



Grant Details

108656 - FY22 Region/CVB Marketing Plan

113967 - FY22 Whitefish CVB Marketing Plan

DOC Office of Tourism

Grant Title: FY22 Whitefish CVB Marketing Plan
Grant Number: 22-51-025
Grant Status: Underway

Comments:
Applicant Organization: Whitefish Convention and Visitors Bureau, Inc.

Grantee Contact: Dylan Boyle

Award Year: FY22

Program Area: DOC Office of Tourism

Amounts:

Contract Dates:	Contract Sent	Contract Received	Contract Executed
Project Dates:	06/16/2021 Proposal Date	07/01/2021 Project Start	06/30/2022 Project End

Grant Administrator: Barb Sanem

Contract Number: 22-51-025

Award Year: FY22

Contract Dates

Contract Sent	Contract Received	Contract Executed	Contract Legal
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Project Dates 07/01/2021

06/30/2022

Project Start Project End

Comments

Amendment Comments

Community & Brand Support

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

The purpose of the Whitefish Convention and Visitors Bureau (Explore Whitefish) Marketing Plan is to sustainably grow the economy of Whitefish by emphasizing its desirability as a travel and recreation destination to non-resident visitors who appreciate and respect the character of the place. We recognize the strain that increased summer visitation places upon our town. As such, Explore Whitefish supports business strategies that emphasize economic and social benefits to our community while maintaining the integrity of place and quality of life of local residents. Our mission is to build a high level of awareness and intent to travel by developing support for Whitefish as a premier year-round mountain town. This includes increasing the occupancy for lodging facilities in Whitefish during lower occupancy times of the year. Explore Whitefish has also taken a lead in destination stewardship with the development and implementation of the Whitefish Sustainable Tourism Management Plan (STMP) which aims to balance the economic vitality of the tourism economy with social, community, and environmental benefits. Established by the City of Whitefish, Explore Whitefish is the officially designated organization charged with tourism promotion and marketing of Whitefish. The organization also provides critical support for visitor information services, destination stewardship, travel infrastructure development, market research, and public relations.

Whitefish, Montana is an authentic mountain town located in the northern Rockies, home to some of the world's most beautiful mountains and spectacular, unspoiled nature. Just 25 miles from Glacier National Park, Whitefish offers close access to the hanging valleys and emerald peaks of this UNESCO World Heritage Site. The majority of our visitors come during the summer months of late June, July, August and early September. This seasonality presents problems for the many small businesses dependent upon non-resident travelers. As a result, we spend a large majority of our marketing budget on promoting the winter and shoulder seasons. The influx of approximately 3 million Glacier National Park visitors annually allows Whitefish to offer excellent dining, expansive lodging options, and exceptional recreational opportunities. Having a viable, robust downtown is very attractive to our visitors. We are also home to Whitefish Mountain Resort, offering 3,000 acres of great skiing, abundant snow and incredible views of Glacier National Park as well as world class mountain biking in the summer and early fall months.

Whitefish aligns perfectly with the Montana Brand pillars:

- More spectacular unspoiled nature than anywhere else in the lower 48
- Vibrant and charming small towns that serve as gateways to our natural wonders
- Breathtaking experiences by day and relaxing hospitality at night

We utilize the Montana Brand pillars in unison to create a cohesive and encompassing message. In our ads and collateral, we serve up beautiful high resolution photos of the scenic beauty and incredible nature that surrounds us. Photos of our iconic downtown are an important part of our collateral. Visitors are very attracted to our downtown and it is a primary economic driver for the town. In addition, we try to counter the preconceived notions that Montana is remote and does not have adequate facilities by showcasing the beautiful lodging and incredible dining that can be found here. Exhilaration by day and comfort by night truly defines us.

Whitefish Mountain Resort is our most important marketing partner and is consistently ranked high in the annual SKI Magazine Resort Guide. In winter, if the ski resort does well, the town benefits. The addition of enhanced on-mountain activities at the resort has increased their summer and early fall offerings and has also resulted in international recognition as a mountain biking destination.

STRENGTHS

- Whitefish aligns perfectly with the three Montana Brand pillars

- Proximity to Glacier National Park — National travel forecasts have predicted an increase in travelers expressing an interest in visiting sites managed by the National Park Service. In addition, the significant name recognition that Glacier National Park holds among North American and international travelers provides an advantage to “putting Whitefish on the map” for potential visitors. According to the National Park Service, visitors to Glacier National Park spent an estimated \$356 million in local gateway communities during 2019 (+3.5%). An estimated \$146 million of those dollars were spent on lodging, comprising the highest percentage of expenditure at 41% of the total expenditures. Visitors spent an estimated \$57.4 million on restaurants, comprising the second highest percentage of expenditures at 16% of the total expenditures. Visitation to Glacier National Park continues to be very strong with approximately 3 million visitors in 2019. The numerous effects of the pandemic in 2020, including the east side of Glacier National Park being closed during peak season and the entire park being closed in the spring, contributed to park visitation being down approximately 44% in 2020. Through the first two months of 2021, visits are already outpacing last winter by over 27%. Increased visitation provides us with the opportunity to highlight the many visitor experiences available outside of Glacier National Park, particularly in Whitefish.
- Downtown Whitefish and the alluring character of the town’s built environment — Research indicates that visitors are attracted to the character and scale of Whitefish, especially the town’s Central Avenue district. These are attributes that form the foundation of the town’s appeal to visitors who stay in, or around the community, eat at the town’s various restaurants, and shop at local stores. Additional amenities such as pedestrian friendly sidewalks, miles of trails and ability to see the night’s sky all add to the Whitefish character.
- Access to recreational activities — A wide variety of recreational opportunities in and around Whitefish is a major draw for visitors. These include Whitefish Mountain Resort, the Whitefish Trail, Whitefish Lake Golf Club, Whitefish Lake, and the Whitefish River, as well as the trails, rivers and scenic roadways in and around Glacier National Park.

