



**Grant Details**

**108656 - FY22 Region/CVB Marketing Plan**

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**114148 - FY22 Visit Southeast Montana Marketing Plan**

**DOC Office of Tourism**

**Grant Title:** FY22 Visit Southeast Montana Marketing Plan  
**Grant Number:** 22-51-007  
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**Contract Dates**

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<b>Project Dates</b>	07/01/2021
	06/30/2022

Project Start	Project End
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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?*

### We're Big Out Here

That is what a visit to Southeast Montana promises. Wide-open spaces. Historical stories. Deeply-rooted traditions. And, adventures as varied as stars in the vast night skies.

Out here, Big Sky meets big adventure. It's the kind of place to slow down and fall in love with Montana. It's the kind of place where cowboys still ride horses across the open plains. It's the kind of place where dinosaur fossils are waiting to be discovered and history is rooted in the land. It's the kind of place where visitors can steep in the myriad colors of a prairie sunset and feel the drum beat that nourished the indigenous tribes for generations.

This is Southeast Montana.

### A Brief History

Originally called "Custer Country," Visit Southeast Montana began in 1984 as an organization charged with helping bring tourists to the region. It was named for one of its most famous attractions, the Little Bighorn Battlefield. In 1987 the Montana Legislature enacted a 4 percent Lodging Facility Use Tax to fund tourism promotion organizations. At that time, Custer Country became one of six state-funded tourism regions in the state.

This organization continued to market the 13 counties and two Indian Reservations of Southeast Montana until 2010. The Billings Chamber of Commerce received the contract from the Montana Department of Commerce to manage the region and the organization moved from Forsyth to Billings. In 2012, the Custer Country Board of Directors voted to change the name of the region to "Visit Southeast Montana."

From a traveler's perspective, it may seem like there is not much "out here" but the FY22 campaign will demonstrate otherwise.

### The Organization

Visit Southeast Montana is a private, nonprofit organization managed by the Billings Chamber of Commerce. We serve as a voice for Southeast Montana's tourism and hospitality industries, seeking to promote the region's many attractions, events and communities while ensuring that tourism is recognized as one of the region's top economic drivers, especially when changes to local and state-wide legislation are considered. Visit Southeast Montana consists of two full-time staff members under contract with the Montana Department of Commerce and is directed by a board consisting of no more than 21 members from across the region.

Visit Southeast Montana partners with the region's two Convention & Visitors Bureaus (Billings and Miles City; Glendive hopes to regain CVB status again in FY23) along with hoteliers, chambers of commerce and other tourism-related entities including state parks, county and federal organizations, plus private businesses ranging from coffee shops

and restaurants to guide services, art galleries and private tour operators. The stakeholders and tourism partners of Southeast Montana provide the essence, flavor, identity and unique character of the region.

## MISSION

The mission of Visit Southeast Montana is to increase tourism to Southeast Montana by increasing the awareness of our region, showcasing our cultural heritage, developing memorable experiences and educating our residents about the economic benefits of tourism.

## VISIT SOUTHEAST MONTANA VISION STATEMENT:

Southeast Montana will become the trusted source for free-spirited travelers to achieve their legendary life experiences.

## IDENTITY

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

This vast region, blessed with a diversity of people, geography and cultures, prides itself on connecting with visitors who enjoy our six very distinctive characteristics:

#### 1. OUTDOOR RECREATION

There is no doubt that opportunities for outdoor recreation abound across Southeast Montana – many exist on public lands and waterways. Fisherman will appreciate the world-class fishing opportunities available along the Bighorn and Musselshell Rivers, Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area (BCNRA) and the Paddlefish Harvest along the banks of the Yellowstone River near Glendive, along with an emerging catfish and bass fishery on the Yellowstone River. Hunters continue to pay premium prices to travel to the Powder River area to bag trophy deer and antelope. The Bull Mountains near Roundup are a rising star for

elk hunters, and Eastern Montana is becoming known throughout the surrounding states for being great bird hunting country, allowing hunters to stretch their hunting season with pheasant, grouse, chukers, ducks and geese.

Hiking and camping enthusiasts will relish the freedom and solitude of the Custer National Forest, Chalk Buttes, Terry Badlands and Medicine Rocks State Park, along with the fore-mentioned Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area. Makoshika State Park, Montana's largest state park, features some of the nation's most spectacular badlands scenery while the Terry Badlands Wilderness Study Area remains pristine. The Yellowstone River Coalition (at the time of publication) is seeking funding to create a recreation corridor along the lower Yellowstone River, from Billings to the confluence with the Missouri River. This project would pursue public-private partnerships and allow for more access to boating and camping along the Lower Yellowstone.

The wide-open prairies of Southeast Montana region also boasts some of the darkest night skies – ideal for stargazing and planet observing – in the high plains of the inner Rocky Mountain region of the U.S. In late December 2020, Medicine Rocks State Park was designated an International Dark Sky Sanctuary – that means the park is the darkest of the dark. This international designation is only one of two in the state of Montana and elevates the Southeast Montana region in the eyes of star-gazers.

## 2. WESTERN AUTHENTICITY

Many states and regions like to think they possess true western culture, but in SEMT's rural communities, as well as the cities such as Billings and Miles City, visitors can get a true picture of everything that was right about the Old West. From Montana's largest state fair in Billings to feel-good, small-town rodeos, Southeast Montana communities have kept western hospitality alive. Standout western events include the Bucking Horse Sale in Miles City, the NILE and Chase Hawkes Rodeos in Billings and Little Bighorn Days in Hardin – Hawkes Rodeos in Billings and Little Bighorn Days in Hardin – from ranch rodeos to larger circuit Professional Bull Riders, the region hosts a rodeo almost every weekend of the warm season, plus plenty in other months. Authenticity is the key word when listing this strength. Simply traveling across the region solidifies that experience when a visitor may have to wait for cowboys to herd their cattle across the road or they experience the western lifestyle while visiting Southeast Montana's small communities and businesses.

