



## Grant Details

### 95522 - FY21 Region/CVB Marketing Plan

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101287 - FY21 Visit Billings Marketing Plan

DOC Office of Tourism

**Grant Title:** FY21 Visit Billings Marketing Plan  
**Grant Number:** 21-51-013  
**Grant Status:** Underway  
**Comments:**  
**Applicant Organization:** Billings Chamber of Commerce/Convention and Visitors Bureau  
**Grantee Contact:** Alex Tyson  
**Award Year:** 2020  
**Program Area:** DOC Office of Tourism  
**Amounts:**  
**Contract Dates:**

	Contract Sent	Contract Received	Contract Executed
<b>Project Dates:</b>	06/15/2020 <small>Proposal Date</small>	07/01/2020 <small>Project Start</small>	06/30/2021 <small>Project End</small>

**Grant Administrator:** Barb Sanem  
**Contract Number:** 21-51-013  
**Award Year:** 2020

#### Contract Dates

<small>Contract Sent</small>	<small>Contract Received</small>	<small>Contract Executed</small>	<small>Contract Legal</small>
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**Project Dates** 07/01/2020  
 06/30/2021

<small>Project Start</small>	<small>Project End</small>
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**Comments**  
**Amendment Comments**

## Community & Brand Support

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*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?*

Visit Billings is a leading brand 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 hospitality industry which boosts the local economy as a whole.

Visit Billings is funded primarily through the BTBID and through a portion of the State Lodging Facility Use Tax. The BTBID assesses \$2.00 per occupied room per night on all hotels and motels in the city of Billings with six (6) or more sleeping rooms. The BTBID funds stay local for the marketing and promotion of the city as a destination. This marketing helps grow visitation and supports businesses at the destination.

Additionally, there are two Montana taxes imposed on users of an overnight lodging facility (such as a hotel, motel, campground, dude ranch, and guest ranch), which are collected by the facility and remitted to the Montana Department of Revenue. These two taxes are a 4% Lodging Facility Use Tax and a 4% Lodging Facility Sales Tax, for a combined 8% state lodging tax. As a destination marketing organization (DMO), Visit Billings is charged with representing Billings as a tourism destination, helping with the development of the industry through promotion of the city.

#### 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.

## BILLINGS IS "MONTANA'S CITY"

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 conveniences meet. Where the adventure of the untamed wilderness and history are right outside your door.

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

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

## ABOUT BILLINGS

Billings, population 110,000, is the county seat of Yellowstone County and the largest city in the state. As Montana's Trailhead, it is the region's economic hub. Major industries including agriculture, energy, healthcare, finance, education, and tourism drive the local economy.

Popular attractions locally include the Rimrocks or rock formations which surround much of the community and offer space to take in incredible views of the region. The city also boasts a walkable brewery district in historic downtown Billings, Montana's only zoo and Botanical Park, contemporary and western museums, galleries, several theaters, music venues, a state-of-the-art public library, and a number of outdoor community venues and festivals. Billings offers nearly 50 miles of multi-use trails and 24 miles of bike lanes. From the Rimrocks to the Yellowstone River, which is the longest free-flowing river in the lower 48, residents of Billings invite visitors to experience the magic of Montana's Trailhead. Billings sits near the intersection of Interstates 90 & 94 and offers a first-class airport with numerous daily flights to major U.S. cities via Delta, United, American Airlines, Allegiant, Frontier, and Alaska Airlines. Regional carrier Cape Air, also plays a crucial role in air travel and connectivity in the state.

Amazing summer weather and snowy winters with blue-bird days offer ample opportunity for outdoor enthusiasts to experience all four seasons and the accompanying adventures. Nearly 4,500 hotel rooms as well as numerous retail and restaurant offerings (Billings offers an incredible food scene), flexible meeting space, and sports venues are ready to accommodate any traveler or planner's needs and preferences.

## VISIT BILLINGS, MONTANA'S TRAILHEAD & COVID-19

Travel and tourism at Montana's Trailhead thrives on recreation, competition, exploration, learning, and networking. Travel restrictions and social distancing have left many people confused and unsure of travel, with much of the data showing Americans being less likely to resume travel until a vaccine is available. The Visit Billings staff and boards (Chamber/CVB and Billings Tourism Business Improvement District boards) are committed to scalable solutions for FY21 as a vast majority of budget impacts to the non-profit organization will be realized in the future depending on multiple economic recovery scenarios. That being said, there is a mission to meet and stakeholders to assist, which remain the top priorities for Visit Billings in transition from FY20 to FY21.

Visit Billings staff will adjust budgets as well as marketing and sales strategies continually, as it has since March 2020, in response to the COVID-19 crisis. At the same time, Visit Billings is preparing to regain momentum in visitor growth with innovation and ingenuity. Looking at a continuum of three phases of focus, Visit Billings is working through the following phases of the COVID-19 pandemic: Mitigate, Restart, and Reimagine - all aligning with resiliency.

At the writing of this document, the organization, and Billings community in general, are toward the end of the mitigation phase of the Destination THINK! reference. Re-normalizing life with COVID-19 by working through the pandemic and its impacts is challenging. Staff will continue to adapt programming and finances in order to continue to meet missions. This is all part of the Restart phase. As travel resumes in a new normal, and hotel occupancy increases, tourism marketing with messaging of safety, responsibility, and wide-open space under Montana's big sky will be relevant.

(Note to reviewer: Visit Billings references the Destination THINK! Mitigate and Futures graphic with credit to Destination THINK! on the full print and digital plan which will be made available to the TAC. The graphs will also be attached in a segment of this program).

Additionally, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Visit Billings team has worked from a strong structure based on responsibility and resiliency. Today, the Visit Billings staff is actively managing the organization with its boards and helping the destination through a crisis by offering positive messaging, staying active on social channels which speak to repeat visitors and potential visitors in a #VisitBillingsLater tone, and preparing for tourism's role(s) in a recovery. Tourism management is key for today, tomorrow, and the weeks, months, and years ahead. As we work to anchor the organization, new perspectives will be applied and strategies adjusted. Visit Billings' staff members are focused on:

## RESPONSIBILITY, RELATIONSHIPS, RESOURCES, REEDUCATION, RECOVERY, AND RESILIENCY

- **Responsibility** – From Governor Steve Bullock's first directive, Visit Billings staff and board members have met the demands of the mandates and regulations. Leadership at the federal, state, and local levels continue to be key to best curb the spread of this virus and soften concerns pertaining to the so-called second wave. At the writing of this document, Visit Billings marketing efforts are not encouraging people to visit the community. Travel awaits and we encourage people to be responsible and prepare to Visit Billings later. In the meantime, looking at past trips, dreaming, and planning for the next adventure are all important actions for the traveler's mind and soul. Visit Billings wants to play a responsible role in that planning.
- **Relationships** – Staff have made it a priority to communicate with stakeholders, tourism partners, and volunteers in a show of support. It's also important for staff to support peers, colleagues, and neighbors. After all, Billings is Strong - #HospitalityStrong. During the first week of the first closure directive from the Governor, Visit Billings executed a board request to create positive messaging, and created the HospitalityStrong message that was available via digital graphic, sticker, storefront posters, and window clings. Additionally, staff have communicated and accommodated meeting planners, sports tournament directors, and other colleagues who either cancelled or postponed events in Billings.
- **Resources** – Communicating resources to potential visitors in the best way we can, including the COVID-19 section at VisitBillings.com, has been a priority. Staff are still fulfilling traveler information requests to grow visitation appropriately. If a person asks for Billings' travel information via mail, email, website, call, or text, that request has been fulfilled. The organization remains a resource for travel planning. Also, the Billings Chamber of Commerce, which manages Visit Billings, has hosted Chamber Town Hall Meetings via Zoom, offering a wealth of information to colleagues and stakeholders. A specific tourism meeting allowed Visit Billings to communicate with stakeholders, peers, and colleagues, locally and regionally.
- **Reeducate** – There will be an appropriate time to begin re-educating the traveling public about choosing Billings as a destination to visit. The team is ready for this reemergence of the brand – once appropriate. Marketing strategies are strong with a regional focus supporting data that shows people will travel less by air and more by road opting for trips closer to their home. Staff are prepared to attract visitors in the drive-market when it is responsible to do so. Social channels are active now and will continue to be used responsibly even beyond the mitigation phase. How Visit Billings

staff conducted business a month ago or yesterday no longer applies. Habits have and will continue to change. Business plans and strategies have been, and will continue to be, adjusted. Innovation is key.

- Recovery – Assessing and reassessing the pandemic’s impact on the Visit Billings’ budget, on the industry locally and in the future, is a constant task. The organization’s role in recovery, and in helping reset the economy, is relevant. Adapting the budget was a first priority and remains such. Strength in leisure travel in a recovery will be key and funds are poised to help execute leisure marketing efforts accordingly. How does Visit Billings help rebuild visitor volume in a recovery? Operating effectively and communicating with visitors sensitively may help drive short-term hospitality business. However, there are many surrounding communities where residents are concerned about travel resuming. They don’t want transient business in order to protect the health of their residents. These communities are partners to Visit Billings. With Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development (MOTBD) and local leadership, concerns will be addressed and Billings will be positioned as ‘an open for business’ destination. During the 2008 recession, recovery efforts focused heavily on booking sports and hobbies, concerts and festivals and gradually growing from staycations to wider-market visits. Recovery from this crisis will likely be quite different and dependent on shifting attitudes toward travel and public gatherings, respecting social distancing until a vaccine is available. Being funded by hotel tax and assessments, travel reports like Smith Travel Research’s occupancy reports will allow staff to monitor growth and potential budget increases which may allow the organization to invest in additional marketing and sales efforts and possibly additional personnel.
- Resiliency – Visit Billings, with tourism partners and community leadership, will get through this collectively by supporting each other – together.

According to HVS Advisors, the COVID-19 pandemic will have two types of impacts on the lodging industry. The first impact is from the travel restrictions the United States is slowly beginning to emerge from (domestically only at the writing of this document), which have been necessary to save lives. Billings has felt the impact of these restrictions with cancellations or postponements of sporting events, group business, meetings, and leisure trips.

Also, the loss of transient lodging demand and at least three temporary hotel closures in Yellowstone County have harshly impacted funding for Visit Billings. After travel restrictions are lifted, the second impact will occur as the economy struggles to regain its footing. This is what is difficult for DMO’s like Visit Billings. Projecting the lodging tax revenue and TBID assessments in order to protect mission, is, and will be, a task as there will be uncertainty from the Mitigate to the Restart phases and ultimately into the Reimagine phase where a recovery is in process.

As far as strengths and weaknesses of the destination, please see the section requesting research references for the plan. Data that offers insight into brand weaknesses and strengths is noted in that section. It was abridged for FY21 marketing planning due to COVID-19 references needing to be a priority than what are the typical weaknesses and strengths of the destination in a ‘normal’ marketing plan for the destination.

#### **Describe your destination.**

#### TRAVEL DECISION PROCESS

##### THREE PHASES:

##### INSPIRE, ORIENT, FACILITATE

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. While these pillars and phases still hold true, Visit Billings is adjusting marketing efforts to take into account the effects of COVID-19 on travel planning.

##### 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 where 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 foundation of this marketing mindset via Montana’s brand image, per the strategic plan. MOTBD markets Montana’s key tourism pillars to inspire potential visitors to the state with inspirational imagery and copy. MOTBD focused strategies on Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks as well as adventures – which aligns with the outdoor recreation travelers will be increasingly seeking once travel reemerges after COVID-19 directives relax. Therefore, in the inspirational phase, Billings must strategize to position the destination as a viable city to include on one’s itinerary. Efforts by MOTBD to elevate eastern Montana will assist with this phase for the region. Visit Billings appreciates investments made by MOTBD for the Eastern Montana Tourism Marketing Initiative.