CHALLENGES

- Limited Transportation Infrastructure — Public transportation options and visitor infrastructure services in and around Whitefish and Glacier National Park are fewer than those provided at competitor destinations.
- Highly Seasonal Visitation Patterns — Visitation patterns to Whitefish are highly seasonal with the majority of visitation occurring during the high demand months of July and August. This seasonality impacts the operating effectiveness of Whitefish businesses that must accommodate these aforementioned demand swings.
- Limited Access To And Traffic Issues On The Going-to-the-Sun Road — The Whitefish summer tourism season is directly tied to the opening and closing dates for automobiles on the alpine section of the Going-to-the-Sun Road in Glacier National Park.
- Uncertain Weather — During some years, low snow levels in the winter hamper winter visitation and spending while summer fire seasons affect willingness for visitors to travel in summer and fall.
- Market Perception — Research performed by the Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development in key destination markets reveals that Montana is perceived to offer lower quality amenities and services to visitors. While Montanans are perceived as being friendly, it should be distinguished that this friendliness does not automatically translate into a guest’s perception of a high level of service.
- Lack of Competitive Pricing for Air Access and Limited Seats Outside of Summer Season — When compared to mountain communities with which Whitefish competes for destination visitors, airline seats to Glacier Park International Airport are limited outside of the summer season, with fewer flights, limited markets and are priced higher. Within the state, deboardings at Glacier Park International Airport (210,458 in 2020) accounted for 17% of the total deboardings in the state, tied with Missoula (17%) and trailing only Billings (19%), and Bozeman (35% - See Appendix). While deboardings at Glacier Park International Airport during the pandemic year of 2020 decreased approximately 40%, they had been rapidly increasing, with 2019 deboardings showing a 15% increase from 2018, indicating that Glacier Park International Airport is one of the fastest growing airports in the state. Passenger numbers for 2021 are projected to be strong once again. Also, the work of Glacier AERO on new and expanded shoulder season air service continues to yield increases in seat capacity year over year.
- International Travel — The uncertain climate related to international travel to the U.S. as a result of the pandemic has resulted in a decrease of international travelers, particularly Canada.

- COVID-19 — Due to the fluid nature of the current situation, it is very difficult to predict visitation trends to Whitefish and when we will be back to historic shoulder season levels of visitation.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Highly seasonal visitation patterns allow for the ability to increase lodging occupancy and visitor expenditures during the shoulder and winter seasons through Explore Whitefish marketing efforts.
- Reach peak season visitors with responsible travel messaging during their stay in Whitefish and the surrounding area.
- Collaborate with local stakeholders, Glacier National Park, regional, and state tourism partners to develop and build out support for shoulder season visitation and to communicate with visitors during the peak season.

Describe your destination.

The overall vision for Whitefish is to have integrated communication throughout the travel planning funnel:

INSPIRATION > ORIENTATION > FACILITATION

Inspiration. At the highest levels of communication, Explore Whitefish leverages the Montana branding guidelines in its selection of imagery and video and development of creative marketing content, while applying its own Whitefish spin on things. We want to foster an emotional connection with this combination of imagery, video, and creative content so that the viewer will move forward with the primary call, which is to visit ExploreWhitefish.com.

Tools:

- ExploreWhitefish.com
- Explore Whitefish Social Media Channels (Facebook and Instagram)
- Earned media features
- Targeted content and search marketing
- Sponsored content in targeting and retargeting campaigns
- Seasonal content in consumer newsletters
- Partner websites such as: glaciermt.com, visitmt.com, and skiwhitefish.com

Orientation. Orientation to new opportunities is administered through interactive maps within the Explore Whitefish website, as well as companion maps within the Travel Guide and a printed town map available for visitors at kiosks and visitor centers. All maps have a consistent look between them. Depending on the method of communication, the location of Whitefish within the state, or its proximity to other points of interest in the region is detailed.

Tools:

- ExploreWhitefish.com and interactive map
- Seasonal itineraries and activity specific content created for ExploreWhitefish.com and used for paid advertising, social media, and consumer newsletters
- Event calendar at ExploreWhitefish.com/events
- Whitefish Town Map and Whitefish Travel Guide

Facilitation. Facilitation (connecting users with stakeholder businesses) is achieved by empowering individual businesses with the capacity to create and maintain business information, specials, packages, video and events that are displayed at ExploreWhitefish.com. The travel guide and locator maps are made available at local visitor information kiosks, visitor information centers and business locations throughout the town.

Tools:

- Self service visitor information kiosks with free wifi
- Seasonal itineraries and activity specific content with business links on ExploreWhitefish.com
- “Book Now” buttons for lodging reservations on ExploreWhitefish.com
- “Reserve Now” buttons for restaurants and activities on ExploreWhitefish.com
- Whitefish Town Map and Whitefish Travel Guide
- Year-round walk-in Visitor Information Center

Optional: Include attachments here

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

Our potential visitors are targeted by geographic location, demographic characteristics, and values that distinguish our overall potential visitor as a “high potential visitor” and “winter enthusiast” (as defined by research conducted by Destination Analysts) and our niche visitor as a “geotraveler” (as defined by research conducted by ITRR, the Travel Industry Association of America (TIA) and the National Geographic Society). The following section provides information on the distinguishing characteristics of potential visitors defined by MOTBD along with the core geographic markets for Whitefish.

HIGH POTENTIAL VISITORS FOR MONTANA

Recently, the Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development (MOTBD) engaged in a destination brand research study with Destination Analysts in which the characteristics of the most desirable visitors to Montana were defined. The “High Potential Visitor” profile aligns with the demographics and psychographics of the geotraveler that Explore Whitefish has been marketing to and has had significant success.