## 3. HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Southeast Montana contains a wealth of historical sites which are internationally known and are of great significance to the story of America. The Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, site of Custer's Last Stand and the nation's most famous Native American victory, is located in Big Horn County and is the third most-visited destination in Montana behind Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks. Pompeys Pillar National Monument bears

William Clark's signature and is one the only remaining in-the-field, physical evidence of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

Due the pandemic, the Trail to the Little Bighorn, which is funded by the Eastern Montana Tourism Initiative, was postponed and will re-start in FY22. The first phase of this project, which utilizes the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument as its centerpiece, connects the dots between the renowned battlefield with related locations and sites across the entire region.

Many other state parks, museums and historic sites tell their own stories of pioneer life on the prairie, the Native American struggle to leave behind their nomadic way of life and the impact of the cattle trade on the American West. From large and well-known to more intimate, all are part of the story of the American West and can be experienced in Southeast Montana.

## 4. ACCESSIBILITY AND FACILITIES

Southeast Montana is fortunate to contain two of the state's busiest highways, Interstate 94 and Interstate 90 that funnel drive-traffic directly into Southeast Montana, converging in Billings. Montana Highway 212, also called the Warrior Trail, cuts from Belle Fourche, SD, to Crow Agency, and offers a two-lane alternative into the region.

Located within a day's drive from the major metropolitan areas of Denver, Seattle and Minneapolis-St. Paul, plus all of Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota and South Dakota, the Southeast Montana region is truly accessible for a vast drive- market. In FY22 Billings Logan Airport, which boasts

United, Delta, American, Alaska/Horizon, Frontier and Allegiant Airlines direct service to eight destinations, including seasonal direct service to/from Chicago, San Diego and Los Angeles, will continue a \$55 million expansion and remodel. Despite pandemic-related slow-downs, American Airlines added a second daily flight to/from DFW and the airport expansion will increase gate capacity from five to eight.

Regional shoppers are also drawn to Billings, the state's largest city, for boutiques, burgeoning downtown district and major shopping centers. Lodging opportunities in Southeast Montana are incredibly diverse, including everything from 4-star hotels, to charming bed and breakfasts, RV parks, rustic camping, hunting and fishing lodges.

## 5. DINOSAUR ADVENTURE

The plains, prairies and buttes of Southeast Montana are dinosaur country. Famous dinosaurs taken from the Southeast Montana area of the Hell Creek Formation include Tyrannosaurus Rex, Maiasaura and Triceratops. Walk with the dinosaurs in Makoshika State Park and visit three museums and facilities that are active members of the well-established Montana Dinosaur Trail. The museums showcase the many paleontological treasures which have been discovered in Eastern Montana. Museums of particular interest to dinosaur enthusiasts include the Carter County Museum, Glendive Dinosaur & Fossil Museum, Frontier Gateway Museum and the Makoshika State Park Interpretive Center. Individuals and families can also opt for a private fossil dig or work with a paleo adventure in Makoshika State Park. This broad category includes fossil and rock collectors.

## 6. NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURE

When visitors from the eastern U.S., Europe, and Asia visit the West, they are innately curious about Native American culture. They grew up reading stories and watching the movies about the tribes that once dominated the American West. Southeast Montana is fortunate enough to play host to Crow Fair, one of the last great Native American cultural events, held annually on the Crow Reservation plus the Cheyenne Victory Days celebration held on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation.

These events gives visitors the opportunity to witness how Native American culture has evolved and the importance the tribes continue to place on their history and traditions. The Northern Cheyenne Reservation contains an incredible variety of historical sites, as well as opportunities to purchase hand-made gifts and educational experiences presented by local tour guides. The history of the region is inseparable from the history of the tribes who live in it to this day.

## KEY CHALLENGES FACING THE REGION

### 1. THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

Likely this challenge does not need introduction. At this time (April 2021), the world has experienced shutdowns, quarantines and vaccines for more than a year. Post-pandemic "rules" continue to evolve while the tourism and travel industry works to re-invent itself and entire populations seek determine what "safe" travel includes. Montana is currently "open" and while this status could change, it could also create challenges in terms of visitor numbers, expectations and behavior (as perceived by Montanans). In addition, tribal tourism partners are less likely to welcome visitation and may even be closed or enforce check-points to ensure the safety of their tribal members (at this time, April, 2020 both the Crow and Northern Cheyenne reservations are closed). As vaccines are being promoted, the environment will likely continue in a state of dynamic change. With no roadmap, it will take some time to determine what travel and tourism looks like in the post-pandemic world.

Visit Southeast Montana functions as both a Destination Marketing Organization and a Destination Management Organization during this transition.

## 2. PERCEPTION THAT MONTANA IS FAR AWAY AND DIFFICULT TO TRAVEL TO.

According to the 2016 Montana Destination Brand Research Study by Destination Analysts, Montana is perceived as challenging to access with associated time and cost that prohibits visitation. Conversely, Colorado (the top regional competitor) was cited as the best destination in regard to scenic beauty, potential for vacation road trip, family-friendly environment, national parks, winter recreational activities and places “I most want to visit.” However, Montana as a whole and Southeast Montana specifically are well-positioned to capitalize on Colorado’s weaknesses: crowded attractions; lack of or losing authenticity; high costs and over-development. However, in the post-COVID crisis environment, this “far away” concept could prove to make Southeast Montana more desirable than other travel locations.

## 3. “REGIONS” ARE CONFUSING.

Tourists typically do not travel via regions, but rather travel to destinations. That is where the identity starts. A marketing campaign that weaves destinations with geographic location will enhance the brand. Additionally, regional partnerships will help strengthen the brand within both the state and four-state region. While the Montana brand should, and does, include Southeast Montana, it is easy for the individuality of the region to be lost within the greater whole. The challenge is to be distinctive while still intertwined within the Montana brand.

