single PDF file. **Release for Review** will change the status of the application to Under Review and move it on to the evaluation process. **Negotiation** will allow you to unlock one or more sections of the application and route the application back to the applicant for further editing. **Annotations** allow internal staff to add notes that are visible to internal staff only and possibly also reviewers if they have a special security privilege. The applicant cannot see these notes. **Versions** will display all component versions that were created as a result of the negotiation process. **Feedback** allows staff to enter feedback about the application to the applicant. The feedback text will appear at the bottom of the application and will be visible to anyone who has access to the application. **Withdraw** changes the status of the application to Withdrawn and removes the app from the evaluation process.

### Application Details

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#### 41744 - FY17 Region/CVB Marketing Plan - Final Application

#### 44122 - Great Falls Montana Tourism Marketing Plan

DOC Office of Tourism

Status: Under Review

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### Organization Information

Name:\* Great Falls CVB  
Organization Type: Non-Profit Organization  
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## 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?*

Great Falls Montana Tourism is the newly combined effort that includes Great Falls Convention and Visitors Bureau, Great Falls Tourism Business Improvement District and the Great Falls Area Chamber of Commerce.

The vision of Great Falls Montana Tourism is to strengthen the Great Falls Montana economy by being the preferred choice for a genuine Montana experience. We will accomplish that vision through our mission to passionately promote Great Falls Montana as a preferred destination for travelers, tourists and conventions to visit, stay, experience, and return.

Research shows the primary reason visitors are attracted to Great Falls is by friends and family, followed by the proximity to Glacier, Yellowstone, Waterton Lakes, and Canada. This is followed closely by the arts. When visitors are here with friends and family, they will most likely engage in the activities the resident enjoys. Residents are attracted to Great Falls by the outdoor recreation and access to mountains. The activity most engaged in by residents is hiking at 50%, followed by fishing at 13%.

We have a new road ahead of us. Great Falls Montana Tourism is developing a team and aligning resources to reverse a downward trend that persists in occupancy, visitation, and revenue.

Research indicates most visitors to Great Falls have been here before, but there are a few uninspired souls that haven't been to Great Falls yet. The top reason why someone hasn't yet visited is because they are unaware of things to do. We can fix that! Additionally, research shows that a non-visitor would visit if a friend or family member recommended it.

Great Falls Montana is poised to chart a new course. Located on the east slope of the Rocky Mountains between Glacier National Park and Yellowstone National Park and home to Malmstrom Air Force Base and Montana Air National Guard, visitors and residents alike embrace the alluring landscape of panoramic views of the Rocky, Highwood and Belt Mountain Ranges, Missouri River valley, buttes, and grasslands that are pure high plains. This landscape proclaims that independent, free adventures are awaiting. Great Falls Montana history and culture captivates visitors as much as the landscape does. Charlie Russell created works of art that captured our rugged independence. Lewis and Clark spent weeks portaging our five falls and a 25,000 square foot interpretive center commemorates their tenacity. The largest bison cliff jump in North America, First Peoples Buffalo Jump State Park and National Historic Landmark, provides genuine insight to our first people's independent spirit.

The strategic priorities of Great Falls Montana Tourism are:

- Demonstrate Operational Excellence
- Build Team Great Falls
- Grow Shoulder & Off-Peak Visitation
- Celebrate, Support & Create Assets
- Develop & Grow the Tourism Pipeline

### **Strengths**

Great Falls Montana offers all the best of Montana recreation: fishing, hunting, hiking, and more. Added to that is a rich history and arts community that caters to enthusiasts. Great Falls Montana is home to Malmstrom Airforce Base and Montana Air National Guard. This provides for a ready made set of tourists. Additionally, with 2,206 rooms and 31,800 square feet of hotel meeting space, Great Falls Montana is an ideal place for meetings and conventions. Over the past couple of years, our community has worked diligently to reduce airfares and add extra airline seats. This effort has been rewarded with additional flight destinations and the title of Montana's lowest average airfares for the last 3 years per Department of Transportation statistics.