•Billings is well situated between the historic landmarks of southeast Montana and the awe-inspiring landscapes of the Yellowstone River valley. Working to compliment MOTBD efforts, Visit Billings will continue to leverage stunning imagery, targeted messaging and compelling calls to action in marketing materials and the Great American Road Trip campaign.

• Billings boasts access to the Beartooth Highway which Charles Kuralt called “the most beautiful drive in America.” As a destination, Billings offers stunning vistas via the sandstone Rimrocks and access to the Yellowstone River, all reasons to choose southeastern Montana as part of one’s route. Wyoming’s state tourism office strategizes to keep the drive market in Wyoming by enticing travelers making ‘on the road decisions’ to access Yellowstone National Park via Cody. Visit Billings hopes to work closely with partners to help ensure potential travelers are inspired to make eastern Montana part of their travels for incredible adventures and ease of access to landmarks. Targeted marketing and out-of-home (OOH) programming including billboards can assist. Visit Billings has contracted several billboards in South Dakota and Wyoming to help boost Billings as a must-see stop along travels.

• Regionally, Billings itself offers a vacation destination to many neighboring communities. Ongoing “weekender” campaigns will inspire and invite the driving audience to explore and enjoy all Billings has to offer in entertainment, outdoor activities, cultural and historic interests and recreation. In a recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and until there is a vaccine available, Visit Billings can emphasize this focus as part of the Great American Road Trip campaign, as more people will embark upon getaways by car in the year ahead.

THE ORIENTATION PHASE is where the traveler begins researching the details of his or her trip. This phase focuses on the route the traveler will take to

arrive at the chosen destination and the mode of transportation used to get there. Per the strategic plan, Montana's visitors have multiple destinations to consider within the state and bordering states. Regions and CVBs provide tools to help the visitor plan a route and encourage a longer stay.

VisitBillings.com

Visit Billings launched its newly re-designed VisitBillings.com website last year, where the destination's "Forge Your Own Path" brand has been brought to life. The new site also addressed critical site design and functionality updates. In today's digital landscape, Destination Marketing websites must work even harder to engage the consumer. While travelers filter through user-generated content (UGC), TripAdvisor reviews, Instagram posts and travel blogs, a destination website should be positioned as a trusted resource for travel inspiration and planning. The new site is designed to ensure the content is relevant to the individual needs of a potential traveler. New persona-driven web content was developed to guide prospective History Buffs, Outdoor Enthusiasts, Foodies, Shopaholics and Arts & Culture Aficionados to Billings. The Great American Road Trip microsite will also orient visitors.

Visit Billings Visitor Guidebook

The Visit Billings Visitor Guidebook is available digitally via the website and is mailed at no-charge upon request. The Billings guide focuses on the "Forge Your Own Path" branding and encourages travelers to seek adventure and live life to the fullest around every corner. With the assistance of beautiful imagery, maps, recreational listings, and more, Visit Billings' focus is to provide accessible and authentic information. There is no advertising included in Visit Billings publications or collateral materials.

Billings Logan International Airport

Visit Billings is working closely with Billings Logan International Airport to monitor the emergence of travel by air relevant to the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to the COVID-19 shutdown, the Billings airport launched its four-year, \$57 million remodeling project to expand the capacity of the facility and offer a modern look and feel. When flight travel resumes without mandatory quarantines for non-residents, Visit Billings will continue to highlight direct flights with United, Delta, American Airlines and Frontier Airlines from cities such as Denver, Minneapolis (MSP), Seattle, and Dallas/Fort Worth (DFW). Cape Air is also an important partner in the regional leisure market serving smaller eastern Montana communities where residents may choose to fly to Billings to shop, schedule use of services, and enjoy entertainment.

THE FACILITATION PHASE is where the traveler seeks experiences en route to a destination and during a stay.

- Tourism Regions, Convention and Visitors Bureaus (CVBs), communities and organizations must all work together to make visitors aware of the full array of experiences available to guests.

- The 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 25 part-time volunteers operate the center, which is normally 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 to facilitate visitor queries. The goal is to foster successful stays and future Montana travels. At the writing of this document, the Billings VIC remains closed due to COVID-19 impacts; however, protective shields, signage, and social distancing protocols are being installed and implemented to protect visitors, employees, and volunteers upon reopening.

- 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 visitors. This initiative is spearheaded by the Billings Trail Guide program of Visit Billings. This civic-minded program works to unite and motivate the Billings community in raising the bar and level of service to visitors. It provides frontline employees training and support regarding options for visitors in and around Billings and southeast Montana.

- 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. Once COVID-19 directives relax, visitors will be invited to engage with the #VisitBillings brand throughout their journey, safely.

**Optional: Include attachments here**    Mitigate.Restart.Reimagine.jpg

*a. Define your target markets (demographic, geographic and psychographic).*

**FORGE YOUR OWN PATH**

Shaped by the Yellowstone River. Born in the shadows of the Rimrocks. Welcome to Montana's Trailhead. Be guided by the greatness that lies ahead. Big skies and big things. Forge your own path.

Leveraging Montana's Trailhead, Visit Billings' "Forge Your Own Path" brand invites visitors to participate in a memorable journey that is authentic to the Big Sky experience.

**SUMMER STRATEGY**

Impacts to the upcoming summer travel season remain unknown due to COVID-19 implications. Visit Billings marketing strategies are focused on being highly flexible so staff can react quickly to the changing environment.

Emerging travel will be heavily impacted on three factors:

- National and state-level lifting of restrictions on travel
- When travelers feel safe to travel once more; vaccination included
- How potential travelers are financially impacted by the economy

While Billings is poised to successfully capture market share when travel resumes, there are a number of factors that must be holistically taken into

consideration as Visit Billings moves into the summer or warm season marketing strategies. Due to COVID-19 concerns, Destination Analysts' research shows the 2020 warm season traveler will be more inclined to travel by car. As a destination, Billings not only rewards their journeys with easy access to the Yellowstone scenic route via Beartooth Highway, but also the inspiring Rimrocks, Pompeys Pillar, and vast, iconic points of interest easily accessible from Billings.

## GOALS

1. Inspire travel to Billings once again after the COVID-19 impacts begin to subside, and travel re-emerges, with the intent to quickly recapture market share, drive hotel occupancy, and eventually focus on lengthening average stay.
2. Generate awareness of Billings as the Most Scenic Route into Yellowstone and its proximity to iconic attractions as part of a Great American Road Trip. Staff will closely monitor COVID-19 restrictions for Yellowstone National Park and other National Park Service entities as well as Montana State Parks, events, and local draws to the destination.
3. Increase awareness of Billings, Montana as being the place to experience unspoiled adventure without sacrificing the comfort of hospitality – particularly as travelers specifically seek outdoor adventure travel.
4. Leverage the "Great American Road Trip" campaign – integrating the ZooMontana's sloth exhibit – as a marketing re-entry strategy targeting prospective visitors, while "Forge Your Own Path" will continue to serve as an umbrella brand position.
5. It will be important for Visit Billings and the local business community to pledge to be open and safe for visitors. Signage in storefronts reassuring best health practices with the Yellowstone County Open and Safe badge will be key.

With the Great American Road Trip campaign, the summer season marketing strategy will continue to establish ownership of the most scenic route to Yellowstone National Park via Beartooth Highway. Ranked alongside Bryce Canyon and Glacier National Park, Yellowstone is a bucket list family attraction. The "Billings - Yellowstone's Scenic Route" messaging will continue to emphasize all that Billings has to offer within the city – excellent hospitality and hotels, walkable brewery trails, great brunch spots, and western heritage sites surrounded by unparalleled and unspoiled nature.

The Great American Road Trip will incorporate ZooMontana's new Sloth exhibit which will be both integrated into the Road Trip creative as well as have stand-alone creative elements. The campaign will focus on driving traffic to the new Great American Road Trip landing page on the Visit Billings site, primarily using digital and video-driven channels. This will speak to the resident and non-resident traveler.

## TRAVELING IN THE WAKE OF COVID-19

COVID-19 will continue to impact the travel industry in 2020 and 2021. According to a Longwoods International tracking study of American travelers and the coronavirus pandemic, 85% of them are changing their travel plans over the next six months (May-October 2020) because of coronavirus. However, the percentage of American travelers planning trips in that same time frame is increasing – indicating that travelers' are experiencing wanderlust and are currently in the dreaming phase, seeking inspiration. When travelers shift into the planning phase, Visit Billings' marketing efforts must take into account longer booking windows.

With that in mind, it is expected that local and regional travel will be the first to recover as travelers will be more comfortable embarking on road trips rather than flying. With the Great American Road Trip campaign, Visit Billings is well positioned to be that road trip destination that provides safe experiences. There will be a renewed sense of appreciation for outdoor adventure, natural scenery, and local small businesses, away from more crowded, urban destinations. The Visit Billings campaign will not only be relevant and sensitive to travelers' needs and concerns, but also designed to create an emotional connection with the target audience, reflective of the destination, and the brand's higher purpose to live big in Big Sky Country.

Call-out:

## TRAVELERS SEEKING THE COMFORT ZONE

In addition to safety concerns related to the coronavirus pandemic, travelers are also balancing concerns regarding an uncertain economy and new regulations which differ by destination. Ultimately, while travelers still want to create new experiences and explore, they will also want to travel where they feel safe and comfortable. Pairing Montana's Big Sky experiences and incredible landscapes with familiar hospitality creature comforts makes the journey more accessible for a broader audience once travel re-emerges. Billings is an economically feasible destination too, with reasonable hotel rates.

## Target Audience

The target audience for Visit Billings will shift, as will the marketing budget. The organization's funding has been drastically impacted, thus audiences with the highest propensity to travel to the destination and the region will be targeted. Taking into account the effects of COVID-19 on specific demographics and their intent to travel, given their concerns regarding health and safety, is key.

The family traveler will be an important summer demographic as surveys show this group has a higher propensity for travel than older demographics such as Baby Boomers who are less likely to travel until the current situation has completely been resolved or there is a vaccine. The focus will be on families with a household income of \$75,000+, couples, as well as younger male-skewed markets more likely to book a road trip sooner.

Creative messaging and media targeting are designed to behaviorally target those who are vacation planning and booking with an interest in the outdoors, national parks, and western heritage experiences. According to the Billings' visitor profile, current visitors have an average HHI of \$97k and average age is 50.

Great American Road Trip Primary Target Audience: Previously, the primary market has focused on summer vacationers from key feeder markets (Minneapolis, MN; Denver CO; Seattle, WA) with interest in travel to Montana and the Western region of the U.S. to visit monuments, state and national parks, and to experience western heritage with a HHI of \$75k+. In light of COVID-19, summer 2020 will pivot to target regional drive markets, primarily in the neighboring states of Western North Dakota and South Dakota as well as Wyoming. We will focus on potential travelers who show interest in traveling to Montana as well as an interest in monuments, outdoor recreation, family vacations, state and national parks, and have a HHI of \$75k+.

ZooMontana Sloth Exhibit Target Audience: The campaign will focus on the regional drive markets in-state including Bozeman, MT; Great Falls, MT; Helena, MT; Missoula, MT; Cody, WY; Sheridan, WY; Buffalo, WY; Gillette, WY; Billings DMA (excluding city of Billings); with a HHI \$75k+.