## 4. DISTANCES BETWEEN SERVICES.

Today’s traveler has higher expectations in terms of cellular service and connectivity to a global network. Conductivity and access to instant, digital information has been especially enhanced during the COVID Crisis. While the distance between towns and services are a challenge to Southeast Montana, that very element may also enhance its appeal in the post-COVID environment, as long as travelers know what to expect. For example, continuing the “We’re Big Out Here” concept into a mini-marketing campaign that includes tear-off and downloadable maps and itineraries will entice travelers who desire “social distance” and open spaces.

## 5. UNDERDEVELOPED TOURISM PRODUCT.

Research from both Destination Analysts and the Institute of Tourism and Recreation Research has identified outdoor recreation as a top activity for Southeast Montana’s target audience. Despite the wealth of unspoiled nature available, little infrastructure exists for many areas. Strengthening partnerships within the region will help identify tourism products that need assistance for wayfinding, signage and potential promotion. Additionally, working with these partners to secure tourism grants from the Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development may help overcome the funding obstacles. Tribal Tourism is also a key partner, as tribal tourism products lack in development and maturity but are in high demand. In addition, not all reservations are or will be open to visitation at this time (April, 2021), as their priority is to keep tribal members safe as the pandemic eases.

Lastly, we anecdotally hear that visitors want a “Western” experience, yet the region lacks tourism products like trail rides, guided tours/agri-tourism and the like. These types of products greatly enhance the visitors’ understanding of the West. Visit Southeast Montana has and will continue to collaborate in all these efforts. However, please note that post- COVID, outdoor recreation will likely be an even more popular activity for locals and tourists alike, which may stress this under-developed product, especially public access points and lands.

**Describe your destination.**

This question is answered via graphic on page 11 of the attached marketing plan.

**Optional: Include attachments here**

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

**TARGET MARKETS**

Prior to the COVID pandemic, Visit Southeast Montana paralleled the target market identified by the Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development, as identified here:

According to the 2016 Montana Destination Brand Research Study by Destination Analysts, the High-Profile Visitor (HPV) is not only attracted to Montana, he/she sees the destination as more attractive and competitive when compared to its regional competition. The HPVs are:

- City dwellers (not rural and not suburban)
- Married with children
- Well-educated
- Affluent (>\$80K)
- Younger (average age 36.4)
- Frequent travelers
- Male-oriented (54.3% male vs 45.7% female)
- Strongly attracted to and familiar with Montana's tourism offerings
- Likely repeat visitors
- Outdoor-oriented travelers (psychographic index)

The HPV's desired activity on a Montana trip relates directly to their psychographic profile of being outdoor-oriented travelers with these favored activities, as indicated in this graph.

10 OF THE TOP 12 DESIRED ACTIVITIES ALIGN WITH VISIT SEMT'S PILLARS.

Additionally, Destination Analysts identified two niche markets: Family travelers and history buffs. Both niches align with Southeast Montana's strengths, with history buffs fitting a cross-section of SEMT's historical significance, western authenticity and Native American culture.

However, as we move forward into the "new normal" in the post- pandemic world, Visit Southeast Montana will retain the flexibility to pivot, mainly by using digital media, which has a short lead-time, and year-round paid social presence.

At this time, Visit Southeast Montana plans to focus on HPVs in drive geo-markets (see road-trippers below). In addition, we will incorporate findings from the FY21 marketing plan (which is in progress) as the marketing plan develops mid-way through FY22.

## TOP GEO-MARKETS

Using data collected by Visit Southeast Montana, we can analyze existing marketing efforts and incorporate these geo-targets into the FY22 target markets.

## WEBSITE TOP 10 STATES

1. Montana
2. Minnesota
3. Washington
4. California
5. Colorado
6. Illinois
7. Utah
8. North Dakota
9. Texas
10. South Dakota

## FACEBOOK

1. Illinois
2. Montana
3. South Dakota
4. Minnesota
5. North Dakota
6. Colorado
7. Washington
8. Wyoming
9. Texas
10. Utah

## TOP STATES FOR NEWSLETTER OPENS

1. California
2. New York

3. Washington
4. Florida
5. Georgia
6. Illinois
7. Montana
8. Colorado
9. New Jersey
10. Virginia

#### TOP LOCATIONS BASED ON EMAIL/SIGN UP FORM

1. Billings, Montana
2. Brooklyn, New York
3. Chicago, Illinois

#### TOP STATES FOR REQUESTED TRAVEL GUIDES

1. Montana
2. California
3. Texas
4. Minnesota
5. Illinois
6. Washington
7. Florida
8. Wisconsin
9. Pennsylvania
10. Colorado

Instagram only gives the top 5 cities – all are in Montana. Based on this information, Visit Southeast Montana will target Western Montana, neighboring states of Wyoming, North Dakota and South Dakota and Midwestern states, particularly Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin and Minnesota. In addition, Washington, Colorado, California and Texas all exhibit strong interest in the region.

Visit Southeast Montana will continue to build on these target markets – as budget allows; however, we will pivot to focus on niche markets as identified here. Note, many of these targets “cross-over,” meaning that a drive-market location may also include History Buffs.

#### NICHE MARKETS

Research conducted by the Institute for Tourism & Recreation Research supported a premise that many in the tourism industry have repeatedly stated: We – residents of Montana – love this vast, complex state and travel extensively throughout it. In fact, according to the 2018 Resident Travel in Montana report, including both resident and nonresident travel spending, total travel industry spending in Montana is \$6.23 billion dollars; 54 percent contributed by nonresidents and 46 percent by resident travel within the state.

#### ROAD-TRIPPERS

Also identified in the 2016 Montana Destination Brand Research Study by Destination Analytics, Inc., the road- tripper market includes travelers from Midwestern states who drive through the Southeast Montana region on the way to Yellowstone and Glacier national parks. We include RVers and campers in this niche market.

