



2023 Plan

Strategies, Objectives, and Tactics for
July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023

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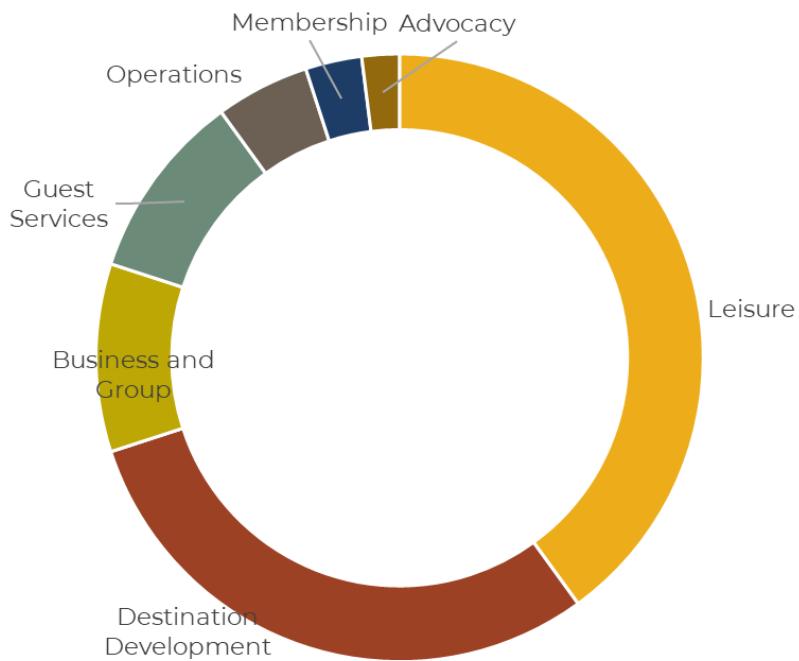
www.VisitGreatFallsMontana.org

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Great Falls Montana Tourism is the destination management organization for Great Falls, Montana. There are 466 incorporated places that have a population of between 50,000 to 99,999, Great Falls is 1 of them. There are 741 places with 25,000 to 49,999. That is 1,206 options other than Great Falls that offer meeting and leisure travel opportunities. Our job is to get Great Falls known and then make people fall in love with our unique opportunities.

Our strategies this fiscal year will be:

1. Promote Great Falls to potential leisure travelers.
2. Develop the Destination by supporting tourism infrastructure assets and investing in new and growing events.
3. Recruit meetings, conventions, and group gatherings to Great Falls.
4. Assist guests with having an only in Great Falls experience.
5. Manage Organization Operations.
6. Recruit members.
7. Advocate for the Tourism industry.



Leisure

The objective is to increase overnight visitors and stays at Great Falls lodging properties by placing paid media in our targeted markets and developing content that is distributed through our owned media, such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, that will inspire travelers. In 2021, Great Falls hosted 1.4 million overnight visitors, room demand was 462,593, our website saw 191,928 users, and our paid media generated over 26 million impressions and a click through rate of 0.45%. Our Facebook followers grew 26% to 11,173, Instagram grew 43% to 5,056, and YouTube grew 77% to 154. Success will be measured by growth in overnight visitors, room demand, website users, paid media click through rate, and social followers.

Destination Development

Great Falls Montana Tourism's objective is to make Great Falls a more competitive destination to visit by recruiting and developing events; supporting new air service at Great Falls International Airport; advocating for development and improvement of new venues to host events, meetings, and groups; encouraging new services to support the tourism industry. In 2021, Great Falls Montana Tourism invested in a group who launched Big River Ruckus, a multi-day music festival that had an estimated 1,200 people in attendance. Great Falls saw a 7% increase in room demand the weekend of the Ruckus. Success will be measured by the number of competitive improvements, people connected, and estimated room demand impact.

Business and Group

With this effort, Great Falls Montana Tourism's objective is to market Great Falls as a location to host conventions, meetings, trade shows, bus tours, reunions, weddings, sporting events, and festivals. This segment has been slow to return since COVID-19. In 2021, we did host the BMW Motorcycle Owners Association National Rally with about 5,000 attendees and an increase in room demand of 19% over the same time in 2019. Success will be measured by the number of projects landed, the number of attendees, and growth in room demand.