## GREAT AMERICAN ROAD TRIP

As previously noted, according to Destination Analysts, 53% of travelers surveyed in April 2020, will be taking more road trips this year to avoid airline

travel. Billings is Montana's Trailhead to monumental, unexpected adventures. Located in southeast Montana, Billings neighbors iconic American sites and attractions, like Yellowstone National Park. When paired with the Black Hills and Badlands regions of South Dakota, along with all of the incredible trips available throughout Montana, the Great American Road Trip is revealed with an unprecedented bucket list of must-see national parks and monuments - in one vacation.

Visit Billings is developing partnerships with aligned-destinations and lifestyle brands to target road trippers and bucket-list travelers and bring awareness to this untold story. The Great American Road Trip was intended to make its debut in 2020; however plans were altered due to COVID-19. In light of this pandemic, research shows that when it becomes safe to travel again, there may still be a fear of air travel. The Great American Road Trip fits well with the return of tourism as it promotes travel by car. The attractions along the way also leave room for social distancing if that is still a recommended practice for summer travelers.

## REGIONAL YEAR-ROUND STRATEGY

Billings is Montana's largest city, and with that, the opportunities are endless. From arts and culture to food scenes, history to outdoor recreation, it's easy to fill days with unique experiences. Regionally, Billings is the city, when it is safe, travelers will crave as it offers the hustle and bustle of a city without the huge crowds. Cultural attractions such as concerts and art galleries, as well as a culinary scene that features unique farmers markets, walkable breweries, restaurants and more will engage visitors. The regional year-round strategy is designed to highlight experiences that can't be found for hundreds of miles and is customized so that it speaks specifically to each unique traveler, encouraging them to "Forge Your Own Path" while exploring the city and the region.

## GOALS

1. Increase awareness of "things to do" in Billings for the regional audience.
2. Establish a sense of urgency around seasonal events and attractions, when appropriate.
3. Continue utilizing the creative assets and messaging of the Great American Road Trip, while leveraging "Forge Your Own Path" as the umbrella brand position, inviting prospective visitors to experience Billings.

Creative messaging will emphasize experiences and activities unique to the city and the region, consistently providing potential visitors new reasons to travel to Billings. The marketing efforts will responsibly establish a sense of urgency in booking for special seasonal features such as the opening of the Sloth Exhibit at ZooMontana, the Grand Opening of the Alberta Bair, and other events. 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.

## TARGET AUDIENCE

Regional focus will remain on target markets with higher awareness and familiarity of 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 a necessity visit (for example, a doctor's appointment) overnight to include leisure activities.

Billings' regional target audience includes adults 25-65 with an annual household income of \$75,000+. We will continue to evaluate if the target demographics need to shift based on market conditions related to COVID-19. Regional markets include Bozeman, MT; Minot-Bismarck-Dickinson, ND; Great Falls, MT; Rapid City, SD; Helena, MT; Missoula, MT; Casper, WY; Cody, WY; Gillette, WY; Billings DMA (excluding city of Billings).

## MEDIA

The Regional Year-Round Media Plan is primarily digital allowing the plan to stay flexible with recurrent changes in creative and messaging. Online display through a Demand Side Platform (DSP) partner allows us to purchase digital ad inventory while providing efficient reach and targeting with the ability to easily adjust creative throughout seasonal flights.

Social and Native placement provides opportunity to promote event-driven content and messaging on Visit Billings' owned channels.

Search is critical for driving site traffic from the regional audience already researching Billings' key events and things to do.

Billboard and OOH placement is incorporated to maintain front-of-mind brand awareness in surrounding regional markets.

Call-out:

## BILLINGS BREW TRAIL

Billings is a craft beer hotspot and the Billings Brew Trail is Montana's only walkable self-guided brewery tour. Although it continues to grow, the current list includes six breweries, two distilleries and a cider house. In May 2019, the city hosted the first-ever Billings Craft Brew Week with Taproom Cards to earn stamps for prizes, yoga, and movie events, as well as a Beer Run and post-race party. Over 350 runners arrived in downtown Billings for the event. Visit Billings, through its grant program, is a supporter of this event.

Call-out:

## STAYCATIONS

Following COVID-19, many travelers will be looking for more staycation-type trips. According to Destination Analysts, 55% of travelers believe a staycation will replace other types of trips for them. Regionally, Billings can be that staycation for many who are looking for experiences outside of their hometown but still within their home state or region.

## MOTORCYCLE ENTHUSIASTS

Aligning with the destination's leisure Great American Road Trip campaign, and to continue building awareness of the destination's proximity to the most scenic route into Yellowstone National Park, Visit Billings will also continue to leverage the Beartooth Scenic Byway as a key draw for the lucrative two-wheeled market. Among its "Top 10 Motorcycle Rides in the U.S.," National Geographic describes the 68-mile stretch of U.S. Highway 212 as "the perfect

definition of what a great bike ride should be." BMW MOA's 2020 Rally was set to take place in Great Falls in the summer of 2020. This has been rescheduled to 2021, due to COVID-19 concerns. Despite not having this influx of motorcyclists to the state, the two-wheel market remains important to Billings visitation.

Motorcyclists in Montana are drawn to curvy roads. They enjoy touring vacations, riding long distances and experiencing the journey. National parks are key drivers of visitation in this segment. In 2018, June through September, an estimated 394,000 motorcyclists rode in Montana, 4.4% of all non-resident visitors to the state. The target audience is men and women motorcycle enthusiasts ages 35-64 on any model bike. Non-resident motorcyclists spent an average of 4.74 nights in a hotel (Motorcycle Touring in Montana: A Market Analysis 2019, published by the Institute for Tourism & Recreation Research).

FY21 plans include additional sponsored content development and niche digital targeting of the two-wheel audience. Billings' hospitality amenities and access to surrounding Big Sky Country roads elevate its position with groups like BMW Motorcycle Owners of America, Gold Wing Road Riders Association, Harley Owners Group, and Yamaha Star Motorcycles.

There is additional information throughout this program for FY21 and Visit Billings. Additionally, the full, formal FY21 marketing plan is available in print and digital format and will be personally mailed to members of the Governor's Tourism Advisory Council.

*b. What are your emerging markets?*

There are budget concerns for FY21 investments into new markets, however themes Visit Billings may contemplate in the coming year may include:

**Birding** - Birding enthusiasts see Montana as a hot spot to watch and identify birds. Many locations near Billings are strong assets for marketing to this market including the Montana Audubon Center, Four Dances Recreation Area, Pictograph Cave State Park, and Pompeys Pillar National Monument. There are also many areas along the Yellowstone River that assist birders in their adventures.

**Mountain Bikers** - Mountain biking along the Billings sandstone Rimrocks offers trail riding from the Yellowstone River to the Molt Road area. Acton Recreation Area managed by the BLM is also becoming a very popular trail running and biking destination.

**Reunions, Families & Military** - Reunions are a consistent market for Billings. Visit Billings staff work closely with reunion planning companies to help connect planners with Billings tourism partners as the community is a reunion friendly destination for groups of all sizes and attendees of all ages. The Montana's Trailhead brand is extremely popular with reunions and weddings as attendees have plenty of space to meet and a large range of offerings locally to assist with itineraries. Outside of the reunion timeframe, attendees can explore Montana's backroads, historic ventures and natural wonders.

**Optional: Include attachments here.**

*c. What research supports your target marketing?*

The Billings Tourism Business Improvement District contracted with Destination Analysts (DA) in 2017 and 2018 for a comprehensive research project pertaining to Billings. This report presents top line survey data collected from surveys between August 2017 and April 2018. The sampling strategy evenly split collection between visitors to Billings during the peak season and shoulder season. Visit Billings relies on this data which is attached here as a full digital report.

Additionally, throughout the remainder of FY20 in response to COVID-19 impacts, Visit Billings has monitored research reports and travel index data supplied by Destination Analysts. Those reports are referred to in this program as well as in the formal, full FY21 Visit Billings Marketing Plan and Budget available in print and digital format at VisitBillings.com. This document will be mailed and emailed to members of the Governor's Tourism Advisory Council.

Visit Billings also relies on the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research with the University of Montana, which is also named throughout the document specifically data on motorcycle tourism.

Other insight pertaining to Billings' brand as a travel destination from the DA research shows:

Familiarity with the Billings destination brand is moderate. In total, 50.2 percent consider themselves familiar or very familiar with the destination. A significantly smaller proportion, 27.7 percent, reported being unfamiliar with Billings. Meanwhile, about one in five said they were neutral neither familiar nor unfamiliar with Billings as a place to visit (22.2%). Regional travelers were much more likely to rate themselves "familiar" or "very familiar" with Billings compared to non regional travelers (top two box scores of 59.8% vs. 36.5%, respectively).

Travelers consider Billings to be an appealing leisure destination. Just under six in ten travelers consider Billings to be appealing (36.0%) or very appealing (22.0%). While similar percentages of regional and non regional travelers described Billings as "appealing", non regional travelers were more likely to consider it a "very appealing" destination (28.1% vs. 17.6%, respectively).

Travelers are moderately likely to visit Billings for leisure in the near future. Over half of all respondents said that they are likely (27.0%) or very likely (26.7%) to visit Billings for leisure in the next three years. Regional travelers reported a higher likelihood of visiting Billings in the next three years compared to non regional travelers (58.2% vs. 47.5%, respectively).

Shopping, dining and parks are the top of mind experiences that Billings offers visitors. In an open ended question, travelers were asked to think about Billings as a place to visit and write in the top attractions, places to visit, things to do and experiences in the area. One quarter of respondents wrote in shopping/antiques (24.9%), while one fifth wrote in dining/restaurants (21.2%). The next most commonly written in response were national/state parks (16.5%), "wide range of attractions" (14.7%) and "scenery/wildlife viewing" (14.0%).

Billings is a destination associated with beautiful scenery, nature/wildlife and urban/small town charm. In another open ended question, travelers were asked to picture Billings and think of the specific words that describe the destination. Beautiful scenery (31.6%), nature/wildlife (29.4%), city life/urban (19.6%) and "small town charm" (19.6%) were the most common descriptions, each written in by one fifth or more of respondents.

Billings is seen as touristy and crowded by some travelers. Presented with a set list of negatively slanted words and phrases, respondents were asked to select all those that accurately describe Billings. In total, 14.5 percent selected "touristy" as a word to describe Billings. Approximately 10 percent or higher of travelers also perceive Billings to be "crowded" (12.9%), "bland" (12.8%), "boring" (11.5%), "congested" (11.3%), "hard to get to" (10.3%), and/or "generic" (10.2%). Just under half of all travelers surveyed reported that none of the negatively slanted words describe Billings (43.1%).

For both regional and non regional travelers surveyed, scenic beauty, affordability and restaurants were considered the most important attributes in selecting leisure destinations in the Western U.S. Interestingly though, regional travelers appear to place more importance on scenic beauty (90.9% vs. 83.4%) and affordability (91.0% vs. 82.7%) compared to non regional travelers. In terms of secondary destination attributes, non regional travelers placed more importance on family friendly activities (65.3% vs. 58.6%) and urban sightseeing/exploration (63.7% vs. 46.6%).

Perceptions of Billings' destination attributes differ between regional and non regional travelers. Regional travelers were much more likely to rate Billings' highly for its restaurants and food (71.1% vs. 56.7%) and good shopping options (58.3%). Meanwhile, non regional travelers were more likely to rate Billings' highly for scenic beauty (75.2% vs. 64.0%), outdoor recreation activities (72.6% vs. 64.5%), historic attractions (60.9% vs. 57.0%), off the beaten path ambience (66.3% vs. 42.2%), iconic attractions (50.1% vs. 37.5%) and urban sightseeing/exploration (46.9% vs. 36.3%).