In the post-pandemic landscape of FY22, we will focus on the road tripper/geomargets identified on page 8. Visitation data from Makoshika State Park notes that North Dakota and Minnesota are the top non-resident states-of-origin at Montana's largest state park.

According to Destination Analysts traveler sentiment surveys during the COVID Crisis, American travelers will seek beaches (38%), then small towns and rural communities and attractions (30%). Only 20% cited national parks as their first trip post-pandemic. At this time (April 2021), air travel is starting to rebound. Even as that increases, the road-tripper market will be incredibly important to the Southeast Montana region.

## **HISTORY BUFF**

With the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument averaging approximately 250,000 visitors per year and Pompeys Pillar National Monument matching the "Visit Lewis & Clark historical sites" as the number 5 Desired Activity on a Montana Trip (according to Destination Analysts 2016 Montana Brand Study), plus the soon-to-be-developed Trail to the Little Bighorn, Visit Southeast Montana will continue to market to the history buff in FY22.

## **INTERNATIONAL**

The Montana Travel Trade office identifies the United Kingdom, Germany and Australia as top three target markets and Visit Southeast Montana will continue building these relationships, as this is low-cost investment for a higher-than- average return spend.

According to ITRR's 2018 Nonresident Visitation, Expenditures & Economic Impacts study, overseas visitors averaged \$1,186 per trip with an average stay of 5.5 days, compared to \$726 total per trip for an average of 4.59 days for domestic visitors. Therefore, aligning with the Montana Travel Trade Office's focus on UK, Germany and Australia makes sense, when the time is right.

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

By the end of FY21, the Eastern Montana Tourism Initiative's astrotourism project will be complete, with Medicine Rocks State Park as the anchor site in Southeast Montana. This emerging market has strong viability with MRSP's new designation as an International Dark Sky Sanctuary. It makes sense that visitors will be traveling to ultra-rural areas for the darkest skies and best viewing and Visit Southeast Montana will continue to build on this market.

Considering the plethora of outdoor adventure opportunities, in FY22 Visit Southeast Montana will continue to look at mountain bikers and birders under the Outdoor Recreation Pillar as an emerging market. According to a 2011 study, birders spent \$15 billion on birding with 52% of those expenses spent on food and lodging. In Wyoming more than 60% of revenue from birding came from non-residents.

## **POST PANDEMIC TRAVEL**

As we experience the 2021 warm season “on the ground” and as we analyze our FY21 marketing efforts, we will keep our finger on the pulse of our target markets and continue to modify our work moving into FY22. At this time, we submit the following data (source: Destination Analyst) to support what Visit Southeast Montana expects to see.

In addition, while we expect a strong travel season in summer 2021, travelers do have expectations that their destinations are “safe.”

In our role as information conduit, Visit Southeast Montana shares this evolving information with tourism partners via email, e-newsletters, webinars and in-person.

**Optional: Include attachments here.**

*c. What research supports your target marketing?*

By incorporating Visit Southeast Montana's existing data (see a.) above) with information from Destination Analysts regarding road trippers, post-pandemic behavior with traveler's desire to be socially-distant, we anticipate that the target markets will still trend towards car travel for another year or so post-pandemic. We lay out the target market information in the (attached) FY22 Marketing Plan and Budget.

Visit Southeast Montana's Overall Goals:

1. Grow In-region Partnerships
2. Develop and Expand Marketing Partnerships
3. Support Tourism Product Development
4. Produce Quality Marketing Initiatives

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

We are interested in any and all JVs that fit our budget and target markets. We are especially interested in project that:

Aim to move traffic into MT rather than WY (Don't Miss MT)

Target the Midwest drive market -- we consistently see those travelers here (not just advertising but social and earned media, too)

Promote MT outside of the parks -- ALL parts of MT and the beauty of its diverse landscapes, history and stories. As a reminder, visitors can use their NPS passes at LBBNM and Pompeys Pillar National Monument -- perhaps that is a link? Another concept would cover the the many battlefields across the state and birding.

**Optional: Include attachment here.**

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

We are interested in any/all JVs, particularly those that promote "Montana outside the parks," history buff favorites, and other thematic ventures.

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

We have consistently participated with the Montana Dinosaur Trail. It has been a successful venture because it continues to grow and attract visitors as we build-out the project's content and flexibility.

Optional: Include attachments here.

Optional: Include attachments here.

Optional: Include attachment here:

### Marketing Segment, Method & Budget

Marketing Segment	Marketing Method	Describe your method.	Provide supporting research/statistics.	Describe the quantifiable measurements for success including Regulations requirements.	Estimated budget for method.	Marketing Method Evaluation	Add'l Attchmnt
Consumer	Multi-Media Marketing	We will employ a combination of print, digital, broadcast and/or social advertising to promote Visit SEMT to all targeted markets identified in the FY22 Marketing Plan during all three phases of the travel decision process. The strategy includes native ads, some banner ads and re-targeting, plus digital paid content. Online advertising will be mainly regional/drive-marketing during the Post-COVID era and will direct traffic directly to the Visit Southeast Montana website and, in some cases, to SEMT's social channels.	In the post-pandemic world, we will see transitions and trends -- and we will use all of these resources to define this marketing method. For examples, CrowdRiff reports:  Outdoor experiences continue to dominate 2021 summer vacation plans both across the United States and Europe. Americans are looking for scenic beauty, warm weather, outdoor activities, beach destinations, national parks, and road trips. Across Europe and the UK, over 1 in 3 with upcoming travel plans will head to coastal destinations, while 15% are planning to visit nature and the outdoors. In	Success will be measured by meeting or exceeding CTR of .30% on digital media.	\$134,768.00	To be completed after marketing method is complete.	