Guest Services

The objective of this effort is to assist guests daily July 1 - September 30; May-June; and Monday-Friday October through April who call, walk-in, and email by answering their questions, sharing stories that excite them about Great Falls, and get them out experiencing Great Falls. The goal of this effort is to get guests to stay the night in Great Falls, extend their stay in Great Falls, and/or plan a return trip to Great Falls. Between 2011 and 2017 there was a 56% decline in walk-in guests. Over 80% of walk-in traffic occurs between May and September, 25% occurred on weekends, and walk-in traffic accounts for about 0.05% of all the overnight visitors to Great Falls. Success will be measured by number of guests assisted, the percentage of guests that are not residents or campers, the percentage of guests visiting on the weekends, and percentage of guests visiting May-September.

Operations

This effort's objective is to maintain efficient and effective operations for the organization. Beyond paying bills, filing reports, leading Board and Executive Committee meetings, tracking progress towards goals, assisting with audits, specific objectives include recruiting, developing and retaining staff and volunteers, advocating for the Future of Montana ExpoPark, and communicating with stakeholders. Success will be measured by clean audits, retention rate, number and open rate of stakeholder communications, and County secured funding to build a multipurpose event center at Montana ExpoPark.

Membership

The objective of this effort is to increase the number of businesses knowing about, supporting, and providing input on Tourism's collective efforts. Success will be measured by growth and retention of members.

Advocacy

Great Falls Montana Tourism's objective in this effort is to educate Tourism's impact on the local economy, oppose efforts that hinder tourism, and support efforts that make Great

Falls more appealing to securing more overnight visitation. Great Falls Montana Tourism will be more involved with local projects supported by TBID assessments. Success will be measured by the percentage of efforts that are successful in Tourism's favor and the percentage of projects supported by TBID assessments that Great Falls Montana Tourism's staff are involved in.

Staffing

Great Falls Montana Tourism's tactics to achieve the objectives of our efforts are performed by 3 full-time staff and 1 seasonal part-time staff. Efforts are led by the Executive Director and supported by a Sales Director, a Content Director, and a Guest Services Manager. Great Falls Montana Tourism is developing a volunteer program and is working to secure guest service volunteers to aid in our efforts. The staff are very diligent to stay focused on top priority efforts and efficient in managing time to achieve results.

Creative Strategy

To stand out in a saturated destination marketing environment, Great Falls, Montana requires a bold and innovative approach. Great Falls is marketed as Montana's greatest dam town that is a basecamp to unspoiled nature, breathtaking diverse landscapes, and friendly, relaxed hospitality. Our tone is conversational, punny (yes, pun-ny), simple, and confident. The use of the word dam is used in marketing headlines when images are of dams, and sparingly in other efforts. We use a double exposed image of our visitors' top activities over a landscape in our promotion to juxtapose the outdoors and illustrate the art in Great Falls that differentiates us from other Montana communities and from the 1,520 other communities vying for traveler attention.

Competitive Set

We compare our efforts against benchmark communities as well as our own historic performance. Those benchmarks include:

- Kalispell, MT
- Casper, WY
- Grand Forks, ND
- Billings, MT
- Missoula, MT
- Spokane, WA
- Boise, ID
- Sioux Falls, SD

STRATEGY 1 | PROMOTE GREAT FALLS TO POTENTIAL LEISURE TRAVELERS TACTICS

In calendar year 2021, Great Falls, Montana had 1,487,559 overnight visitors, a 47% increase over 2019. During the same calendar year Great Falls market saw a 2.36% decline in room demand over 2019, and a 1.76% decline in gross lodging tax collection. Fiscal year data is still projected, however, is expected to paint a much different picture. The reason is that the first quarter of 2021 still was being impacted by COVID-19.