Billings performs above average or on par for the destination attributes that are considered least important to the destination decision process but underperforms for the most important to travelers surveyed. Amongst the attributes tested, Billings performs well for outdoor recreation activities, shopping, craft breweries, nightlife and live music. However, these attributes are relatively less important to the destination choice.

Billings performs sub par for the top five attributes that are important in selecting leisure destinations in the west; scenic beauty, affordability, restaurants, historic sites and iconic attractions. Educating travelers about Billings' assets in these areas should be a high priority in its marketing messaging.

Deterrents to visiting Billings differs between regional and non regional travelers. Regional travelers were much more likely to say they have more interest in other destinations (43.6% vs. 26.5%) and/or personal financial reasons (27.3% vs. 18.7%) are keeping them from visiting Billings more often. Meanwhile, non regional travelers were more likely to feel they don't know enough about the destination (30.5% vs. 16.6%) and/or that airfare is too expensive (21.1%).

While the DA data offers key insight to target markets as well, the brand data here, is also important in noting strengths and weaknesses in the brand of Billings as a tourism destination.

## 2020-2021 STRATEGIC GOALS

### FOSTER VISITOR GROWTH

Tourism remains a leading industry in Billings and will be important as the COVID-19 curve settles and people become more mobile in the region. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the industry generated economic impact that was crucial to local businesses. Nearly \$500 million was injected into the economy between out-of-state and in-state visitation to Yellowstone County in 2018 (ITRR).

As Visit Billings works to reeducate potential visitors and the economy begins a recovery, the investment in tourism marketing by Visit Billings will be key. Appropriate marketing and sales efforts will elevate stakeholders once again as well as tourism partners including retailers, restaurants, and attractions. Tourism supports thousands of jobs within Yellowstone County and enhances the overall quality of life in Billings.

### THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

During FY20, Visit Billings successfully executed a new program, Billings Trail Guides, focused on fostering a sense of pride and place for residents by educating them about all Billings has to offer as a community and tourism destination. In Billings, research has previously reflected a weakness in civic pride among Billings' area residents. It will be the goal of the Visit Billings team to not lose momentum in this programming despite COVID-19 impacts to the tourism industry and community. Gains were made in FY20 by presenting to groups, large and small, the importance of residents playing a role in the positive visitor experience in Billings by welcoming out-of-towners and facilitating any questions or needs they may have.

Even as we deal with the pandemic and its impacts, Billings' residents have the capacity to elevate Billings which can significantly impact visitor growth and the visitor experience. Staff will work to strategize ways to appropriately convey the highlights of the Trail Guides program digitally or possibly in small group settings that support social distancing prior to vaccine availability.

### INCREASE LEISURE VISITATION

Visit Billings' marketing and sales efforts aim to position Billings and the surrounding area as a preferred destination for leisure visitation. Destination Analysts' research during COVID-19 'shelter in place' directives across the country in March and April showed once restrictions were lifted, but prior to there being a vaccine for the virus, people would stay close to home, road trip, and/or enjoy a staycation. Visit Billings' staff, together with its boards and advertising agency, believe this close-to-home, regional travel mindset will be key in rebuilding visitation to Billings and southeast Montana in the future.

Leisure tourism marketing strategies will remain the highest priority for the organization as leisure visitation supports all Visit Billings' stakeholders (hotels and motels owners) as well as partners including restaurants, retailers, and attractions. Regional marketing campaigns will focus on road trip itineraries and partnerships with attractions like ZooMontana where social distancing is feasible. Safety also will be key in all marketing efforts.

### MEETING/CONVENTION SALES AND SERVICING

Even with the COVID-19 pandemic impacts to business travel, Billings is a desirable meeting destination. By marketing, promoting, and selling Billings as a meeting destination, Visit Billings can generate room nights and revenue for stakeholders which can eventually help in a recovery for the community's economy overall. Visit Billings staff will work to be innovative in how to meet the needs of meeting planners during this time. Staff will continue to inspire and orient meeting professionals with thoughtful sales strategies in a time of meeting cancellations and postponements. This segment can continue to have a strong economic impact on the community. The Visit Billings staff is assisting planners through this by facilitating their needs and re-orienting them with our offerings should they need to adjust attendee numbers, digital needs, etc.

FY20 saw continued declines in meeting and convention recruitment. In 2010, such business accounted for nearly 25% of total visitation to Billings. That number, according to HVS Advisors, has decreased closer to 17%. With the closure of the Red Lion Hotel and Convention Center in Billings in 2019, Billings now offers five convention hotels. However, the market segment is still viable to the destination and despite COVID-19 expense reductions and

adjustments in sales strategies, meeting recruitment will be a priority. It will be more important as ever for staff to help facilitate this segment by providing planners with assistance and services that benefit and enhance events meeting social distancing needs and calming concerns of attendees.

## SPORTS TOURISM

Strong gains in sports tourism in FY20 continued to position Billings as a sports events destination. With COVID-19 impacts, sports recruitment efforts will be adjusted. Positioning Billings as a sports events destination will remain a priority for Visit Billings in FY21, with staff looking at new technologies and innovations that will shape the future of sports events and sports tourism at Montana's Trailhead. At the writing of this document, Visit Billings had partnered with Montana State University Billings (MSUB) for NCAA bids as well as MetraPark for Montana High School Association (MHSA) bids. 2020 brings the execution of major sporting events like the NCAA DII West Region Cross Country Championships. Strategizing with NCAA officials to meet the needs of protecting athletes, officials, fans, and volunteers from COVID-19 during this event, for example, will be key. Meanwhile, staff will continue to foster growth in this segment by supporting partners like the MHSA, MSUB, Rocky Mountain College, area school districts, local tournament directors, as well as the City of Billings and Yellowstone County.

## THE INTERNATIONAL MARKETPLACE

Together with tourism partners, Visit Billings has made strong gains in growing international travel to southeast Montana in recent years. The impacts of this travel segment due to COVID-19 and accompanying international travel restrictions are substantial. However, it is important for Visit Billings to maintain relationships with international tour operators so overseas visitors who have ranked sightseeing, fine dining, and national parks/ monuments as major draws in deciding where to spend time while visiting the United States keep Billings top-of-mind as new travel habits emerge. Visit Billings will continue to work with the Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development and partners like Visit Southeast Montana and Rocky Mountain International to remain relevant in travel recovery to the international market.

*a. In what types of co-ops with MTOT would you like to participate?*

## COOPERATIVE OPPORTUNITIES

### MONTANA OFFICE OF TOURISM AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Visit Billings will continue partnering with the MOTBD in marketing and advertising opportunities including print, digital, OOH, and trade shows. In FY20, these partnerships included MOTBD co-op advertising opportunities such as TripAdvisor and Sojern, as well as a boosted billboard presence in the Dallas area which was postponed due to COVID-19 impacts, but later reformatted for a June 2020 install.

### ADDITIONALLY

Visit Billings relationship with MOTBD was strengthened even more during the planning and execution of Travel Blog Exchange and the partnership of our organizations. 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.

## LOCAL AND REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Visit Billings' would like to participate in the following cooperative opportunities with neighboring regions:

- In FY20, Visit Billings partnered with Visit Southeast Montana on media buys as well as execution of Familiarization Tours, Travel Blog Exchange events, and more. In the coming year, Visit Billings will continue its important partnership with Visit Southeast Montana to draw visitors to the area as budgets allow.
- Yellowstone Country travel region, particularly the Red Lodge area, is another important region where Visit Billings will continue building relationships. Many 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 GWRRA Wing 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 who are seeking services, as well as 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, Montana's tourism regions, and CVBs on relevant consumer trade shows when appropriate. Many of Montana's tourism regions and CVBs came to the table to sponsor Travel Blog Exchange, showing a united effort from our state while welcoming over 500 Travel Bloggers, Influencers and Industry Professionals to our city. Billings has and will continue to partner with MOTBD and Visit Southeast Montana at the Rocky Mountain International Roundup and the USATA's IPW. These partnerships have proven successful in the past and are expected to be in the future, budget allowing.
- 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 area tourism products to grow Billings as a year-round destination.

**Optional: Include attachment here.**     2017-18 Billings Visitor Profile Study - Final Report of Findings 1.18.19.pdf

*b. In what other types of co-ops would you like to participate? (Regions/CVBs, etc.)*

As a whole, warm season offerings by MOTBD are considered by Visit Billings staff and the agency of record. Visit Billings has been a partner in the VisaVue opportunity since it was first offered and will continue to participate. The AirDNA offering is appreciated, however, given the state of the budget

given COVID-19 impacts, Visit Billings will more than likely not engage at this time.

Visit Billings appreciates the JV offerings by MOTBD.

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

Visit Billings has participated in several of the MOTBD co-op advertising opportunities including iExplore, Sojern, TripAdvisor, and Outside Magazine. Previous completion reports would show defined successes. Tradeshow partnerships with MOTBD at IPW and previously GoWest Summit, have proved successful. Although Visit Billings is not attending GoWest Summit at this time due to weaknesses in the market.

A favorite series of partnerships executed by Visit Billings were with MOTBD and Visit Southeast Montana during Chicago transit take-overs. Visit Billings took part in this offering two warm seasons. From billboards on Chicago buildings to transit system creative installations, the investments were quite successful during those years as was validated in Smith Travel Research Reports in occupancy and ADR growth.

Optional: Include attachments here.

Optional: Include attachments here. Montana Tourism - Chicago - Brand Buses[1].pdf

Optional: Include attachment here:

### Marketing Segment, Method & Budget

Marketing Segment	Marketing Method	Describe your method.	Provide supporting research/statistics.	How do you plan to measure success?	Provide a brief rationale for this method.	Estimated budget for method.	Marketing Method Evaluation	Add'l Attchmnt
		<p>Visit Billings' Summer 2020 Media Plan will focus on responsible marketing post COVID-19, as it is the responsibility of the DMO to be a resource in fostering a relevant and responsible recovery for the destination. Highly-visual elements such as video and social media marketing, as well as directing travelers to the COVID-19 information page on the Visit Billings website, will help to educate travelers on how to safely enjoy the experiences found in the destination as well as current directives from Montana Governor Steve Bullock. 2021 spring/summer season planning remains unknown due to constant market and budget changes.</p> <p>The media plan(s) for FY21 must be highly flexible to ensure staff is able to pivot and adjust based on market conditions and budgets. There are a variety of elements to consider which will impact which paid media platforms are used, when they will be engaged, and the budget allocated for each platform. The</p>		<p>MEDIA KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPI'S)</p> <p>To balance quantity and quality of website visitation, we will optimize digital media toward conversion actions and monitor for an efficient CPC (cost per click) and CTR (click-through rate). The team will measure 25% of view-through conversions and 100% of click-through conversions.</p>	<p>Impacts to the upcoming travel seasons remain unknown due to COVID-19 implications. Visit Billings marketing strategies are focused on being highly flexible so staff can react quickly to the changing environment.</p> <p>Emerging travel will be heavily impacted on three factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National and state-level lifting of restrictions on travel</li> <li>When travelers feel safe to travel once more; vaccination included</li> <li>How potential travelers are financially impacted by the economy</li> </ul> <p>While Billings is poised to successfully capture market share when travel</p>			

