



## Grant Details

### 118486 - FY23 DMO Plan

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122513 - FY23 Red Lodge DMO Plan

DOC Office of Tourism

**Grant Title:** FY23 Red Lodge DMO Plan  
**Grant Number:** 23-51-055  
**Grant Status:** Underway  
**Comments:**  
**Applicant Organization:** Red Lodge Chamber of Commerce/Visitors Center  
**Grantee Contact:** Sherry Weamer  
**Award Year:** FY23  
**Program Area:** DOC Office of Tourism  
**Amounts:**  
**Contract Dates:**

Contract Sent	Contract Received	Contract Executed
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<small>Proposal Date</small>	<small>Project Start</small>	<small>Project End</small>

**Grant Administrator:** Barb Sanem  
**Contract Number:** 23-51-055  
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06/30/2023

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**Comments**  
**Amendment Comments**

## **DMO Plan Narrative**

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### **1. Describe Your Destination**

*Describe your destination (who you are, who you wish to attract and why they would come) addressing your strengths, opportunities, and potential challenges.*

Nestled in Montana's magnificent Beartooth Mountains and surrounded by Custer Gallatin National Forest, Red Lodge delivers world-class outdoor recreation and access to Yellowstone National Park via the world-renowned Beartooth Highway. In our historic downtown, you'll enjoy locally owned shops, quality restaurants and plenty of first-class accommodations and entertainment. No matter what the season, Red Lodge is your Base Camp to the Beartooths.

The Red Lodge visitor arrives here looking forward to its natural beauty and quaint charm. What they discover is its magic. And for that, they return again and again, over a lifetime. Like so much of Montana, Red Lodge is surrounded by natural splendor -- Montana's highest peaks frame our back yards, its crystal-clear waterways tumble down our valleys, and that unique combination of pine and aspen scents invigorate our air. But as the Red Lodge visitor knows, we have something special going on here; we're just far enough off the beaten path that locals truly appreciate visitors, we want to say "Hello" when we see someone new in town, and we do not just throw out the welcome mat for you, we show you why we love living here.

Today's travelers are looking for that one of a kind of experience, and it's one Red Lodge excels at delivering.

A year-round population of just over 2,000 and an historic Main Street business district with great restaurants, shopping, entertainment, and accommodations means a stay in Red Lodge is an opportunity to make friends with locals.

Red Lodge, Montana, 2016 Gateway Community of the Year, anchors the most scenic route into Yellowstone National Park: the 68-mile alpine and structural wonder of the Beartooth Highway, an "All-American Road". Open late May-October, visitors come from around the world to experience its summer snowfields, high-mountain vistas, and legendary curves.

Sitting on the edge of a National Forest, Red Lodge lays claim to almost 1 million acres of uninterrupted and unspoiled wild country as our "backyard." Much of that is easily accessible with well-marked trails for hikers, horseback riders, and many near town are even open to bicyclists. Whatever the day's adventures entail; Red Lodge is the perfect Base Camp to the Beartooths.

#### **OUR STRENGTHS:**

##### **Gateway to Yellowstone National Park**

*The Most Scenic Route to Yellowstone Park, over the Beartooth Highway*

##### **The Beartooth Highway**

Dubbed "the most beautiful roadway in America" by On the Road correspondent Charles Kuralt, the Beartooth Highway climbs to an astounding 10,947 feet above sea level. As it winds its way from Red Lodge to Yellowstone National Park, the Highway traverses an impressive range of ecosystems and geological wonders. At the

highway's summit, travelers find themselves in a sky-high world of glacial cirques, clear alpine lakes, and snow that lingers through the summer months.

### **Gateway to the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness**

Our back yard consists of millions of acres of high-country wilderness. As early as 1897, trails began snaking their way up the West Fork canyon, cleared by hand with saws and pickaxes. Today those same trails can take you to pristine country where visitors can enjoy a variety of outdoor activities.

### **Great Shops, Restaurants and Music Entertainment**

Charming historic downtown hosts a variety of locally owned stores run by helpful, knowledgeable staff. Pop into one of the many restaurants for a quick burger and a locally brewed beer, or experience fine dining featuring wild game and other local fare. In 2018, eight of our local restaurants were selected to participate in Taste Our Place which is a program launched by the State of Montana. The Taste Our Place logo is a declaration of authentic Montana Quality. Relax and listen to some great music from our many local musicians or attend a first run movie at the historic Roman Theater.