Market

In 2021, the overnight visitor to Great Falls, as shown in research conducted by ITRR, can be characterized as:

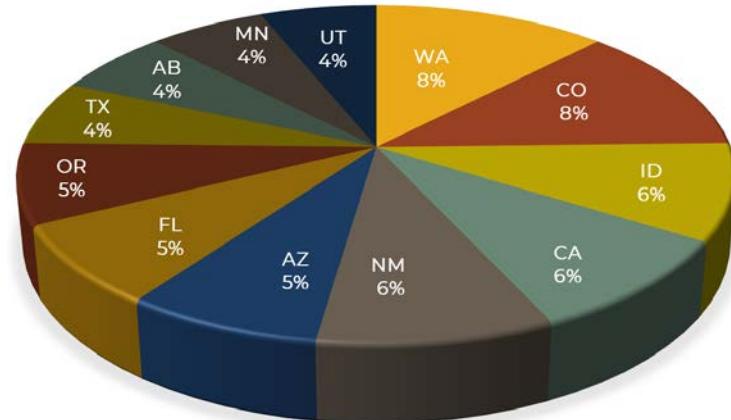
- A couple, 55-64 years old
- With \$100,000 to \$150,000 in household income
- Who has previously been to Great Falls
- Driving their personal vehicle

Arriving from:

- Washington
- Colorado

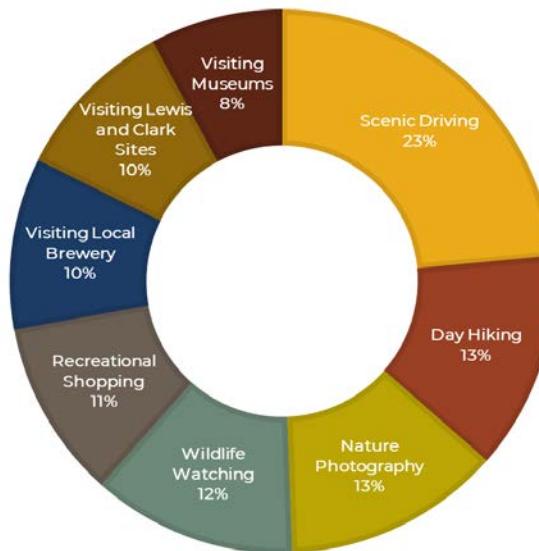
- Idaho
- California
- New Mexico
- Arizona
- Florida

- Oregon
- Texas
- Alberta
- Minnesota
- Utah



Engaging in these activities while in Great Falls:

- Scenic Driving
- Day Hiking
- Nature Photography
- Wildlife Watching
- Recreational Shopping
- Visiting Local Brewery
- Visiting Lewis & Clark Sites
- Visiting Museums



Targeted Geographic and Psychographic Markets

- Active Independent Adventure Couples 35-65 years old in
 - Drive Markets
 - Spokane
 - Coeur d'Alene
 - Boise
 - Direct Fly Markets
 - Denver
 - Seattle
 - Originating Flight Markets
 - Los Angeles
 - Bismarck
 - Lethbridge
 - Calgary
 - Chicago
 - Dallas

- Emerging Markets
 - Nashville
- Culture and History Buffs aged 50-65 in
 - Drive Markets
 - Spokane
 - Coeur d'Alene
 - Boise
 - Direct Fly Markets
 - Denver
 - Seattle
 - Originating Flight Markets
 - Los Angeles
 - Emerging Markets
 - Nashville
- Event Experiencers aged 25-45 in
 - Local Drive markets
 - Billings
 - Butte
 - Drive Markets
 - Spokane
 - Coeur d'Alene
 - Bismarck
- Shop & Diners aged 25-65 in
 - Drive Markets
 - Lethbridge
 - Calgary

Traditional Paid Media

- Provide outdoor recreation, cultural amenities, event, and itinerary messaging through paid ads on Facebook, Instagram, SnapChat and YouTube.
- Market Great Falls' outdoor recreation and cultural amenities through articles published on digital and print platforms.
- Place ads in niche print publications.
- Take advantage of media opportunities that leverage video assets.
- Take advantage of media opportunities that retarget audiences engaging with a first Great Falls message.
- Take advantage of media opportunities that leverage Glacier and Yellowstone National Park trip planners and visitors.
- Create custom landing pages to support all paid media placement for better tracking.