Consumer	Multi-Media Marketing	<p>goal is to be as nimble as possible with paid media to ensure the marketing budget is being used wisely and will result in delivering maximum impact.</p> <p>Among paid media, social, Facebook and Instagram will remain prominent. Creative materials will place emphasis on video placement through Instagram stories, Facebook's Instant Experience and a video network, so impressions aren't locked to the content on just one platform but can optimize to whichever channel is showing the best performance.</p> <p>Paid search will also continue to play a prominent role in driving qualified traffic to VisitBillings.com.</p> <p><b>GOALS</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inspire travel to Billings once again after the COVID-19 impacts begin to subside, and travel re-emerges, with the intent to quickly recapture market share, drive hotel occupancy, and eventually focus on lengthening average stay.</li> <li>Generate awareness of Billings as the Most Scenic Route into Yellowstone and its proximity to iconic attractions as part of a Great American Road Trip. Staff will closely monitor COVID-19 restrictions for Yellowstone National Park and other National Park Service entities as well as Montana State Parks, events, and local draws to the destination.</li> <li>Increase</li> </ol>	<p>Visit Billings refers to the 2017-2018 research project conducted by the BTBID for the DMO by Destination Analysts, for Visitor Profile for strong data. The full document is attached in information for this plan in this program. Furthermore, Visit Billings is also monitoring habit and travel adjustments by travelers as reported by weekly Destination Analysts travel sentiment index data. The latest research released ahead of the deadline for this marketing report showed, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The thought on COVID-19 getting worse over the next month has decreased from 48.5% to 37.4%.</li> <li><b>Increase in June and July for rescheduled postponed trips as opposed to cancellations.</b></li> <li>New this survey: "I'm not traveling until there is a vaccine".             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>36.5% agree with this statement while 33.1% disagree.</li> </ul> </li> <li>New this survey: What are the first things you are going to when the shelter-in-place restrictions are lifted?             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Go on a trip: 22.5%.</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>35.7% of Americans said they would be excited to take a weekend getaway with a family member or close friend. This has gone up over the course of the past three weeks. 27.9% to 35.7%.</li> <li><b>44.5% of American are excited to learn about the new travel experience or destinations. This has gone up over the course of the past three weeks. 33.5% to 44.5%.</b></li> <li>We continue to see an increase in</li> </ul>	<p>The following engagement actions will be tracked:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner referrals</li> <li>Page views</li> <li>Requests for Visitor Guides</li> <li>3+ Minutes on site</li> <li>eNewsletter sign-ups</li> <li>Web traffic through ZooMontana (Sloth promotion)</li> </ul> <p>In instances where social ad units direct a user to stay within the platform, social engagement metrics will be monitored and optimized. The campaign will be set up dynamically to retarget the budget toward the market that is performing the best.</p> <p>Visit Billings will also look to Smith Travel Research Reports (STR Reports) to monitor occupancy and room demand data. Any increase in room demand will be noted.</p> <p>Additional information on plans to measure:</p> <p>Each campaign piece will naturally have a variety of different platforms for measuring KPIs. VB social campaigns are strictly Facebook and Instagram, which allows for the use of Facebook Ads Manager, for tracking click through rates and engagement. Paired with Google Analytics, to track conversions, such as clicking on a partner property or attraction, and e-newsletter signs ups, staff is able to see a full picture. Search is managed through Google Adwords and Analytics. Programmatic and display ads are managed through Campaign Manager, which is a digital campaign trafficking and tracking platform. Each display ad created is given a pixel and UTM tag and sent to the vendor running</p>	<p>resumes, there are a number of factors that must be holistically taken into consideration as Visit Billings moves into the summer or warm season marketing strategies.</p> <p>Due to COVID-19 concerns, Destination Analysts' research shows the 2020 warm season traveler will be more inclined to travel by car. As a destination, Billings not only rewards their journeys with easy access to the Yellowstone scenic route via Beartooth Highway, but also the inspiring Rimrocks, Pompeys Pillar, and vast, iconic points of interest easily accessible from Billings.</p> <p><b>GREAT AMERICAN ROAD TRIP</b></p> <p>According to Destination Analysts, 53% of travelers surveyed in April 2020, will be taking more road trips this year to avoid airline travel. Billings is Montana's Trailhead to monumental, unexpected adventures. Located in southeast Montana, Billings neighbors iconic American sites and attractions, like Yellowstone National Park. When paired with the Black Hills and Badlands regions of South Dakota, along with all of the incredible trips available throughout Montana, the Great American Road Trip is revealed with an unprecedented bucket list of must-see national parks and monuments - in one vacation. Billings plays a strong role as a destination to include on such an itinerary.</p> <p>The Great American Road Trip fits well with a tourism recovery as it promotes travel by car. The</p>	\$50,000.00	
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		<p>awareness of Billings, Montana as being the place to experience unspoiled adventure without sacrificing the comfort of hospitality – particularly as travelers specifically seek outdoor adventure travel.</p> <p>4. Leverage the “Great American Road Trip” campaign – integrating the ZooMontana’s sloth exhibit – as a marketing re-entry strategy targeting prospective visitors, while “Forge Your Own Path” will continue to serve as an umbrella brand position.</p> <p>5. It will be important for Visit Billings and the local business community to pledge to be open and safe for visitors. Signage in storefronts reassuring best health practices with the Yellowstone County Open and Safe badge will be key.</p>	<p>September and October travel.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Americans are still replacing vacations with staycations.</li> </ul>	<p>the campaign. From there, any impressions that are served and conversions made are tracked through these pixels. This allows Visit Billings to report and optimize when needed.</p> <p>Authenticating the quality of each media impression that is served is also an important measurement. For many campaigns the engagement of DoubleVerify is added to ensure that each impression is fully viewed, viewed by a real person, and is in a brand safe environment. This helps to ensure that Visit Billings receives what they have paid for in buys as well as peace of mind on where the ads are being placed.</p>	<p>attractions along the way also leave room for social distancing if that is still a recommended practice for summer travelers.</p> <p>REGIONAL YEAR-ROUND STRATEGY</p> <p>Billings is Montana’s largest city, and with that, the opportunities are endless. From arts and culture to food scenes, history to outdoor recreation, it’s easy to fill days with unique experiences. Regionally, Billings is the city, when it is safe, travelers will crave as it offers the hustle and bustle of a city without the huge crowds. Cultural attractions such as concerts and art galleries, as well as a culinary scene that features unique farmers markets, walkable breweries, restaurants and more will engage visitors. The regional year-round strategy is designed to highlight experiences that can’t be found for hundreds of miles and is customized so that it speaks specifically to each unique traveler, encouraging them to “Forge Your Own Path” while exploring the city and the region.</p>			
		<p>Printed materials for Visit Billings focus on the “Forge Your Own Path” branding and encourage travelers to seek adventure around every corner with the assistance from beautiful imagery, maps, recreational listing, and more.</p> <p>Visit Billings’ focus is to provide accessible and authentic information; therefore, no advertising is included in Visit Billings publications.</p> <p>Printed materials are essential to visitor orientation and</p>	<p>For both regional and non regional travelers surveyed in 2017-2018, scenic beauty, affordability and restaurants were considered the most important attributes in selecting leisure destinations in the Western U.S. Interestingly though, regional travelers appear to place more importance on scenic beauty (90.9% vs. 83.4%) and affordability (91.0% vs. 82.7%) compared to non regional travelers. In terms of secondary destination attributes, non regional travelers placed more importance on family friendly activities (65.3% vs. 58.6%) and</p>	<p>The ultimate measure of success is mission fulfillment regarding projects like this. 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.</p>	<p>THE ORIENTATION PHASE is where the traveler begins researching the details of his or her trip. This phase focuses on the route the traveler will take to arrive at the chosen destination and the mode of</p>			

Consumer	Printed Material	<p>facilitation for leisure and group travel.</p> <p>Printed materials are available via digital format at <a href="http://www.VisitBillings.com">www.VisitBillings.com</a> as well.</p> <p>Visit Billings uses these publications in print and digital form in order to help orient and facilitate the visitor. The two main items printed using CVB funds are the Visit Billings Scenic Drive Map and the Visit Billings - Billings Brew Trail Map. These two maps are typically re-printed once a year. They are mailed out, made part of registration bags for meeting planners, handed out at the Billings VIC, and the Billings' airport, and are also available at tradeshows.</p>	<p>urban sightseeing/exploration (63.7% vs. 46.6%).</p> <p>Having a Scenic Drive Map is assisting in facilitation of the visitor experience. Meantime, re Billings Brew Trail, Billings is a craft beer hotspot and the Billings Brew Trail is Montana's only walkable self-guided brewery tour. Although it continues to grow, the current list includes six breweries, two distilleries and a cider house. In May 2019, the city hosted the first-ever Billings Craft Brew Week with Taproom Cards to earn stamps for prizes, yoga, and movie events, as well as a Beer Run and post-race party. Over 350 runners arrived in downtown Billings for the event. Visit Billings, through its grant program, is a supporter of this event.</p>	<p>Inventory will be closely monitored of these print projects as well. If the inventory doesn't decrease, then there is not a need for a reprint and may not be a need for the map itself, ultimately. However, at this time, there have been years when both these maps have needed to be reprinted twice in on budget year. In that case, the BTBID, which already helps design these two projects, helps offset reprint needs.</p>	<p>transportation used to get there. Per the strategic plan, Montana's visitors have multiple destinations to consider within the state and bordering states. Regions and CVBs provide tools to help the visitor plan a route and encourage a longer stay.</p> <p>THE FACILITATION PHASE is where the traveler seeks experiences en route to a destination and during a stay.</p>	\$3,000.00		
		<p>Visit Billings will continue partnering with MOTBD in marketing opportunities including print, digital, OOH, and trade shows as offered and feasible. In FY20, these partnerships included MOTBD co-op advertising opportunities such as TripAdvisor and Sojern, as well as a boosted billboard presence in the Dallas area which was postponed due to COVID-19 impacts.</p> <p>TripAdvisor is also a significant partner for Visit Billings. TripAdvisor has been a trusted partner for many years. Visit Billings has had success with TripAdvisor co-ops on a national scope and will make another investment in FY21.</p> <p>Visit Billings' will participate cooperative opportunities with neighboring regions, where/when appropriate. Given COVID-19 impacts, staff will monitor opportunities as they are offered and budget allows.</p> <p>Other opportunities may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In FY20, Visit Billings partnered with Visit Southeast Montana on media</li> </ul>		<p>MEDIA KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPI'S)</p> <p>To balance quantity and quality of website visitation, we will optimize digital media toward conversion actions and monitor for an efficient CPC (cost per click) and CTR (click-through rate).</p>				