### **Year-round Skiing**

During the winter months enjoy bountiful snow, shimmering blue skies and terrain for all abilities that make for great fun on the slopes. Open from mid-November through mid-April.

During the summer months, the Beartooth Highway is your chair lift to acres of open terrain for skiing and snowboarding. For those that are not much interested in hiking there is Beartooth Basin with two permanent poma lifts for skier access to the Twin Lakes headwall.

### **Arts and Culture**

Catch the spirit of today at one of the many art and photography galleries in town or experience various styles of art at the Carbon County Arts Guild & Depot Gallery and the Red Lodge Clay Center. For history enthusiasts, Red Lodge is home to the Carbon County Historical Society and Museum where visitors can learn about the colorful history of Red Lodge and the surrounding areas.

### **Events and Attractions**

Red Lodge is home to many events and year-round attractions. Yellowstone Wildlife Sanctuary - Home of Champions Rodeo - Beartooth Rally - Winter Fest - National Finals Ski-Joring - Christmas Stroll - Fun Run - Iron Horse Motorcycle Rodeo - Red Lodge Songwriter Festival - Bearcreek Downs Pig Races - Beartooth Run – Shredfest, Cruisen' Red Lodge and many more.

### **Proximity to Billings**

Billings is the largest city in Montana with a population of over 110,000 and a major transportation hub for South Central Montana. Travelers can reach Billings by air, bus or car on two east and west and north and south Interstates highways. Billings Logan International Airport is served by four major airlines United, Delta, Alaska, and American.

### **Amenities**

Red Lodge may seem like a remote destination to some visitors, but they will be pleased to find we have the same amenities and comforts as they have at home, and more than adequate cell phone coverage and broadband internet in most areas.

## **OPPORTUNITIES:**

### **Motorcycle/Auto Groups**

The Beartooth Highway was recently voted the *Number 1 Motorcycling Road in America* by the American Motorcyclist Association. It is a “bucket list” item for many motorcycle enthusiasts.

### **Small Groups**

Red Lodge is the perfect destination for small groups. RV clubs, executive retreats, conventions of 200 people or less, craft clubs, all find the comfortable meeting spaces and hospitality of Red Lodge a great place to spur creativity, make new friendships and renew old relationships.

### **Weddings/Reunions**

Picturesque venues, quality lodging options and numerous recreational opportunities in the surrounding area make Red Lodge the perfect setting to gather family and friends for your wedding or reunion.

### **Tournaments/Community Events**

The newly revamped Roosevelt Center, our modern high school auditorium, and other historic venues, provide the opportunity to house tournaments as well as larger community events.

### **Outdoor Competitions**

Challenging, yet stunningly beautiful terrain attracts competitors from around the country to a multitude of outdoor events. Included among these events are the Beartooth Run, Nitty Gritty Road Race, Collegiate Ski Races, National Ski Joring Championships, and the summer Shredfest which is the only summer qualifier in North America for the Freeride World Tour.

### **Media Partnership Opportunities**

Billings has a wide reach with television, radio and print media that we can better utilize with positive and timely press releases and promotional partnering. More can be done with KTVQ, KULR, YPR, and the print media options in Billings, Yellowstone Valley Women, and Magic Magazine, among others.

### **Annual Events**

Red Lodge has a growing number of competitive, recreational and cultural events. Many of these events take place during the summer months but winter events such as the Alpine Ski Races, National Ski Joring Championships, and Winter Fest also attract visitors from in state and out of state locations. In the summertime we have Red Lodge Music Festival, Red Lodge Songwriter Festival, Fourth of July Rodeos and Parades, Beartooth Basin Summer Ski Area, Beartooth Bike Rally, Cruisen’ Red Lodge Vintage Car Show, and Labor Day Fun Run just to name a few.

### **Location and Way Finding Signage**

Red Lodge is miles from a major highway. Montana Highway signs point Yellowstone Park travelers past Red Lodge exits or towards the Chief Joseph Highway in Wyoming. Location and Way Finding Signage has finally come to fruition and will be implemented in time for this year tourist season.