Non-Traditional Paid Efforts

- Find opportunities to leverage influencers that will produce a strong return on investment.
- Be open to local product production partnerships: Pasta Montana, JJ Johnson, Mighty Mo, Mountain Wave Distilling, and others.
- Consider opportunities to promote Great Falls through Great Falls Sporting Venues: Electric City Speedway, Great Falls Trap and Skeet Club, Centene Stadium, Montana ExpoPark, Great Falls Ice Plex, and McLaughlin Center.

- Lead a targeted innovative “It’s Greater in Great Falls” guerilla marketing effort in Texas, if new direct flight announced.

Established Events

- Support Western Art Week show organizers by listing their shows and events at WesternArtWeek.com.
- Support Western Art Week shows by producing a comprehensive guide to all activities during the week and making them available to all guests.
- Promote Western Art Week to Event Experiencers, Shop & Diners, and History Buffs as a supplement to the show organizers promotion to art buyers.
- Coordinate “The Greatest Dam Mimosa Showdown” the weekend of National Mimosa Day, to include a brunch the day after, leveraging technology assets to determine value.

Joint Ventures

- Participate in State of Montana Department of Tourism and Business Development opportunities that offer video or content placements.
- Participate in strategically aligned opportunities provided by partners.
- Provide opportunities to partners to capitalize on consumer awareness built by Great Falls Montana Tourism to increase interest for the member’s business by sharing our media plan.

Public Relations

- Subscribe to media request service and respond to appropriate leads to generate interest for Great Falls, Montana.
- Establish relationships with writers and offer familiarization tours in exchange for media coverage.

Facebook

- Be the leader in producing original content about Great Falls by posting Glimpse of Great Falls videos, Did you Know/Check this Out posts, podcast new episode announcement posts, new blog announcement posts.
- Members who create Facebook Events will have those events added to our page’s event section.
- Launch member developed “Show Me” video segments where members will provide Great Falls Montana Tourism short videos that provide insider tips and behind the scene developed about their business.
- Share posts of positive news highlighting the Great Falls’ community, current non-political events, and exciting opportunities with the primary objective to make Great Falls, Montana the destination for a leisure traveler.
- Invite people who engage with our content to Like our page.
- Respond to comments and messages, both positive and negative, as appropriate.

Instagram

- Post breathtaking, emotion invoking user generated photos.
- Secure rights and leverage user-generated content that showcases our diverse landscapes and seasonal experiences in and around the basecamp; an approximate 60-mile radius from Great Falls.

- Include simple conversational toned captions, a location, and the minimum following hashtags: #VisitGreatFalls #GreatFallsMontana #GreatFallsMT #GreatFalls #Montana on all posts. Additional trending experience, season, and image specific hashtags will be included to leverage larger feeds.
- Post videos sparingly as we want the market to engage within seconds.
- Include shared stories that highlight outdoor adventure in Great Falls and the surrounding area that Great Falls Montana is tagged in, or with similar original content, as stories.

Twitter

- Post in real time as events occur, conversational confident toned tweets and attempt to engage, as appropriate, people of notoriety with our tweets.

YouTube

- Maintain a library of Great Falls Montana Tourism videos that currently includes Montana People of Great Falls series, Introduction to Great Falls series, and our podcast, We're No Dam Experts, episodes.
- Develop a strategy to better leverage YouTube.

We're No Dam Experts Podcast

- Create, produce and deliver a weekly episode on a topic about Great Falls, Montana and publish to podcast libraries.
- Create a landing page for each episode and link that page to the show landing page.

Website

- Launch a redesigned website with dedicated content for wedding and sport segments.
- Develop and source, from partners and industry experts, blogs for www.VisitGreatFallsMontana.org that will share first person experiences for others to engage with.
- Create evergreen itineraries to inspire leisure travelers next trip to Great Falls.
- Develop custom content, as appropriate, to orient leisure travelers with Great Falls.
- Research opportunities to create digital passes that reduces the need for paper and will offer virtual guided engagement through Great Falls.

Direct Communication

- Create and deliver a seasonal “Get to Know Great Falls” email to all new inquiries on the following Tuesday after they are received.
- Create and deliver a monthly “Adventure Awaits” email to our entire leisure traveler database.
- Create and deliver special edition focused email communications to targeted interests as the need arises.

