Community & Brand Support

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?

ESTABLISHMENT OF A DESTINATION

BILLINGS, MONTANA - WHERE YOU CAN FORGE YOUR OWN PATH

Shaped by the Yellowstone River and sheltered by the sandstone Rimrocks, Billings is a place of forever views and forever memories, where urban amenities and modern convenience meet the edge of the genuine frontier. Where the adventure of the untamed wilderness and history are out your front door calling you to forge your own path. It is the city without limits with descendants of the West's greatest heroes and is the central point to the ultimate western experience.

Conveniently positioned in the region as the largest city between Calgary and Denver, Spokane and Minneapolis, Billings proudly serves a trade area serving more than 500,000 residents with diverse shopping, award-winning cuisine, arts, history, and culture.

Warm, genuine people take the time to welcome you and greet you with a smile. Unparalleled access to some of the most breathtaking and historic wonders in the United States including Yellowstone National Park, Beartooth Highway, Bighorn Canyon, Little Bighorn Battlefield, and Pompeys Pillar make Billings an idyllic destination for connecting to the best that Montana offers.

ABOUT BILLINGS

Billings, population 110,000, is well-positioned in southeast Montana as a gateway to Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, the northeast entrance to Yellowstone National Park, Pompeys Pillar National Monument and urban amenities on the edge of the genuine frontier. Billings is also situated with great access to some of the key areas in Montana’s State Park system including Pictograph Cave and Chief Plenty Coups State Parks. The county seat of Yellowstone County and largest city in the state, “Montana’s City” is also the region’s economic hub. Major industries including agriculture, energy, healthcare, finance, education and tourism all help drive the local economy.

Popular attractions locally include the Yellowstone Kelly Interpretive Site, Walkable Brewery District in Historic Downtown Billings, Montana’s only zoo and botanical park, contemporary and western museums, several theaters, music venues, a state-of-the-art public library and a number of outdoor community festivals. Today, Billings offers nearly 50 miles of multi-use trails and 24 miles of bike lanes. From the sandstone Rimrocks to the Yellowstone River, which is the longest free-flowing river in the lower 48, Billings residents invite visitors to experience the magic of Montana’s Trailhead.

Amazing Big Sky summer weather and snowy winters offer ample opportunity for outdoor enthusiasts to experience all four seasons and the accompanying adventures. Nearly 5,000 hotel rooms along with recreational, cultural and adventurous experiences as well as numerous retail and restaurant offerings, sporting event venues, and several hundred thousand square feet of flexible meeting space are ready to accommodate any traveler’s needs and preferences.

ACCOLADES / WHAT THEY ARE SAYING ABOUT US

MONTANA TOURISM AWARD

MARKETING CAMPAIGN OF THE YEAR

MY FAVORITE PLACE SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

Visit Billings is proud to own the Marketing Campaign of the Year title with the Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development. The My Amazing Place Social Media Campaign highlights Team Visit Billings showing off top spots at Montana’s Trailhead. Check it out on Facebook @billingsmt

BILLINGS TO WELCOME THE MARINE CORPS LEAGUE

MCL CHOOSES BILLINGS AS THE 2019 NATIONAL CONVENTION HOST CITY

In 2019, Visit Billings, the Billings Hotel and Convention Center, Billings area lodging partners and the community will have the privilege of hosting thousands of members of the Marine Corp League. The MCL focuses on camaraderie and fellowship for the purpose of preserving traditions and the interests of the United State Marine Corp and those who have been honorably discharged. We are honored.

NOW SHOWING
Find inspiration to take in all of the Billings area’s top natural, cultural, and adventurous attractions when you watch the newly released Visit Billings Inspirational Video. From the top of the Rimrocks to the top of the Beartooth-Absarokee Mountains, experience Montana’s Trailhead.

NOW COMPLETE

YELLSTONE KELLY INTERPRETIVE SITE
Thanks to partnerships with the Billings Chamber of Commerce, City of Billings, Billings area lodging partners, cultural partners and the business community, residents and visitors alike can learn about Yellowstone Kelly. This warrior and veteran is buried atop the Billings’ Rimrocks. The area of his gravesite now offers points of interest and interpretation regarding the life of this scout.

SUCCESSFUL YEAR ONE

AMERICAN AIRLINES - DIRECT SERVICE BIL/DFW
Strategic partnerships proved key in FY18 as Billings Logan Airport started offering direct, year-round, daily service to Dallas/Fort Worth. Focused advertising efforts in the Dallas market as well as in Billings, southeast Montana, and northern Wyoming assisted with positive promotion of the direct service.

SPORTS TOURISM GROWTH REALIZED FOR BILLINGS

WELLS FARGO NAIA DI WOMEN’S BASKETBALL
Billings will host this 32 team tournament in 2019 and 2020 thanks to community support. Year two of what now looks like a four year cycle, was a huge hit for Billings as a sports tourism destination, but also for the local business community; however, the most significant highlights were the Champions of Character and Youth Impact Day events which helped drive 2,000 area youth to experience the high caliber of competition at Rimrock Auto Arena.

Additional Highlights:
- NAIA Best New Host Award
- Billings named the 2018 Readers’ Choice Award Winner by SportsEvents Magazine
- Billings named 2017 Platinum Choice Meeting Destination by Smart Meetings Magazine

MORE ABOUT BILLINGS:

STRENGTHS

ACCESSIBILITY TO UNSPOILED NATURE
The most scenic entrance to Yellowstone National Park is via the Beartooth Highway, a National Scenic Byway and All-American Road, 60 minutes from Billings:
- Red Lodge – 60 miles
- Beartooth Highway – 65 miles
- Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness Mountains – 60 miles
- Yellowstone National Park NE entrance at Cooke-City/Silver Gate (summer access via vehicle; winter access via snowmobile) – 140 miles
- The only physical evidence along the Lewis and Clark Expedition is located at Pompeys Pillar National Monument, 30 miles from Billings
- Pictograph Cave State Park – 7 miles
- Native American Culture
- Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument – 60 miles
- Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area – 85 miles
- Crow Fair at Crow Agency (August) – 80 miles
- Chief Plenty Coups State Park – 35 miles

Billings scenic and outdoor attractions:
- Red, sandstone Rimrocks define the city and offer an unexpected backdrop and vantage points of the horizon
- Walking, hiking and biking trails
- The longest free flowing river in the lower 48, Yellowstone River, runs just south of town
- Four Dances Recreation Area offers excellent access to Bureau of Land Management trails and scenic views

VIBRANT COMMUNITY

APPEAL / ARTS & CULTURE
Historic Downtown Billings and Montana’s only walkable Brewery District, which includes six breweries, two distilleries and a Cider House
- True American West culture
- Museums serving contemporary to western tastes
- Yellowstone Art Museum
- Western Heritage Center
- Yellowstone County Museum
- Lively music, theater and nightlife scene - Magic City Blues, Alberta Bair Theatre, the Pub Station, and Rimrock Auto Arena and Cove Creek Pavilion

Culinary experiences from diners and burgers to James Beard recognized chefs including Montana frontier farm-to-table

State-of-the-art library

Shopping ranging from specialty boutiques to name brand retailers like Scheels at Shiloh Crossing

ACCOMMODATIONS & FACILITIES
- Nearly 5,000 hotel rooms in 55 different hotels ranging from brand name chains to local historic properties
- 360,000-square feet of flexible meeting space
- 10,000 seat Rimrock Auto Arena at MetraPark
- Numerous unique meeting settings including the Historic Billings Depot, Henry’s Garage and Swift River Ranch
- Substantial development projects are underway in Billings regarding a Montana convention center development with Hammes Company as well as sports facility opportunities in south and west Billings

AIRPORT
Billings Logan Airport serves ten (10) cities directly with major airlines Delta, United, American Airlines, Alaska and Allegiant
Cape Air serves northeast Montana with several daily intrastate flights

Airport located conveniently downtown

Non-stop flights offered daily, weekly and seasonally:
- Seattle (daily)
- Portland (daily)
- Salt Lake City (daily)
- Denver (daily)
- Minneapolis/St. Paul (daily)
Billings offers sports teams and events to entertain visitors and locals:

- Billings Mustangs Baseball - rookie affiliate team to the Cincinnati Reds has home games June-Sept at Dehler Park
- Communitywide events attract athletes from all over the country
- Yellowstone Kelly Mountain Run
- Big Sky State Games - region's largest Olympic style state games
- Montana Marathon (Boston Marathon qualifier)
- Montana Women's Run
- Heart & Sole Run (5k regional qualifier)
- 406 Triathlon Challenge
- Trailhead Triathlon
- Montana Warrior Run
- Big Sky Volleyfest
- Stockman Bank Magic City Soccer Classic
- Sporting venues allow Billings to position itself as a contender in ying for tournaments and competitions
- Revolution Sports Campus
- Dehler Park $12 million multi-use baseball stadium
- Amend Park soccer, lacrosse and cross country fields
- MotaPark Grounds including Rimrock Auto Arena
- Two universities, four high-schools with full sports facilities and two state-of-the-art middle schools
- Stewart Park Softball and Baseball Complex

**STRONG ECONOMY & BUSINESS CLIMATE**

- Medical - two nationally renowned hospitals including one Mayo Clinic Partner (Billings Clinic)
- Supportive local business climate
- Partnership with Chamber of Commerce, Big Sky Economic Development, Downtown Billings Alliance as well as City of Billings and Yellowstone County officials strengthens community ties
- Strong agricultural support for state and region
- Oil refineries (Exxon Mobil, Phillips66 & Cenex Harvest States)

**OCCUPATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**

- **WYOMING TOURISM EFFORTS**
- The Wyoming Office of Tourism, always a major competitor for Montana, is strategizing and investing in efforts to keep visitors en route to Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming. The Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development (MOTBD) invests millions of dollars annually in promoting Yellowstone National Park as a tourism pillar.
- Wyoming positions itself as “a more desirable entrance to ‘Yellowstone National Park’ via Cody and more scenic means of traveling the west from Mount Rushmore instead of taking the Warrior Trail in southeast Montana.
- Billings has the opportunity to own Yellowstone’s Most-Scenic Route via the Beartooth Highway, targeting the westbound drive markets and key fly markets through strategies that invite travel into southeast Montana to experience Little Bighorn Battlefield and Pompeys Pillar National Monument, the Warrior and Dinosaur Trails, or the most scenic route into Yellowstone National Park via the Beartooth-Highway into the northeast entrance at Cooke City/Sturgis.

**AIRPORT**

Billings Logan Airport, though offering consistent and strong air capacity, is perceived as not keeping pace with necessary and/or potential growth as compared to other Montana destinations. Billings has lost market share in the form of deplanements in recent years as competing Montana communities work hard to attract travelers. Billings Logan, together with community partners including Visit Billings and the Billings Chamber of Commerce, has strongly supported the newest direct flight from Dallas/Fort Worth with American Airlines. Such an opportunity, among other key direct flights including Minneapolis and Denver, allows Billings to compete and yield growth in the future. In the meantime, the City of Billings is working to invest in a major expansion of Billings Logan Airport.

In many cases, airfare is higher than competitive cities. This can be considered a concern for Billings as a destination, particularly with the leisure, sports and conventions recruitment efforts. Billings Logan statistics state that, on average, airfare into Billings fluctuates a few dollars higher or lower as compared to competitive Montana destinations, like Bozeman.

**TOURISM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT**

There is an ongoing perception or stigma, still, that there can be nothing to do in Billings. This is beginning to evolve, but the investment into brand lift to focus on the positives at Montana’s Trailhead are as important as ever in changing mindset. It’s important for stakeholders and business owners to realize the importance of community development. As quality of life improves in Billings and Yellowstone County, so will the offerings to potential visitors. This transformation will help with community pride efforts as well.

**MEETINGS & CONVENTION FACILITIES**

Billings offers no state-of-the-art, structured, large-capacity convention center on a campus setting. Existing facilities are spread throughout the city and research has found some to be either dated or not in convenient locations, i.e. close proximity to shops, restaurants and points of interest.

With Meeting and Convention business representing nearly a quarter of Billings’ tourism industry, a new convention center in any Montana city could steal significant market share from Billings.

Multiple convention center development proposals have emerged this year. Having experienced resistance from industry partners, advocacy will be critical to supporting successful development of these needed facilities and growth of Billings’ meetings business.