Consumer	Joint Ventures	<p>buys as well as execution of Familiarization Tours, Travel Blog Exchange events, and more. In the coming year, Visit Billings will continue its important partnership with Visit Southeast Montana to draw visitors to the area as budgets allow.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yellowstone Country travel region, particularly the Red Lodge area, is another important region where Visit Billings may continue building relationships. Many 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 GWRRA Wing 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 who are seeking services, as well as shopping and urban amenities. Visit Billings believes there is value in strengthening the benefits each city offers the other.</li> <li>• Visit Billings will partner with MOTBD, Montana's tourism regions, and CVBs on relevant consumer trade shows when appropriate. Many of Montana's tourism regions and CVBs came to the table to sponsor Travel Blog Exchange, showing a united effort from our state while welcoming over 500 Travel Bloggers, Influencers and Industry Professionals to our city. Billings has and will continue to partner with MOTBD and Visit Southeast Montana at the Rocky Mountain International Roundup and the USATA's IPW. These partnerships have proven successful in the past and are expected to be in the future, budget allowing.</li> </ul> <p>Finally, Visit Billings will also look to partner in research offerings including</p>	<p>For Visit Billings to engage in Joint Venture and Cooperative Opportunities, the latest tourism trends in the COVID-19 environment will be monitored.</p> <p>Meantime, Visit Billings refers to the 2017-2018 research project conducted by the Billings Tourism Business Improvement District for Visit Billings with Destination Analysts, for Visitor Profile Information. The full document was previously attached in this program for the FY21 grant request.</p> <p><b>Update Research/Statistics once Joint Venture(s) is identified and method is employed.</b></p>	<p>The team will measure 25% of view-through conversions and 100% of click-through conversions.</p> <p>The following engagement actions will be tracked:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner referrals</li> <li>• Page views</li> <li>• Requests for Visitor Guides</li> <li>• 3+ Minutes on site</li> <li>• eNewsletter sign-ups</li> <li>• Web traffic through ZooMontana</li> </ul> <p>In instances where social ad units direct a user to stay within the platform, social engagement metrics will be monitored and optimized. The campaign will be set up dynamically to retarget the budget toward the market that is performing the best.</p> <p>Visit Billings will also look to Smith Travel Research Reports (STR Reports) to monitor occupancy and room demand data. Any increase in room demand will be noted.</p> <p>Again, the measurement of success will depend on which opportunities are offered by MOTBD and partners as well as which type of programming is contracted.</p>	<p>Joint Ventures are very important to Visit Billings and always have been which was defined previously in this FY21 application when asked.</p> <p>The ability to leverage funds, garner a larger reach, and build relationships with tourism partners, vendors, major publications that would otherwise be too costly for one DMO, are very important to visitor growth at Montana's Trailhead.</p> <p>Joint Ventures in marketing or research will always be considered. The only offerings that don't typically make sense for Visit Billings to take advantage of are those with a winter season focus.</p>	\$35,500.00		
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		<p>VisaVue and if budgets allow in a post COVID-19 recovery, AirDNA data. Private funds typically support VisaVue research costs.</p>						
Consumer	Photo/Video Library	<p>The objective of enhancing a photo library is to increase the number of assets for Visit Billings, stakeholder, MOTBD, and tourism partner use.</p> <p>Having fresh, relevant, and targeted images is key to properly market a destination.</p> <p>Visually compelling and INSPIRING photography increases engagement across all media applications, whether it be increasing the view rate of an article, swaying a consumer's selection process or improving social media interaction. Articles containing relevant images have 94% more total views than articles without images, on average (JuffBullas.com). Given the visual age we live in, the power of strong photography cannot be emphasized enough.</p> <p>This year, Visit Billings will continue to tap local talent for existing images and also schedule custom photo shoots to capture specific scenes, location and audience demographics to keep pace with media frequency and trends. Emphasis this FY will be placed on relevant photos with people in them experiencing the destination.</p> <p>Photos will also be used on social media platforms and VisitBillings.com, and will be available to tourism organizations and partners at no charge.</p>	<p>Maintaining an inventory of current Billings-specific photographs is critical in representing the destination in a relevant, fresh and compelling manner. Visit Billings makes a year-round effort to acquire imagery that supports marketing efforts, and showcases iconic Billings sites like the Rimrocks, Yellowstone River stretch, Billings Brew Trail stops, food scene, shopping, entertainment options, ZooMontana, trails, parks, and other recreational, cultural, and historic offerings.</p> <p><b>Update Research/Statistics</b></p>	<p>Visit Billings will measure success by tracking the number of images obtained in FY21 and the budget expended to do so.</p> <p>The goal will be to obtain 5-10 quality images using the budget or less than the approved budget for this method. Due to COVID-19 and less budget amounts in collections, there is less money available for this method. However, staff will do what they can to, as always to negotiate the best price per image to help execute marketing strategies.</p>	<p>Maintaining an inventory of current Billings-specific photographs is critical in representing the destination in a relevant, fresh and compelling manner. Visit Billings makes a year-round effort to acquire imagery that supports marketing efforts, and showcases iconic Billings.</p> <p>Billings' leisure market consists of a healthy balance of history on the genuine frontier, outdoor adventure and recreation and urban amenities. As the largest city in the region, Billings offers amenities and opportunities regional visitors expect from the destination (medical, shopping, restaurant offerings, etc.).</p> <p>Visit Billings is striving to be sure visitors expectations are exceeded so that all visitors, regardless of where they come here from, see Billings as the trailhead to the many iconic attractions and experiences offered.</p>	\$2,500.00		
		<p>Travel and Tradeshow, under Billings CVB line items, will focus on international tour operator relationships.</p> <p><b>The International Marketplace</b></p>			Together with			

Consumer	Travel/Trade Shows	<p>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.</p> <p>Attending events like IPW with the United State Travel Association and Rocky Mountain International's International Round-Up allow Visit Billings staff to introduce the destination to tour operators or foster existing relationships.</p> <p>The Tradeshows noted in this line item will include RMI's International Roundup and USTA's IPW. Due to COVID-19, the 2020 IRU was cancelled. Therefore, Visit Billings' registration for this event was transferred to the 2021 show. Thus, the only costs the Billings CVB will incur in 2021 for IRU is for travel and accomodations.</p> <p>Visit Billings appreciates the chance to attend these events with MOTBD staff and liaisons. Particularly with IPW, Visit Billings would not be able to afford atendance to this show without partnering with MOTBD as well as other Regions and CVBs.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Appointments are key to appointment-based trade show events. We appreciate the work of MOTBD staff to leverage the MONTANA brand to help lead to good conversations with Regions and CVBs.</p> <p>The 2019 international event line-up proved successful with full schedules for Visit Billings staff as partners of MOTBD staff.</p> <p>Source? Update Research/Statistics</p>	<p>Success will be measured by number of appointments to each show as well as if contacts made showing interest in Montana, Billings, or southeast Montana. Locally, leads are followed up with via staff through account management using iDSS, the program Visit Billings uses for client management.</p>	<p>tourism partners, Visit Billings has made strong gains in growing international travel to southeast Montana in recent years. The impacts of this travel segment due to COVID-19 and accompanying international travel restrictions are substantial. However, it is important for Visit Billings to maintain relationships with international tour operators so overseas visitors who have ranked sightseeing, fine dining, and national parks/ monuments as major draws in deciding where to spend time while visiting the United States keep Billings top-of-mind as new travel habits emerge. Visit Billings will continue to work with the Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development and partners like Visit Southeast Montana and Rocky Mountain International to remain relevant in travel recovery to the international market.</p>	\$5,250.00		
		<p>People visit websites for information. Visit Billings staff members need to continually monitor the</p>	<p>Research notes consistently that destination management organizations (DMOs) play a vital role in promoting tourism in a</p>	<p>Visit Billings, with a website review team in partnership with its agency, recently performed a high-level audit of the visitbillings.com website, focusing on user experience (UX), security, tracking implementation, and performance. The deliverable, which was paid for using Billings Tourism Business Improvement District funds, was a full report of findings and recommendations following the audit. Staff performed this audit because weakness were</p>	<p>Visit Billings reported weaknesses and error reporting in sections of VisitBillings.com.</p>			

<p>Consumer</p>	<p>Website/Internet Development/Updates</p>	<p>effectiveness of VisitBillings.com and its content to grab visitor attention, engage with users, accommodate users, and ultimately retain users on the site. A website should provide clear, easy to understand, and enough information to help visitors make a purchase decision(s) and navigate the destination without error.</p>	<p>region, state, and single destination. An easy-to-navigate website that accommodates the user, can be key in the decision-making process for leisure visitors, tour operators, meeting planners, business travelers, and tournament directors. A good website that excites the user about the destination can have a positive impact on a potential visitor or colleague.</p> <p><b>What reserach? Update Research/Statistics</b></p>	<p>suspected. The Visit Billings team has reviewed the report thoroughly and is contemplating the phases of the approach offered by the agency to mitigate some of the site's weaknesses and make necessary adjustments to ensure the site accommodates users (visitors and potential visitors) appropriately. Once the project or phases are executed and/or completed, Visit Billings staff will look to tracking and performance of the site with marketing drivers to track success included but not limited to site speed, mobile usage and responsiveness, overall behavior, and review previous areas of friction for the user via Google Analytics and error reports to ensure all concerns posed in the audit report are improved.</p>	<p>An audit was requested from the agency currently managing the site. Overall, the website has a good design and contains relevant information for its unique visitors. However, the content structure and some navigation offered concern as well as some issues regarding usability, needed to be noted for resolution.</p>	<p>\$15,000.00</p>		
<p>Film</p>	<p>Opportunity Marketing</p>	<p>This is a to be determined (TBD) expense.</p> <p>Visit Billings looks forward to any opportunity to help the Montana Film Office succeed for the Montana brand.</p>	<p>Per the Montana Film Office's website, the primary roles of the Montana Film Office are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To promote the state of Montana as a filming location to the Film/TV/Print industries and invite these productions into Montana for the overall economic benefit of the state.</li> <li>Once a production has come into our state, assist producers to find locations that fit their script, as well as act as their liaison through every phase of production.</li> <li>To nurture and support the development of our resident crew base, as well as our resident filmmakers.</li> </ul> <p>The Montana Film Office is a component of the Montana Department of Commerce. Film support is very important to Visit Billings. Previous partnerships with former employees of the office included major projects like NEBRASKA, American Idol, HGTV episodes, as well as working to meet site</p>	<p>If the Montana Film Office or Visit Billings are able to partner in any capacity with a film or production crew and these funds are spent, that will be a primary measurement of success in this segment.</p>	<p>In the past, Visit Billings has hosted directors and producers with film/location scouts in order to help meet the needs of any project. Staff will be on call and offer support to the Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development and the Film Office with DOC, to ensure Montana and its communities are film-friendly.</p>	<p>\$1,000.00</p>		

			location and casting needs.  Update Research/Statistics					
Group Marketing	Multi-Media Marketing	<p>Amid COVID-19 concerns, social distancing requirements and travel restrictions, Visit Billings staff will work with regional and state partners to monitor the international travel segment while continuing to foster partnerships with domestic and international tour operators. These professionals are key partners to Visit Billings staff and are critical in efforts to grow visitation at Montana's Trailhead in the future.</p> <p>As staff monitor the international landscape in a pandemic, they will consider marketing opportunities through MOTBD, Rocky Mountain International, and the United States Travel Association.</p> <p>There are annual print and digital opportunities that are offered to help promote Billings to key regions important to Visit Billings marketing in Italy, Germany, France, and Nordic Regions. It's important for Visit Billings to continue to have a presence in these markets, thus funds have been budgeted to participate in continued placements.</p> <p>At the same time, Meeting and Convention Recruitment is important to Visit Billings and Billings as a destination. Despite convention cancellations, postponements, and budget adjustments due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Visit Billings staff must remain supportive and innovative to, and for, the meeting planner. There may still be marketing opportunities that seem relevant considering lower budgets that warrant an investment in digital marketing to</p>	<p>Visit Billings refers to the 2017-2018 research project conducted by the Billings Tourism Business Improvement District for Visit Billings with Destination Analysts, for Visitor Profile Information. The full document is attached in information for this plan in this program.</p> <p><b>Pull out specific research and plug into marketing plan method.</b></p> <p>Visit Billings will also look to Smith Travel Research Reports (STR Reports) to monitor occupancy and room demand data. Any increase in room demand will be noted.</p> <p>VisaVue data is also monitored in both domestic and international spending.</p> <p><b>Stating the research source is not the same as providing the supporting research/statistics. Update Research/Statistics</b></p>	<p>1. Build brand awareness of Billings as either a group tour or meetings destination.</p> <p>2. Generate new leads and grow Visit Billings' database of qualified planners and/or tour operators.</p>	<p>Group Marketing is important to growing key tourism segments in Billings and supporting properties of all sizes and needs.</p> <p>In order to reach decision makers, planners, tour operators, and tournament directors as well as attendees and other visitors, a multi-media approach is necessary including print, digital, and other communication means.</p> <p>Group Tour Marketing:</p> <p>Yellowstone National Park and Little Bighorn Battlefield, along with the Lewis and Clark Trail, are key attractions positioning Billings as a trailhead to access Montana's iconic sites. These points of interest make Billings a group-friendly destination for the domestic or international traveler. Billings' proximity to the Beartooth Scenic Byway, as well as the northeast and north entrances to Yellowstone National Park, position the city well as a stop on a group tour itinerary.</p> <p>Meeting and Convention Marketing:</p> <p>Meeting planners often have a misperception of Montana, but this is Big Meetings Country and awareness of the wealth of amenities and resources available for meetings and conventions at the destination is important to promote. Billings' walkable downtown with dining and entertainment, close proximity to Billings Logan International airport with nonstop</p>	\$10,000.00		