Photos and Videos

- Secure new photos for owned and paid media utilizing hired photographers for staged shoots, call for submission to amateur photographers, and photo contests.
- Develop new video content to promote Great Falls with connected to outdoors, art, food and shopping.

- Capture new Western Art Week video content for new promotional video of Western Art Week

Printed Support Materials

- Distribute printed visitor guides through Certified Folder for Yellowstone and Glacier Routes.
- Maintain supply of Visitor Guides for distribution through Great Falls partners and Tourism's Basecamp.
- Provide printed guides to those who request one.
- Update design of City of Great Falls map and print map into pads.
- Update design of The Falls of the Missouri map and print map into pads.

STRATEGY 2 | DEVELOP THE DESTINATION BY SUPPORTING TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE ASSETS AND INVESTING IN NEW AND GROWING EVENTS TACTICS

- Continue to create alliances with willing partners to further the efforts of Great Falls Montana Tourism.
- Provide education on the details and the economic value of improving Montana ExpoPark to civic groups, organizations, and resident groups.
- Invest in and support the efforts through the Small Community Air Service Development grant, led by Great Falls International Airport Authority.
- Invest in and support the efforts of the Low-Cost Air Initiative that looks to bring cost competitive new flights into Great Falls, led by Great Falls area Chamber of Commerce Foundation.
- Provide data and insight to efforts that will enhance Great Falls' competitiveness for overnight visitation.
- Create and deliver "Let's Partner" Marketing Series Workshops to cover how to leverage Great Falls Montana Tourism's efforts and develop an event mini-marketing plan to attract overnight visitors.
- Conduct research to invest in recruiting or developing new signature events for Great Falls, Montana.
- Accept proposals to partner with Great Falls champions to grow tourism in Great Falls.

STRATEGY 3 | RECRUIT MEETINGS, CONVENTIONS, AND GROUP GATHERINGS TO GREAT FALLS TACTICS

The meeting industry is divided. According to Meeting Planners International (MPI), 75% of planners anticipate favorable live attendance to meetings. The challenge within this segment is staffing at both the planner and supplier levels as well as vaccine requirements for attendance by both suppliers and attendees. Reports indicate that 44% of in-person events are back to the length they were in 2019, however, 50% report having shorter events than in 2019. Coming out of a variety of social and work isolation scenarios, planners are changing the construct of meetings to include more time to engage and network, with a lot of that being done as part of tours and outdoor activities in smaller groups. While 33% of planners expect business as usual by the end of 2022, 42% say it will be until 2023 sometime for a return to normal.

Target Market

- Associations west of Mississippi River who host meetings and conventions with 350+ attendees within the following industries:
 - Agriculture

- Arts
- Culture
- Outdoor Recreation
- Montana Associations who are open to considering new locations.
- Montana regional sporting events.

Leverage Competitive Advantages

- Accessibility of Great Falls by direct flights from Seattle on Alaska, Salt Lake City and Minneapolis on Delta, Denver and seasonally Chicago on United, Las Vegas and Phoenix on Allegiant.
- Montana's 3rd Largest City with 60,000 residents.
- 2,300 available lodging rooms.
- Emotional connection to Montana.
- Variety of budget conscious options.
- Outdoor space options.

Develop the Pipeline

- Search MINT+ database for new meeting and convention opportunities by industry and location.
- Deliver Bring it to the Basecamp presentations to local civic organizations and ask for referrals of meeting and convention opportunities.
- Network with local leaders to find industry associations, passion projects, reunions, and sporting events connected to and ask for referral to bring opportunity to Great Falls.
- Attend Hosted Buyer Shows to pitch Great Falls 1:1 with targeted meetings planners.
- Work with local venues to develop a comprehensive calendar of projects and leverage for national opportunities connected to already secured business.
- Search like communities for booked business and research prospect.
- Prospect through LinkedIn to connect with meeting planners.
- Research options for how to leverage travel trade, bus tours, weddings, festivals, trade shows, and sporting events.