## **OUR CHALLENGES:**

## **Making Red Lodge a Destination**

Red Lodge is used as a 'Pass Through' for the Beartooth Highway and Yellowstone Park in the summer. If we can influence a small percentage of summer travelers to stay one additional night in Red Lodge and enjoy all the offerings of our town and surrounding area, it will make a significant impact on our local economy. In the winter months we need to reinforce Red Lodge as a winter destination to skiers and non-skiers alike. First class restaurants, comfortable accommodations, great shopping, restful relaxation, ice-skating, Nordic skiing, wildlife viewing, and hiking are a few of the winter time activities available in Red Lodge. Red Lodge Mountain is a fabulous, family-oriented alpine ski area.

The Phase I Wayfinding signage directing visitors to "Attractions" and "RV Parking/Additional Parking" has helped catch some of the "pass through" traffic/visitors, but last minute lodging vacancies are difficult to come by during our busy warm season.

As Red Lodge has gained popularity because of the space and activities visitors are seeking, there are concerns about the sustainability of tourism around the area. Therefore, the Red Lodge Area Chamber has stepped in/up to offer materials to businesses that will help educate and encourage visitors to the area to visit and recreate responsibly.

In addition to this, the City of Red Lodge has expressed concerns regarding the marketing of Red Lodge as a destination. There is no allocated Resort Tax funding via the City of Red Lodge for marketing.

## **Location and Way Finding Signage**

Red Lodge is miles from a major highway. Montana Highway signs point Yellowstone Park travelers past Red Lodge exits or towards the Chief Joseph Highway in Wyoming.

**Montana is perceived as challenging to access.** In addition to the states' destination attribute weaknesses, both the Montana and Red Lodge brand brings with it this perceived access challenge.

## **Beartooth Highway is Seasonal**

Weather and snow plow funding often delay the opening of the Beartooth Highway in the spring. Snowstorms will temporarily close the road. Timely communication of the road status is challenging with reports of closures carrying a higher priority than reports of the Highway re-opening. The portion of the Highway located in Wyoming is a secondary priority for snowplows.

## **Make Winter Success Less Dependent on the Snow Conditions at Red Lodge Mountain**

Red Lodge Mountain is the major draw for Red Lodge in the winter season. The town's commerce follows the quality of the snow conditions on the mountain. We can reduce the dips when snow conditions are not at their best by promoting all of the other amenities, events and winter time activities going on in Red Lodge. Red Lodge is within easy reach of public access to BLM lands, Forest Service lands, and national parks. Hiking, cross country skiing, wildlife viewing, scenic drives, shopping, fine dining, and relaxing in one of our great accommodations to name a few.

## **Online Mapping Services**

Google Maps and others report inaccurate information for routes and business addresses.

## **Lack of City Marketing Support**

While the City of Red Lodge collects a Resort Tax, the governing body offers no marketing or promotional funds for Red Lodge.

## **Perceived lack of comforts/technologies**

Montana is perceived to be somewhat remote and lacking many of the amenities and technologies those travelers who may be less outdoor minded are looking for.

**Perceived costs and time requirements inhibit visitation to Montana.** Research shows focus group and in-depth participants expressed serious concerns about the cost of a trip to Montana. Beyond the cost of traveling to Montana, many generally felt that a trip to Montana would require a significant investment of time.

## **COMPETITOR ANALYSIS:**

### **Jackson Hole, WY**

Popular tourism destination because of its proximity to Yellowstone & Grand Teton National Parks. Website, mobile, social media, and internet advertising resources.

### **Livingston, MT/Gardiner, MT**

Way finding signage on I-90. Year-round entrance to Yellowstone Park.

### **Bozeman, MT / Big Sky, MT**

Greater variety in lodging, dining and shopping opportunities, including groups, conventions and conferences. Proximity to Yellowstone Park. Four-season activities. Popular ski area. Cultural, historic, and educational activities, events, and attractions. Significantly greater marketing dollars.

### **West Yellowstone, MT**

West entrance to Yellowstone Park. The name West Yellowstone. More lodging and dining options. Significantly greater marketing dollars.

### **Cody, WY**

Eastern gateway to Yellowstone Park, access to five scenic byways including Chief Joseph Highway is a second route to Beartooth Highway and Northeast entrance. Lodging options, Buffalo Bill Center of the West, regional airport. By partnering with Wyoming Tourism, Cody has successfully marketed itself as “Yellowstone Country” and its airport “Yellowstone Airport.” Significantly more funding for promotion is directed to Cody by local, county and state monies.