		meeting planners in FY21.			services, and surrounding regional attractions, are strong value propositions for planners.			
Marketing Support	Ad Agency Services	<p>Agency support is extremely important to Visit Billings. The Visit Billings Agency of Record is BCF Agency. This agency offers dozens of services that a small team like Visit Billings' three FTE's cannot scale or manage. Contracting with BCF Agency offers on demand services for the website, marketing strategies, creative services, design needs, placements, to name a few. Visit Billings will continue to utilize ad agency services in FY21.</p> <p>Visit Billings also contracts with BCF Agency in a retainer model in order to execute the following timely and efficiently:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marketing Strategies</li> <li>Remain fluid with placements and campaign execution in proper DMAs</li> <li>Ongoing planning, execution, and assessment of campaigns and ROI</li> <li>Benchmarks and regular reporting for DOC/MOTBD Rules and Regulation needs as well as reports for staff and boards</li> <li>Continuous improvement of campaign performance versus paying per project</li> </ul>	<p>Visit Billings refers to the 2017-2018 research report conducted by the BTBID for the DMO by Destination Analysts, for Visitor Profile for strong data. The full DA research document is attached previously to this FY21 application. In order to not be redundant, please reference this plan in this program for additional reference to supporting stats and data. Furthermore, Visit Billings is also monitoring habit and travel adjustments by travelers as reported by weekly Destination Analysts travel sentiment index data. ITRR and VisaVue data is also important to marketing and sales strategies for Visit Billings and BCF Agency.</p>	<p>MEDIA KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPI'S)</p> <p>To balance quantity and quality of website visitation, we will optimize digital media toward conversion actions and monitor for an efficient CPC (cost per click) and CTR (click-through rate). The team will measure 25% of view-through conversions and 100% of click-through conversions.</p> <p>The following engagement actions will be tracked:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner referrals</li> <li>Page views</li> <li>Requests for Visitor Guides</li> <li>3+ Minutes on site</li> <li>eNewsletter sign-ups</li> <li>Web traffic through ZooMontana</li> </ul> <p>In instances where social ad units direct a user to stay within the platform, social engagement metrics will be monitored and optimized. The campaign will be set up dynamically to retarget the budget toward the market that is performing the best.</p> <p>Visit Billings will also look to Smith Travel Research Reports (STR Reports) to monitor occupancy and room demand data. Any increase in room demand will be noted.</p>	<p>Visit Billings' Agency of Record offers a combination of internal support that stretches beyond the talents of employees. BCF's contract allows staff to engage the agency in wide-ranging, multi-channel campaigns, leverage social platforms to reach target audiences, and tailors needs to budget needs and goals as a destination marketing and management organization. BCF handles all digital, print, collateral, web, and strategy needs with the Visit Billings team.</p> <p>While the primary role of BCF is the creation of marketing strategies and assistance with and execution of, the marketing plan, the BCF staff is an extension of the 3.5 employees with Visit Billings.</p>	\$36,000.00		
		Per Regulations and Procedures for Regional/CVB Tourism Organizations regarding use of the Lodging Facility Use Tax:		Per the contract between the Montana Department of Commerce and the Billings Chamber of Commerce, 20% of projected revenue may be designated to cover allowable administrative expenses per the management agreement for the	The Billings CVB is a very important organization to the local lodging community in support of the economy and annual execution of			

Marketing Support	Administration	<p>Up to, but not to exceed the amount, 20% of the Billings CVB's new annual revenue may be designated to cover administrative expenses. In FY21 this will be difficult given the state of the industry due to COVID-19 impacts. However, these allowed expenses will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equipment such as copying machine, phones, software, etc.</li> <li>• Rent</li> <li>• Storage</li> <li>• Legal Fees</li> <li>• Janitorial Services</li> <li>• Utilities</li> </ul>	<p>Promotion and support of the local lodging community assisting with the Lodging Facility Use Tax per Montana Code Annotated is a main driver for the Billings CVB. If local lodging partners are supported, the partnership between the Department of Commerce, Billings CVB, and the Billings Chamber of Commerce is successful.</p>	<p>Billings CVB. These funds will help ensure the health of the organization in order for staff to execute mission. Growth in visitation based on success in other marketing segments in this application will help measure success.</p> <p>These funds are extremely important to the health of the Billings CVB as an organization as noted in the method and noted again here:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equipment such as copying machine, phones, software, etc.</li> <li>• Rent</li> <li>• Storage</li> <li>• Legal Fees</li> <li>• Janitorial Services</li> <li>• Utilities</li> </ul>	<p>the tax proceeds to market and sell Billings as a preferred travel destination. Visit Billings is managed by the Billings Chamber of Commerce which helps leverage funds for the organization. Clearly \$45,000 doesn't cover expenses incurred by a DMO, but the administrative amount does help offset expenses in order to help Visit Billings execute mission to promote and support the local lodging community and grow visitation at Montana's Trailhead.</p>	\$45,000.00		
					<p>THE ORIENTATION PHASE is where the traveler begins researching the details of his or her trip. This phase focuses on the route the traveler will take to arrive at the chosen destination and the mode of transportation used to get there. Per the strategic plan, Montana's visitors have multiple destinations to consider within the state and bordering states. Regions and CVBs provide tools to help the visitor plan a route and encourage a longer stay.</p> <p>Visit Billings Visitor Guidebook</p> <p>The Visit Billings Visitor Guidebook is available digitally via the website and is mailed at no-charge upon request. The Billings guide focuses on the "Forge Your Own Path" branding and encourages travelers to seek adventure and live life to the fullest around every corner. With the assistance of beautiful imagery, maps, recreational</p>			

Marketing Support	Fulfillment/Telemarketing/Call Center	<p>Fulfillment is important to visitor orientation and facilitation. The Billings Visitor Guidebook and other materials assist potential visitors in planning with both orientation and facilitation in the travel decision process as strategized by MOTBD.</p> <p>Visit Billings has partnered with Certified Folder for more than ten (10) years in efforts to ensure information regarding Billings as a travel destination are readily available at rest stops, VICs, hotels, convenience stores as well as via mail ahead of actual travel.</p> <p>In addition to contract fulfillment, Visit Billings will utilize dollars for general postage and fulfillment assistance with local mail service, MTS.</p>	<p>76% of travelers to Montana are repeat visitors. It's important to ensure a positive experience during trip execution to help result in more repeat visitation.</p> <p>Printed materials, digital offerings, customer service training programs for frontline employees and a visitor information center all assist in this phase of the travel process.</p>	<p>Visit Billings tracks inventory of the Visitor Guidebook with Certified Folder to assess interest. There have been issues with distribution due to COVID-19 with CF, but Visit Billings staff are monitoring the situation and will ensure service is consistent once mandatory 14-day quarantine restrictions and shelter in place directives are relaxed and traveler begin to mobilize again.</p> <p>Staff will continue to track inventory and how mailers and distribution relate to visitation.</p> <p>In FY21, Certified Folder Display will offer the Billings Visitor Guide along with I-90, I-94, and I-15 corridors.</p> <p>These areas include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rapid City</li> <li>The Black Hills</li> <li>Yellowstone Route</li> <li>Buffalo and Sheridan, WY</li> <li>Helena</li> <li>Great Falls</li> <li>Bozeman Rest Area</li> <li>Sweetgrass Rest Area</li> <li>Anaconda Rest Area</li> <li>Dena Mora Area</li> <li>Butte</li> </ul>	<p>listings, and more, Visit Billings' focus is to provide accessible and authentic information. There is no advertising included in Visit Billings publications or collateral materials.</p> <p>THE FACILITATION PHASE is where the traveler seeks experiences en route to a destination and during a stay.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Tourism Regions, Convention and Visitors Bureaus (CVBs), communities and organizations must all work together to make visitors aware of the full array of experiences available to guests.</li> <li>•The 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 25 part-time volunteers operate the center, which is normally 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 to facilitate visitor queries. The goal is to foster successful stays and future Montana travels. At the writing of this document, the Billings VIC remains closed due to COVID-19 impacts; however, protective shields, signage, and social distancing protocols are being installed and implemented to protect visitors, employees, and volunteers upon reopening.</li> <li>•The Visit Billings staff keeps an open dialogue of</li> </ul>	\$22,000.00		
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					<p>communication and information flow with tourism partners, area hotels, attractions, businesses and the community in preparation to provide exceptional customer service to visitors. This initiative is spearheaded by the Billings Trail Guide program of Visit Billings. This civic-minded program works to unite and motivate the Billings community in raising the bar and level of service to visitors. It provides frontline employees training and support regarding options for visitors in and around Billings and southeast Montana.</p> <p>·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. Once COVID-19 directives relax, visitors will be invited to engage with the #VisitBillings brand throughout their journey, safely.</p> <p>Whether visitors seek adrenaline-pumping adventure, fun recreation, or easy-paced experiences, Billings is the perfect place to set up home base. It is Montana's Trailhead. With nearly 4,500 hotel rooms, a wide variety of local attractions, and access to breathtaking views, Billings is a perfect part of a Great American Road Trip itinerary or a quick weekend get-away.</p>			
		TAC Meetings: Most of these meetings take place in Helena and require travel and		<p>Meetings of the Tourism Advisory Council (TAC) constitute required attendance for the Executive Director of a Region or CVB.</p> <p>These meetings offer important insight for</p>	Team building and information			

Marketing Support	TAC/Governor's Conference meetings	<p>at least one overnight stay.</p> <p>Governor's Conference on Tourism and Recreation: This event is hosted by a Montana community that differs from year to year. This event requires travel and typically two overnight stays. In FY21, this event will take place in Billings which is why this budget item is less than in most years when the conference does not take place in Billings.</p>	<p>TAC Meetings are a requirement.</p> <p>The Governor's Conference is typically a home run for staff and is attended annually for many reasons including networking, time with partners, relationship building, information gathering, strategizing, exposure to major travel brands, and a general tradeshow.</p>	<p>organizations from both the TAC, MOTBD, and State Partners including ITRR and Montana State Parks for Regions and CVBs.</p> <p>The Annual Governor's Conference on Tourism and Recreation is an important relationship building and information gathering event hosted every April. Visit Billings uses State Lodging Facility Use Tax to send the Executive Director while private dollars are used to send other CVB staff.</p>	<p>gathering are important aspects of the industry and making sure all partners understand what is required of them and ways/opportunities to work together.</p> <p>For other needs, please reference the MOTBD Regulations and Procedures document pertaining to such meeting expenses.</p>	\$1,400.00		
Marketing Support	Professional Development	<p>Destinations International (DI) strives to make its members and destinations successful. Investing in professional training opportunities like the DI annual conference attendance helps grow staff to make them stronger DMO employees and tourism advocates.</p> <p>As the world's largest and most reliable resource for destination organizations, Visit Billings will send one staff members with CVB funds to connect, inspire and learn more about destination marketing tourism economic impacts, job creation, community sustainability and quality of life through travel.</p>	<p>Investing in <b>employee training should</b> improve worker retention rates, customer satisfaction and creativity for new product ideas.</p> <p>Effective <b>training</b> saves labor by reducing time spent on problem-solving and saves money in the long run by producing a better workforce.</p>	<p>Papers and reports by the employee(s) attending training will be made available to the Visit Billings Boards of Directors (TBID and Chamber/CVB).</p> <p>The Visit Billings staff member who attends - shares findings and revelations with colleagues and coworkers. He/she will also share any papers at the request of stakeholders.</p>	<p>The annual conference, held in July, has a history of being a very worthy investment for many reasons including networking opportunities and the sharing of best practices among peers in the industry.</p> <p>Visit Billings private funds pay for the membership fee to DI, while State CVB funds assist with allowing one staff member to attend the annual conference hosted every July or to take part in trainings offered by the organizations like the certification called: CDME - Certified Destination Marketing Executive</p>	\$2,000.00		
				<p>Visit Billings, with a website review team in partnership with its agency, recently performed a high-level audit of the visitbillings.com website, focusing on user experience (UX), security, tracking implementation, and performance. The deliverable, which was paid for using Billings Tourism Business Improvement District funds, was a full report of findings and recommendations following the audit. Staff performed this</p>				