MONTANA’S HIGH POTENTIAL VISITOR CHARACTERISTICS

Source: Destination Analysts, Montana Destination Brand Research, 2016

- 60% have HHI (Household Income) above \$80,000

- 54% Male, 46% Female
- 68% have college degrees or above
- Average age: 36.4 years old
- Expected Days Spent in Montana: 8.1
- Expected Total Expenditures in Montana: \$1,887
- Frequent travelers who live in urban areas yet are outdoor-oriented travelers and heavy consumers of recreational activities

WINTER ENTHUSIASTS FOR MONTANA

The Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development (MOTBD) engaged in a destination research study with Destination Analysts in which the characteristics of the most desirable visitors to Montana during the winter season were defined. The “Winter Enthusiasts” profile aligns with the demographics and psychographics of the geotraveler that Explore Whitefish has been marketing to and has had significant success.

WINTER ENTHUSIASTS INTERESTED IN TRAVELING TO MONTANA FOR WINTER RECREATION

Source: Destination Analysts, Montana Profile & Study of the Winter Enthusiast, 2018

- Average Annual HHI (Household Income): \$80,991
- 54% Male, 46% Female
- 61.5% have college degrees or above
- Average age: 39.7 years old
- 75% typically travel for winter recreation with spouse or significant other as travel party
- Spending on 4 day/3 night winter recreation trip: \$3,071
- Three attributes for selecting winter recreation destinations: superior snow quality, outdoor activities other than skiing, exciting atmosphere.
- 46.8% are familiar with Montana as a place for winter recreation
- Months most likely to visit Montana for winter trip: January (16%), February (39.5%), December (38.4%)

WHITEFISH NICHE VISITOR: GEOTRAVELERS

Geotourism is defined as tourism that sustains or enhances the geographic character of the place being visited including its environment, culture, heritage, landmarks and the well-being of its residents. According to the ITRR study, “Statewide Vacationers to Montana: Are They Geotravelers,” the strong geotraveler spent the most money per day while traveling in Montana (\$141.79) followed by the moderate geotraveler (\$134.10) and the non geotraveler vacationer spent (\$133.27). Visitors who agreed with the principles of geotourism spend more money per day while traveling in Montana than non- geotravelers. A 2016 ITRR Study, “The Importance of Traveler Spending on Locally Produced Goods & Services,” further examined geotraveler spending. The results of this study showed that visitor groups who purchased “Made in Montana ” products, items from local farmers’ markets, and who used local guides and outfitters spent \$184.76 more per stay than visitors who did not purchase these products and services.

Geotravellers are low impact, high value visitors who appreciate the unique characteristics and natural values of the places they visit. They place a high value on authentic travel experiences that respect and support the local character of place and its environment, and are less likely to become discouraged in their travel experiences by travel distances, difficulties and variable weather, especially during the shoulder seasons.

Values – Creative, curious, connected, engaged, adventurous, independent, mindful.

Source: Geotraveler Exploratory, Alexis Sanford, 2008.

Attitudes – Immerse yourself in the culture, go off the beaten trail, get out of your comfort zone, allow for spontaneity, take a risk, pay attention, go now.

Source: Geotraveler Exploratory, Alexis Sanford, 2008.

- A segment of the U.S. total travel market estimated to include over 55 million people.
- They seek authenticity in travel experiences.
- They seek out opportunities to experience businesses and activities that are locally unique.
- Travel is an important part of their “lifestyle” and they often combine learning with travel.
- They spent a disproportionate amount of their income on travel compared to other travelers.
- They are more likely to be aware of their own impact, both environmental and community, on the places they are visiting.

b. What are your emerging markets?

Explore Whitefish will focus its attention during this fiscal period on low impact, high value potential visitors who match the geotraveler profile in the following geographic markets. It is possible that opportunities will arise in additional markets in partnership with other tourism organizations, such as the Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development. In these instances, Explore Whitefish may extend its efforts beyond these core focus markets.

- Seattle, Washington (Puget Sound Area) – Seattle and the Puget Sound area have been historically strong markets for Whitefish. The existence of the Amtrak train route has made this connection logical, as well as daily direct flights. Explore Whitefish invests in print, digital, and out of home campaigns in this market as well as actively cooperating with Whitefish Mountain Resort (WMR) on multi-channel marketing campaigns. During 2020, approximately 21% of visitors surveyed who spent at least one night in Whitefish originated in the state of Washington.
- Portland, Oregon – The existence of the Amtrak train route has made this connection logical, as well as seasonal direct flights and short connecting flights the rest of the year. Explore Whitefish invests in print, digital, and out of home campaigns in this market as well as actively cooperating with Whitefish Mountain Resort (WMR) on multi-channel marketing campaigns. During 2020, approximately 4% of visitors surveyed who spent at least one night in Whitefish originated in the state of Oregon.
- Chicagoland (Chicago core and northern suburbs to Madison, Wisconsin) – During FY20, Explore Whitefish engaged in its sixth consecutive comprehensive cooperative marketing campaign with Whitefish Mountain Resort in the Chicago market with many years of assistance of MOTBD. There is currently a weekly winter seasonal direct flight from Chicago O’Hare (ORD) to Glacier Park International Airport (GPIA). Daily direct flights are also available during the holiday season. A significant expansion of seats for warm season service have also been added in recent years as well as multiple carriers now flying this route daily direct seasonally. During 2020, approximately 6% of visitors surveyed who spent at least one night in Whitefish originated in the state of Illinois.