The unique experiences only Great Falls Montana can provide are:

- North America's Largest Buffalo Jump and National Historic Landmark, First Peoples
- World's Shortest River, Roe
- Western Art Capital of the World, for one week in March
- 1 of the Top 5 Skate Parks in the Pacific Northwest, Riverside Railyard
- Montana's Best Irish Pub, as named by BuzzFeed, 1/15/2016
- Montana's Best Coffee Shop, as named by Business Insider, 8/6/2014
- Montana's Best Tiki Drink, as named by Delish, 8/10/2015
- Montana's Best Burger, as named by Food Network Magazine, 4/30/2009

- Montana's Pizza Capital, as named by MSN, 3/22/2015
- Montana's Museum worth traveling for, CM Russell, as named by FlipKey by TripAdvisor, 3/30/2016
- North America's most extensive display of the Lewis & Clark expedition at the Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center
- Montana's only live mermaid show
- Montana's Museum Capital
- Montana's Veteran's Memorial
- Montana's Largest Specialty Dry Goods Store
- Montana's oldest reinforced concrete, open spandrel, multi-arch bridge
- Montana's only city with 5 falls, The Great Falls, Black Eagle Falls, Rainbow Falls, Crooked Falls, Colter Falls
- Montana's State Fair
- Montana's Pro Rodeo Circuit Finals
- Benton Lake Wildlife Refuge
- Electric City Water Park at Mitchell Pool
- River's Edge Trail on the Missouri River
- PRCA sanctioned Rodeo during Montana's State Fair
- 57 City of Great Falls Montana maintained parks

Additionally, Great Falls Montana can serve as the basecamp for short, close and amazing adventures to:

- Montana's First Ski Hill, Showdown
- Silver Crest Recreation area
- Bob Marshall Wilderness
- Sluice Boxes State Park
- Freezeout Lake
- Gibson Dam
- Missouri River
- Holter Lake
- Tiber Reservoir
- Lake Francis
- Teton Pass Ski Resort
- Great Divide Ski Resort
- Glacier National Park
- Yellowstone National Park
- Montana's Birthplace, Fort Benton
- Gates of the Mountains
- Blue Ribbon Missouri River Trout Fishing
- The Rocky Mountain Front
- White Cliffs of the wild and scenic Missouri River
- Upper Missouri River National Monument
- The biggest and oldest one-day PRCA rodeo in Montana, American Legion Rodeo in Augusta
- PRCA sanctioned rodeos in Belt, Augusta, Fort Benton, Chinook, Shelby, Cascade, Helena, Stanford and White Sulpher Springs.

Great Falls Montana offers visitors an authentic Montana experience without the congestion that can be found in other destination locations.

### **Weaknesses**

Great Falls Montana is a little down on itself. This poses a weakness for Great Falls Montana Tourism as we know that 75% of the methods used for planning a trip to Great Falls come from word of mouth channels: personal/previous experiences, family and friends, and locals.

Great Falls Montana lacks facilities or capacity to host some events, groups, and conventions that have interest in coming to our community. Great Falls Montana partners and Great Falls Montana Tourism have begun working on planning options for rectifying this weakness.

## **Challenges**

The fluctuation of the Canadian dollar against the US dollar has a massive impact on Great Falls. When the exchange rate drops below 90%, the volume of the Canadian leisure traveler declines significantly.

Glacier National Park's East entrance is 2.5 hours from Great Falls Montana. Kalispell Montana is just over a 1/2 hour to the West entrance of Glacier National Park. Although it is feasible for Great Falls Montana to get visitors on their way to and from Glacier National Park, price and time become a deciding factor for visitors to choose Great Falls Montana as the starting destination for their Glacier National Park experience.

## **Opportunities**

The Great Falls International Airport Authority continually works to establish more direct flights into Great Falls Montana. With more direct flights, Great Falls Montana, becomes a destination easier to get to. With more airfield use, cost associated with Great Falls Montana air transportation will continue to decrease.

Ground Transportation will be getting a new component, Uber. It is undetermined what impact Uber will have in Great Falls Montana; however, it is an opportunity for our community.

## **Markets**

Great Falls Montana historically gets strong interest for information from people in:

- **9% California**
- 6% Texas
- 5% Illinois
- 5% Florida
- 4% Minnesota
- **4% Washington**

This is data gathered from historic requests for Visitor Guides.

Great Falls Montana Visitor Center stats show actual visitation from:

- **21% Alberta**
- 20% Montana
- **10% California**
- **8% Washington**

ITRR research indicates visitors who spend the night in Great Falls Montana come from:

- **19% Alberta**
- **11% Washington**
- **8% California**
- 6% Idaho
- 5% Texas

ITRR indicates visitors enter Montana in key locations to access Great Falls.