**COMPETITIVE SPORTS FACILITIES**

Billings is a strong sports destination with the potential to recruit significantly more youth, collegiate and amateur events if sports facility offerings were expanded.

A feasibility study conducted by Victus Advisors was completed in 2018 and identifies a multi-court indoor facility, ice swimming facility as Billings’ most needed facilities, in addition to existing field renovations such as lighting and turf.

**WALKING EXPERIENCES/GATHERING AREAS**

Downtown Billings’ outdoor shopping venues like Shiloh Crossing and the West Park Promenade are strengths, but there are few other offerings that encourage guests to explore town. In FY19, Billings will be branding and further promoting the Billings Brew Trail, the only walkable brewery district in Montana.

Investments in the Billings trail system, including the Marathon Loop, are top priorities of the Chamber of Commerce’s Trails Committee and Billings TrailNet. Both organizations have a robust volunteer base, while City and County support and strategies help strengthen walkability in Billings. The business community’s investment into the Yellowstone Kelly Interpretive Site (YKIS) along Swords Rimrock Park is a prime example of local residents wanting to invest more into the community for quality of life and tourism impacts.

**REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS**

Known for “Big Sky Country” experiences, Montana ranks high on travel wish lists, however, the more urban experience of Billings, and that of Southeast Montana, varies from the wide-open and unobstructed “Big Sky” perceptions. Many people simply do not have the knowledge that Billings offers great adventure without the sacrifice of a downtown experience.

To build awareness of Southeast Montana, Visit Billings will be establishing partnerships with companion frontier destinations and points east and southeast of Billings to target summer bucket-list travel including an unprecedented list of iconic American sites and attractions from Mount Rushmore to Little Bighorn for the “Great American Road Trip.”

**TRAIL GUIDES**

A brand is only as strong as the local people and businesses that live and breathe it every day. Through the Trail Guides program, we will empower these local businesses and key local influencers to be brand ambassadors and visitor resources once in Billings, essentially adding virtual visitor centers throughout Billings. Visitors to these establishments can ask for recommendations on places to go and things to do, as well as have access to maps and other literature to help them get the most out of their Billings experience.

Participating businesses and locations will showcase a Trail Guide decal on their storefront, letting locals and visitors know that they are a resource for everything tourism and experience related in Billings.
Additionally, we'll have the opportunity to do a series of Trail Guide social takeovers, allowing visitors to get a personal, behind-the-scenes look at the people and places that make up the unique Billings travel experience.

CULINARY
Billings' food scene is as unique and diverse as its travel experience. Branding the Billings culinary experience, Trailhead Gourmet, allows us to not only package and promote our style of cuisine in a unique way, but also represents the wide range of culinary offerings, from diners to James Beard recognized chefs, found throughout Billings.

By branding Billings' culinary scene, we also open up partnership opportunities with food bloggers, writers, food programmers, as well as influencers.

HISTORY & WESTERN HERITAGE
With historic people, experiences, and destinations like Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, Pompey's Pillar National Monument, and the Yellowstone Kelly Interpretive Site, Billings is the centerpiece to a powerful western history and heritage experience. There is an opportunity to package and develop these stories and attractions into a richer and more engaging tourism product.

There's also an opportunity to make this history and heritage more relevant in today's social conversations by having a local legend like Yellowstone Kelly take over the Visit Billings social channels. How would he view the world? Where would he go to eat? What would he do if he were alive and in Billings today?

CHALLENGES
OIL, GAS, & COAL
The regional leisure tourism segment benefits from the oil, gas and coal workforce in eastern Montana and northern Wyoming. The current oil, gas and coal production slump has impacted Billings as a tourism destination. Regional visitors who would typically be traveling to Billings for entertainment and shopping, which equates to room nights, are instead staying close to home.

COMMUNITY PRIDE
Billings locals often direct visitors outward, whether to nearby Bozeman or surrounding regional attractions, giving the perception that there isn't anything to do worthwhile inside of Billings. Community pride is a major component to a successful campaign and drive in visitation – pride starts within.

SMALL TOWN DESIGNATION
Billings is a vibrant community and the largest in the state, however, it is not small and charming per the MOTBD brand pillars. Gaining Montana Tourism brand support as a viable destination in the region is an ongoing challenge for Visit Billings and its stakeholders.

ARRIVAL EXPERIENCE
Entering Billings via Interstate 90 is especially dreary at nearly half of the city's exits – with sprawling and visible refineries and industrial activities. The Billings Logan Airport arrival experience is strong for visitors traveling by air, but the aesthetics via the I-90 corridor aren't as inviting nor welcoming. The exits need improvement in some cases, like berms, wayfinding signage and landscaping that can be more appealing and enticing for visitors contemplating a stopover.

GROUND TRANSPORTATION
With the addition of Uber in the Billings market, ground transportation has substantially improved. However, taxicab services continue to be inconsistent regarding availability and often times are offered in a shuttle format, meaning a rider may share the cab with other riders taking longer to get to a store, restaurant or attraction. There is typically not a price break in this group ride scenario. There is room for improvement in this transportation offering to Billings, but the burden lies with individual businesses.

CANADIAN EXCHANGE RATE
Ongoing flux in the Canadian exchange rate directly impacts the viability of this market.

HOMELESS POPULATION
Billings has strong programs and services for the homeless community through Montana Rescue Mission among other organizations, however, the existence of these programs impacts a noticeable homeless population as other communities in Montana rely on Billings for these programs. The visible presence of homelessness can impact a visitor's first impression and is a topic that exists in travel reviews and online forums.

VISIT BILLINGS
A DESTINATION MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING ORGANIZATION
Visit Billings is a leading brand comprised of the Billings Tourism Business Improvement District and the Billings Convention and Visitors Bureau and is managed by the Billings Chamber of Commerce.

Together with the Billings Chamber of Commerce/Convention and Visitors Bureau (BCC/CVB) and Billings Tourism Business Improvement District (BTBID) Boards, the Visit Billings team is committed to growing visitation at Montana's Trailhead. The staff is an extension of its stakeholders (lodging partners) working to provide sales, services, and marketing support to the local hospitality industry.

As a destination management and marketing organization, Visit Billings is charged with representing Billings as a destination, helping with the development of the tourism industry and community through travel and tourism promotion, marketing, and strategies.

MISSION STATEMENT
The mission of Visit Billings is to generate room nights for lodging facilities in the city of Billings by effectively marketing the region as a preferred travel destination.

VISIT BILLINGS 2027
Together with community, regional and state partners, the Visit Billings team will continue to strategize with local leaders, community associates and stakeholders to ensure a solid foundation of success into the next decade of travel promotion at Montana's Trailhead while working in the here and now to grow visitation in support of local stakeholders.

VISIT BILLINGS EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
In a world where destinations are focused on being relevant and remarkable, at every turn, with every tourism product, many times the quintessential means of connecting with the potential and active traveler becomes a secondary focus. As human beings we are inspired by emotion, passion, excitement, impressions, and sensations.

Our senses are drawn to the reactions felt from the smell of the dirt at the rodeo, the feeling you get when you are in a trail surrounded by the sounds of birds chirping while scents of grass and trees float around you, the wind on our faces as we bike or jog down the path, the views achieved after reaching the top of the hill, the admiration realized when walking into the gallery of a powerful artist, the warm feeling from a sip of a handcrafted beverage, the adrenaline exerted while floating the river, the accomplishment of actually feeling the tug on the end of the fishing rod, the emotion that overcome you when you watch the cowboy kneel down and pray before the ride. Inspiration leads to Experience. Experience leads to living. Living leads to memories and tradition.

Tourism product development is directly related to offering places to go, meet, and compete, but the authentic experience speaks to people and that is what guides individuals in travel and builds a confidence in us to live life to the fullest. That's the power of travel and to Visit Billings and our tourism partners that is the power of traveling to Billings.

As Visit Billings continues to focus on the ten year vision, the experience will be primary. In FY19, we will focus on the destination, the community, the people, the pride, and the experience. It's about wellness, adventure, history, culture, nature, and discovery.

From community pride efforts and customer service training to working with strategic partners on tourism product development efforts, Visit Billings will look to the people and places that draw people to the region.

Research projects including general tourism projects, economic impact data, sports tourism expansion efforts, and convention center development will help mold visioning strategies. Marketing and sales strategies will home in on what we already know; people make places. At Visit Billings, we strive to host people to the best of our experiences and we are the head of the trail to lead the way to new adventures in the great American West.

Describe your destination.

TRAVEL DECISION PROCESS / THREE PHASES
INSPIRE, ORIENT, FACILITATE
SUMMER STRATEGY
As it’s currently positioned and marketed, Montana’s Trailhead directs visitors outward, away from Billings. This ... activities within city limits. From initial on-the-ground research, this was also the case when engaging with the local

Yellowstone Kelly and William Clark (of Lewis and Clark) to today’s makers, innovators, adventurers and artists, representing the strong will, Western humility and the self-made perseverance that embodies the Billings way of life.

Leveraging Montana’s Trailhead, Visit Billings will be launching “Forge Your Own Path,” an evolution of the Visit ... this to the beginning. Forge your own path. Billings. Montana’s Trailhead.

Onward pioneers. Today is ours for the taking. And tomorrow too. For we have a vision of something better. Of mighty ... guided by the greatness that lies ahead. Let’s stoke the fire of the pioneer spirit. Call home to a place we’ve only seen

Whether visitors seek adrenaline pumping adventure or easy paced experiences, Billings is the perfect place to set up ... and access to breathtaking views and Montana icons, Billings will surprise and delight visitors from all walks of life.

COMMUNICATE AND DELIVER MONTANA’S SPECTACULAR UNSPOILED NATURE IN A WAY THAT MAKES IT REAL, TANGIBLE AND ACCESSIBLE TO THE VISITOR.

STRATEGY 1
TO POSITION ITSELF AS A VALUABLE CONTRIBUTOR TO THE STATE’S TOURISM EFFORTS AS SOME ELEMENTS OF THE MOTBD STRATEGY ARE ADAPTED TO BILLINGS.

MOTBD BRAND PILLARS
Tourism Regions, Convention and Visitors Bureaus (CVB)s, communities and organizations must all work together to make visitors aware of the full array of experiences available to guests.

- The Visit Billings Visitor Information Center (VIC) is managed by Visit Billings and housed on the main floor of the Billings Chamber of Commerce office one mile from the Interstate 90 corridor. Nearly thirty part-time volunteers operate the center, which is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., with expanded hours on some high-season weekends. The VIC is complete with brochures, maps, guides and retail offerings. The Visit Billings and Chamber teams are knowledgeable, welcoming and on-the-ready in order to facilitate visitor queries. The goal is to foster successful stays and future Montana travels.

- The Visit Billings staff keeps an open dialogue of communication and information flow with tourism partners, area hotels, attractions, businesses and the community in preparation to provide exceptional customer service to expected visitors. This service initiative is spearheaded by the Trailhead Tourism Ambassador Program. The TTA mission is to provide frontline employees training and support regarding culture for visitors in and around Billings and southeast Montana.

- In FY19 Visit Billings will be evolving the TTA Program to include Visit Billings Trail Guides, empowering local businesses and key local influencers to be brand ambassadors, further enhancing the visitor experience.

- Visit Billings continues to foster connectivity within different social media platforms by offering visitors current and relevant content via Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter and YouTube. Visitors are invited to engage with the #VisitBillings brand throughout their journey.

STRATEGY 2
HIGHLIGHT AND HELP DEVELOP VIBRANT AND CHARMING SMALL TOWNS THROUGHOUT MONTANA.
Billings may boast big city amenities, but it does offer a truly small town feel. Billings offers travelers a destination for shopping, nightlife, dining, accommodations and culture – on the edge of the genuine frontier and near small-town Montana. As the largest community between Calgary and Denver, Spokane and Minneapolis, Billings is a vibrant community with access to small towns via Visit Southeast Montana and Yellowstone Country.

- Equally important to the visitor, the frontier character of its warm and hardworking people is uniquely Montana and small-town America. FY19 marketing initiatives will employ Billings locals as its Trail Guides, inviting visitors to participate in the culture and spirit of the destination and its people, whether connecting with local artists and artisans, discovering historical perspective through the lens of Yellowstone Kelly, or simply locating the “locals favorite” trails and burger spots.