- Minneapolis, Minnesota – This has been a historically strong market for Whitefish in terms of visitation and ease of travel due to daily direct flights and Amtrak service. During FY22, Explore Whitefish will increase investment in this market in order to continue building awareness of Whitefish as a premier travel destination. During 2020, approximately 3% of visitors surveyed who spent at least one night in Whitefish originated in the state of Minnesota.
- California (San Francisco/Oakland & Los Angeles) – Although California consistently ranks as a top market of visitors to Whitefish, the addition of enhanced direct air service has made California a core geographic market for Explore Whitefish. Daily direct service during the warm season of 2017 was added for San Francisco and daily direct seasonal service for Los Angeles began in the spring of 2018. As of 2019, multiple carriers will be flying to Los Angeles with seasonal daily direct flights. During 2020, approximately 11% of visitors surveyed who spent at least one night in Whitefish originated in the state of California.
- Regional Drive-To (including Spokane, Coeur D’Alene, British Columbia) – Explore Whitefish invests in regional drive-to markets as these potential visitors have the ability to travel on short notice, particularly during the shoulder seasons. Although the amount of investment is significantly smaller than the aforementioned core geographic markets, we believe it is important to continue to raise awareness and intent to travel in these regional drive-to markets.

ESTABLISHED GEOGRAPHIC MARKET

Explore Whitefish has identified the following established geographic market due to current and historic visitation numbers, as well as historical investment in marketing. Although this market is very important from a visitation perspective, Explore Whitefish is currently choosing to invest in the core geographic markets identified above as having the largest potential for growth.

- Alberta – Alberta has been a historically strong market for Whitefish. Awareness of Whitefish as a premier travel destination has been well established and the fluctuations in currency exchange play the single biggest factor in increased or decreased visitation and expenditures to Whitefish. During 2020, due to pandemic travel restrictions, approximately 1% of visitors surveyed who spent at least one night in Whitefish originated in the province of Alberta. In 2019, this number was 8%.
- Missoula, MT – Missoula has been a historically strong market for Whitefish in terms of visitation and ease of travel due to proximity to Whitefish. The ability to make short shoulder season trips and last minute trips makes this market desirable. Explore Whitefish will pursue the possibility of using only private funds for specific, targeted marketing opportunities.

Optional: Include attachments here.

c. What research supports your target marketing?

We utilize many sources for our research that validates our marketing plan and our target marketing. The non-resident data collected by the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research (ITRR) at the University of Montana is an invaluable tool for determining where our customers come from, what they do, how much they spend, what they like and do not like. We also use data from the US Travel Association (USTA) for broad industry indicators as well as Smith Travel Research, AirDNA, and VisaVue for data on seasonal lodging occupancy and visitor expenditures, with particular focus on visitor from our target markets.

ITRR RESEARCH

NON-RESIDENT WHITEFISH VISITOR CHARACTERISTICS

Source: 2020 ITRR Non-Resident Visitor Study

- 86% visited Glacier National Park (95% in 2019)

- 47% traveled as a pair (2 persons)
- Average group size was 2.38
- 78% have HHI (Household Income) above \$75,000 (67% in 2019)
- 57% Male, 43% Female
- 22% were first time visitors (down from 29% in 2019)
- 76% plan to return within 2 years
- Average age of visitor was 55 years old
- Average length of stay in Montana was 7.28 nights (up from 6.06 nights in 2019)

NON-RESIDENT WHITEFISH VISITOR AGE GROUPS REPRESENTED

Source: 2020 ITRR Non-Resident Visitor Study. The total response percentage exceeds 100% because the question allowed for multiple choices thus the total number of answer choices selected were greater than the number of respondents

- 25% Under 18 years old (27% in 2019)
- 6% 18-24 years old (7% in 2019)
- 15% 25-34 years old (27% in 2019)
- 15% 35-44 years old (19% in 2019)
- 17% 45-54 years old (17% in 2019)
- 48% 55-64 years old (35% in 2019)
- 25% 65-74 years old (27% in 2019)
- 8% 75 and older (8% in 2019)

TOP FIVE NON-RESIDENT VISITORS TO WHITEFISH ACTIVITIES WHILE IN MONTANA

Source: 2020 ITRR Non-Resident Visitor Study

- 70% Day hiking
- 67% Scenic Driving
- 46% Recreational shopping
- 42% Wildlife watching
- 34% Car / RV camping (up from 20% in 2019)
- 33% Visit local brewery

WHERE NON-RESIDENT VISITORS TO WHITEFISH PRIMARILY COME FROM

Source: 2020 ITRR Non-Resident Visitor Study

- 21% Washington (3% in 2019)
- 11% California (6% in 2019)
- 6% Illinois (4% in 2019)
- 6% Utah (2% in 2019)
- 6% Wisconsin 2% in 2019)
- 5% Colorado (3% in 2019)
- 5% Texas (6% in 2019)
- 1% Alberta (8% in 2019)
- 39% Everywhere else in the U.S. and the world (without any regular pattern)

SMITH TRAVEL RESEARCH AND AIR DNA

Whitefish experiences an uneven cycle of visitation with a busy summer season that operates with high lodging occupancy. Deep shoulder seasons include early spring and late autumn, with moderate visitor activity during the winter season. Higher winter activity and occupancy exists during the Christmas holiday period and also during select holiday periods throughout the ski season. Therefore, we focus our marketing efforts on the shoulder and winter season in our stated target markets in order to increase lodging occupancy and visitor expenditures.