- 13% Monida
- 11% Sweet Grass
- 11% Superior
- 10% Great Falls International Airport

## **Brand**

Great Falls Montana is fortunate to be able to boast all three of Montana's Brand Pillars. Our beautiful location nestled next to the Missouri River with five scenic waterfalls and 57 miles of trail makes "spectacular unspoiled nature" within walking distance for a visitor. Giant Springs State Park, the most visited state park last year, is one of the largest fresh water springs in the United States. Families and visitors enjoy unspoiled nature at its finest as they picnic, hike and recreate in the park adjacent to the River's Edge Trail.

Our downtown is charming with its tree-lined streets, its local retail merchants, and its emerging vibrant pubs and restaurants. We are a gateway to natural wonders found in the Bob Marshall Wilderness, the Rocky Mountain Front, the Missouri River Breaks and the Kings Hill Scenic Byway.

Breathtaking experiences by day on our trail and river give way to relaxing hospitality by night in one of our many lodging properties that invite a visitor to savor their stay with fine dining and a vibrant night life.

**Optional: Include attachments here**

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

### **Inspiration, Orientation and Facilitation**

The State of Montana has done a great job capturing the attention of the geotraveler by promoting Montana's spectacular, unspoiled nature, it's vibrant and charming small towns and breathtaking experience by day, and relaxing hospitality at night.

#### **Inspire**

Great Falls Montana Tourism will continue to take the lead from the State. Great Falls' greatest asset and defining point of difference is the Missouri River and the falls, followed by outdoor activities. To inspire visitors, our story telling will focus on the Missouri River, the falls, and outdoor activities. Each message will be tailored according to market segmentation. The images below from Roland Taylor showcase Great Falls' greatest asset. Great Falls Montana Tourism will lead with our assets in our imagery in every message. We will focus on evoking strong emotion that is necessary to begin building the relationship with the potential visitor.

#### **Orient**

Once the prospective visitor has connected with Great Falls Montana, Great Falls Montana Tourism will assist them in planning how to get to their destination. The Visitor Guide and Great Falls Montana Tourism website will aid in this by showcasing the ease of accessing Great Falls' central location through:

- Direct Flight Routes into Great Falls International Airport
- Routes to and from Great Falls to Glacier and Yellowstone National Parks
- Drive routes into Great Falls from every direction

#### **Facilitate**

Now that the prospective visitor is connected to Great Falls emotionally and knows the best way for them to get here, we will begin highlighting all the opportunities for them to experience Great Falls Montana. Great Falls Montana Tourism will utilize many tools to share our family friendly small town atmosphere to include:

- Visitor Center
- Social Channels
- Tourism Partners
- Website

**Optional: Include attachments here.**

### 3. Who is your market?

#### *a. Define your target markets (demographic, geographic and psycho-graphic)*

##### **Targeted Markets: Leisure**

With a limited budget, Great Falls Montana Tourism will focus messaging on the following leisure markets and targeted demographics.

**Alberta:** Great Falls Montana gets strong visitation from Alberta. This market volume is directly tied to the USD to CAD exchange rate. Albertans tend to come to Great Falls for weekend getaways, engaging in shopping, dining, golfing, visiting attractions, and to utilize low cost airfare from Great Falls International Airport. When the CAD is closer in value to the USD, the volume increases. As the dollar improves, Great Falls Montana Tourism will see an increase in Canadian visitation.

**Washington:** With 11% of visitors entering from Superior, Montana we can reasonably assume these visitors are coming in from Washington and Idaho. Seattle and Spokane are strong markets to target. These visitors appreciate the breathtaking beauty and outdoor adventures without the congestion. Great Falls Montana Tourism will use primary messaging that focuses on those key aspects when visiting with them.

**California:** These visitors appreciate the breathtaking beauty and outdoor adventures without the congestion. Great Falls Montana Tourism will use primary messaging that focuses on those key aspects when visiting with them.

**Illinois:** These visitors appreciate the breathtaking beauty and outdoor adventures without the congestion. Great Falls Montana Tourism will use primary messaging that focuses on those key aspects when visiting with them.

**Montana:** Regional Markets we will look to engage with are along the Hi-Line, Billings, Missoula and Kalispell for the new outdoor adventures they can have while being supported by fabulous hospitality.

