



2022 Marketing Plan and Operation Strategy



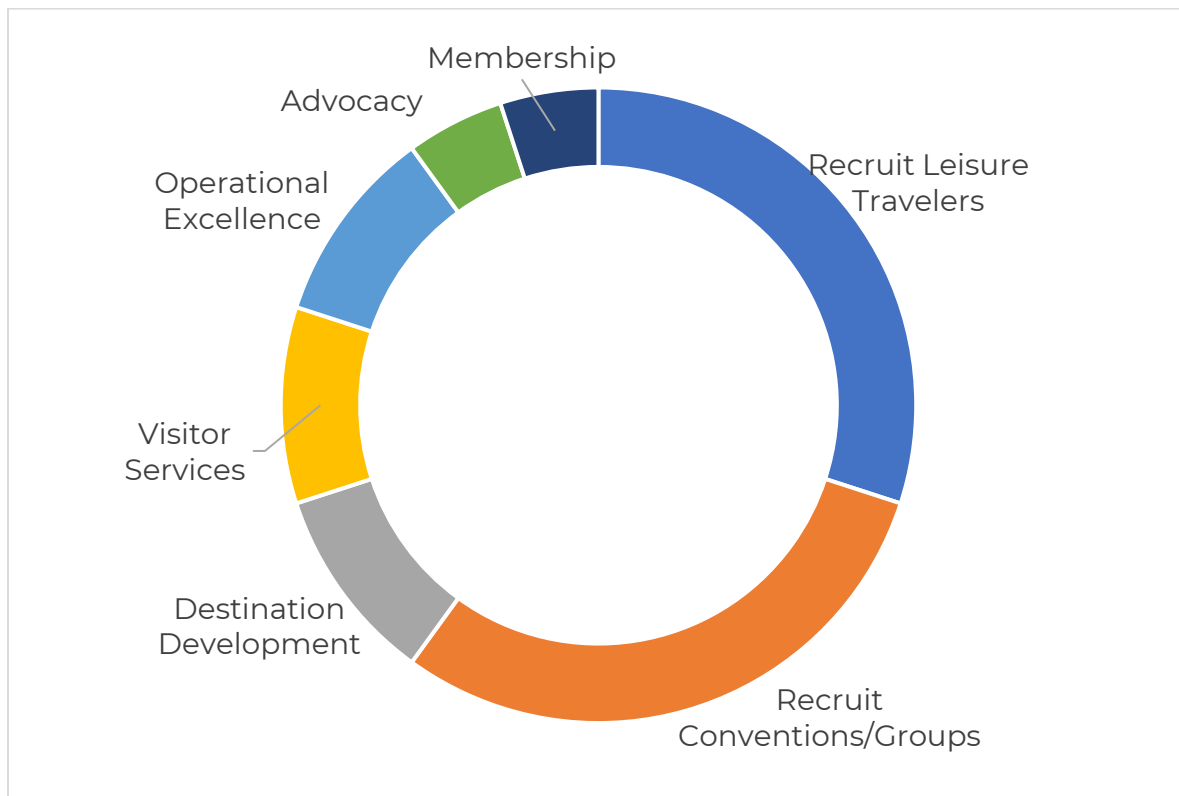
July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022

Adopted 4-15-2021

www.VisitGreatFallsMontana.org

Great Falls Montana Tourism is the destination management organization for Great Falls, Montana. Our efforts are to:

1. Promote Great Falls to potential leisure travelers.
2. Recruit meetings and conventions to Great Falls.
3. Support tourism infrastructure assets.
4. Assist in-market guests with having an only in Great Falls experience.
5. Invest in new and growing events.
6. Advocate for the Tourism industry.
7. Recruit members.



Our team is focused on the organization's mission to strengthen our economy by promoting the uniqueness of Great Falls, Montana to visitors that will generate an overnight stay in Great Falls.

There are 466 incorporated places that have a population of between 50,000 to 99,999, Great Falls is 1 of them. 741 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. That doesn't account for the 314 other places with a population of 100,000 or more, just in the United States. (Attachment 1)

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 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 via for attention. (Attachment 2)

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

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

According to the Institute of Tourism and Recreation Research (ITRR), Great Falls hosted 44% fewer overnight visitors in 2020 than it did in 2019. Room demand was 29% lower in 2020 compared to 2019. Our 2020 lodging collections were 40% lower than 2019. (Attachment 3) The Canadian Border was closed to non-essential travel and the east entrances to Glacier National Park were closed. As we begin to move forward, 2019 will be held as our benchmark for recovery and 2020 will remain an oddity for data due to COVID-19.