<p>Marketing Support</p>	<p>Website/Internet Development/Updates</p>	<p>People visit websites for information. Visit Billings staff members need to continually monitor the effectiveness of VisitBillings.com and its content to grab visitor attention, engage with users, accommodate users, and ultimately retain users on the site. A website should provide clear, easy to understand, and enough information to help visitors make a purchase decision(s) and navigate the destination without error.</p>	<p>Research notes consistently that destination management organizations (DMOs) play a vital role in promoting tourism in a region, state, and single destination. An easy-to-navigate website that accommodates the user, can be key in the decision-making process for leisure visitors, tour operators, meeting planners, business travelers, and tournament directors. A good website that excites the user about the destination can have a positive impact on a potential visitor or colleague.</p>	<p>audit because weakness were suspected.</p> <p>The Visit Billings team has reviewed the report thoroughly and is contemplating the phases of the approach offered by the agency to mitigate some of the site's weaknesses and make necessary adjustments to ensure the site accommodates users (visitors and potential visitors) appropriately.</p> <p>Once the project or phases are executed and/or completed, Visit Billings staff will look to tracking and performance of the site with marketing drivers to track success included but not limited to site speed, mobile usage and responsiveness, overall behavior, and review previous areas of friction for the user via Google Analytics and error reports to ensure all concerns posed in the audit report are improved.</p>	<p>\$15,000.00</p>		
		<p>Visit Billings partners with the MOTBD, tourism and hospitality partners, and neighboring regions in promoting visitation to Billings through earned media initiatives. A few key FY21 tactics include:</p> <p><b>MEDIA RELATIONS AND OUTREACH</b></p> <p>Throughout the year, Visit Billings will continue to build relationships with influencers and journalists that will help grow the brand and inspire travel. Attending events such as Public Relations Society of America Travel and Tourism Conference and North America Travel Blog Exchange have increased contacts in the past and allow the team to build the influencer program. When the time is right, Visit Billings will proactively reach out to appropriate media and influencers with original, relevant, and timely stories.</p> <p>TBEX,</p>					

<p>Publicity</p>	<p>Fam Trips</p>	<p><b>FAMILIARIZATION (FAM) TOURS AND PRESS TRIPS</b></p> <p>As a result of journalists and influencers visiting the destination, Billings has received incredible media coverage highlighting the experiences and favorites of the destination. This past year, Billings hosted TBEX (Travel Blog Exchange), a conference that brought together travel journalists and digital influencers for workshops focused on digital and travel technology.</p> <p>Over 500 attendees joined and participated on "pre-BEX" tours that included excursions to national monuments and Yellowstone National Park as well as in-town adventures like climbing and biking the Rimrocks, paddle-boarding Lake Elmo State Park, taking in the Billings Brew Trail, downtown arts and galleries, and ZooMontana. Visit Billings coordinated 38 pre-conference tours, all beginning at Montana's Trailhead.</p> <p>From this event, Visit Billings partnered with colleagues from Visit Southeast Montana, Visit Big Sky, Yellowstone Country Tourism, Glacier Country Tourism, Montana State Parks as well as local partnerships with the Billings Depot, Camelot Ranch, Billings Cultural Partners, and the Pub Station. The Visit Billings team will continue outreach and collaboration with the attendees throughout the year to generate even more media and digital coverage.</p> <p><b>PRESS ROOM AND BLOG</b></p> <p>The VisitBillings.com website includes a press page with featured press hits, story ideas and easily accessible images for press use. Content is an important part of our marketing and earned media efforts. Blog content is produced not only for consumers, but to inspire influencers, journalists and bloggers.</p>	<p>A comprehensive Visitor Profile research study conducted by Destination Analysts, offered top line survey data collected from in-person intercept surveys of Billings area visitors informed top visitor origin markets, purpose of visit and place of stay, as well as detailed trip characteristics. The most important factors motivating the visit to Billings included a special event or festival, shopping, a good deal on airfare, and nearby friends or family. Hosting influencers and members of the press/media in order to highlight the experiences at Montana's Trailhead can help grow visitation.</p>	<p>Account Management, relationship follow-up, bookings, social channel followers, and Cision Reporting will help guide ROI and successes for fam trips with press, influencers, and/or tour operators.</p>	<p>Visit Billings' public relation's strategy focuses on generating distinct story angles and themes centered around the "Forge Your Own Path" brand-level campaign with an emphasis on elevating awareness of Montana's Trailhead. The very nature of public relations allows us to be nimble in our response as travel re-emerges after COVID-19. In spring 2020, many media outlets paused coverage as writers weren't able to travel and the destination experiences were closed. However, digital coverage focused on local travel and outdoor experiences is expected to rebound quickly. Local writers and content creators help tell these local stories of Billings and the region.</p>	<p>\$3,000.00</p>	
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Research	Survey/Data Collection	<p>Visit Billings subscribes to monthly citywide Smith Travel Research Reports (STR Reports) in order to track data pertaining to occupancy, room demand, average daily rate, and other key indicators in hotel data that helps Visit Billings track growth and declines at the destination.</p> <p>Visit Billings also monitors a destination report which compares Billings' performance with that of chosen competitor markets, allowing the team to discover the impact of marketing efforts on stakeholders and assist in building key strategies for future marketing.</p> <p>Additionally, Visit Billings will subscribe to weekly STR Reports in order to monitor growth in a COVID-19 recovery. This will also allow Visit Billings staff and boards to monitor impacts of events on the lodging community. Such weekly reports are also made available to the public and are received every Wednesday.</p>	<p>The Billings CVB is a very important organization to the local lodging community in support of the economy and annual execution of the tax proceeds to market and sell Billings as a preferred travel destination. Such data as STR Reports allows Visit Billings and its stakeholders to monitor growth and declines in the market. This will be very important in monitoring tourism with COVID-19 impacts. This research is the very research needed in order to answer questions like, 'please provide supporting research/statistics' for the needs of this grant application and marketing plan.</p>	<p>The Billings CVB is a very important organization to the local lodging community in support of the economy and annual execution of the tax proceeds to market and sell Billings as a preferred travel destination. Such data as STR Reports allows Visit Billings and its stakeholders to monitor growth and declines in the market. Success will be measured by having this report available internally and externally to review for future marketing decisions. STR Reports are important in monitoring tourism with COVID-19 impacts. This research is the very research needed in order to answer questions like, 'please provide supporting research/statistics' for the needs of this grant application and marketing plan. Therefore, having this information available will help measure success in this segment.</p>	<p>STR Reports are the hotel industry standard for benchmarking measurables for a DMO like Visit Billings. Data tracked includes occupancy rate, room demand, RevPar and average daily rate (ADR). By tracking and utilizing this research, Staff can benchmark Yellowstone County lodging statistics with other competing destinations across the region and country. The STR Report is emailed to stakeholders, media, and tourism partners and is made available at VisitBillings.com.</p>	\$8,500.00		
						\$255,150.00		

**Marketing Method Evaluation Attachments**

- Attachment 1
- Attachment 2
- Attachment 3
- Attachment 4
- Attachment 5
- Attachment 6
- Attachment 7
- Attachment 8
- Attachment 9
- Attachment 10

**Marketing Method Budget**

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Marketing Segment	Marketing Method	Bed tax funded budget	Non bed tax funded budget (optional)
Consumer	Multi-Media Marketing	\$128,362.90	\$0.00
Consumer	Printed Material	\$3,000.00	\$0.00
Consumer	Joint Ventures	\$35,500.00	\$0.00
Consumer	Photo/Video Library	\$2,500.00	\$0.00
Consumer	Travel/Trade Shows	\$5,250.00	\$0.00
Consumer	Website/Internet Development/Updates	\$15,000.00	\$0.00
		\$189,612.90	\$0.00
Film	Opportunity Marketing	\$1,000.00	\$0.00
		\$1,000.00	\$0.00
Group Marketing	Multi-Media Marketing	\$20,000.00	\$0.00
		\$20,000.00	\$0.00
Marketing Support	Ad Agency Services	\$36,000.00	\$0.00
Marketing Support	Administration	\$45,000.00	\$0.00
Marketing Support	Fulfillment/Telemarketing/Call Center	\$22,000.00	\$0.00
Marketing Support	TAC/Governor's Conference meetings	\$1,400.00	\$0.00
Marketing Support	Professional Development	\$2,000.00	\$0.00
		\$106,400.00	\$0.00
Publicity	Fam Trips	\$3,000.00	\$0.00
		\$3,000.00	\$0.00
Research	Survey/Data Collection	\$9,860.00	\$0.00
		\$9,860.00	\$0.00
		\$329,872.90	\$0.00

### Miscellaneous Attachments

Description	File Name	File Size
Visit Billings Research Report which is referred to several times in the FY21 Grant Application for the Billings CVB.	2017-18 Billings Visitor Profile Study - Final Report of Findings 1.18.19.pdf	3.7 MB
Visit Billings Research Report which is referred to several times in the FY21 Grant Application for the Billings CVB.	2017-18 Billings Visitor Profile Study - Final Report of Findings 1.18.19.pdf	3.7 MB
Visit Billings Budget Document with private fund information per Billings TBID Funding for FY21.	Abridged Visit Billings Plan with TBID Budget Information (Private Funds).pdf	5.5 MB
Visit Billings Budget Document with private fund information per Billings TBID Funding for FY21.	Abridged Visit Billings Plan with TBID Budget Information (Private Funds).pdf	5.5 MB
Billings CVB Budget in form of required pie chart/graph	Billings CVB Pie Chart.pdf	133 KB
Billings CVB Budget in form of required pie chart/graph	Billings CVB Pie Chart.pdf	133 KB
Billings CVB Budget Table	CVB Budget.Table.pdf	453 KB
Billings CVB Budget Table	CVB Budget.Table.pdf	453 KB
Visit Billings FY21 Marketing Plan and Budget (Digital)	Visit Billings FY21 Marketing Plan and Budget - digital version.pdf	7.6 MB
Visit Billings FY21 Marketing Plan and Budget (Digital)	Visit Billings FY21 Marketing Plan and Budget - digital version.pdf	7.6 MB

### Reg/CVB Required Documents

Description	File Name	File Size
Required Document I	Required Document I.pdf	455 KB
Required Document II	Required Document II.pdf	464 KB
Required Document III	Required Document III.pdf	575 KB