Engage Organizers

- Communicate directly by telephone, video, email and 1:1 meetings.
- Provide letters of interest highlighting Great Falls' competitive advantage.
- Incentivize communication with small, Great Falls specific, door openers.
- Host Familiarization Tours.
- Utilize LinkedIn to highlight activities, space, unique opportunities, and successes.
- Create and deliver relevant content through "Bring it to the Basecamp" email communication.
- Create and deliver content that demonstrates how Great Falls successfully hosts a variety of projects through direct email communication and LinkedIn.
- Maintain Memberships in
 - Destinations International
 - DMA West
 - Montana Society of Association Executives

Respond to Requests for Proposals

- Request room rates & availability from all lodging properties via email for leads.

- Provide information on applicable resources, such as catering, live music, networking events, transportation, and family itineraries.
- Provide incentives and leverage incentive requirements for member benefit.
- Develop and deliver custom pre/post conference itineraries for attendees.
- Highlight unique industry opportunities available for keynote addresses or on-site tours.
- Pitch unique attendee experience opportunities to increase attendee interest.

Provide Convention Services

- Provide members opportunities to provide discounts and special offers for attendees.
- Aid meeting planners in building attendance by attending preceding event, providing social media posts about Great Falls, and/or distribute communications about Great Falls to potential attendees.
- Provide Family/Partner itineraries to increase add-on attendance.
- Develop pre/post conference itineraries for distribution to meeting attendees.
- Provide connections to community and industry leaders, local service providers, and community engagement opportunities.
- Survey meeting planners after event to obtain feedback on services and secure testimonials to use in future marketing.
- Offer Welcome Booth at event with Great Falls resources to provide attendees information about things to do after conference.
- Deliver sponsorship opportunities for landed projects to members.

STRATEGY 4 | ASSIST GUESTS WITH HAVING AN ONLY IN GREAT FALLS EXPERIENCE TACTICS

- Greet all in-market guests with a smile, answer questions, and add value by over sharing about Great Falls, Montana.
- Be available to in-market guests daily from July 1 - September 30 and May-June
- Greet all callers with a smile, answer questions, and add value by over sharing about Great Falls, Montana.
- Provide printed materials as requested, while encouraging electronic delivery.
- Work with partners to bring additional opportunities to Overlook Park, such as food trucks, bike rentals, and disc golf equipment rentals.
- Develop displays for in-market guests to engage with throughout 15 Overlook Drive.

STRATEGY 5 | MANAGE ORGANIZATION OPERATIONS TACTICS

- Conduct weekly Pipeline Meetings to prioritize leads, discuss what it will take to land projects, and strategize next steps for landed business.
- Conduct weekly Team Meetings to prioritize for the week, discuss hurdles, and strategize owned and paid media efforts.
- Create and deliver meeting progress reports as needed to venues and lodging properties regarding leads lost and secured and known business occurring in Great Falls.
- Create and deliver quarterly Basecamp Briefs for members, lodging properties and community leaders.
- Create and deliver weekly, Tourism Tuesday emails for interested parties and Board of Directors that highlights the team's results and pertinent items that affect Tourism, from the previous week.

- Create and deliver weekly Operations Update emails for the Board of Directors that provides insight to the pipeline, team's efforts, and paid media results.
- Create and deliver weekly, The Eventory, an inventory listing of events occurring in Great Falls for our event industry partners, interested parties, and lodging properties to aid in itinerary fillers for in-market guests and strategic planning or collaborating on established and new events.
- Provide staff opportunities for continuous education within the industry and their area of professional purpose.
- Oversee annual audit of assessment and tax funds. Coordinate 990 preparation for Great Falls Convention and Visitors Bureau. Submit annual reports for both Great Falls Tourism Business Improvement District and Great Falls Convention and Visitors Bureau. Deliver quarterly financial reports for Great Falls Convention and Visitors Bureau. Complete annual marketing evaluation report for Great Falls Convention and Visitors Bureau.
- If funding secured, conduct Destination Next assessment, strategic planning, and market analysis.
- Track all activity for inquiries, leads, projects, and partners through iDSS customer relationship management system.
- Track organizational goal progress, owned and paid media, visitation, lodging tax collection, and TBID assessment collection in Performance Dashboard and deliver report monthly to Board of Directors.
- Conduct monthly Board of Directors Meetings and Executive Committee meetings to monitor financials, review progress towards goals, review strategy, and adopt changes in strategic efforts.
- Provide live and recorded Director orientation.
- Retain a high performing, professional staff.
- Review and update policies; add new policies as needed.