RECRUIT LEISURE TRAVELERS

ITRR data shows that Great Falls receives the propensity of its visitors from Washington, Idaho, Colorado, California, Minnesota, Florida, Illinois, Oregon, North Dakota, Utah, and Texas. Overnight visitors to Great Falls primarily enjoy scenic driving, day hiking, recreational shopping, wildlife watching, nature photography, and visiting museums/historical sites. Great Falls Montana Tourism has received 22,718 inquiries in fiscal year 2021, mostly coming from Texas, California, Florida, Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Missouri. They predominately arrive by personal vehicle and are repeat visitors. Our visitors are couples, 55 years old and older, with an income range of \$75,000 to \$150,000. (Attachment 4)

Target Markets

- Active Independent Adventure Couples 35-65 years old who live in
 - Drive Markets – Spokane, Coeur d’Alene, Boise, Bismarck, Fargo, Rapid City, Alberta, Saskatchewan
 - Direct Fly Markets – Denver, Seattle, Chicago
 - Originating Flight Markets – Los Angeles, Texas (Dallas, San Antonio, Austin)
 - Emerging Markets – Nashville, Milwaukee



- Culture and History Buffs aged 50-65 who live in
 - Drive Markets – Spokane, Coeur d'Alene, Boise, Bismarck, Fargo, Rapid City, Alberta, Saskatchewan
 - Direct Fly Markets – Denver, Seattle, Chicago
 - Originating Flight Markets – Los Angeles, Texas (Dallas, San Antonio, Austin)
 - Emerging Markets – Nashville, Milwaukee
- Event Experiencers aged 25-45
 - Local Drive markets – Billings, Bozeman, Butte, Missoula, Kalispell
 - Drive Markets – Spokane, Coeur d'Alene, Bismarck, Fargo, Rapid City, Alberta, Saskatchewan
- Shop & Diners aged 25-65
 - Drive Markets – Alberta, Saskatchewan
- Flight Credit Holders (Delta, United)

(Attachment 5)



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.
- Local product production partnerships: Pasta Montana, JJ Johnson, Mighty Mo, Mountain Wave Distilling, and others.
- Find ways to promote Great Falls through Great Falls Sporting Venues: Electric City Raceway, 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.

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 pub crawl the night before and brunch the day after, leveraging technology assets to determine value.
- Support the launch of The Newberry with marketing grant investment.

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.
 - These ads will appear among Great Falls Montana Tourism branded ads for increased impact. While the Great Falls, Montana brand ads provide orientation to answer the question, “Where in Montana?” joint venture ads have the opportunity to provide the answer to “How/What in Great Falls, Montana?”



Public Relations

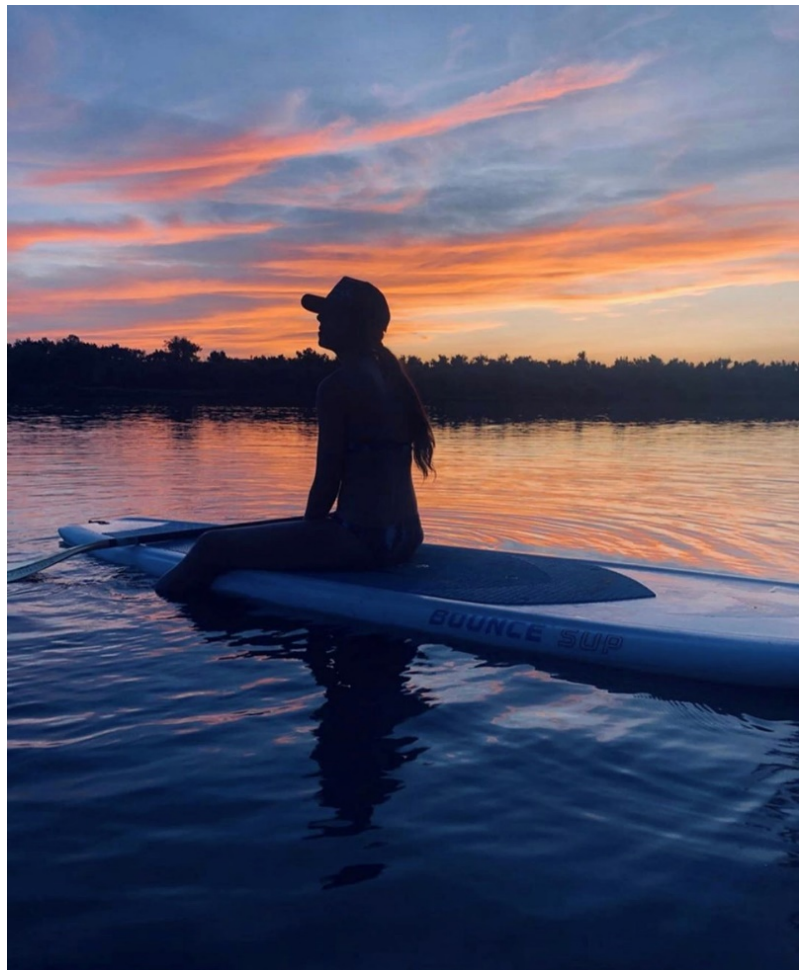
- Subscribe to media request service and respond to appropriate leads to generate interest for Great Falls, Montana.
- Establish relationships with writers and offer familiarization tours in exchange for media coverage.