WHITEFISH CITY LIMITS AVERAGE LODGING OCCUPANCY BY QUARTER

Source: SMITH TRAVEL RESEARCH, Calendar Year 2020

- January - March: 40.3% (-6.2%)
- April - June: 33.4% (-43.2%)
- July - September: 71.3% (-12.5%)
- October - December: 42.7% (-3.6%)
- Calendar Year 2020 Average Lodging Occupancy: 47.4% (-16.9%)

WHITEFISH SHORT TERM RENTAL CITY LIMITS AVERAGE LODGING OCCUPANCY BY QUARTER

Source: AirDNA, Calendar Year 2020

- January - March: 37.3% (+2%)

- April - June: 51.9% (+33%)
- July - September: 69.4% (+14%)
- October - December: 36.6% (+29%)
- Calendar Year 2020 Average Lodging Occupancy: 48.8% (+18%)

WHITEFISH SHORT TERM RENTAL ZIP CODE (59937) AVERAGE LODGING OCCUPANCY BY QUARTER

Source: Source: AirDNA, Calendar Year 2020

- January - March: 43.2% (+2%)
- April - June: 46.8% (+27%)
- July - September: 66% (+14%)
- October - December: 39.6% (+31%)
- Calendar Year 2020 Average Lodging Occupancy: 48.9% (+17%)

VISAVUE VISITOR EXPENDITURES

Tracking on the ground visitor expenditures to Whitefish is critical to understand the effectiveness of our target marketing. Below you will find a breakdown of the top five domestic target market expenditures by quarter in 2020. Explore Whitefish target markets consistently show up in the top five each quarter as well as in the full year 2019 breakdown.

WHITEFISH 2019 VISITOR EXPENDITURES BY METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREA (MSA): \$71.2 Million

Source: VisaVue and other sources, Expenditures include Montana residents who reside outside of the Whitefish 59937 Zip Code

- 4.3% Seattle (State of Washington 14%)
- 3.5% Los Angeles (State of California 17%)
- 2.7% San Francisco
- 2.6% Missoula, MT
- 1.9% Portland, OR

WHITEFISH 2020 VISITOR EXPENDITURES BY MSA: \$72.3 Million

Source: VisaVue and other sources, Expenditures include Montana residents who reside outside of the Whitefish 59937 Zip Code

2020 QUARTER 1 (JANUARY - MARCH) BY MSA: \$14.9 Million

- 5.3% Seattle

- 3% Missoula, MT
- 2.1% Los Angeles
- 2% Portland, OR
- 1.9% San Francisco

2020 QUARTER 2 (APRIL - JUNE) BY MSA: \$10 Million

- 3.8% Seattle
- 3.5% Los Angeles
- 2.7% San Francisco
- 2.5% Missoula, MT
- 2.2% Phoenix

2020 QUARTER 3 (JULY - SEPTEMBER) BY MSA: \$30.7 Million

- 6.1% Seattle
- 4.7% Los Angeles
- 4% San Francisco
- 2.4% Phoenix
- 2.4% Dallas

2020 QUARTER 4 (OCTOBER - DECEMBER) BY MSA: \$30.7 Million

- 3.7% Los Angeles
- 3.6% Seattle
- 3.1% San Francisco
- 2% Missoula, MT
- 1.7% Portland, OR

In light of the Whitefish Sustainable Tourism Management Plan (STMP), Explore Whitefish has segmented our FY22 Marketing Plan Goals into two categories: traditional marketing plan goals and destination stewardship goals.

TRADITIONAL MARKETING PLAN GOALS

- Support the brand identity and presence of Whitefish, Montana in the marketplace as a destination for active experience-seeking travelers.
- Encourage destination visitation from the core geographic markets.
- Aggressively showcase varied winter vacation experiences in and around Whitefish and Glacier National Park.
- Position special events messaging to enhance visitation during the “Secret Season” of May-June, and the “Summer Plus” season of September-October while still leading with the primary reasons for travel to Whitefish: spectacular unspoiled nature, recreational activities, and a charming and vibrant mountain town.
- Position Whitefish as the basecamp for Glacier National Park visitors with the natural, cultural, and culinary assets of Whitefish.
- Improve “Secret Season” visitation by promoting bicycling, wildlife viewing, birding, fly fishing, golf, water sports, horseback riding, performing arts, culinary experiences, and community events.
- Improve “Summer Plus” visitation by promoting fall foliage, wildlife viewing, hiking, birding, golf, fly fishing, bicycling, non-motorized water sports, horseback riding, performing arts, culinary experiences, and community events.
- Stimulate the publication of feature stories in national and regional publications, digital media, and broadcast media.
- Encourage ski groups and incentive travel to improve the meeting and convention market with emphasis on Fall, Winter and Spring.
- In partnership with Glacier AERO and Glacier Park International Airport (GPIA), work to maintain current air service and help to facilitate new and expanded fall, winter, and spring markets to improve access, ease, and affordability of travel.
- Collaborate with Glacier National Park and regional and state tourism partners to develop and build out support for shoulder season visitation.

DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP GOALS

Focus on implementation of the Whitefish Sustainable Tourism Management Plan (STMP) and integration into the Whitefish Brand

- Co-lead the implementation of a Whitefish Sustainable Tourism Management Plan (STMP) in conjunction with the Whitefish STMP Committee and City of Whitefish.
- Take the lead on outreach segments of the STMP to build awareness and influence visitor behavior, with particular focus on the peak summer season.
- Integrate elements of the STMP into the Whitefish Brand. Develop messaging specific to these new elements.
- Encouraging alternative modes of transportation such as bicycle and pedestrian paths and expansion of public transportation.
- Conduct the annual Explore Whitefish Grant Program with preference given to grant projects which support the key pillars of the STMP: Community Character, Livability, and Community Engagement.
- Pitch media coverage to include topics such as recreating responsibly, leave no trace, traveling safety around wildlife, wildfire mitigation, etc.
- Collaborate with Glacier National Park and regional and state tourism partners to communicate with visitors during peak season.

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

Explore Whitefish has actively participated in the past and anticipates participating in the future in a variety of cooperative marketing programs with the Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development (MOTBD). Explore Whitefish participation in MOTBD marketing programs in the past have primarily centered around spring, fall, or winter campaigns. Winter MOTBD cooperative campaigns that focused on the destination ski market have been of particular interest to Explore Whitefish. Spring and autumn cooperative campaigns that are focused on the active outdoors traveler within our core geographic markets have also been of particular interest. In FY22, Explore Whitefish will consider cooperative opportunities and research cooperative opportunities which align with our budget, timing, and marketing goals.