STRATEGY 6 | RECRUIT MEMBERS TACTICS

- Recruit businesses and organizations for a \$100 investment that will receive value from and help support Tourism's efforts and provide them the following benefits:
 - Opportunity to participate in Joint Venture Opportunities from Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development:
<https://marketmt.com/JointVenture>.
 - Facebook events created by member shared to Visit Great Falls Montana Facebook page.
 - First right of refusal to model for photo and video shoots as appropriate.
 - Photo image and link description for all DBA's in appropriate categories on Great Falls Montana Tourism website, within the context of Great Falls Montana Tourism's strategic plan, brand platform, marketing plan, and creative strategy.
 - Member developed content will be shared as appropriate for Great Falls Montana Tourism to fulfill its mission.
 - Opportunity to leverage event sponsorships and conference welcome services with specials, as available.
 - Opportunity to leverage Great Falls Montana Tourism led trade show attendance with donations.
 - Opportunity to buy-in to collaborative advertising as available and appropriate.
 - Discounts on sponsorships offered for incentive-based strategic opportunities.

- First right of refusal for photo and video venue shoots.
- Provided materials displayed in membership section of reception area.
- Basecamp Brief with current Tourism market data and strategic priority updates.
- Notice of upcoming conventions/events.
- Current Great Falls Montana Tourism Paid Media Schedule.
- Access to Paid Research.
- Use of Tourism Images and Video content.
- \$25 Credit for NEW Member Recruitment.
- Track and report to members results of media-based benefits that feature their business.
- Offer Members the opportunity to engage with Great Falls Montana Tourism through an Annual Meeting in June and Marketing Roundtable in December.
- Provide “Let Us Welcome You” retargeted offers/discount email and Visitor Magazine QR Code where members and lodging properties provide a discount to be delivered to travelers using a digital pass. Provided on a first come, first served basis.
- Provide 12 “We Want You Here” retargeted email opportunities where the member buys-in for a 100% of voice sponsored content retargeted email served as part of an automated series to a list of people who engaged in an initial Adventure Awaits email. The content will be approved and placed by Great Falls Montana Tourism. \$200 for members, \$600 for non-members. Provided on a first come, first served basis.
- Provide 21 “Friday Basecamp Sponsor” opportunities beginning on National Tourism Day (May 6, 2022) until the last Friday in September. Members will work with Tourism Staff to design a value-added sponsorship at 15 Overlook Drive on Fridays. Put your t-shirts on our team, provide samples of your food for guests, do a giveaway, provide a special coupon. It’s only good for one day – so make the most of it. \$25 for members, \$250 for non-members. Provided on a first come, first served basis. (Attachment 8)
- Provide 1 per week “Give us a Minute” sixty-second sponsored content spot on Montana’s #1 Podcast, We’re No Dam Experts. The scripted spot will be approved and produced by Great Falls Montana Tourism, in podcast style, and aired at the beginning of the weekly podcast episode as well as listed in the library as its own mini episode. \$100 for members, \$400 for non-members.

STRATEGY 7 | ADVOCATE FOR THE TOURISM INDUSTRY TACTICS

- Increase awareness of Tourism efforts through civic group presentations.
- Oppose any attempts to reduce or reallocate funds generated through current Tourism Business Improvement District laws.
- Oppose any attempts to change the lodging facility use tax that would negatively impact its ability to be used for tourism promotion and tourism infrastructure.
- Oppose efforts that reduce Great Falls' competitiveness to attract overnight visitors.
- Be involved with TBID supported projects locally.

RESULTS

- Secure 4 new meetings.
- Secure 200 members.
- Retain 90% of current members.
- Grow Facebook Followers by 25%.
- Grow Instagram Followers by 40%.
- Grow YouTube Audience by 60%.

- Generate combined Click Through Rate on Paid Media of 0.5%.
- Grow Fiscal Year Room Demand by 2%.
- Recruit volunteers to fill 14 guest service shifts between July – September; May-June.
- Retain 60% of volunteers.