Facebook

- Be the leader in producing original content about Great Falls and 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.
- Relaunch "What's Up Wednesday" video segment that will feature a new event or special activity happening in two to three weeks from the time of post.
- 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 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.
- If a partner, or staff capacity is found, launch "We Want You Here" video series for YouTube that builds off the Montana People of Great Falls video series by highlighting business owners and influential residents sharing what makes Great Falls unique and ending with inviting the viewer to Great Falls.

(Attachment 6)



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

- Develop and source, from partners and industry experts, blogs for www.VisitGreatFallsMontana.org that will share first person experiences for other's 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.
- Create digital passes that reduces the need for paper and will offer virtual guided engagement through Great Falls.
- Establish dedicated content for wedding and sport segments.

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.

Visitor Guide

- Provide enhanced, flippable, experience for Visitor Guide online.
- Print a limited run of guides and offer print on demand of the guide from our website.
- Distribute printed guides through Certified Folder for Yellowstone and Glacier Routes.
- Provide printed guides to those who request one.



RECRUIT CONVENTIONS

The meeting industry will take more time than leisure to fully recover. According to a Meeting Planners International (MPI) survey, 45% of planners anticipate holding their next face to face event between July and December 2021 and 61% expect to offer a hybrid component to that face-to-face event. Hybrid will be part of all future face to face events according to 66% of meeting planners. COVID-19 continues to impact planning, with meeting planners giving preference to places with upgraded air filtration systems, rapid testing, outdoor space options and limiting capacity. (Attachment 7)

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

- Access through direct flights to Seattle on Alaska, Salt Lake City and Minneapolis on Delta, Denver and seasonally Chicago on United, Las Vegas and Phoenix on Allegiant using GTF.
- 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 or passion projects 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.

Engage Meeting Planners

- 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, in person and virtually.
- Utilize LinkedIn to highlight activities, space, unique opportunities, and successes.
- Create and deliver monthly "Bring it to the Basecamp" email communication and incentivize submission of open RFPs.
- Create and deliver content that demonstrates how Great Falls successfully hosts a variety of projects through direct email communication and LinkedIn.
- Conduct venue interviews showcasing capabilities and personality of Great Falls and deliver through direct email communication and LinkedIn.
- Create "Friday Feel" segments that showcase unique experiences for attendees that will be housed on YouTube and shared 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.

Convention Services

- Provide Only Attendees digital pass for attendees to hold full conference agenda and plan for after conference activities and receive special offers from members.
- 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.



DESTINATION DEVELOPMNET

- 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.
- If EDA Grant secured, work with a consultant to analyze Great Falls' capacity for hybrid meetings at local venues.
- Conduct interviews with meeting planners for "Let's Give 'em What They Want" meeting partner engagement series.
- Establish relationships with University of Providence and Great Falls College-MSU to promote Great Falls to prospective students and parents to come visit.
- Establish relationships with Great Falls Clinic and Benefis Health Systems to promote Great Falls to outpatient users.
- If EDA Grant secured, make investments to support Voices of Montana Tourism and Great Falls Development Authority.
- 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.
- If EDA Grant secured, offer grants for marketing events.
- Continue to create alliances with willing partners to further the efforts of Great Falls Montana Tourism.

VISITOR SERVICES

- Greet all in-market guests, answer questions, and add value by over sharing about Great Falls, Montana.
- Greet all callers, 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 once relocated to 15 Overlook Drive.
- Develop displays for in-market guests to engage with throughout 15 Overlook Drive.



OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

- 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 walk-in traffic reaches a level to warrant, add Guest Services Manager, either as part time, full-time seasonal, or in partnership with River's Edge Trail Foundation. (Attachment 8)
- If EDA Grant 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.
- If EDA Grant secured, buy Economic Impact Calculator to integrate into iDSS to quickly assess impact of landed business.
- Track organization 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 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.
- If American Rescue Plan Act funds or EDA Grant secured for operation costs, make investment into reserves.



ADVOCACY

- 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.

- Support efforts to reopen the northern US border for Canadian travel south.

MEMBERSHIP

- 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.
- Launch Member Portal to provide quick access to benefits and opportunities.
- 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 February.
- 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.

RESULTS

- Recover overnight visitation to 85% of 2019 levels.
- Recover room demand to 85% of 2019 levels.
- Land 6 new meetings.
- Grow Facebook Followers by 30%.
- Grow Instagram Followers by 40%.
- Retain 85% of current members.
- Secure 55 new members.