Optional: Include attachment here.

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

Explore Whitefish actively cooperates with Whitefish Mountain Resort (WMR) on multi-channel marketing campaigns in key target markets including, but not limited to, Seattle, Portland, and Chicago. Explore Whitefish also cooperates locally with Glacier AERO (Airline Enhancement and Retention Outreach), WMR, and Discover Kalispell to promote inbound travel on new and expanded air service to Glacier Park International Airport. Explore Whitefish partners with Glacier Country Regional Tourism including cooperative media events, special events, press trips, FAM trips, groups marketing, and crisis management planning.

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

Explore Whitefish has engaged in many cooperative marketing initiatives with the Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development (MOTBD) in the past. We have made adjustments to future participation based on previous tracking and we have found the most success in MOTBD cooperative efforts that are aligned with our primary seasonal and geographic targets, particularly winter. The research cooperative opportunities offered by MOTBD, including VisaVue and AirDNA, have been invaluable in helping us to measure visitor spending to Whitefish, particularly within our stated target markets, as well as to monitor closely our seasonal trends and the effects of short term rentals.

Optional: Include attachments here.

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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	Estimated budget for method.	Marketing Method Evaluation	Add'l Attchmnt
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				including Regulations requirements.			
Consumer	Online/Digital Advertising	<p>We advertise in our stated target markets as well as nationally through cooperative opportunities with the Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development. In FY22, this method will comprise 100% of our consumer advertising budget. While we have strategically been moving more funds toward online and digital advertising over the past few years, the last year has seen the largest shift. While the pandemic certainly has played a role in this (i.e. meeting potential future travelers where they most likely are - at home and on devices versus out of home placement in train stations and airports), the enhanced ability to track the effectiveness of our advertising campaigns to inspire actionable visits to ExploreWhitefish.com is the foundation for this shift in media buying strategy.</p> <p>During FY22, our online and digital advertising will be broken out into digital placement, media partnerships, and video/audio streaming services. Examples of each type of placement can be found below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital placement: Search, Explore Whitefish video and custom website content featured on our owned paid channels such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. Media partnerships: Custom video, editorial, and email newsletters with Teton Gravity Research/Whitefish Mountain Resort 	<p>EFFECTIVENESS OF ONLINE/DIGITAL MARKETING</p> <p>Destination Analysts recently asks respondents which marketing channels they were most receptive to learning about new destinations to visit. Many of the channels utilized in the FY22 Explore Whitefish online/digital media strategy ranked in the top ten. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Websites found via search engine (#1: 35.8%) Email (#2: 25.1%) Streaming video services such as YouTube, Hulu, etc. (#4: 23.3%) Online content such as articles and blogs (#6: 22.1%) Facebook (#7: 22.1%) Instagram (#9: 16.2%) <p><i>(The State of the American Traveler: Destinations Edition: January 2021)</i></p> <p>The 2019 Whitefish Campaign Survey also helped us to measure the effectiveness of our seasonal online/digital ad campaigns. Over one third of respondents to the online survey of potential visitors felt that the ads fit them and their interests. In addition, 16% said they were likely to investigate further about Whitefish after seeing these ads. Considering this was a broad survey of potential visitors in the western United States, this is very encouraging.</p>	<p>Explore Whitefish has recently adopted a customer-intent based strategy in order to monitor success indicators happening on the Explore Whitefish website. Rather than using upper-funnel signals like website visits to measure success, Explore Whitefish will now leverage bottom of the funnel signals of customer-intent to track indicators of success on the website such as clicks to book. Actions such as these are a better indicator that a website visitor is coming, or is strongly considering coming, to Whitefish than someone simply landing on the Explore Whitefish homepage. As we collect more of this data, season over season and year over year growth will be tracked, and our goal is to grow the volume of these high intent consumer actions over time. Specifically, we will be tracking and growing the following success measures.</p> <p>DIGITAL ADVERTISING SUCCESS MEASURES</p> <p><i>Success measures are compared to the performance of the</i></p>	\$119,905.00		

- and Outside Magazine
- Video/audio streaming services: Spotify

Our consumer advertising is based around visitation in our shoulder seasons and our strategy is broken out into the following three categories: Summer Plus, Winter, and Secret Season. The consumer advertising budget for each strategy is allocated to the seasonal media buying plan.

SUMMER PLUS:

Occupancy history in Whitefish shows that during the period of late June through August the town is at its busiest. From late August into early September, occupancy levels are still strong, but begin to wane. The objective is to extend the peak summer season and grow occupancy and business levels in the autumn for the time period of September to the end of October. The approach for this time period is to develop and communicate narratives for adventures, activities, fall events, and specific reasons for visiting Whitefish during this time period that cannot be experienced if Whitefish were visited during another time of year. As we continue to position Whitefish as the basecamp of Glacier National Park, the narrative will lead with fall experiences in Glacier National Park. Explore Whitefish has allocated 20% of its overall consumer advertising budget to Summer Plus marketing efforts.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The target audience for this time period are those 35 and older with a household income (HHI) over \$75,000 whose travel or vacation is

EFFECTIVENESS OF ONLINE/DIGITAL MARKETING FOR TARGET MARKETS

Tracking on the ground visitor expenditures to Whitefish is critical reach to understand our target marketing. Below you will find a breakdown of the top five domestic target market expenditures by quarter in 2020. Explore Whitefish target markets consistently show up in the top five each quarter.