STRATEGY 3
INTEGRATE NATURE AND TOWNS TO OFFER AND DELIVER A BALANCE OF “BREATHTAKING EXPERIENCES” AND “RELAXING HOSPITALITY.”
Whether visitors seek adrenaline pumping adventure or easy paced experiences, Billings is the perfect place to set up home base. With nearly 5,000 hotel rooms, a wide variety of local attractions, and access to breathtaking views and Montana icons, Billings will surprise and delight visitors from all walks of life.

“FORGE YOUR OWN PATH” BRAND EVOLUTION
Onward planners. Today is ours for the taking. And tomorrow too. For we have a vision of something better. Of doers, thinkers, makers. New inventions. New innovations. The likes the world has never seen. Let’s forge our own path. Blaze new trails. Find new freedom. Be guided by the greatness that lies ahead. Let’s stoke the fire of the pioneer spirit. Call home to a place we’ve only seen in dreams. Big skies and big things. This is freedom. A city without limits. Born in the shadows of the Rimrocks. Fed on dreams. Bred on dreams. A city with no borders. A city with no边界. What do you want for yourself? For this life? For the places you dream of? Billings. Montana. This is Montana’s Trailhead. This is the beginning. Forge your own path. Billings. Montana’s Trailhead.

Leveraging Montana’s Trailhead, Visit Billings will be launching “Forge Your Own Path,” an evolution of the Billings brand promise, positioning into their own passions and start their own unique and memorable journey, authentic to the Big Sky Montana experience yet approachable and unexpected. “Forge Your Own Path” is built on the pioneer spirit of Billings’ culture and its people, from Yellowstone Kelly and Wilhem Clark (of Lewis and Clark) to today’s makers, innovators, adventurers and artists, representing the strong will, Western humility and the self-made perseverance that embodies the Billings way of life.

Visit Billings will differentiate itself from the competitive set by bringing the Billings experience to life through the lens of its brand essence, the spirit at the core of the destination. Typical tourism campaigns feature big scenery and “people doing stuff,” whether crossing a dirt bike, hiking or shopping. Visit Billings will stand out not only for its products and muddy back-lit action shots, but its authentic, accessible character.

MARKETING REGIONS AT HOME
As it’s currently positioned and marketed, Montana’s Trailhead directs visitors outward, away from Billings. This directly plays into the overall perception of a lack of things to do, events, entertainment and family activities within city limits. From initial on-the-ground research, this was also the case when the local community and business owners. More often than not, we were directed outside of Billings when seeking unique travel experiences. Community pride is a major component of a successful brand and its campaign efforts to drive visitation. It’s imperative that we continue to evolve the ambassador program, introduce new initiatives like the Billings Trail Guides, increase stakeholder engagement, and utilize local partnerships to instill pride and ownership of Billings.

SUMMER STRATEGY
Visit Billings will focus heavily on behavioral targeting around summer vacation planning and booking, with interest in outdoors, national parks and western heritage experiences. Based on recent Visitor Profile research, Visit Billings will target adult travelers 25-54 with an annual household income of $75,000 to $150,000.
SUMMER LEISURE STRATEGY AND CREATIVE MESSAGING

Summer season strategy will establish ownership of the most scenic route to Yellowstone National Park via Beartooth Highway. Branded as "Billings Yellowstone's Scenic Routes," messaging will focus on Billings' proximity to the surrounding unspoiled nature without sacrificing hospitality, hotel accommodations, great brunch spots and walkable brewery trails, western heritage sites, and even guaranteed opportunities to see and appreciate native animals up close at Montana's only zoo.

Partnerships will be developed in FY19 with companion frontier destinations to target summer bucket-list travel including an unprecedented list of iconic American sites and attractions from Mount Rushmore to Little Bighorn Battlefield for the "Great American Road Trip."

While family remains an important summer demographic, especially in targeting growth of older Millennial families, the current visitor profile indicates that a majority visitors to Billings are traveling without children. Ranked alongside Bryce Canyon and Glacier National Park, among others, Yellowstone is a bucket list attraction for a wide range of annual visitors. In growing awareness of Billings' proximity to the national park, as well as western heritage sites such as Pompey's Pillar and Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monuments, Visit Billings will target road warrior families seeking epic summer vacation memories. According to Mintel's Outdoor Enthusiasts, US - March 2017 report, six in 10 families say they are very enthusiastic about the outdoors, compared to slightly over one third of all adults. Younger men are more likely than women to participate in active outdoor activities, an opportunity to engage with fathers. Creative messaging and media plan will balance growth of families traveling with an equally outsized target of outdoor enthusiasts traveling as couples or as groups of friends.

To maximize budget, national marketing initiatives will focus on 3-3 key geographic markets with the highest potential for ROI; ensuring a minimum reach and frequency to truly make an impact. Visit Billings and BOF conducted a thorough market analysis to determine the top markets most effective for summer-visit growth, especially for new visitors. This analysis includes factors such as proximity and accessibility (drive time and flight convenience and cost), population within reach of demographics, web visits and engagement, and travel behavior data among other variables.

The following position maps key target geographic areas, primarily top national feeder markets and DMAs with direct flights, based on demographic and behavioral considerations indicative of travelers seeking a destination experience that aligns with that of Billings. MT, Areas shaded in darker red and orange indicate larger concentrations of desired travel behavior. This includes variables such as DMA population which has spent over $5,030 on domestic travel, taken 2+ domestic non-business trips or visited a National Park within the last 12 months. (source: Esri ArcGIS 2010 U.S. Census data)

POTENTIAL OUT-OF-MARKET MARKETS FOR SUMMER TARGETING:

Denver DM, COA

With a population of over 1.5M ages 25-64, Denver ranks highest in travel behavior that aligns with Billings' destination experience. The "Mill High City" shaves high for nature enthusiasts with an active, outdoor lifestyle. Located about 550 miles Southeast of Billings, Denver has affordable daily non-stop flights and is within drive proximity at about an eight-hour trip. The market ranks as the primary feeder market in preliminary visitor profile data, and fifth in unique website visits to VisitBillings.com

Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN DMA

Another large feeder market with daily non-stop flights to Billings, Minneapolis is about 840 miles South/Southwest of Billings, about a 12 hour drive or short two-hour flight. This prime target market sits at an ideal location for the "All American Road Trip." The target population age 25-54 is about 1.7M and skews high for frequent travelers who participate in sightseeing while on domestic vacation.

Dallas-Ft. Worth, TX DMA

As the newest direct flight to Billings, recent promotional partnerships have seen growth in this feeder market. Located about 1,300 miles from Billings, visitation will be dependant on affordable and convenient non-stop flight service. Dallas population of ages 25-54 is over 2.9M and, of Billings target markets, it has one of the largest populations of frequent domestic travelers and those who have visited a state park. The market ranks high in unique website visits to VisitBillings.com, in part due to recent promotional efforts.

Salt Lake City, UT DMA

Ranked second highest in unique website visits to VisitBillings.com, Salt Lake City is under a nine hour drive from Billings or a quick one-hour non-stop flight; however, its location southwest of Billings may inhibit opportunities to target summer visitation around Yellowstone National Park. Salt Lake City's population age 25-54 sits just under 1.1M. A prime target for outdoor enthusiasts and nature lovers, Salt Lake City itself is surrounded by five of Utah's own national parks.

REGIONAL TARGET FOR ANNUAL GROWTH YEAR ROUND - UTILIZATION OF PRIVATE FUNDS FOR REGIONAL MARKETING

Regional focus will remain on targeted markets with familiarity or affinity to Billings. These include markets within 350 miles, primarily in-state as well as Wyoming and South Dakota. For leisure travel, these close-in drive markets have a higher propensity to visit year-round for events, outdoor activities and nearby skiing in the winter, and short getaways for shopping and dining in Montana's biggest city. In some cases, travel may align with extending the need visit (doctor's appointment) overnight to include leisure activities.

Creative messaging will focus around "things to do," consistently providing potential visitors new reasons to travel to Billings and establishing a sense of urgency around booking for special seasonal features, such as opening of Beartooth Highway or holiday family ski retreats. Primarily promoted through digital targeting, these travel drivers will be communicated through the brand lens of "Forge Your Own Path." A content calendar will outline key travel driving events, activities and attractions by season, and map out markets and allocated budgets throughout the year.

A win lose this past year was when visitors showing increased enthusiasm in learning more about winter activities at Montana's Trailhead. This past year's winter campaign focused on why you should make Billings a destination on a snow day. The messaging focused on gearing up and getaway to Billings for snow shoes and warm brews.

Regionally, our digital display ads for our fall, holiday and winter campaigns saw CTRs between 0.04% - 1.19%. The Brandpoint listicle drove 645 visitors in a very steady stream over the course of the winter campaign - 45% of all referral traffic. The new microsite was introduced in 2018-17 to help position Billings as a viable and competitive winter tourism destination in Montana. Campaign efforts on both a regional and national level directed to this site. These efforts were continued to be reinforced in FY19 with an increase of 24% unique pageviews and increase of 5.9% average time on site. Our efforts will continue in FY19 with website updates and potential focus on SEO.

Brand partnerships, Facebook Caravans ads and programmatic will present opportunities to brand and showcase product differentiators. In FY 2018-2019, Visit Billings will brand and own these differentiators such as Billings' Brew Trail, the only walkable brewery district in Montana, as well as the destination's authentic culinary experiences from award-winning brewers to James Beard recognized chefs.

TWO/FOUR WHEEL

The two and four wheeled market is lucrative for the Billings region, with the Beartooth Highway, voted by AMA Magazine as the #1 Motorcycling Road in America, just 60 miles away. FY17 saw the completion of the Gold Wing Road Riders Association Wing Ding event with targeted recruitment to these riders.

The target audience is men and women motorcycle enthusiasts 35-64 residing in the United States – on any model bike, in any age group. Specifically talking to the two-wheeled group, Harley riders are generally mid-40s to early 50s. Honda Gold Wing riders can skew toward mature riders with time to tour. BMW riders are generally mid-40s to 80s. Motorcycle riders in this area enjoy touring vacations, driving long distances and “experiencing” the journey. Women riders typically stop more often, visiting, shopping and relaxing in cities.

Visit Billings has partnered with Butler Motorcycle Maps to offer a variety of detailed tour options in order to ensure all motorcyclists enjoy the best ride experience into and out of Billings and the region.

INTERNATIONAL

International marketing will continue to grow with emphasis on the German and Asian markets. FY18 saw continued partnership with Brand USA.

Visit Billings staff will again work to host opportunities like workshops that will help stakeholders and tourism partners best host international visitors. Such promotion and involvement programs can help identify the role of Montana's Trailhead in international leisure market expansion. The development of Billings Trail Guide program, an evolution of the current Trailhead Tourism Ambassador program, will expand the program beyond hotel frontline employees to help gain traction for the tourism industry and assist the destination in offering first class hospitality as a whole, particularly for international visitors.

Canada remains a viable international market for Billings, particularly during spring/summer when driving tourists on route to Yellowstone National Park is leveraged for this market. As the exchange rate continues to fluctuate, so does the viability of this market.

Visit Billings will continue to research the international landscape for other viable markets and will seek opportunities to market our destination in partnership with other strong voices like Brand USA and the MOTBD. Additionally, group travel is significant for the international market and efforts in this area continue to grow.

GROUP TOUR

Yellowstone National Park and Little Bighorn Battlefield, along with the Lewis and Clark Trail, in which Billings plays a major role, are key attractions positioning Billings as a trailhead to access popular tourism sites from a reliable and group-friendly destination. Billings offers tour operators 55 hotels to choose from (5,000 sleeping rooms) along with more than 500 restaurants, the historic Walkable Brewery District, strong retail offerings, museums, historical and cultural attractions, as well as adventure and recreational opportunities for all groups of all sizes.

Billings continues to rival its competitive-set cities for adventure, access, and experience. Billings' proximity to Beartooth Highway, a consistently top ranked scenic drive in North America, and the close-in northeast entrance to Yellowstone National Park at Cooke City/Silver Gate is a major asset to the Billings tourism industry and the group tour market. Visit Billings appreciates its relationship with the Red Lodge business community and town leaders as we work to attract groups in partnership with Visit Southeast Montana.