## **Colorado**

Travelers' perceptions make Colorado Montana's top competitor. In addition to awareness, demand, excitement for and visitation at significantly higher rates than Montana, research illuminated the directly competitive relationship Colorado represents. In discussing where to go in the West and Montana specifically, it was clear that most research participants viewed Colorado as the destination they would be heavily weighing Montana against, and a more persuasive one at that. These travelers felt Colorado had similar offerings on a basic level—spectacular natural beauty, abundance of outdoor recreation, outdoor culture, winter sports. Very importantly, Colorado's cities, infrastructure and mature tourism product were seen as providing more of a “safety net,” something that was keenly on the minds of those who were less on the outdoor spectrum and/or less familiar with traveling in this region of the U.S.

## **2. Align with Montana Brand**

*Briefly describe how your destination aligns with the Montana Brand.*

The Montana Brand Pillars were seemingly written for Red Lodge.

Nestled in the Beartooth Mountains, with Yellowstone Park just up the road, and the Beartooth All American Highway at our doorstep, we truly offer more spectacular unspoiled nature than anywhere else in the lower 48.

A little off the beaten path Red Lodge, a historic mining town, is a vibrant and charming community that serves as a gateway to many natural wonders.

From art walks to downhill mountain bike rides, from reading a good book by the fire to skiing fresh powder, Red Lodge is a friendly, welcoming town offering a wide range of activities in every season. Enjoy breathtaking experiences by day and relaxing hospitality by night. Regardless of your choice of activities, our people work hard to make your visit an experience to remember.

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

The Red Lodge Area Chamber of Commerce/VIC/CVB is well marked via our Wayfinding Signage. During our busy summer visitor season, we are open from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm Monday through Friday and 9 am to 1 pm on Saturday. The goal is for each visitor to have a positive experience and plan their return visit to Red Lodge. Visitors are always happy to see we offer public restrooms, current conditions of Beartooth Highway, and local hiking (trail conditions), as well as offer them our Destination Red Lodge Travel planner to take with them to help guide them once they leave the Visitors Center.

We work closely with our tourism partners, TBID, the City of Red Lodge, and Merchants and Lodging Association.

Our content will focus on the three core elements travelers are looking for when deciding on an outdoor destination such as Red Lodge:

1. unique natural encounters without giving up modern comforts
2. comfortable isolation that attracts free-spirited adventurers,
3. a place for entirely new experiences and a place for new ways of experiencing the familiar.

## **3. What is the strategic role of your DMO?**

*Select all that apply: Destination Marketing, Destination Management, Destination Stewardship, Destination Development).*

Destination Marketing, Destination Management

**Based on the strategic role you serve, provide the following information.**

*3a. Define your audience(s) (demographic, geographic, and psycho-graphic).*

## The High Potential Visitor

This group is clearly a high-value audience; it is different from other travelers in important ways. Behaviorally and demographically, the survey shows that high potential Montana visitors have a remarkable and distinctive profile. This group of heavy travelers is not only attracted to Montana, they see the destination as more attractive and competitive when compared to the regional competition. In brief, high potential Montana visitors are:

- City dwellers (i.e., not rural and not suburban)
- Married with children
- Well-educated, Affluent
- Younger
- Frequent travelers
- Male-oriented (54.3% male and 45.7% female)
- Strongly attracted to Montana's tourism offering
- Familiar with Montana's tourism offering
- Likely repeat visitors
- Outdoor-oriented travelers

These high value potential Montana visitors are also heavy consumers of recreational activities. This group is interested in a diverse array of Montana activities, centered around day hiking and visits to the National Parks.

**Family travelers** are a natural fit with Montana's travel product, including that available in the Eastern portion of the state. They are a large and lucrative segment. In the Montana Brand Exploration Survey, approximately one-third, 32.0 percent, of travelers reported having children under the age of 18 in their homes. Like high potential visitors, family travelers index high on outdoor psychographics, have high incomes and would expect to spend more and stay longer in the state than other travelers. Family travelers are interested in a variety of Red Lodge experiences, but their ideal trips would appear to center around Yellowstone National Park, day hiking, horseback riding, and driving scenic byways. This niche market also expresses significant interest in child-friendly activities related to history, culture and geology.

Red Lodge offers affordable vacation opportunities to families visiting Montana for the first time or coming back on a repeat visit. 85% of visitors surveyed responded they will return to Montana within the next two years. These returning visitors are a significant target for our CVB.