WHITEFISH 2020 VISITOR EXPENDITURES BY MSA: \$72.3 Million

Source: VisaVue and other sources, Expenditures include Montana residents who reside outside of the Whitefish 59937 Zip Code

2020 QUARTER 1 (JANUARY - MARCH) BY MSA: \$14.9 Million

- 5.3% Seattle
- 3% Missoula, MT
- 2.1% Los Angeles
- 2% Portland, OR
- 1.9% San Francisco

2020 QUARTER 2 (APRIL - JUNE) BY MSA: \$10 Million

- 3.8% Seattle
- 3.5% Los Angeles
- 2.7% San Francisco
- 2.5% Missoula, MT
- 2.2% Phoenix

2020 QUARTER 4 (OCTOBER -

FY20 and FY21 seasonal campaigns, as applicable

- Ad click through rates
- Ad cost per click
- View and impressions for video and streaming ads

WEBSITE SUCCESS MEASURES

Success measures are compared to the website performance during the FY20 and FY21 seasonal campaigns, as applicable

- Clicks to book
- Clicks to reserve (restaurant)
- Clicks off to stakeholder websites
- Newsletter sign-ups
- Travel guide downloads
- Traffic volume from targeted markets
- Visitor quality measures (Bounce rate, Length of time spent on site,

not restricted by an academic calendar.

PSYCHOGRAPHICS

Travelers seeking active experiences such as scenic driving, wildlife viewing, hiking, birding, golf, fly-fishing, road and mountain biking, non-motorized water sports, horseback riding, paddling, and hiking. Cultural and culinary experiences such as dining, shopping at local shops, attending performing arts, and community events are also considered primary autumn activities for Whitefish.

WINTER: Whitefish offers a world-class ski and snowboarding experience, including unique winter events, yet destination visitation to the town is still significantly lower than the summer season. As a result, Explore Whitefish has allocated 60% of its overall consumer advertising budget to winter ski marketing efforts. These efforts also seek to focus on the winter experiences in Glacier National Park, including sightseeing, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing. The perception that Glacier National Park is closed in the winter continues to be a challenge and our increased efforts to showcase these winter experiences will hopefully help to dispel this myth. In addition, Whitefish also has fat bike and cross-country skiing experiences near town.

DEMOGRAPHICS

For the 2019/2020 season, the National Ski Areas Association (NSAA) estimated that there were 9.2 million domestic active skiers or snowboarders who account for roughly 2.8% of the total U.S. population (NSAA 2020 U.S.

DECEMBER) BY MSA:
\$30.7 Million

- 3.7% Los Angeles
- 3.6% Seattle
- 3.1% San Francisco
- 2% Missoula, MT
- 1.7% Portland, OR

number of pages viewed)

Snowsports Participants Report). Our target audience for this time period are those 35 and older with a household income (HHI) over \$100,000 whose travel or vacation is not restricted by an academic calendar. Since we are targeting a small percentage of the domestic population, and particularly those active participants, we can most efficiently reach this target through niche channels.

PSYCHOGRAPHICS

We largely apply our overall traveler profile to the ski market. Experiential preferences for authentic travel are more likely to appreciate and enjoy Whitefish and then return again in subsequent years. The top reasons for choosing Whitefish for a winter destination were cited as “experience of a prior winter visit” and “affordability compared to other resorts” and “snow conditions” and “lack of crowding” and “the Town of Whitefish” (Whitefish Mountain Resort 2018/19 End of Season Report). It is important that we acquire new, repeat customers, not simply attract one-time visitors who are not a good fit for the Whitefish experience and as a result will not likely return.

SECRET SEASON: The objective is to begin the visitor season earlier and grow occupancy and business levels in the spring and early summer for the time period of May and June. The approach for this time period is to develop and communicate narratives for adventures, activities and specific reasons for visiting Whitefish during these time periods that cannot be experienced if Whitefish were visited during another

		<p>time of year. As we continue to position Whitefish as the basecamp of Glacier National Park, the narrative will lead with spring experiences in Glacier National Park such as biking or hiking the Going-To-The-Sun Road and wildlife watching. Explore Whitefish has allocated 20% of its overall consumer advertising budgets to spring marketing efforts.</p> <p>DEMOGRAPHICS The target audience for this time period are those 35 and older with a household income (HHI) over \$75,000 whose travel or vacation is not restricted by an academic calendar.</p> <p>PSYCHOGRAPHICS Travelers seeking active experiences such as road and mountain biking, wildlife viewing, hiking, birding, golf, non- motorized water sports, and horseback riding. Cultural and culinary experiences such as dining, shopping at local shops, attending performing arts, and community events are also considered primary spring activities for Whitefish.</p>				
Consumer	Photo/Video Library	<p>Our consumer advertising is based around visitation in our shoulder seasons and our strategy is broken out into the following three categories: Summer Plus, Winter, and Secret Season. Without high quality, compelling photo and video content, we could not successfully execute our seasonal advertising campaigns or social media strategy. Nor could we truly convey the Whitefish experience to visitors on our website and annual travel guide, inspiring them to travel to Whitefish.</p>	<p>Compelling photo and video content are vital to the success of our campaigns, as well as our social media channels, website, and travel guide. For example winter image testing conducted by MOTBD (February 2019) showed that high quality photos of skiing at Whitefish Mountain Resort had the combined highest ratings of any photos tested and those that viewed them were more likely to learn more about the destination than the other scenarios (such as apres ski, mountain town, other activity).</p>	<p>We measured success based upon the acquisition of 10 professionally licensed photos and video, which will be utilized for marketing efforts during the fiscal year.</p>	\$5,000.00	