The incubation period in generating successful leads in the group travel market spans a multi-year strategy where tour operators begin booking new itineraries 12-18 months ahead of tour schedule execution. Visit Billings staff will focus on marketing Billings as a preferred travel destination in the tour group market on a variety of websites as well as in order to compete in this expanding tourism market.

MEETINGS AND CONVENTIONS

Within a highly competitive marketplace, meeting and convention sales are a top priority for Visit Billings. Meetings business grows year-round visitation, especially in the shoulder seasons. Relationships with meeting and event professionals are a key to the future of this segment, along with quality properties, state-of-the art facilities and attractions that create excitement about the destination and its brand. Billings is a strong meeting and convention market, with over 100,000 sq. ft. of flexible meeting space and 5,000 hotel rooms. With multiple proposed development projects under review, Visit Billings will continue to advocate for a new large-scale convention center and as well as surrounding, walkable multi-use and entertainment products. Partnering and supporting the Harris Company and the region's One Big Sky District development efforts will help align this segment for growth as part of the Visit Billings 2027 vision.
Visi Billings will focus on small market meetings and major city-wide convention business that benefits convention properties and multiple hotels. Such growth in this segment will result in continued progress in hotel occupancy, average daily rate (ADR), and impact the local economy by filling restaurants, retailers and attractions. This also supports the workforce and to some extent, the area’s tax base.

Sales and marketing initiatives will be aimed toward planners and decision makers of small market meetings, those with 400 attendees or less, utilizing three or more hotels with approximately 400 peak room nights and between 8,000 and 20,000 square feet of meeting space.

Planners are concerned about having state of the art venues that support high attendance at meetings. They also desire destinations with attributes they believe their delegates will value. Multitaskers who want all destination information at their fingertips, planners also seek to build relationships with a destination. There is an emphasized focus on the experience beyond the four walls of the meeting room, and sales efforts will highlight that experience for Billings.

Targeted industries include two and/or four-wheeled, energy, agriculture, religious, corporate, military, trails, cycling, outdoor/recreation, healthcare, non-profit and professional and trade associations. Billings’ amenities and access to surrounding bucket list attractions elevate its position with city-wide convention groups like BMW MOA, Gold Wing, Corvette, Mustang and Harley. Record attendance and success for previously hosted rallies position Billings well for future city-wide bookings in the two and four wheel markets and beyond.

SPORTS

As a leading regional destination in the sports market, Billings offers a wide range of venues accommodating several sports categories. The current sports facilities, coupled with strong air service options and proximity to national attractions position Billings strongly in this growing tourism segment. Team-friendly restaurants, local attractions, affordability and competitive room rates make Billings an ideal sports hub for youth, high school, collegiate, and amateur athletic events.

A highly competitive segment, sports event travel includes not only the athletes, coaches, officials and trainers, but also parents and family members. This supportive group comes to play a loyalty role, but seeks experiences outside of a tournament bracket. At the same time, there are athletes, professional and amateur, who make Montana part of their itineraries to hike, raft and climb as well as experience fishing, hunting and birding.

In March 2018, Billings welcomed its second year of the NCAA Division I Women’s Basketball National Championships with 32 teams competing in 31 games in six days at Rimrock Auto Arena. Billings will be host community to Montana State University Billings’ Athletics as the destination for the 2018 and 2020 NCAA Dill West Region Cross County Championships which aligns the city well for a future bid effort regarding the national championship. Visit Billings also looks forward to assisting MSU Billings Athletics with the 2019 GNAC Softball Championship.

For a sports event planner, one of the most important decision factors in selecting a destination is its track record of hosting similar events. Destinations with a clear track record prove their ability to accommodate venue and hotel needs, and in the event planner’s mind this is easier to work with. Visit Billings currently targets sports planners, tournament directors, and sports industry decision makers representing competitive events such as volleyball, lacrosse, soccer, softball, basketball, and cross country to include amateur, K-12 and collegiate competition. Primarily a regional scope to include Montana, Regional, Northwest, Pacific Northwest and Midwest conferences and associations.

As the sports travel segment continues to grow in Billings, it’s necessary for the stakeholders, the community and Visit Billings as a DMO to have a better understanding of the opportunities available to recruit new, and expand existing, sporting events. In FY18, Visit Billings partnered with regional stakeholders to conduct a sports facility feasibility study. Results of the independent analysis identify a need for several facilities including a multi-court indoor facility, ice arena (two sheets of ice would be ideal), and competitive swimming facility, as well as lighting, turf and field improvements to existing facilities. For Visit Billings, it’s time to look at executing long term strategic planning for sports tourism sales and marketing, take steps to organize a community sports committee and create a position at Visit Billings that could result in the hiring of a sports manager to execute sales, marketing and service of this important segment. Sports tourism is a significant part of Visit Billings 2027.

b. What are your emerging markets?

As noted previously, here is a look at emerging markets, under contemplation, for Visit Billings:

POTENTIAL OUT-OF-STATE MARKETS FOR SUMMER TARGETING:

Denver, CO DMA

With a population of over 1.8M ages 25-54, Denver ranks highest in travel behavior that aligns with Billings’ destination experience. The “Mile High City” skews high for nature enthusiasts with an active, outdoor lifestyle. Located about 550 miles Southeast of Billings, Denver has affordable daily non-stop flights and is within drive proximity at about an eight-hour trip. The market ranks as the primary feeder market in preliminary visitor profile data, and fifth in unique website visitation to VisitBillings.com

Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN DMA

Another large feeder market with daily non-stop flights to Billings, Minneapolis is about 840 miles South/Southwest of Billings, about a 12 hour drive or short two-hour flight. This prime target market sits at an ideal location for the “All American Road Trip.” The target population age 25-54 is about 1.7M and skews high for frequent travelers who participate in sightseeing while on domestic vacation.

Dallas-Ft. Worth, TX DMA

As the newest direct flight route to Billings, recent promotional partnerships have seen growth in this feeder market. Located over 1,300 miles from Billings, visitation will be dependent on affordable and convenient non-stop flight service. Dallas population of ages 25-54 is over 2.9M and, of Billings target markets, it has one of the largest populations of frequent domestic travelers and those who have visited a state park. The market ranks high in unique website visitation to VisitBillings.com, in part due to recent promotional efforts.

Salt Lake City, UT DMA

Ranking second highest in unique website visits to VisitBillings.com, Salt Lake City is under a nine hour drive from Billings or a quick one-hour non-stop flight; however, its location southwest of Billings may inhibit opportunities to target summer visitation around Yellowstone National Park. Salt Lake City’s population age 25-54 sits just under 1.1M. A prime target for outdoor enthusiasts and nature lovers, Salt Lake City itself is surrounded by five of Utah’s own national parks.

Optional: Include attachments here.

c. What research supports your target marketing?

Resources:

Esri ArcGIS - 2010 U.S. Census data
http://www.btr.umt.edu/
https://www.ustravel.org/
http://www.mtonline.com/
Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development in partnership with Destination Analysts
Destination Analysts in partnership with Visit Billings
VisaVue
BCF Agency

2018-2019 STRATEGIC GOALS

Focus: The Visitor Experience
Foster Visitor Growth at Montana’s Trailhead
Visit Billings as a destination management and marketing organization, promotes Billings and supports the local tourism economy. The Visit Billings team assists the destination and stakeholders (Billings and Yellowstone County lodging partners) by using strategic marketing campaigns, deliberate activities, tourism leads, sales missions, familiarization tours, publicity efforts and other regional, domestic, and international promotional efforts to increase visitation to the city and region.

Full hotels equal to full restaurants, retail businesses and tourism attractions. In turn, the business climate and local economy thrive. This overarching goal for FY19 fully supports the mission of Visit Billings as the Billings Convention and Visitors Bureau and Billings Tourism Business Improvement District of Billings, Montana.

As the State of Montana prepares for the 2019 Legislative Session, policies that protect and promote travel including improvements to our roads and airports as well as protecting tourism funding and generation, will be a priority for Visit Billings and its managing organization the Billings Chamber of Commerce. At the same time, on a national level, Visit Billings is proud to continue to support the United States Travel Association’s (USTA) Project: Time Off. The average American leaves nearly 17 days of vacation time unused annually. Visit Billings supports the USTA’s efforts to disrupt the vacation stigma and will help communicate the message of the importance of taking time off. It’s key to personal well-being, professional success, and business performance while vital to local economic expansion.

Goal
The Visitor Experience
A positive visitor experience is a significant piece of a successful tourism economy. Cynthia Messer with the University of Minnesota’s Tourism Center, once stated that if every resident of a community is an essential partner in the tourism experience. As she noted, tourism has the opportunity to instill a sense of community pride and knowledge of local history that can elevate a destination and grow visitation. It has been evident in recent Visit Billings led research findings that the Billings’ community lacks civic pride. This can significantly impact visitor growth and visitor experience. As Messer also mentioned in a 2011 article, residents often focus on negative perceptions of a city. They don’t see it as a destination. So when a visitor asks basic questions of a resident, certain community-minded frustrations can be discussed like low-wage jobs, a ‘nothing to do here’ mentality, taxes, or traffic congestion instead of places to experience as a guest to the community.

This mindset aligns with what research shows for Billings. As Visit Billings 2027 evolves, The Visitor Experience strategy will be an umbrella priority. An improvement of community pride will play a significant role in the future of visitor growth at Montana’s Trailhead. From expanding the Trailhead Tourism Ambassador (TTA) program and shining a light on the importance of visitor orientation and facilitation to developing ways for the community to get involved as tourism ambassadors, we will work to inspire residents to become champions of Billings.

Goal
Support Airport Progression
Quality air service as well as pleasant arrival and departure experiences are essential to tourism growth for a destination.

Billings Logan Airport (BIL) is a proven strength for Billings, the surrounding region and Montana. Numerous flights per day serving several major hubs including Salt Lake City, Denver and Minneapolis/St. Paul, help grow visitation at Montana’s Trailhead and sustain a strong business climate. In FY17, American Airlines (AA) announced daily, year-round, direct service between Billings (BIL) and Dallas/Ft Worth, Texas (DFW) as Billings secured a Small Community Air Service Development Program Grant from the Federal Government. In FY19, that service may expand following a successful first 12 months of service. Visit Billings will work in tandem with community partners including the Chamber of Commerce, Big Sky Economic Development and the City of Billings to help sustain this newly established flight together with BIL officials.

In FY19, Visit Billings will continue to assist partners in fostering relationships with air carriers serving the city including United, Delta, American Airlines, Alaska Air, Allegiant and CapeAir. Together with the Visit Billings’ Chamber’s Air Service Committee, Visit Billings staff and the TBID Board of Directors will monitor growth and expansion opportunities for air service into BIL, and will foster relationships with air carrier officials.

As the City of Billings and its Aviation and Transit Department work to move the destination forward with expanded air service and by enhancing the traveler’s experience, Visit Billings will provide leadership support for the City’s $47M airport expansion and development project. This is a crucial piece to tourism growth in Billings and southeast Montana. Visit Billings will also foster its relationship with the Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development (MOTBD) in the agency’s efforts to grow air service for the state of Montana as a whole.

Goal
Increase Leisure Visitation
Investing in leisure tourism marketing strategies is a top objective for Visit Billings. The regional, national, and in some cases, international, markets support the majority of Visit Billings’ stakeholders.

From the regional resident to the international traveler, Billings is an attractive destination. Local amenities and gateway access to national historic, cultural and natural attractions help strengthen the destination’s brand and boost visitation. The overall leisure marketing strategy is to increase year round visitation targeting regional, national and international travelers. In FY17, the team began the process of assessing and diversifying the organization’s leisure marketing efforts. These strategies will continue to be assessed and expanded in FY19.

As of the publishing of this document, Visit Billings was approaching the end of a year-long, tourism research project with Destination Analysts. The final research report is expected during the first quarter of FY19. At this time, this information obtained that helps guide marketing efforts for the organization will be released to all stakeholders and also contemplated and considered by the Visit Billings staff. Then, together with the Visit Billings creative agency of record, BCF Agency, this research will be applied in future marketing efforts to help grow leisure visitation for the destination.

Goal
Sports Tourism at Montana’s Trailhead
Strong gains in sports tourism have helped position Billings as a sports events destination since 2012. Continuing to position Billings as a sports events destination will remain a priority. In FY19, Visit Billings staff, together with the Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID) Board of Directors, will plan to expand sports tourism efforts for Visit Billings as a destination marketing and management organization.