		<p>Additionally, we will actively seek opportunities to partner with MOTBD, other regions, CVBs and other partners (like Montana Audubon) in an effort to leverage advertising in FY22.</p>	<p>addition, The majority of American leisure travelers—70%—plan to head out of state for their summer vacations. Only one in ten will travel internationally. Cars remain the dominant form of transportation.</p> <p>We are focused on the outdoor experiences in FY21 (i.e. Big Space is in our nature Out Here) as it applies to the Montana Brand and will continue that across multiple channels in FY22, unless research demonstrates a drastic shift in travelers' sentiment.</p>				
Consumer	Ad Agency Services	<p>Our Agency of Record (AOR), Windfall, works closely with us on many aspects of our marketing plan, starting with strategy and moving through to execution and finishing with tracking and analysis. We communicate our desires during an annual strategy session and utilize the AOR's great media power. In addition, we rely on our AOR to bring innovative opportunities, industry trends and other outside-of-the-box thinking to Visit Southeast Montana.</p>	<p>ROI is a key component in measurement. The return on investment for an Agency is revealed by how much they save in media buying while simultaneously creating and implementing a strong and effective marketing plan that melds within the overall organizational goals and strategies.</p>	<p>We will measure success based on the completion of contracted work by the Agency. In addition, we will consider the media plan savings equaling or exceeding Agency fees. For example, if the Agency is paid \$60,000 for creative and media services, and Visit Southeast Montana's media buy savings equals or exceeds \$60,000 then the method is successful.</p>	\$75,000.00		
Consumer	Billboards/Out-of-Home	<p>Out of Home (OOH) advertising provides brand lift, plus places inspirational imagery directly in front of drive markets targets. This is simply a placeholder method at this time.</p>	<p>We will use traffic counts from MOTBD for research.</p>	<p>Metrics for success will be determined when this method is implemented.</p>	\$100.00	To be added after marketing method is complete.	
Consumer	Social Media	Visit Southeast	Facebook and Instagram	We defined the following	\$10,000.00	To be added	

		<p>Montana maintains an active social media presence on Facebook and Pinterest, with Twitter operating through an "if-this-then-this" app. Adding paid social media to the media plan is an inexpensive way to reach a very targeted consumer audience. In FY22 we will continue to use paid social for inspiration and engagement. In addition, we will run this year-round, instead of just warm season with the intent to keep the audience inspired and engaged while driving year-round traffic to southeastmontana.com.</p>	<p>are both popular social media channels but speak to very different audiences. For example, Facebook's 2.8 B monthly worldwide users are more likely to be female with an average age of 40, while Instagram's 1B users are likely under 35 years of age. In fact, in the US, 70% of internet users have at least one active social media account (Pew Research). In addition, we can use Facebook and Instagram's target market features to define geo- and behavior targets.</p> <p>We are also building on our own prior experience. In FY20 (prior to the pandemic shutdown), our in-state (Western MT) "experience" ads averaged a 1.71% CTR and our Facebook likes campaign ranged (pre- and post-shutdown) from .70 - 1.31% CTR.</p>	<p>metrics to measure success:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase social media numbers (followers, engagement, etc.) by 10%.</li> <li>2. Complete a year-round paid social media campaign.</li> </ol>		<p>when marketing method is complete.</p>
Consumer	Electronic Adv - Newsletter, E-blast	<p>With the addition of a second full-time marketing position in February of 2020 (3 short weeks before the pandemic shutdown), we expanded Visit Southeast Montana's blog and e-blast quality and frequency as planned to inspire, orientate and facilitate our visitors while also driving traffic to the website (including a CTA for free travel guides).</p>	<p>Email marketing is an inexpensive and effective option, especially when using in concert with other marketing methods. For every \$1 you spend on emails marketing, you can expect an average return of \$42 (DMA, 2019).</p>	<p>In FY22, our goal is to add 5,000 additional consumers to our email list and maintain an open rate of 16% on consumer e-blasts.</p>	\$3,500.00	<p>To be completed after marketing method is complete.</p>

		This method works in conjunction with organic social media, events promotion, blog and news releases in our multi-layered approach.					
Consumer	Printed Material	Printed materials remain relevant, especially in niche markets (i.e. history buffs) or older consumers and with boots-on-the-ground-travelers. We will use this marketing method for projects like more thematic maps and itineraries. In addition, we may collaborate with regional partners for project specific to our emerging markets.	<p>According to study at Bentley University, printed materials are most relevant to "on-the-ground" travelers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On average, 79 percent of visitors picked up a brochure (up from 67 percent in 2016)</li> <li>• After searching the web, printed brochures are the next most popular source of information for trip planners with a usage rate of 52 percent</li> <li>• 85 percent of visitors became aware of an attraction or business as a result of picking up a brochure</li> <li>• 61 percent of visitors planned to purchase tickets or merchandise they learned about from a brochure</li> <li>• 73 percent of visitors would consider altering their plans because of a brochure</li> </ul>	We will track quantity printed and distribution for each piece.	\$10,000.00	To be completed after marketing method is complete.	

Consumer	Travel/Trade Shows	<p>As we transition into a post-pandemic world, we anticipate that in-person travel trade shows may look different. However, we still see value in these traditional meetings. Therefore, we have reserved some placeholders for domestic travel trade shows and plan to attend the International Roundup in Spring, 2022. At that point, it is hoped that European and other international travelers will be allowed back into the U.S.</p> <p>Roundup is specifically targeted to European, Australian and New Zealander operators looking for destinations and suppliers in WY, ND, SD, MT and ID -- the Intermountain West. We want to be present to outline the new products in the region (such as the "Night Skies" trail) and other stops along the way from GNP and YNP to TRNP and/or MRNM. We will align with MOTBD's target markets, as we have in the past.</p>	<p>According to ITRR's 2019 Nonresident Visitation Expenditures &amp; Economic Impacts study, overseas visitors averaged \$1,010/trip and \$201/day. Compared to domestic visitors, who spent \$152/day and \$680/trip, the international tourist is a higher-value visitor.</p>	<p>This method will be considered successful if we attend Roundup and complete follow-ups with at least 60% of appointments.</p>	\$1,900.00	<p>To be completed after marketing method is complete.</p>	
Consumer	Travel Guide	<p>We will use this marketing method to distribute Visit Southeast Montana's annual travel guide via rack distribution, direct</p>	<p>Our annual travel guide is inspirational while also providing facilitation and orientation information. In addition, we know from ITRR research that</p>	<p>This method will be consider successful when all orders (email, phone, etc.) and racks are filled and distribution</p>	\$36,500.00	<p>To be completed after marketing method is complete.</p>	