		<p>We utilize local photographers as much as possible because of their knowledge of our tourism products</p>	<p>The 2019 Whitefish Campaign Survey also measured the effectiveness of high quality seasonal imagery in our online/digital ad campaigns. Half of survey respondents reported positive emotional responses to the seasonal campaign ads with the majority specifically saying they were struck by the beauty of the images. Thus, compelling photo and video content are vital to the success of our campaigns to inspire potential visitor to learn more about visiting Whitefish.</p>			
Destination Management	Multi-Media Marketing	<p><u>The Whitefish Sustainable Management Plan</u> Committee was formed in 2018 as a volunteer committee of the City of Whitefish and in partnership with Explore Whitefish. Over the course of the next few years, the committee gathered information from public meetings and worked with consultants and Explore Whitefish to create the Whitefish Sustainable Tourism Management Plan, approved by Whitefish City Council in September 2020.</p> <p>Explore Whitefish has taken action by identifying specific destination stewardship goals in the FY22 Marketing Plan which came directly from the STMP. These includes taking the lead on outreach segments of the STMP to build awareness and influence visitor behavior related to recreating responsibly, leave no trace, traveling safely around wildlife and wildfire mitigation, etc. Particular focus is given to the peak summer season.</p>	<p>Destination stewardship is defined by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) as a process by which the public sector, private sector, and the residents of the local community are engaged jointly to preserve, protect, and benefit from visitors to their destination.</p> <p>The purpose of the Whitefish Sustainable Tourism Management Plan is to promote sustainable community-based tourism development that is beneficial to community members, employees, and visitors. The key pillars of the plan are: community character, livability, and community engagement. The executive summary and full plan is available at SustainableWhitefish.com.</p> <p>During the summer of 2021, Explore Whitefish first executed a peak summer season on-the-ground outreach campaign called "Friend of The Fish." We plan to</p>	We will measure success on the successful execution of our outreach strategy to build awareness and influence visitor behavior related to recreating responsibly, leave no trace, traveling safely around wildlife and wildfire mitigation, etc. Particular focus is given to the peak summer season.	\$50.00	

			continue this campaign into the future.				
Marketing Support	Opportunity Marketing	Throughout the year, new marketing opportunities present themselves that were not specifically budgeted for. Money is set aside to examine opportunities and potentially act upon them if they are in line with our marketing strategy.	We create full vetted strategies and rely on industry and historical research, along with the annual marketing plan, to determine how opportunity marketing funds are spent.	Depending on the opportunity, we measure success in a variety of ways, including, but not limited to, the success measurements outlined in the FY22 Marketing Plan. As per the rules and regulations, we will not use more than 10% of the total budget for Opportunity Marketing. Opportunity marketing funds are successfully spent maximizing the goals of the annual marketing plan.	\$50.00		
Marketing Support	TAC/Governor's Conference meetings	Explore Whitefish is required to attend all meetings of the Tourism Advisory Council (TAC) as well as the annual Governor's Conference on Tourism and Recreation. As these meetings hopefully return to in-person meetings during FY22 and take place all over the state, we require support for travel and expenses to attend.	Tourism Advisory Council (TAC) meetings are required attendance for CVBs/Regions in order to be maintain yearly bed tax funding (pending TAC approval of annual marketing plan). It is also a valued networking opportunity to expand knowledge of the Montana tourism industry, destination marketing trends, and opportunities to partner with the Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development. This is also the case for the annual Governor's Conference on Tourism and Recreation.	We measure success based upon the executive director meeting attendance and reports back to the organization regarding information learned at the meetings, including new resources, information, research, best practices, and marketing updates.	\$1,776.00		
Marketing Support	Marketing/Publicity Personnel	The Marketing Manager position is imperative to executing the goals and objectives of the organization. ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website & Online Communications 	The Marketing Manager position is essential to successful execution of the FY22 Marketing Plan. We have utilized this method in previous years and stated that measurements of success were achieved that we would continue to use this	We plan to measure success based upon the execution of the essential functions outlined in the Marketing Manager job description. This includes bimonthly or monthly	\$51,000.00		WCVB_MarketingSalesManager_JobDescriptionFY22.pdf

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Media • Digital Promotion • Collateral (Travel Guide & Whitefish Town Map) • Group Sales 	method in the future. We last utilized this method successfully in FY20. We did not include this method in FY21 as we allocated more of our public funds to other methods as we were forced to reevaluate our budget multiple times during the year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.	presentations (depending on meeting schedule) on essential functions at our board meetings.			
							\$177,781.00

Marketing Method Budget

Marketing Segment	Marketing Method	Bed tax funded budget
Consumer	Online/Digital Advertising	\$149,905.00
Consumer	Photo/Video Library	\$15,000.00
		\$164,905.00
Destination Management	Multi-Media Marketing	\$45,823.00
		\$45,823.00
Marketing Support	Opportunity Marketing	\$29,277.00
Marketing Support	TAC/Governor's Conference meetings	\$1,776.00
Marketing Support	Marketing/Publicity Personnel	\$51,000.00
Marketing Support	Outreach	\$0.00
		\$82,053.00
		\$292,781.00

Miscellaneous Attachments

Description	File Name	File Size
FY22 BUDGET OVERVIEW AND PIE CHART BY METHOD	FY22 BUDGET OVERVIEW AND PIE CHART BY METHOD.pdf	170 KB
FY22 PUBLIC BUDGET PIE CHART BY METHOD	FY22 PUBLIC BUDGET PIE CHART BY METHOD.pdf	47 KB
FY22 PUBLIC BUDGET PIE CHART BY SEGMENT	FY22 PUBLIC BUDGET PIE CHART BY SEGMENT.pdf	38 KB
FY22 Whitefish CVB Marketing Plan	Whitefish Marketing Plan FY22_v3_State.pdf	4.2 MB

Reg/CVB Required Documents

Description	File Name	File Size
Required Documents (Application for Lodging Tax Revenue, Pledge of Understanding and Compliance, Applicant's Certificate of Compliance)	Signed Required Documents FY22.pdf	1.3 MB
WCVB Board Meeting Minutes 12 Apr 2021	WCVB Board Meeting Minutes 12 Apr 2021.pdf	176 KB
WCVB Board Meeting Minutes 8 March 2021	WCVB Board Meeting Minutes 8 March 2021.pdf	1.0 MB
Whitefish City Council Meeting Minutes 5 Apr 2021	Whitefish City Council Meeting Minutes 5 Apr 2021.pdf	666 KB