**Geo-tourism** is defined as tourism that sustains or enhances the distinctive geographical character of a place—its environment, heritage, aesthetics, culture, and the well-being of its residents. **Geo-travelers** are high-value, low impact visitors who appreciate the unique characteristics, eccentricities and natural qualities of Red Lodge. They place high value on travel experiences that respect and support the local character of place and are less likely to become discouraged in their travel experiences by travel distances/difficulties and vagaries of weather.

## History Buffs

History buffs score higher on the psychographic index, have proven to have higher incomes and would spend more and stay longer compared to non-history buffs.

## Our Traveler at a Glance

- Healthy, Active, Outdoor Enthusiasts
- Arts, Crafts, Entertainment Enthusiasts
- Motorcyclists and Auto Enthusiasts
- RV Enthusiasts



- Empty Nesters/Active Retirees
- Income: AHI of \$50,000+
- Education: Bachelor's Degree
- Age: 35-65

### **Core Geographic Markets**

Red Lodge is located in the South Central portion of Montana. We are the gateway to the Northeast Entrance to Yellowstone Park via the Beartooth Highway. Because of our geographic location, the majority of visitors come from east of us.

### **Summer**

California, Florida, Texas, Wyoming, Idaho, Colorado, Washington, and the Mid-Western States, particularly Minnesota and Wisconsin.

### **Winter**

California, Florida, Wyoming, North Dakota, Minnesota, and SK/MB Canada are key winter markets.

### **Key Psychographic Markets for Red Lodge.**

- Social Class - middle to upper class (in terms of disposable income)
- Lifestyle - active, outdoor recreational oriented, frequent travelers
- Opinions - interested, but primarily influenced by desire to experience things for themselves
- Attitudes & Interests - outdoor activities, history & culture, foodies
- Attitudes & Beliefs - environmentally conscious, has an adventurous spirit, likes nature
- Technology - savvy - using mobile devices in all stages of planning & travel

### **3b. What research supports your DMO strategy?**

### **Demographic Research**

#### **(ITRR 2017 Interactive Data Non-Resident Travel Survey Report) \***

- Average Age - 57
- Age Groups –47% 55-64, 43% 65-74, 21% 45-54, 23% 35-44, 21% 25-34
- Gender - 53% Male, 47% Female
- Group Size - 52% Couple, 5% Self, 31% Immediate Family
- Average Group Size - 2.43
- Household Income – 23% Less than \$50k, 7% \$75-\$100k, 13% \$50-\$75k, 29% \$100-\$150k

*\*All percentages taken from online ITRR reports with 72 respondents*

#### **Facebook Demographics – Top 4 Categories, 65%, are women**

- 15% Women 35 to 44 Years

- 16% Women 45 to 54 Years
- 10% Women 25 to 34 Years
- 13% Women 55 to 64 Years
- 9% Women 65+ years

### **Geographic Research – Non Resident**

#### **ITRR – Non Resident**

- ITRR 2014 – Texas, Minnesota, Missouri, Kentucky, Arizona
- ITRR 2015 – Wyoming, Minnesota, California, Colorado
- ITRR 2016 – Wyoming, Minnesota, Washington, Colorado
- ITRR 2017 – California, Wyoming, North Dakota, Idaho, Wisconsin

#### **RedLodge.com Travel Planner Requests**

1859 Travel Planners were requested during FY 21. One of our most popular pieces of literature is our Destination Red Lodge Travel Planner. Red Lodge continues to become an increasingly popular destination for travelers as Red Lodge so much of what the pandemic traveler and travelers in general are looking for: great outdoor recreational opportunities, wildlife viewing, close proximity to Yellowstone National Park, a variety of lodging options, shopping, and many delicious eateries to choose from. The Midwest accounted for 37% of all requests. Top states were Minnesota with 9% and Florida and Texas with 5%

#### **Facebook – Top 5 Cities (Outside Montana)**

- Cody, WY
- Bismarck, ND
- Powell, WY
- Denver, CO
- Gillette, WY

#### **Facebook – Top 5 Cities (Within Montana)**

- Billings
- Red Lodge
- Bozeman
- Laurel
- Missoula

ITTR 2017 non-resident study data showed the average length of stay for non-resident visitors to Montana was 7.31 nights with 78% of in Yellowstone Country. 57% of the Non-resident travelers stated their primary reason for coming is vacation/recreation/pleasure, which leads to the supposition that they want a broader experience than just visiting Yellowstone Park.