		<p>mail and bulk mail services. Funds cover expenses relating to the call center (field phone calls and emails) inquiries from potential and on-the-ground visitors. We currently contract with Certified Folder to distribute the travel guide to racks in MT, WY and SD. The contracts include agency costs, fees, shipping to the recipient(s), postage and storage.</p>	<p>Montana experiences repeat visitors -- the guide is instrumental in that -- as well as providing a CTA for those already traveling in the region. Consider this information from a study at Bentley University:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On average, 79 percent of visitors picked up a brochure (up from 67 percent in 2016);</li> <li>• After searching the web, printed brochures are the next most popular source of information for trip planners with a usage rate of 52 percent;</li> <li>• 85 percent of visitors became aware of an attraction or business as a result of picking up a brochure;</li> <li>• 61 percent of visitors planned to purchase tickets or merchandise they learned about from a brochure; and</li> <li>• 73 percent of visitors would consider altering their plans because of a brochure.</li> </ul>	<p>is tracked/reported for future analysis.</p>			
Consumer	Website/Internet Development/Updates	Our website, southeastmontana.com, is the cornerstone to the entire marketing plan,	There is no doubt that a robust website is absolutely critical to a	Our overall strategy will be successful if we meet these goals:	\$42,100.00	To be completed after marketing	

building and refreshing content year-after-year, to include blogs, the Eastern Montana Initiative projects, updated business listing, general content and niche market content. It's an ever-evolving tool that all marketing efforts lead to. We will likely reach more than 100,000 unique visitors in FY21 - a high since the rebuild in FY18. We continue to accentuate our momentum.

This marketing method covers website maintenance, development, optimization and other related activities, plus photo/video acquisition.

DMO. Consider these stats:

- An estimated 700 million people will make a booking online by 2023
- 83% of US adults want to book their trips online
- 72% of mobile bookings happen within 48 hours of last-minute Google searches that include the words 'tonight' and 'today'
- 82% of all travel bookings around the world took place without human interaction in 2018
- There are over 148 million travel bookings made annually
- 70% of all customers do their research on a smartphone

And, according to TripAdvisor:

- 45% of global travelers start their booking process by deciding on a specific destination
- 59% of pre-travel research takes place between one and three months before traveling
- 86% of travelers use online resources when deciding on their accommodation
- 73% of travelers use online sources

- Increase website traffic numbers by 20%;
- Add (3) new segments and/or landing pages to the website; and
- Use (7) new images and (1) video on the website.

method is complete.

			when deciding on their destination				
Marketing Support	Administration	In our FY22 budget, Visit Southeast Montana is budgeting the full 20% allowable for Administrative Expenses. Our strategy in doing so is to take a conservative stance in terms of how much of the Administrative Budget will ultimately be used. By budgeting for the full 20%, we don't run the risk of going over budget for allowable Administrative expenses.	This is recommended and allowable by TAC Rules & Regulations.	Our objective for Administration budget is to spend funds appropriately and efficiently for managing the organization's operations. Per statute, the maximum allowed for the Administration method is no 20% of the total annual lodging tax receipts (or less). Success will be determined by the total spend in the Administration method; if it is 20% or less, we will consider the method successful.	\$117,692.00	To be completed after marketing method is complete.	
Marketing Support	Marketing/Publicity Personnel	Visit Southeast Montana will employ a full-time Director of Marketing plus a full-time Marketing Specialist in FY22. The Marketing Director is responsible for implementation of marketing and public relations projects as assigned. A full job description is attached. The Marketing Specialist works in conjunction with the Marketing Director and will develop, manage and monitor publicity and communications projects and programs, including social media. Complete job descriptions are attached.	Our research has shown that it is necessary to market a region to travelers in order to encourage them to visit and to see sights and attractions which might not otherwise be known to them. Marketing staff is necessary in order to facilitate the many projects and tasks needed in order to accomplish this, in addition to managing the Agency of Record.	Success will be measured dependent on annual marketing goals set by the SEMT Board of Directors. Marketing Personnel are also evaluated annually by John Brewer, CEO of Visit Southeast Montana.	\$109,400.00	To be completed after marketing method is complete.	SEMT Marketing Specialist.docx

Marketing Support	Joint Ventures	<p>We consider the Joint Ventures a vital marketing segment because it is basically a "2 for the price of 1" opportunity, plus Joint Ventures allow us the look both within and beyond the region to find similarities (ie: Things to Do &amp; See on Your Way to YNP) and market thematically. These funds are specifically designated for use in joint marketing projects with lodging tax entities, including CVBs, Regions, the Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development or related entities like Montana State Parks.</p> <p>The Montana Dinosaur Trail, which is more than 15 years old, is an excellent example of a successful JV.</p>	Each project will clearly state their metrics for determining success. Approval is determined by committee with Visit SEMT staff ensuring that the project adheres to the Rules & Regulations.	This will be determined when the opportunity is defined.	\$5,000.00	To be completed after marketing method is complete.	
Marketing Support	Cooperative Marketing	We know that collaboration makes sense and leveraging budgets stretch limited dollars. In the past Visit Southeast Montana has offered Cooperative Marketing Grants to non-profit tourism related businesses throughout the region. Successful applicants must demonstrate that the project (for which funds are being requested) will benefit	Each project will need to provide research or statistics to support their request. Approval is determined by committee with Visit SEMT staff ensuring that the project adheres to the Rules & Regulations.	Each project will clearly state their metrics for determining success. Approval is determined by committee with Visit SEMT staff ensuring that the project adheres to the Rules & Regulations.	\$5,000.00	To be completed after marketing method is complete.	