##### **Demographics**

The sweet spot of the Great Falls Montana visitor demographic is 45 – 74 years of age traveling in a vehicle, alone or as a couple on vacation, with an annual household income of \$75,000 – \$200,000. According to ITRR, this is the largest demographic that visits Great Falls Montana currently.

Great Falls Montana is positioned to attract a younger demographic. In the 2015 Topline Report from the Outdoor Foundation, top activities for anyone 6 years old and older are:

- Running, jogging, trail running
- Bicycling – road, mountain, bmx
- Hiking
- Fishing – fresh, salt, Fly

Our digital strategies are designed to begin engaging this market.

##### **Targeted Markets: Conventions, Meetings and Groups**

Great Falls Montana will be working with 2,206 total hotel rooms, 31,800 square feet of hotel convention space for Fiscal Year 2017. The majority of the rooms are split between Upper Midscale (37% of rooms), and Economy (38% of rooms). Rounding out the inventory, we have 15% Midscale and 11% Upscale.

The newly assembled team will work with industry resources to determine the best market for us. The immediate work begins with determining what opportunities exist with local businesses, groups, and associations to secure large corporate meetings, retreats, conferences and gatherings that aren't already being held in Montana. This, coupled with Great Falls' central location, creates a competitive advantage to grow this segment.

## Events

The efforts we worked on in 2016 for Western Art Week show a decrease in demand and occupancy overall. Individual property surveys indicate some properties had increases, some properties did not. Website traffic was up over last year; however, this did not result in occupancy increases within Great Falls.

This event is a huge asset for Great Falls Montana and should continue to be supported. Great Falls Montana Tourism will continue to support the promotion of all the shows and all the events of Western Art Week by providing information about all the activities. We will work to enhance the website by adding a blog and leveraging facebook all year to showcase art and artists including messaging regarding all art, all prices. We will work to build the relationship with the readers of the blog and gain emotional attachments between the reader and the event. Great Falls Montana Tourism will work with show organizers to find additional ways to support the activities and events of the week and commit to updating the website with all show content, and developing brochures for the week's activities.

Great Falls and the area around it is home to exciting PRCA rodeo action. These events are selling points for our market, however, Great Falls Montana Tourism does not take an active lead in dedicating resources for the rodeo activities in Great Falls or in the area.

Great Falls Montana Tourism will work to find, enhance, or develop another event that will have the same impact as Western Art Week. We will keep our options open and when the best opportunity presents itself, we will move forward.

### *b. What are your emerging markets?*

Great Falls Montana is positioned to attract a younger demographic. In the 2015 Topline Report from the Outdoor Foundation, top activities for anyone 6 years old and older are:

- Running, jogging, trail running
- Bicycling – road, mountain, bmx
- Hiking
- Fishing – fresh, salt, Fly

### *c. What research supports your target marketing?*

Great Falls Montana Tourism utilized data from previous marketing campaign reader service, Visitor Center guest logs, Institute of Tourism and Recreation Research studies, Outdoor Foundation 2015 Topline report, independent research done by North Star Destination Strategies, Facebook analytics, Website analytics and historic performance to determine our target marketing.

Great Falls Montana historically gets strong interest for information from people in:

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- 6% Texas
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North Star Destination Strategies research indicates most visitors to Great Falls have been here before, but there are a few uninspired souls that haven't been to Great Falls yet. The top reason why someone hasn't yet visited is because they are unaware of things to do. We can fix that! Additionally, research shows that a non-visitor would visit if a friend or family member recommended it.

**Optional: Include attachment here.**

#### 4. Overall Goals

##### Goals

The primary goal for Great Falls Montana is to grow visitation to Great Falls Montana. The collective efforts of this marketing plan looks to:

- Increase occupancy at Great Falls Montana lodging properties by 1%, 2014 occupancy was 58.5%
- Increase Facebook page likes by 5%, FY15 likes grew 7% from 2,610 to 2,804
- Increase total unique visitors to website by 5%
- Establish 1,000 Instagram followers
- Increase Visitor Center use by 1%, FY15 use was 8,634 visitors
- Secure commitments for 3 new conventions, groups or meetings.
- Generate 500 views of videos on Great Falls Montana YouTube Channel

**Optional: Include attachments here.**

#### 5. Joint Venture Opportunities

**MONTANA.GOV**  
OFFICIAL STATE WEBSITE  
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