The following 2017 ITTR data outlines what visitors are doing while in our area.

- Scenic Driving - 70%
- Wildlife Watching - 60%
- Day Hiking - 57%
- Recreational Shopping - 33%
- Visit local brewery - 29%
- Nature Photography - 27%

- Visiting Museums - 22%
- Fly fishing - 20%
- Car/RV camping - 18%
- Visiting Historical Sites - 18%
- Attending Festivals and Events – 17%
- Followed by river rafting/floating, farmers markets, birding, skiing/snowboarding

### **Beartooth Highway Economic Impact Research**

During the winter season, Red Lodge, MT is not considered a gateway community because of road closures limiting access only to Cooke City/Colter Pass/Silver Gate, MT and Cody, WY (via the Chief Joseph Scenic Byway).

Nonresident visitor expenditures contributed to over \$41.1 million in economic activity to Carbon County in 2016, the vast majority being spent in Red Lodge. The economic impact for this region from nonresident travelers is substantial to local communities. Furthermore, results identified that nonresidents perceive the Beartooth Highway as a destination in itself, not simply a highway.

2015 average spending in Carbon County by nonresident visitors to Montana totaled \$63.4 million. This \$63.4 million in local spending directly supports \$40.2 million of economic activity in the region, and supports an additional \$16.1 million of economic activity, indirectly.

Source: [http://scholarworks.umt.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1352&context=itrr\\_pubs](http://scholarworks.umt.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1352&context=itrr_pubs)

### **3c. What are your emerging markets?**

#### **Two Wheel travelers**

Motorcyclists and bicyclists are attracted to the Beartooth Highway for its beauty and challenge. This segment of the tourism market is growing and important as they view the Highway as a destination and spend multiple nights in our area.

#### **Foodies**

Red Lodge has an array of excellent restaurants, an award winning craft beer brewery, gourmet food and wine shops, for those travelers that seek unique dining experiences. Adventure is food for the soul, and food is fuel for the adventure. After a long day in the great outdoors, there is nothing quite like a warm meal. But not just any warm meal...a really good warm meal with good company. Whether visiting the local burger joint or enjoying an elegant, farm-to-table meal, dining in Red Lodge is sure to please everyone. With a rich agricultural heritage, Red Lodge has a wonderful selection of locally grown products that translates to a thriving dining scene.

#### **Entertainment/Music Seekers**

On any given night there are a number of bars and restaurants that feature live music, both local artists and touring bands. During the course of the year, events such as The Red Lodge Music Festival and the Red Lodge Songwriter Festival bring world class musicians to Red Lodge to share their art.

#### **Billings**

Billings is 60 miles away and has a population base of approximately 160,000. The Billings Convention and Meeting market is growing and we will continue to develop our relationship with the Billings CVB, Visit Billings. The Billings market is the perfect target to strengthen our winter destination business, especially on non-holiday weekends.

### **Corporate Retreats**

Red Lodge is the perfect place for executive retreats and small group gatherings for associations, social clubs and private companies located in Billings and Bozeman.

### **Areas to the East**

Eastern Montana, North Dakota, and Minnesota continue to be strong markets and will be the focus for our Winter destination marketing.

### **Colorado & other Mountain States**

We have listed Colorado previously as a competitor for non-resident visitors. However, state tourism data and our own information indicate a rising interest in visiting Montana and specifically Red Lodge from Coloradans. As their own tourism industry continues to grow and their population continues its rapid growth, the competition for outdoor space grows in equal proportion. Many Colorado residents especially those from major metropolitan areas are looking for less crowded, less expensive, simpler destinations, much the way Colorado used to be. Red Lodge is the perfect fit, an 8-9 hour drive or a one hour direct flight from Denver, their largest metropolitan area.

## **4. Define and describe your overall goals.**

*A goal is an idea of the future or desired result that a person or group of people envisions, plans and commits to achieve.*

The overall goal of the Red Lodge CVB is to increase tourism for our area. The Red Lodge area still has a decline in tourism numbers during the winter months. Therefore we will focus on the winter traveler for cooler weather related activities such as skiing, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, winter hiking, ski joring, photography and wildlife sightings while also continuing to draw the high value visitor for our warm season as there is still room to increase these collections as well.