		Visit Southeast Montana as a region. All TAC regulations must be met in order for funding to be given and the committee favors new projects and events over others.					
Marketing Support	TAC/Governor's Conference meetings	Personnel from Montana's tourism regions are required to attend the Montana Governor's Conference on Tourism and Tourism Advisory Council meetings. This line item sets aside funding to allow us to do so.	<p>A value network allows individuals to share information as well as know peers, thus saving time and money when working collaboratively. Operating in a silo is counter-productive.</p> <p>Attending TAC meetings and the Montana Governor's Conference on Tourism provides information peer training and familiarization along with an opportunity to learn new marketing or management tools at a relatively low cost.</p> <p>Additionally, research indicates that attendance at the TAC meetings is required by the Rules and Regulations.</p>	Success will be measured by attendance (in-person and virtual) of the executive director at all quarterly TAC meetings and the annual Montana Governor's Conference on Tourism and Recreation.	\$2,500.00	To be added after marketing method is complete.	
Marketing Support	Marketing Plan Development	The Visit Southeast Montana Board of Directors may gather to evaluate MOTBD's reports, related data (especially post-pandemic) and determine how it all relates to the organization, its marketing plan and future strategies.	According to managementhelp.org a strategic plan should be reviewed at least every three years. The Board last reviewed strategies prior to the pandemic, in October of 2019.	This method will be successful if a majority of the Board attends the strategic planning session. Additionally, success is related to completing/updating elements of the strategic plan.	\$500.00	To be added after marketing method is complete.	

Marketing Support	Professional Development	This marketing segment provides funds for Visit Southeast Montana staff to attend Destination Marketing Association International (DMAI), Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) Conference on Travel & Tourism, or similar industry-specific training and/or leadership/management training.	Research will be provided when specific activities are identified.	Metrics will be provided when specific activities are identified.	\$100.00	To be added after marketing method is complete.	
Marketing Support	Research	This is a placeholder and the marketing method will be more fully determined when it is implemented.	Research will be provided when specific activities are identified.	Metrics for success will be provided when the method is defined and implemented.	\$100.00	To be added after marketing method is complete.	
Marketing Support	Outreach	<p>We will use this segment to offer support to Visit Southeast Montana's Tourism Partners and build internal (regional) awareness. This fits the "...educating our residents about the economic benefits of tourism" segment of Visit Southeast Montana's mission statement.</p> <p>We have offered tourism marketing workshops since FY18 - including virtually, during the pandemic in FY21. While attendance has been positive, we</p>	By offering our expertise and marketing support to Visit SEMT's Tourism Partners, we strengthen the entire region and industry. This collaboration logically flows directly into the Visitor Facilitation piece of the funnel. Over the past 4 years, even through a pandemic, these workshops have been well-recognized and garner steady attendance, including new tourism partners every year, which demonstrates an ongoing need.	We will continue to track attendance and evaluate questionnaires from the workshops. We will also track the number of presentations and individuals at presentations. We will consider this a success if we have at least 42 attendees and meet our goal of at least 4 presentations within the region.	\$4,000.00	To be added after marketing method is complete.	

		consider this a vital service for our tourism partners and see new partners join each year. Additionally, these funds support the cost associated with traveling in the region to give presentations, meet with local Chambers of Commerce and the like to share the mission of Visit Southeast Montana and explore ways to collaborate.					
Marketing Support	Crisis Management	This is a placeholder. To be provided if method is implemented.	be provided if method is implemented.	Metrics for success will be provided if method is implemented.	\$100.00	To be added after marketing method is complete.	
Marketing Support	Opportunity Marketing	Any marketing opportunities that arise will be considered by how it fits within the existing marketing plan, media plan and budget	Supporting research will be determined when/if the opportunity arises	Metrics for success will be determined when this marketing method is implemented.	\$10,000.00	To be added after marketing method is complete.	
Marketing Support	VIC Funding/Staffing/Signage	This marketing method may fund grants to Visit Visit Information Centers to help them maintain operations and/or pay for improvements (within the state rules and regulations including signage) so they can better meet the needs of Visit SEMT visitors. As the eastern gateway of the state, it is vital that the VICs receive visitors, specifically	Visit Southeast Montana's (3) VICs -- Broadus/Powder River Co; Hardin/Big Horn Co; and Wibaux/Wibaux Co. -- all lie within or near areas of poor to no cellular service. While an increasing number of travelers rely on cellular service to provide travel information, areas with poor coverage require additional services for travelers.	These grants will be considered successful if they submit a detailed report, as defined in Visit Southeast Montana's grant application (as approved by the Grants Committee).	\$15,000.00	To be added after marketing method is complete.	

		during the warm season.				
Publicity	Fam Trips	<p>This marketing method sets aside funds for familiarization tours through Southeast Montana for tour operators, journalists, bloggers, free-lance writers, video producers, photographers and other content creators. It also includes promotional giveaways for welcome packets given to specific individuals or groups visiting the region plus includes a placeholder for film recruitment. These fam tours are often performed as a co-op with MOTBD or with other tourism entities including CVBs.</p> <p>The value of WOM - Word of Mouth - marketing cannot be fully understood (although some methods do try to monetize each "produced piece"). It is traditional and long-trusted. We will continue to employ effort into WOM.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1,000,000 travel-related hashtags are searched weekly. (Wex, 2019)</li> <li>• 81% of travelers consider it very important for brands to provide personalized experiences to their customers (Travolution)</li> <li>• 84% of Millennials and 73% of non-Millennials are likely or very likely to plan a trip based on someone else's vacation photos or social media updates. (APM Agency)</li> <li>• 37% of Millennials have had their holiday destination influenced by social media and 34% have booked a holiday because of content seen on social media. (WeSwap)</li> <li>• Leisure travelers ages 18–34 are 2.4x more likely than those ages 35 and over to discover travel destinations via mobile. (Facebook)</li> <li>• 89% of Millennials plan travel activities based on content posted by their peers online. (Entrepreneur)</li> </ul>	<p>Metrics for success will be measured based on earned media (articles, videos, blogs and the like) written by hosted journalists, photographers and other content creators. We use a media tracking service/database to both connect with media and to monitor and report on earned media.</p> <p>In addition, we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host (3) media/social influencer visits, and</li> <li>• Increase earned media with (1) pitch/month, resulting in total of (3) national articles/segments and (15) regional articles/segments.</li> </ul>	\$8,200.00	To be added after marketing method is complete.