Supporting public partners like the City of Billings, Yellowstone County, and South Billings Urban Renewal District as well as private investors and sports supporters will be important to Visit Billings staff and the future of this tourism segment. Meanwhile, continuing to foster relationships with MSU Billings, Rocky Mountain College, the Big Sky State Games, and YMAC, as well as with youth and amateur tournament directors will be a priority.

As FY20 approaches, Visit Billings will be prepared to hire a sports sales manager, partner with strategic partners to create a sports tourism focused committee that will also support youth and amateur sports from a community point of view, continue to apply findings from research released in the Yellowstone County Sports Facility Feasibility Study executed by Vicius Advisors in 2018, and, finally, will build off of past successes to prepare the destination for sports tourism growth in the future – Visit Billings 2027.

Goal
Meetings and Conventions Recruitment
The meetings and conventions recruitment conversation is significant at Montana’s Trailhead. The value of this tourism segment for Billings must be elevated. Tradeshows, business meetings, conventions, and conferences all bring people and business to Billings – directly impacting the local economy year-round. Working with stakeholders and strategic partners, Visit Billings staff will continue to grow this segment which speaks for 24% of visitation to Billings (RTM, 2019). As a destination marketing and management organization, Visit Billings will collaborate with tourism partners to market and grow this segment for Billings. These efforts will include strategic marketing campaigns, tradeshow attendance, one-on-one meeting planner exchanges, mining leads, sales missions, and meeting planner-focused familiarization tours.

Simultaneously, updated research, expected to be released mid-year 2018, along with Chamber of Commerce efforts to spotlight the importance of a regional convention center for Montana, will help define the future of this market for Billings. Visit Billings is a proud strategic partner with the Hammes Company in the future of One Billings Sky District. This development project focuses on a large-scale convention center which would complement Billings’ six smaller convention center properties and MetaPark as an exhibition, agricultural and arena focused venue. Visit Billings will leverage its efforts and will drive innovation in this tourism realm.

Goal
The International Marketplace
Visit Billings appreciates its relationship with the Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development (MOTBD), Rocky Mountain International, Brand USA and other entities that help grow international travel to the western United States.

In recent years, top leisure activities for overseas visitors were ranked as follows: (1) shopping, (2) sightseeing, (3) fine dining, (4) national parks/monuments and (5) amusement/theme parks. Visit Billings will continue to work together with the MOTBD and partners like Visit Southeast Montana to better position eastern Montana for international travel experiences.

Visit Billings has worked with Brand USA, Rocky Mountain International and events like the U.S. Travel Association’s IPX MarketPlace to help foster relationships in specific international regions. Strong relationships have been built to countries like Italy, Germany and the UK, but there is much work to be done especially considering concerns surrounding a reported decline in U.S. competitiveness for international travel dollars in recent years (United State Travel Association). As a destination, Billings aligns well with the goals of the international visitor with plans to experience the west, National Parks, and Montana.

Visit Billings will again work in FY19 to provide more education to tourism partners and stakeholders (sponsored workshops) to help research and grow promotional programs aimed at attracting and accommodating the international traveler and international group tours. International familiarization tours will also remain a priority to help staff and stakeholders build relationships with international tour operators.

a. in what types of co-ops with MOTBD would you like to participate?

COOPERATIVE OPPORTUNITIES

Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development
Visit Billings will continue to partner with the Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development (MOTBD) in marketing and advertising opportunities including print, digital, OOH, and trade shows. There is value in not only leveraging dollars toward increasing audience reach and frequency, but in the association and tie to MOTBD messaging and brand pillars.

Digital opportunities that hyper target a qualified audience of travelers have been heavy lifters for Billings. Accordingly, staff will look first to those opportunities again. In FY18, Visit Billings participated in several of the MOTBD co-op advertising opportunities including iExplore, Sojern and TripAdvisor. Similar placements will be considered in FY19.

Visit Billings is always eager to partner in co-operative opportunities with MOTBD, when opportunities align appropriately.

**Optional: Include attachment here.**

Visit Billings CVB - Destination Red Lodge Partnership.pdf

**COOPERATIVE OPPORTUNITIES**

**Local and Regional Partnerships**

Visit Billings would like to participate in the following cooperative opportunities with Neighboring Regions:

- Yellowstone County, and particularly Red Lodge, is another important region where Visit Billings will continue building a relationship. Many successful familiarization tours and wins have been realized through team efforts between Billings and Red Lodge including the Hot Bike Tour, Outdoor Writers Association of America, BMW MOA Rally and GVWRR Wa Ding 38. Billings is a gateway to the Beartooth Highway (considered part of Yellowstone Country) and Yellowstone National Park via Red Lodge. Billings is also a welcome destination for travelers coming out of the park seeking services, shopping and urban amenities.
- Visit Billings believes there is value in strengthening the benefits each city offers the other.
- Visit Billings will partner with MOTBD and Montana Regions/CVBs on relevant consumer trade shows when appropriate. Billings has and will continue to partner with MOTBD and Visit Southeast Montana at the Rocky Mountain International Roundup, U.S. Travel Association’s IPW and the GoWest Summit. These partnerships have proven successful in the past and are expected to be in the future.
- Finally, falling in line with MOTBD’s strategic goals, Billings will partner with the City of Billings, Chamber of Commerce, Yellowstone County, Downtown Billings Alliance and local leaders to preserve the assets and quality of life in the community, maintaining productive dialogue around seeking ways to improve Billings and our product as a year-round destination. The Yellowstone Kelly Interpretive Site renovation at Swords Rimrock Park is a perfect example of community partnership. In FY19, Visit Billings will also be partnering with our locals, the people who have established the character of the destination. We will be establishing our Billings Trail Guide program and seeking inspiration in our people and the stories of the past with tourism product development front of mind.

**a. What types of co-ops have you done in the past? Were they successful - why or why not?**

Visit Billings has participated in the following co-operative opportunities in the past, including, but not limited to, publication opportunities as well as transportation campaigns in prime markets like Chicago.

Visit Billings has and will continue to partner with MOTBD and Visit Southeast Montana on relevant consumer trade shows including, but not limited to, Rocky Mountain International Roundup, U.S. Travel Association’s IPW and the GoWest Summit. These partnerships have proven successful in the past and are expected to be in the future.

In FY18, Visit Billings participated in MOTBD co-op advertising opportunities including TripAdvisor. TripAdvisor has been a trusted partner for many years, and the plan moving forward is to continue to nurture and grow the relationship.

Visit Billings is always eager to partner with regional friends and of course, MOTBD, when opportunities align appropriately.

**Optional: Include attachments here.**

FY19 Visit Billings Marketing Plan.pdf

**Marketing, Segment, Strategy & Budget**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marketing Segment</th>
<th>Marketing Method</th>
<th>Does research support this method?</th>
<th>Describe your method.</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>How do you plan to measure success?</th>
<th>Provide a brief rationale.</th>
<th>Estimated budget for method.</th>
<th>Marketing Method Evaluation</th>
<th>Are you using private funds to support this method? (optional)</th>
<th>Non bed tax funds used? Yes/No (optional)</th>
<th>Add'l Attachments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consumer</td>
<td>Printed Material</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>THREE PHASES: INSPIRE, ORIENT, FACILATE</td>
<td>According to the current Montana Tourism and Recreation Strategic Plan, the best way to consider how the potential traveler considers and contemplates trip planning and execution of an itinerary is as follows: INSPIRATION - The process of being mentally stimulated to do or feel something, especially to do something creative. ORIENTATION - The relative physical position or direction of something. FACILITATION - The action of facilitating something to make it easy or easier.</td>
<td>Printed and digital materials assist in proper execution of the facilitation phase and accommodating visitors. THE FACILITATION PHASE is where the traveler seeks experiences en route to a destination and during a stay.</td>
<td>Figure visitors to ensure a positive experience during trip execution to help result in more repeat visitation and bookings.</td>
<td>$6,350.00</td>
<td>Billings Historic Warehouse Brewery District Map</td>
<td>This method was successful and the objective was met to distribute the supply of the tear-off map to assist visitors. 10,000 copies were printed and the supply was depleted. Typically, Visit Billings must reprint the fail every six months for distribution. This printed map is distributed in the Billings Visitor Information Center, at the Billings Logan Airport Visitor Area, is given to stakeholders and tourism partners to distribute at their hotels or attractions, and is also included in all convention bags or on service tables for events. In 2013, Visit Billings created the Billings Historic Warehouse Brewery District. Over the course of several years, many breweries, two distilleries, and eventually a Cider House opened in a 1.5 mile area of downtown Billings – all walkable for visitors. Visit Billings spearheaded the project six years ago and continues to foster the promotion of the tour today as a means to court visitors to the destination. This map includes safety options including ways to contact Uber, Lyft, and a list service restaurants options, and opportunities to stop at galleries, museums, and other points of interest along the route as the establishments located in the map. Since the initial design of the District, the Billings Historic Warehouse Brewery District Map is available in digital format at VisitBillings.com and is part of orientation materials (digital and print) for meeting planners, conventions attendees, and sports teams. The map is also made available for facilitators at hotel that clients, the Billings Visitor Information Center, and the Billings Visitor Guidebook. The District is also part of several national/cruise campaigns (cruise ships), social media offerings, digital assets, and print assets to create inspiration. The printed piece is a very important component to the project and will be continued. In 2015, in order to offer non-alcoholic brew or different time of day options to guests, the Visit Billings team added a Brew Map to the backside of this front/back print piece. A highlights coffee and tea shops in the same vicinity.</td>
<td>Private funds were used. Visit Billings is in the process of ordering the creative for the above printed. With the exception of the YNP/GNP Map File, the file was applied to the project by Carol Cook, Director of the Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Budget Overview

The three print projects executed in FY19 were all successful. Each project is important in the orientation and facilitation phases of travelers, and at least one is a key to inspiration to travel to Billings and Montana.

Visit Billings staff and stakeholders see great value in this map and will continue to update the material and print the material. It is available online here: https://www.visitbillings.com/billings-drive-trade.

There is no advertising offered on this publication.

This project is exempt from bidding requirements per the Regulations and Procedures for Regional/CVB Tourism Organizations because the project cost was less than $2,000.

There is no advertising offered on this publication.

The cost to print this FY19 supply of the map was $1,407.05, but the print shop offered a discount of $148.79 for a total of $1,258.26 for this map supply.

Visit Billings reprints this map for distribution. In May 2019, Visit Billings ordered 200 maps which consist of 50 sheets per each 11x17 paper that is 80#. This is a total of 10,000 in quantity. It is a glossy, four color design that appeals to visitors and potential visitors for it’s sports travels. Again, this supply was depleted.

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The objective of enhancing a photo library is to increase the number of assets for Visit Billings, stakeholders, MOTBD, and tourist partners. High-quality, relevant, and targeted images are key to property marketing and brand development.

Visually compelling and INSPIRING photography increases engagement across all media applications, whether in the form of an article, a blog post, social media post, or in print. Images are the primary way to attract users to an article without a title or a headline, and they also increase the likelihood of a user clicking through to read the full article.

As noted in the Method, the objective of building and managing a relevant photo and video library for Visit Billings is to increase the number of photo assets in the organization’s library to allow the organization, stakeholders, tourism partners, and MOTBD to have access to fresh and targeted video and photographic assets as well as for marketing and sales needs.

As of June 30, 2019, Visit Billings spent $4,000 of the budget for the FY19 Photo/Video Library line item to purchase images from hosting two Millennial Marketers in Billings. Influencers were important to host the influencers in Billings prior to Billings executing Travel Blog Exchange as well. Arnd Fischer and Emily Sams were amazing to host. We had booked And previously, but leveraged the use of funds to include additional rights to images they obtained during the 48 Hours in Billings event.

The initial contract was to receive 20 images. In the end, Emily offered us 48 images that will be used across all media applications, whether it be increasing the view rate of an article, swaying a consumer’s selection process or improving social media engagement.

$5,500.00

Other funds were utilized for a full FY19 photo and video shoot for Visit Billings as well as for a social media campaign by the Visit Billings agency of record.

Yes

$46 hours in Billings, Montana_VER2.pdf

Private funds were utilized for a full FY19 photo and video shoot for Visit Billings as well as for a social media campaign by the Visit Billings agency of record.