1. The DMO wants to continue to grow the busy warm season (July-August-September), but also increase visitors to our fall and winter seasons (October – March).
2. The DMO will begin Phase II of our Wayfinding signage project focusing on the 4 entrances to Red Lodge (N via US 212, S via US 212, W via Hwy 78, and E via Hwy 308).
3. Encourage residents and visitors to keep the Red Lodge area a safe tourism destination by traveling responsibly, leaving no trace, practicing wildland fire safety, being kind, respectful and patient with one another and by recreating responsibly.
4. Continue to Build Marketing Infrastructure

This will include, but not be limited to:

Consistent and informed Visitor Information Center staffing to enhance the guest experience and educate them to all Red Lodge and the surrounding area has to offer.

- Increase Travel Planner Mailers
- Increase public awareness of what is happening in the Red Lodge area with targeted and regular e-news
- Increase social media reach through Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter
- Continue to promote local events.

***4a. Describe proposed tactics and projects as related to overall goals and controlled by the organization in its financial statements.***

Tactic 1: Targeted advertising campaigns promoting fall/winter events, such as our popular Christmas Stroll, wildlife viewing, snowshoeing, skiing, and ice skating by expanding our advertising.

Tactic 2: Targeted advertising campaigns promoting warm weather activities unique to our area such as hiking, scenic motorcycle rides, wildlife viewing, camping, fishing, or enjoying a day walking our beautiful and historic downtown while enjoying unique shopping and dining options.

Tactic 3: Improve the visitor experience by providing consistent accurate area information via visitor counselors, travel planners, and additional Wayfinding signage as well as mainting and improving our visitor information center.

Tactic 4: Producing and distributing brochures in conjunction with our TBID and making presentations to our business partners and city council.

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<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Measurable Metrics for Success</b>	<b>Report the Metric Achieved</b>	<b>Evaluation of Measurable Metrics for Success</b>
Communicate keeping Red Lodge a safe and thriving tourism destination by educating visitors to visit Red Lodge responsibly.	Distribute visitor information re: "Visiting Red Lodge Responsibly" to area businesses.  Present at 3 community events on keeping Red Lodge a competitive and sustainable visitor destination.	Yes, we were able to present the "Happy Trails" information at 3 community events as well as providing these brochures to area businesses for distribution to visitors.	Yes, we met our objective and yes the method was successful. We will continue to distribute the Happy Trails brochures with the simple change to incorporate Visit Montana's "Leave No Trace" wording and message to visitors and provide the brochures to area businesses to have available for visitors.
Increase contact database through travel guide requests.	Increase annual travel guide requests from 1900 in FY22 to 2100.	Yes, we increased the annual travel guide requests from 1900 in FY22 to 2189 in FY23.	Yes, we met our objective and yes this method was successful. We will continue to track travel planner request numbers.
We will begin Stage 2 of our Wayfinding Signage focusing on the 4 entrances to Red Lodge (78 West, 212 North and South, and 308 East).	Signs manufactured and installed will be our measurement for success.	This metric was not fully achieved due to flooding.	We partially met our objective as the Stage 2 Wayfinding "Welcome" signs have been manufactured and we know that our Stage 1 Wayfinding Signage is a successful method, but the Stage 2 Wayfinding "Welcome" signage locations have to be redetermined due to the 2022 flooding.
Increase lodging tax collections while improving the overall visitor experience.	Increase lodging tax collections for the DMO by 2% over FY22 collections, while improving the overall visitor experience.	We did not increase lodging tax collections for FY23 over FY22 collections.	We did not meet our objective and this method was not successful due to June 2022 flooding. We do feel this method could still be successful and has been successful previously.

## **DMO Budget**

<b>Allowable Methods</b>	<b>Amount Budgeted</b>	<b>% of Budget Allocated</b>	<b>Amount Expended</b>	<b>% of Budget Expended</b>
Administration	\$11,123.60	14.75	\$7,659.75	68.86
Earned Media/Tourism Sales	\$500.00	0.66	\$548.94	109.79
Education/Outreach	\$1,500.00	2.0	\$2,937.12	195.81
Joint Venture	\$9,975.00	13.23	\$3,000.00	30.08
Opportunity Marketing	\$500.00	0.66	\$0.00	0
Paid Media	\$15,100.00	20.03	\$10,375.12	68.71
Product Development	\$25,196.40	33.42	\$4,655.00	18.48
Visitor Services	\$11,500.00	15.25	\$9,112.91	79.24
	\$75,395.00	100.00	\$38,288.84	

## ***Narrative Evaluation***

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One of our primary objectives; to increase lodging tax collections for the Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) by 2% over the collections from FY22. This goal was established to support the DMO's ongoing initiatives and marketing efforts, ensuring continued growth and success in promoting our community as a travel destination.