Publicity	Social Media	<p>The marketing method works in concert with the Fam Trips and Press Promotions/Media Outreach Publicity Methods.</p> <p>This segment support efforts in the social media realm including social media influencers (trip expenses and/or creative fee), event promotions or "boosts" and other ways to enhance organic social media content throughout the region. It also alllows for marketing staff to travel with in the region to create social media content and the tools to cover a broad expanse through this method.</p>	<p>This data supports the broad reach and continuously important role of social media in a strong marketing plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1,000,000 travel-related hashtags are searched weekly. (Wex, 2019)</li> <li>• 81% of travelers consider it very important for brands to provide personalized experiences to their customers (Travolution)</li> <li>• 84% of Millennials and 73% of non-Millennials are likely or very likely to plan a trip based on someone else's vacation photos or social media updates. (APM Agency)</li> <li>• 37% of Millennials have had their holiday destination influenced by social media and 34% have booked a holiday because of content seen on social media. (WeSwap)</li> <li>• Leisure travelers ages 18–34 are 2.4x more likely than those ages 35 and over to discover travel destinations via mobile. (Facebook)</li> <li>• 89% of Millennials plan travel activities based on content</li> </ul>	<p>We will consider this marketing method a success if we meet the following goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase social numbers by 10%</li> <li>• Establish new social channel on Pinterest and build base audience.</li> </ul>	\$5,000.00	<p>Metrics for success will be determined when this marketing method is implemented.</p>
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			<p>posted by their peers online. (Entrepreneur)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 31% of Millennials said that posting holiday pics online is just as important as the holiday itself, and 29% wouldn't choose a holiday destination if they were not able to post on social media while there. (WeSwap)</li> <li>• 40% of travelers post activity/attraction reviews on social media after returning home. (WebFX)</li> <li>• 42% of Millennials stress about taking the perfect photo for social media during vacation (Value Penguin)</li> </ul>			
Publicity	Press Promotions/Media Outreach	<p>Public relations, earned media and media tracking are all strategies that allow Visit Southeast Montana to stretch the marketing dollar. Hosting media events for new tourism products or collaborating to bring media to a major or new event will leverage even more dollars into trackable product. This strategy compliments the Fam strategy.</p>	<p>Statistically speaking, earned media is nearly a 0-cost method, therefore, very effective. Marketing staff completes media releases and events as part of their normal tasks, so thos costs are included. And the main cost is employee laboar, so this method has a strong ROI - - the investment is minimal while the potential outcome is huge.</p>	<p>These goals tie into the Social Media and Fam Trip categories. To be considered a success, we will:</p> <p>Host (3) media/social media influencer tours</p> <p>Increase earned media with a goal of (1) pitch/month, resulting in (8) national articles/segments and 15 regional articles/segments.</p>	\$12,000.00	To be added after marketing method is complete.
					\$608,460.00	

## Marketing Method Budget

Marketing Segment	Marketing Method	Bed tax funded budget
Consumer	Ad Agency Services	\$75,000.00
Consumer	Multi-Media Marketing	\$210,000.00
Consumer	Billboards/Out-of-Home	\$100.00
Consumer	Social Media	\$15,000.00
Consumer	Electronic Adv - Newsletter, E-blast	\$5,000.00
Consumer	Printed Material	\$10,000.00
Consumer	Travel/Trade Shows	\$7,800.00
Consumer	Travel Guide	\$40,000.00
Consumer	Website/Internet Development/Updates	\$62,500.00
		\$425,400.00
Marketing Support	Administration	\$127,692.00
Marketing Support	Marketing/Publicity Personnel	\$109,400.00
Marketing Support	Joint Ventures	\$10,000.00
Marketing Support	Cooperative Marketing	\$15,000.00
Marketing Support	TAC/Governor's Conference meetings	\$2,500.00
Marketing Support	Marketing Plan Development	\$500.00
Marketing Support	Professional Development	\$9,000.00
Marketing Support	Research	\$100.00
Marketing Support	Outreach	\$4,000.00
Marketing Support	Crisis Management	\$100.00
Marketing Support	Opportunity Marketing	\$56,467.00
Marketing Support	VIC Staff/Customer Service Training	\$15,000.00
		\$349,759.00
Publicity	Fam Trips	\$13,700.00
Publicity	Social Media	\$7,500.00
Publicity	Press Promotions/Media Outreach	\$40,300.00
		\$61,500.00
		\$836,659.00

## Miscellaneous Attachments

### Description

Note: Updated this file as per TAC review

### File Name

SEMT 21-22 Marketing Plan\_FINAL.pdf

### File Size

15.9 MB

(5/27/21)

FY22 Marketing Plan

SEMT 21-22 Marketing Plan\_For Board.pdf

27.5 MB

## ***Reg/CVB Required Documents***

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<b>Description</b>	<b>File Name</b>	<b>File Size</b>
FY22 Budget Breakdown	Budget Breakdown Pie Chart - Copy.xlsx	23 KB
Visit Southeast Montana's FY22 Budget Pie Chart	FY22 Budget Pie Chart.pdf	84 KB
FY22 Required documents	Required documents FY22..pdf	45 KB