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Visiting in leisure, business, and cultural marketing strategies is a top objective for Visit Billings. The regional, state, national, and international leisure support the majority of Visit Billings' stakeholders.

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Cooperative Opportunities

Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development (MOTBD) in marketing and advertising opportunities including print, digital, OOH, and trade shows. There is value in not only leveraging dollars toward increasing audience reach and frequency, but in the association and tie to MOTBD messaging and brand pillars.

In FY18, Visit Billings participated in several of the MOTBD co-op advertising opportunities including iExplore, Sojern and TripAdvisor. Similar again. In FY18, Visit Billings participated in several of the MOTBD co-op advertising opportunities including iExplore, Sojern and TripAdvisor. Similar again. In FY18, Visit Billings participated in several of the MOTBD co-op advertising opportunities including iExplore, Sojern and TripAdvisor. Similar again. In FY18, Visit Billings participated in several of the MOTBD co-op advertising opportunities including iExplore, Sojern and TripAdvisor. Similar again. In FY18, Visit Billings participated in several of the MOTBD co-op advertising opportunities including iExplore, Sojern and TripAdvisor. Similar again. In FY18, Visit Billings participated in several of the MOTBD co-op advertising opportunities including iExplore, Sojern and TripAdvisor. Similar again. In FY18, Visit Billings participated in several of the MOTBD co-op advertising opportunities including iExplore, Sojern and TripAdvisor.

Cooperative Opportunities are equally as important to Visit Billings as Local and Regional Markets.

Visit Billings said yes to digital opportunities that targeted a qualified audience of travelers using Sojern, TripAdvisor, and Parents magazine.

In FY19, Visit Billings will work with TripAdvisor and GWRRA Wing America, BMW tent, and Red Lodge, is another important region for Visit Billings and continue building a relationship. Many successful familiarization tours and events were realized through learn efforts between Billings and Red Lodge in June. Visit Billings is a gateway to the Beartooth Highway (considered part of Yellowstone Country) and Yellowstone National Park via Red Lodge.

Billings is also a welcome destination for leisure coming to Billings for shopping, seeking services, shopping and urban amenities. Visit Billings is a gateway to the Beartooth Highway (considered part of Yellowstone Country) and Yellowstone National Park via Red Lodge. Visit Billings is a gateway to the Beartooth Highway (considered part of Yellowstone Country) and Yellowstone National Park via Red Lodge.

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Patricia was successful in her role in driving qualified traffic to VisitBillings.com. Visit Billings has allocated resources to participate in MOTBD's joint venture programs as opportunities become available in June.

In FY18, Visit Billings included additional partnership in Monta, Colorado, North Dakota, South Dakota, Idaho and Wyoming content. Among paid social, Facebook and Instagram will remain prominent along with teasing YouTube and Pinterest with interest and keyword targeting. Creative materials will place emphasis on video placement, Instagram stories and Facebook’s Instant Experience. Paid Search will also continue to play a prominent role in driving qualified traffic to VisitBillings.com. Visit Billings has allocated resources to participate in MOTBD’s joint venture programs as opportunities become available in June.

In FY19, this included cover photo and video sponsorship that appears at the top of the destination pages to all travelers.

Destination branding which brands Visit Billings with an icon and cross-link to the social profile on TA. Participating destination photos to showcase Billings to travelers.

Sponsored profile which allows VB to gain more visibility and followers.

A 300x250 ad

The Discovery carousel which offers a mix of trips, articles, and videos for travelers to discover (be inspired and oriented) and become engaged while exploring Billings as a destination.

The FY19 TA commitment looked like this as well:

- $30,000 TripAdvisor spend (includes Destination Sponsorship & matching advertising spend)
- $80,000 for Acceleration Ad Serving
- 100% SOV of the standard IAB banner placements
- Content integration on TripAdvisor
- Matching advertising spend will run in the spring, targeting Montana content and active travel planners in target states

$20,000 Total

*Informally Premium Destination Partnership

**End date extended to renew at beginning of the calendar year without additional cost.

***The number of ad-sizes for the DS has been reduced

**No cost for the DS to be included

TripAdvisor suggests uploading a new hero image (2560x500), avatar, and updating the About Info.

- TripAdvisor’s overall performance was dampened by the 320x53 creative performance. Going forward, BCF recommends reimagining the mobile presence on TripAdvisor and incorporating alternative mobile ad units, e.g., mobile native ad unit. PDF advertisements were updated from a site-perspective (to better fit the social landscape) in conjunction with the BCF-sponsored creative.

Next Steps:

- Visit Billings and BCF will work with TripAdvisor to drive more qualified traffic & interest to the PDP page. We own 100% SOV and must have creative locked on the page. BCF will work internally, to see what we can do regarding creative refreshing. The summer campaign ended on 6/30/19, however, the Joint Venture portion of the campaign ended on 7/8/19 for TripAdvisor.

Visit Billings also expended funds for digital presence:

- Affiliate Mix
- Social
- Email
- AdYouLike

This Method and these projects were successful and will be continued as the objective(s) were met.

For calendar year 2018, Visit Billings Room Demand per Smith Travel Research or STR Reporting was 9.2%. The goal was 9% Visit Billings and Billings as a gateway tourism destination is importantly, to see what we can do regarding creative refreshing. The summer campaign ended on 6/30/19; however, the Joint Venture portion of the campaign ended on 7/8/19 for TripAdvisor.

Visit Billings to accurately use the STR Room Demand data along with ADR and Occupancy as reports for this Method.
Visit Billings appreciates its relationship with the Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development (MTOBD), Rocky Mountain International, Brand USA, and other entities that help grow international travel to the western United States.

In recent years, top leisure activities for overseas visitors were ranked as (1) hiking, (2) sightseeing, (3) fine dining, (4) national parks, monuments and (5) amusement/theme parks. Visit Billings will continue to work together with the MTOBD and partners like Visit Southeast Montana to better position eastern Montana for international travel experiences.

Visit Billings has worked closely with Brand USA, Rocky Mountain International, and other entities like the U.S. Travel Association's IPW Marketplace to help build relationships in specific international regions. Strong relationships have been established through participation in events like the U.S. Travel Association's IPW Marketplace to help foster international tour operators exposure and relationships.

Visit Billings staff will focus on the International Marketplace which Billings Staff line items, will focus on building relationships with countries like Italy, Germany and the UK, but there is much work to be done especially considering countries surrounding a reported decline in U.S. competitiveness for international travel dollars in recent years (United States Travel Association). As a destination, Billings aligns well with the goals of the Montana Tourism and Business Development (MTOBD). Billings is a trailhead to Yellowstone National Park and the Beartooth Battlefield along with the Lewis and Clark Trail, is which Billings plays a major role, as key to attracting international tour operators.

Visit Billings has built a platform to attract popular tourist rides from a reliable and quality-driven destination.

International travel market spans a multi-year strategy where tour operators begin booking by appointment-based trade shows, as well as more clout with such buyers as Billings is still a bit removed from gateways and entrances. Although we have seen in on pre or post familiarization tours in recent years or were visited with again at IPW in Anaheim.

The remaining 30-ish are all Travel Companies and they typically have interest in learning more about the destination.

**Success will be measured by:*
- Number of attendees to visit Billings at all site visits.
- Contact from European, Italian, and German buyers.
- Billings appreciated the work of the MONTANA brand to Help lead to good dialogue around the destination.
- Billings and local leaders to preserve the assets and quality of the in-kind offerings, maintaining productive dialogue around seeking ways to improve Billings and our product development.

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Consumer - Web-Media Marketing

Yes

To establish a minimum 10% lift of Billings’ target audience in its primary geographic markets with highest propensity for ROI, media will layer in placements that have the propensity to deliver the greatest targeted, non-overlapping audience. Key media placements will include both digital and traditional media. Key primary social and short form video. Media selection will also be cognizant of the media characteristics of particular markets as well as the target audience. Specific markets may present opportunities to utilize radio and television to enhance reach and recall, whether broadcast or streaming and over-the-top streaming. Visit Billings’ specific market analysis research, 2017 report which states 33% of outdoor enthusiasts said they look to TV programming to stay informed about outdoor activities they enjoy. While 38% of outdoor enthusiasts have used an online source to stay informed about outdoor activities and 25% use print magazines.

Exposure to media on multiple channels will be key in driving awareness and purchase intent, and exposing digital simultaneously with traditional offline media will drive greater lift. In addition, brand collaboration and sponsorship opportunities will further engage summer vacationers and outdoor enthusiasts with predisposition to visit national parks and western heritage experiences.

Travel Decision Process

Three Phases: Inspire, Orient, Facilitate

According to the current Montana Tourism and Recreation Strategic Plan, Billings needs to consider how the potential traveler identifies and contemplates trip planning and execution of any itinerary as follows.

The Process is Defined by Use of the Following Terminology and Corresponding Definitions:

Inspiration - The process of being mentally stimulated to do or feel something, especially to do something creative.

Orientation - The relative physical position or direction of something.

Facilitation - The action of facilitating something to make it easy or easier.

The Inspiration Phase is when the traveler is made aware of the general product and develops a desire to visit the destination. The Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development (MOTBD) is responsible for the facilitation of the marketing matrix as Montana’s brand image, the positioning of the state with inspirational imagery and copy. MOTBD uses strategies on both digital and traditional media. To inspire potential travelers, Montana and Billings markets will work together to establish a desire to visit the destination.

The Orient phase is when the traveler is aware of a destination and has decided to visit. This phase includes Montana’s key tourist pillows to inspire potential travelers to the state with inspirational imagery and copy. MOTBD focuses strategies on the state’s key markets to orient potential travelers to Billings. Building the destination into itineraries to Montana.

Billings’ market is Montana’s key tourist pillow to inspire potential travelers to the state with inspirational imagery and copy. MOTBD focuses strategies on the state’s key markets to orient potential travelers to Billings. Billings will create content and coordinate with Montana on the inspirations.

Potentially, the inspirations could include:

- A Montana itinerary
- Montana’s top attractions
- Montana’s best weather
- Montana’s best time to visit
- Montana’s best seasonal events
- Montana’s best outdoor activities
- Montana’s best food and drink

The Facilitate phase is when the traveler is ready to make a decision and has booked travel to the destination. In this phase, Billings will focus on behavioral targeting around purchase intent, digital and print media, with interest in promotions, national parks and western heritage experiences. Based on Visit Billings’ specific market analysis research, Billings will target ideal travelers 25-54 with an annual household income of $75,000 to $150,000.

Visit Billings’ specific market analysis research, 2017 report which states 33% of outdoor enthusiasts said they look to TV programming to stay informed about outdoor activities they enjoy. While 38% of outdoor enthusiasts have used an online source to stay informed about outdoor activities and 25% use print magazines.

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Digital reporting and metrics from agency will pair with Visit Billings’ specific market analysis research.

Potential Out-of-State Markets

State-Wide

- Denver, CO

With a population of over 1.5 million, Denver is the highest travel destination for Billings’ external markets. Denver is 25 miles South of Denver and provides easy access to an active, outdoor lifestyle. Located about an hour away from downtown Denver, Denver has affordable daily non-stop flights and is within three drive or short two-hour trips. Denver offers a variety of travel experiences, including natural and cultural attractions. The “City High City” views for a true mountain lifestyle with an active, outdoor lifestyle.

Brown County

Billings is a gateway to the city of Billings. Denver offers a variety of travel experiences, including natural and cultural attractions. The “City High City” views for a true mountain lifestyle with an active, outdoor lifestyle.

Missoula

Another large target market with direct non-stop flights to Billings.

Polyester-St. Paul, MN

Another large target market with direct non-stop flights to Billings.

Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN

Another large target market with direct non-stop flights to Billings.

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Another large target market with direct non-stop flights to Billings.
Consumer

Visits/Hotel Advertising

Yes

Summer season-national campaign strategy will hold southeast Montana's access to the most scenic routes to Yellowstone National Park via Beartooth Highway. Branded as “Billings Yellowstone’s Scenic Route,” messaging will focus on Billings presence in the surrounding unspoiled nature without sacrificing hospitality, hotel accommodations, great branch spots and worldwide travel trends, western heritage sites, and even guaranteed opportunities to see and appreciate native animals without close quarters. Only... Partnerships will be developed in FY19 with companion frontier destinations to target summer bucket-list travel including an unprecedented list of iconic American visits and attractions from Mount Rushmore to Little Bighorn Battlefield for the ‘Great American Road Trip.’