However, despite our best efforts and strategic planning, this goal was not achieved. Our collections were down 1% from FY 22 in FY 23. The unexpected and unprecedented occurrence of a 1000-year flood in our community had a profound and widespread impact, including on our ability to increase lodging tax collections. The flood disrupted normal business operations and travel plans for visitors. As a result, we faced reduced occupancy rates and lower overall tourism activity. These circumstances made it exceptionally challenging to generate the anticipated increase in lodging tax collections.

The flood also created a unique obstacle regarding our Stage 2 Wayfinding Signage project. Although the signs were successfully manufactured, their placement was delayed due to the flooding's impact on the designated locations. To address this setback, we are actively working on relocating some of the placements to ensure they are optimally positioned to guide visitors and enhance their experience in our community.

While facing some hurdles due to flooding, we are excited to report we exceeded our goal of 2100 travel planner requests with a total of 2189 travel planner requests. This is a result of our ability to participate in Joint Ventures with Yellowstone Country utilizing online digital advertising through Windfall. We also took advantage of Print Advertising opportunities in Southeast Montana Magazine (Distribution of this magazine is 80,000 copies with an estimated readership of 230,000), Cody Enterprise (distribution of 130,000 copies delivered to 7 different states (Wyoming, Montana, North & South Dakota, Idaho, Utah, and Nebraska- which are in our drive market), American Road (audience of around 100,000 readers and distribute 2,800 copies), and Road Runner Magazine (readership of 232,567 and 96% of their readers use RR to plan their trips each year). These Print and Digital Advertising efforts represent our determination to bounce back from the flood's impact by highlighting Red Lodge's appeal as a travel destination. Red Lodge offers an abundance of unique outdoor recreational opportunities as well as one of the most scenic drives in the United States, the Beartooth Highway.

Additionally, we presented our "Happy Trails" initiative at three important community events: the Business & Lodging Association, City Council, and a Beartooth Recreational Trails Association meeting. The enthusiastic reception and appreciation from these key community stakeholders underscored the value of our efforts in Destination Management. "Happy Trails" not only promotes our town but also celebrates our trails and backcountry spaces, reinforcing our commitment to sustainable tourism and outdoor enjoyment.

As part of our ongoing commitment to responsible tourism, we are excited to announce our transition to the official VisitMT "Leave No Trace" messaging. This step aligns with our values of preserving and protecting our natural resources, ensuring that our town remains a pristine and inviting destination for years to come. By adopting these principles, we demonstrate our dedication to responsible tourism practices and environmental stewardship.

For FY23 we had 1000 bags with our logo and Red Lodge Montana created, 1000 lip balms, and 1000 pens which were included in "welcome packets" and given to participants of the Montana Gravel Tour, Beartooth Run, 24 Hours of Elk Basin, Whistle Pig Adventure Race, Red Lodge Randonnée, the Montana Historical Society Conference, and the Red Lodge Car Show. These carefully curated promotional items were designed to leave a lasting impression on event participants and conference attendees and encourage a return visit to Red Lodge.

To conclude, our journey through the challenges posed by the 1000-year flood has been marked by resilience and determination. Despite initial setbacks, we not only met but exceeded our travel planner request goal, ensuring our community's continued appeal to travelers. We overcame obstacles related to our Wayfinding Signs project and received positive feedback on our "Happy Trails" initiative. Our transition to the "Leave No Trace" messaging further solidifies our commitment to sustainable tourism. As we move forward, we remain focused on our mission to showcase the beauty of our town, trails, and backcountry spaces while preserving them for future generations to enjoy.

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

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<b>Description</b>	<b>File Name</b>	<b>File Size</b>
FY23 Red Lodge Certificate of Compliance	FY23 Certificate of Compliance.pdf	503 KB
FY23 Red Lodge CVB BOD DMO Approval	FY23 DMO Approval.pdf	119 KB
Red Lodge BOD Bylaws	Red Lodge ByLaws Updated-Revised-Accepted.pdf	187 KB