The site will include the full marketing plan for the targeted top national geographic areas, most top national travel markets and DMA's on demographics and behavioral considerations indicating travelers seeking a destination experience that aligns with that of Billings, MT. Areas in orange indicate larger concentrations of desired travel behavior. This includes variables such as DMA population that has larger money or demand for non-business trips or related to a National Park (within the last 12 months: source: Enor An/GS 2017 U.S. Census data)

Method will be measured based on Smith Travel Research Report (STR) which offers monthly snapshots of occupancy and room demand percentages as well as full reporting from the agency of record on the placements and performance of the placements (see attachment).

To maximize budget, national marketing initiatives focused on MSP, GDS, and SEO with the highest potential for ROI, ensuring a strong competition frequency to truly make an impact. Visit Billings and BCF conducted a thorough market analysis to determine which markets most effective for summer visitation growth especially for new travelers. This analysis considered factors such as proximity and accessibility (drive time and flight convenience and cost), population within target demographics, with similar social media usage and travel behavior data among other variables.

$40,000.00

In FY19, Visit Billings leveraged the Montana’s Trailhead brand and the destination’s “Forge Your Own Path,” brand which invites visitors to be their own pioneers and participate in a memorable journey, authentic to the Big Sky Montana experience yet approachable and unexpected.

“Forge Your Own Path” is built on the pioneer spirit of Billings’ culture and its people, from Yellowstone Valley and William Clark of Lewis and Clark to today’s makers, innovators, adventurers and artists, creating the strong link of West. Resident humility and the self-made perseverance that embodies the Billings way of life.

All creative and placements focused on the above marketing strategy.

Additionally, Visit Billings’ 2019 Media Plan focused on programmatic pre-roll and post-roll videos with online display retargeting. Through a DSP partner, the plan showcased new video assets for the destination.

Video continues to lead the storytelling space and is the most powerful way to connect emotionally with an audience. A new content partnership with RoadTrippers.com (private funds), a web and mobile travel-planning platform, will provide custom trip guides with display, email and social promotion.

Summer national campaigns:

- With the Summer campaign kicking off officially on 5/31, Visit Billings and the agency of record, BCF, used the first month of data to benchmark the campaign’s performance to ensure that the campaign was optimized to continue total conversion growth, as well as lower its overall cost per conversion.
- The campaign’s inflated overall cost per conversion was solely indicative to Delphion’s video cost per conversion and was expected; as video are not expected to drive conversions, but awareness.
- Video placements out performed display placements. End users were not initially responding favorable to the new, summer creative. BCF then worked with vendors to manually optimize display campaigns, as well as allowed vendor ad servers to gather information to recalibrate their algorithms to assess their end user response to new creative.

- TripAdvisor’s overall performance was dampened by the 320x50 creative performance. Going forward, BCF recommends reconsidering the mobile presence on TripAdvisor and incorporating alternative mobile ad units, e.g., mobile native ad unit. PDF advertisements were updated from a site perspective (to better fit the social landscape) in conjunction with this - BCF expected creative.
- Delphion’s video placement performed very well, delivering a consistent and overall Video Completion Rate of 60%. Display rendered a slightly Higher Cost per Conversion (CPC) in June however this slight upshift could be attributed to the linter time for the new ad serve to gather reporting. BCF continued to work with Delphion to manually optimize the campaign, while the partner’s algorithm maximized.
- Facebook saw strong performance out of the gate June and July 2019 with national leisure buy. The campaign focused around the Brand Experience unit and video units running across Facebook and Instagram Stories. Pinterest was also active. The Family Outdoors creative running in Stories for G drive into strongest initial interest as well strong conversion, While the lowest efficient in driving initial engagement was the Instagram Instant Experience it still proved to ultimately drive the right audience to the site with strong on-site engagement of those with significant volume of conversions.
- Several targeting tactics were tested for the YouTube campaign with performance and available inventory driving strategy built within Google AdWords. As the consumer campaign gained traction and historical data, CTR, CPC, and CPA metrics improved week over week for the life of the campaign.

Videos for the campaign can be seen here: https://vimeo.com/cohmos/wzw9/591765 (password: tony)

Next Steps:
- Visit Billings and BCF will work with TripAdvisor to drive more quality traffic to the PDP page, as we don’t DOM and our new visitor numbers respect the page. BCF will adjust. Initially, it is well what we can do regarding creative refreshing. The summer campaign ended on 6/30/19; however, the joint venture portion of the campaign started on 7/1/19 for TripAdvisor.
- Look-a-like targeting and Retargeting are being introduced to the Facebook campaign. As these adjustments gained traction, Facebook’s optimization of spend was monitored and adjusted to hedge budget.

Regarding Facebook and the eagr7تعاون 2019 national placements:
- Display delivery and native were initially extended to 6/14 to account for two weeks of being off while the website was being upgraded (VisitBillings.com), but was stopped 6/7 due to upload performance. This will also allow us to test new creative to ensure maximum performance. BCF will work with the agency to ensure success.
- Facebook continued to see strong performance at the beginning of May 2019 prior to the campaign being paused. With the resumption of the campaign, while initial performance in May dipped, June saw an improvement as the Facebook system recalibrated the campaign. The Instant Experience was turned off and budget shifted to the conversion campaign at the end of May 2019.
- Similar to the Facebook campaign, the Search campaign saw a dip in performance after being off of the VisitBillings.com website updates, but saw improvements as Google AdWords regained a post performance. The overall campaign was re-enabled and seen as good overall conversion performance. Additional negative keywords were added, poorly performing keywords were removed, and the pay per click strategy was adjusted.
- For Facebook and the Search campaigns, the CTR increase was significant, as it was the conversion data. The performance of the search campaign was improved with better budget allocation and the conversion data and AdWords was expanded to increase campaign reach to the national and regional level.
Consumer

Ad Agency Services

Yes

Visit Billings relationship with its ad agency, BCF Agency, is extremely important to the mission of the organization. The main role of an advertising agency is to work with you to develop an advertising campaign. Advertising agencies are staffed with copywriters, art directors, media planners who will create your ads and place them in the appropriate media.

Marketing and advertising are the most important pieces of destination marketing. As a destination management and marketing organization, staff need to be able to ensure that the investments in marketing are focused on a substantial return on the investment for stakeholders.

Working with an agency is essential.

Visit Billings agency of record is BCF Agency. This partnership, which includes a monthly retainer that is paid for using private dollars and Billings CVB dollars, will offer Visit Billings staff and stakeholders the following in FY19:

- Annual planning and strategizing
- Creative services are crucial to communicating inspirational and targeted messaging to prospective visitors. Advertising, branding, creative, and other marketing efforts are focused on a substantial return on the investment for stakeholders.

Next Steps:

- Test alternate Facebook audiences moving into future campaigns.

Visit Billings also expended funds in the following publications:

- Northwest Travel 2-page spread
- Lewis and Clark Marketing Program
- Washington Tourism Program
- Montana Official Tourism Program
- Yellowstone Journal
- America’s Outdoors: See pages 62-63 for ad and advertorial
- RoadRUNNER (part of two-wheel campaign)
- 2-page YouTube 2 min video
- 2-wheel Twitter
- Accessibility = 2-wheel
- Buy local brand
- AdFocus.biz
- Sojern
- Prezly

Lewis and Clark Marketing Program:

Visit Billings is a proud partner of the Lewis and Clark Expedition Marketing Program with J. Greg Smith Inc. This publication has been promoting Billings area visitor attractions in the Lewis and Clark Country since its inception in 2016. The program includes the following:

1) The Lewis and Clark Trail regional brochure for Montana and the Dakotas
2) Billings Trailhead Discovery Trail auto tour brochure

During FY19, Visit Billings Room Demand per Smith Travel Research or STR Reporting was 5.3%. The goal was 3%. Visit Billings and Billings CVB are aligned with tourism destinations that focus on a substance return on the investment for stakeholders.

- Leveraging Montana’s TRIP database along with STR and Occupancy as reports for Billings CVB accurately are used.

Such Methods will continue in FY20 as they proved successful in FY19. It is important for Visit Billings staff and the Visit Billings agency to consistently monitor which programs are performing in order to ensure proper investment.

Pioneers and start inviting visitors to be their memorable journey, inspiring, orienting, and facilitating are priorities for Visit Billings in partnership with MOTBD and Montana’s Regions and CVBs.

Next Steps:

- Test alternate Facebook audiences moving into future campaigns.

Visit Billings relationship with its ad agency of record is BCF Agency. This partnership, which includes a monthly retainer that is paid for using private dollars and Billings CVB dollars, will offer Visit Billings staff and stakeholders the following:

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**Marketing**

**Film**

- The Montana Film Office is a component of the Montana Department of Commerce. Film support is very important to Visit Billings. Previous partnerships with other areas of the office created major projects last year and contributed $60,000. This year, they may mean less funds are available due to demand.

**Multi-Media**

- Visit Billings looks forward to any opportunity to help the Montana Film Office as the Montana Film Office was very successful and will be continued. The Method was successful and will be continued.

**Opportunity Marketing**

- The Montana Film Office and MOTBD as well as other Regions and CVBs when a project arises. Visit Billings continues to have strong and consistent representation of Montana and MOTBD.

**Yes**

**Yes**

**Yes**

**Yes**

**Group Marketing**

- These dollars will be invested in print and digital marketing efforts for Meeting and Convention Recruitment, Group Tour Marketing, and Sports Tourism efforts.

**Multi-Media Marketing**

- Marketing efforts were set aside in FY19 as well. Private funding for a business meeting between a potential film project and Visit Billings.

**Yes**

**Yes**

**Yes**

**Yes**
Levelling Montana’s Trailhead, Visit Billings will be launching ‘For Your Own Path’, an evolution of the Visit Billings branded platform, making visits to the Billings market experience to life through the lens of its brand essence, the spirit at the core of the destination. Typical tourism campaigns feature big scenery and typical tourist attractions as the major role, yet key attractions positioning Billings as a trailhead to access popular tourist destinations and as a group-friendly destination. Billings offers 35 hotels to choose from (3,500 sleeping rooms) along with seven downtown restaurants, and an array of retail offerings, museums, historical and cultural attractions, as well as an array of outdoor recreational opportunities—all items that can assist with building an exciting and adventurous custom itinerary for groups of all sizes.

FAM trips are intended for operators to become familiar with certain products and offerings to better market their services to their clientBase. Group Tour, international, and domestic, as well as meeting planner familiarization events are very important to growing Montana’s Trailhead. Yellowstone National Park and Little Bighorn Battlefield, along with the Lewis and Clark Trail and Rapid City are major role, yet key attractions positioning Billings as a trailhead to access popular tourist destinations and as a group-friendly destination. Billings offers 35 hotels to choose from (3,500 sleeping rooms) along with seven downtown restaurants, and an array of retail offerings, museums, historical and cultural attractions, as well as an array of outdoor recreational opportunities—all items that can assist with building an exciting and adventurous custom itinerary for groups of all sizes.

FAM tours will be a continued means of encouraging Montana’s Trailhead to work independently and with MOTBD to invite journalists and expose them to Billings and the surrounding regions. In addition to the leads generated by FAMILIARIZATION FAM TOURS, Visit Billings will reach out to journalists on prospective story ideas. When a journalist shows interest, the team will be ready to execute a fully guided experience at Montana’s Trailhead. Media gathering entities like CNN will be seeking for tracking coverage and generating leads. Visit Billings will continue to invite and assist partners (including MOTBD and WBDI) to help grow the international landscape for the region. We will seek opportunities to expose Montana to an international audience with Montana’s Trailhead destination in partnership with other strong voices like Brand USA and the MOTBD. Group travel is significant to the international market and efforts in this area continue to grow.

Visit Billings employees are proud to continue partnering with MOTBD to expose potential buyers and tour operators to Montana including Billings.

In FY19, as the method outlived, Visit Billings partnered with MOTBD and other Regions and CVB’s to elevate Monatana to buyers. Working with MOTBD, Visit Billings was able to play a role in the 2018 Australia/New Zealand Mega Fams. Thirteen guests plus Brand USA hosts and staff from MOTBD arrived in Billings on Thursday, August 16 and stayed in and around Billings for two night hub and spoke to Yellowstone Country and southeast Montana. The guests enjoyed Billings’ nightlife and also took in major events like the St. Vincent Regional Medical Center’s July 4th fireworks. The group also visited the Montana Wild Interpretive Site before heading west to Miles City for the Crow Fair and the Indian County excursions.

Funds under this line item for FAM Tours in order to grow Group Tours included Homesteading riding, PICA Rodeo at First Interstate Arena at MetraPark, and meals with private dollars paying for all alcoholic beverages. Items include:

- Bars & Ulta
- Thomas
- Nicholson
- Hershov
- Shepard
- Sharp
- McBride
- Ledson
- Fowler
- Malcolm
- Fletcher (Brand USA host)
- Davis (Brand USA host)
- Toback (NZ Air Raj)
- Iverson (MOTBD)
- Brand (MOTBD)
- Sinex (Karst Stages)

Funds were also expended for a Meeting Planner Site Inspection conducted by Visit Billings to grow visitation for the destination in the Meetings/Convention Recruitment segment.

Visit Billings staff vetted, chose, and hosted successfully the following meeting planners:

FAM attendees were:

- Tara Bass - Helmsbriscoe
- Sines (Karst Stages)
- Birrell (MOTBD)
- Iverson (MOTBD)
- Davis (Brand USA host)
- Fletcher (Brand USA host)
- Sharp
- Shepherd
- Nicholson
- Thomas

Visit Billings also hosted a site inspection for the Montana Corp League’s National Convention which was ultimately hosted in Billings in August of 2019. It was one of the organization’s most attended conventions. The site inspection in 2017 was hosted with private funds for Visit Billings.

The final site visit was paid for using Billings OVB dollars. This second site visit was very important to the meeting planners in order for them to satisfy pre and post tours for attendees and to ensure all venues and services were secured.
In FY19, the contract for fulfillment by a contractor with Certified Folder Display (CFD) assisted Visit Billings by deploying Visitor Guidebooks at the following areas:

- Buffalo/Billstein, Wyoming
- Bison/Great Falls
- Yellowstone Routes
- Butte at I-15 and I-90
- Billings area magazine racks
- Rapid City/Black Hills

In FY19, Visit Billings supplied CFD 30,000 Visitor Guidebooks. We did run low on supply at some locations and will make adjustments to printing counts in FY20 runs.

Funds to make:

- The majority of guides are distributed via six (6) routes across southern and central Montana, including 555 stations.
- The key Rapid City/Black Hills distribution includes 233 locations.
- The Yellowstone routes offer 100 points of distribution.

The CFD contract with Visit Billings costs $16,393.11. This breaks down to less than $1,500 monthly to have the supply distributed to real areas, routes, and convenient stores across the region. Visit Billings does receive a non-profit discount with CFD.

The most expensive part of the contract is the display in the Black Hills region with the least expensive part of the contract: the distribution in area near the I-90/I-15 corridors near Butte and Helena.

Other contracts with CFD disposal guides at:
- Sweet Grass, Bozeman, Anaconda, and Dena-Motas Rest Areas
- Visit Billings will utilize dollars for general postage and fulfillment assistance with local mail service, MTS.
- Organizations may use up to 10% of their total budget for Opportunity Marketing to fund these initiatives.

In FY19, Billings saw growth of 2.2% to 5.2% in calendar year 2018 with continued growth in citywide demand for Room Demand in Montana or en route to Montana.

Visit Billings uses private funds to pay for the design and printing of the Visitor Guidebook inventory then leverages State CVB funds to facilitate, fulfillment, and postage. 27,308 Visitor Guidebooks were mailed utilizing in-house and MTS fulfillment services for FY19.

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Per statute, the maximum Support is $70,236.00. As noted in the Method, the Marketing Committee approved that Visit Billings’ destination marketing area fee was appropriately planned in the FY19 budget.

As noted in the Method, the potential visitors to Billings and the surrounding region. Visitor Guidebook, and is also available online at www.visitbillings.com. The Visit Billings maintains a toll-free number that rings directly into the Visitor Center Toll-Free Phone Number.

Visitor Center Toll-Free Phone Number

The Billings Visitor Information Center (VIC) is open year-round, 37.5 hours each week. The VIC is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., with expanded hours on some high-impact weekends. The Billings Visitor Information Center is located at 132 Commerce Center Way, Bozeman, MT 59715. The Billings VIC toll-free hotline is made available on printed materials including the Billings Visitor Guidebook in order to offer a free, long-distance phone call for those preferring a toll-free number.

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Visitor Billings staff continue to monitor the relevance of this line which costs $1,121.73 annually. This cost hasn’t increased or decreased. Some conversations with colleagues of other DMOS prove that many have canceled their toll-free numbers. Visit Billings still have given certain generations traveling or preparing to travel prefer to have a toll-free line and thus, this Method is considered successful, necessary and will continue for one more year as the objective for the organization is to orient and facilitate travelers or potential travelers via staff, volunteers, or other travel counselors.

$1,121.73 was expended which was 101.98% of the budget for this line item. Again, this program may be canceled prior to the end of FY20.

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Final two stages: the FACILITATION PHASE is where the traveler needs experiences an route to a destination and during a stay. The Billings Visitor Information Center (VIC) is considered successful, necessary and will continue for one more year as the objective for the organization is to orient and facilitate travelers or potential travelers via staff, volunteers, or other travel counselors.

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The objective of these funds is to appropriately and efficiently manage the organization’s operations.

### Marketing Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research</th>
<th>Yes</th>
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Targeted industries to mine meeting leads include both in-state and out-of-state. These industries include religious, corporate, political, trade, cycling, outdoor recreation, healthcare, non-profit and professional and trade associations. Billings is a hub for Montana and surrounding bucket list attractions due to its position with city-wide convention space including the Civic Center, Mustang and Dine. Record attendance and success for previously hosted notable projects such as Billings for future city-wide logistics in the form of accommodating tour groups, conventions, meetings and events, and beyond. EmpowerMINT assists staff with prospecting.

Account Management, Relationship Follower, Request objectives, followup, Cost Reporting, Smith Travel Research on STR which offers monthly snapshots of occupancy and room, demand percentage, ADR, and average daily rate. STR is unique in many other Montana cities, as a road to adventure, western experiences and deformation of Big Sky, County, offers firms the experiences that can be highly effective in drawing large attention. There are nearly 5,000 sleeping rooms, more than 12.7 million annual visitors, and a $250 million impact on the lodging, meetings and events real estate which accommodate the destination. In order to review and report the impact of events booked by the convention center, the Smith Travel Research Citywide Report is used.

With nearly 55 lodging partners reporting on ADR, Market Share, and other data points like Average Daily Rate to the Smith Travel Research company, Visit Billings can be heard on monitoring such data to influence and thermals of boosted events, but also to recognize weaknesses within the destination. For location, value season including months from April through October are in the Spring and Autumn, but November through March can be weaker offering value. Visit Billings works to book events early and often to satisfy employee satisfaction and support. Recently, the Tourism Partners market events during these months in hopes of strengthening the stakeholders bottom line with the destinations as a primary market growth.

In FY19, the State Revenue Expense budget was estimated at $11,000.00.

Visit Billings spent $10,420 of this budget.

### Research Support

<table>
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<th>Yes</th>
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Smith Travel Research produces a monthly report related to the STR Report. This report offers data on community, regional and national trends, which are then incorporated into the marketing plan. The STR Report is critical to the marketing plan.

In FY19, Visit Billings executed the contract for STR spending $1,980 on the Trend Report which allows staff the access to the competition set of other destinations to monitor including Montana cities, the U.S., Montana, and other cities comparable to Billings including Rapid City, South Dakota and Madison, Wisconsin. This, $2,240 was also spent as part of the overall STTR contract in order to combine, filter, and present data for Billings' cities report as related to:

- Occupancy
- Average Daily Rate (ADR)
- Room GPR

The project was successful and will be continued.

### EmpowerMINT

EmpowerMINT was not successful and the program will be discontinued.

For the FY19 Method, Destinations International (DI) offers a program called EmpowerMINT. It is a database of tens of thousands of conventions and meetings, large and small that can be filtered to meet the needs of the destination. Destinations International (DI) and EmpowerMINT (EMP) are able to subscribe to this database and mine for leads to recruit business to their communities.

While the subscription of this program has proven fruitful in the past by previous sales personnel, the current Meetings and Conventions Sales Manager does not utilize the program or the subscription enough. The current subscription to the DI has reached its end and will be cancelled for FY20. Please note, the list price for EmpowerMINT is $15,300. Visit Billings was able to contract with this subscription for $5,300 which was negotiated by the BO.

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### Marketing Support

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Marketing Support is one of the key areas that the Billings CVB can allocate funds to in order to attract new business and keep the existing business in Billings.

The objective for the FY19 Marketing Support will remain the same as the budget line item in FY19.

Visit Billings spent $6,725 of the budget line item in FY19.
Marketing Support

DMO Program Participation

Yes

Formerly DMAI, Destinations International (DI) strives to make its members successful. A DMO's mission is to attract visitors from outside the region, generate revenues for destination organizations, create jobs, and improve the quality of life through travel. DI is a member of the World Federation of Tourism Organizations (WFTO) and promotes the cooperation and common purposes among the international tourism organizations.

The Visit Billings team strives to partner with the Montana Office of Tourism and Economic Development (MOTBD), tourism partners and neighboring communities to work collaboratively and strategically to identify new revenue opportunities and projects through strong partnerships and destination management organizations (DMOs). Visit Billings promotes the destination and assists the destination and local tourism economy.

Visit Billings, as an employee of a DMO or DMO Board, is important to gain industry knowledge to be able to serve visitors to the best of their ability. The team will be a valuable partner in an employee of a DMO or DMO Board, visiting and reporting on the destination.

Papers and reports by the Destination Management Team will be made available to the Visit Billings Board of Directors (TBD) and Chamber/CVB. The Visit Billings staff member who attends - shows findings and feedback to colleagues and coworkers. Healthcare will also share any papers at the request of stakeholders.

Visit Billings' role in the event has a history of being a very worthy investment for many reasons including networking opportunities and the sharing of travel practices among destination professionals. It is critical for breeding future industry leaders and showcasing the workforce of the future.

This event has a history of being a very worthy investment for many reasons including networking opportunities and the sharing of travel practices among destination professionals. It is critical for breeding future industry leaders and showcasing the workforce of the future.

The travel experience for the participants is key to the success of the program. The Visit Billings team will work independently and with MOTBD to recruit journalists and/or influencer trip or FAM press, media, journalist, and/or influencer trip or FAM press, media, journalist, and/or influencer trip or FAM press, media, journalist, and/or influencer trip or FAM press, media, journalist, and/or influencer trip or FAM press, media, journalist, and/or influencer trip or FAM press, media, journalist, and/or influencer trip or FAM press, media, journalist, and/or influencer trip or FAM press, media, journalist and/or influencer trip or FAM press, media, journalist and/or influencer trip or FAM press, media, journalist and/or influencer trip or FAM press, media, journalist and/or influencer trip or FAM press, media, journalist and/or influencer trip or FAM press, media, journalist and/or influencer trip or FAM press, media, journalist and/or influencer trip or FAM press, media, journalist and/or influencer trip or FAM press, media, journalist and/or influencer trip or FAM press, media, journalist and/or influencer trip or FAM press, media, journalist.
Marketing Method Evaluation Attachments

Attachment 1  FY19VisitBillingsBudgettoActualComparisonpiecharts.pdf
Attachment 2  FY19 Visit Billings Partnership spend of total marketing budget.xlsx
Attachment 3  BillingsTripAdvisor.xlsx
Attachment 4  Sojern - JV - FY19 Report.pdf
Attachment 5  Horizon - Proof of performance.m4v
Attachment 6  BillingsAdvertorial_RM2019_ITA_adproof-1024.pdf
Attachment 7  Billings Media Report 7.8 (1).xlsx
Attachment 8  2019 Lewis and Clark Marketing Program Report for VB.pdf
Attachment 9  Planner FAM 19.pdf
Attachment 10  Horizon Buy - Times Square POP.jpg

Marketing Method Budget

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marketing Segment</th>
<th>Marketing Method</th>
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<th>Non bed tax funded budget (optional)</th>
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Miscellaneous Attachments

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