



## Grant Details

### Grant: 23-51-035 - FY23 Central Montana DMO Plan - FY23

**Status:** Underway  
**Program Area:** DOC Office of Tourism  
**Grantee Organization:** Central Montana  
**Program Officer:** Barb Sanem  
**Awarded Amount:** \$673,644.00

## Narrative Evaluation

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With FY23 being a year for Central Montana to bring on a new Executive Director in August of 2022, it was a year of transition and responsiveness for our organization. With this in mind, there was a lot to dig into and get up to speed on. While doing so, we also were able to either achieve or make solid progress towards our marketing goals.

With our marketing goals in mind, the theme was to increase our communications and messaging channel, while expanding upon our emerging markets.

With astrotourism being one of our emerging markets, we set an objective to create a landing page that promotes Trails to the Stars, which can be seen at <https://centralmontana.com/stargazing>. This page was launched in October of 2022 and received 11,272 pageviews and an average time on page of 01:48 for the remainder of the fiscal year.

Our second objective was to embrace agritourism as our other emerging market. This was accomplished by creating a landing page for that highlights agritourism within the Central Montana Region and can be seen at <https://centralmontana.com/agritourism>. This landing page went live in June of 2022 and received 3,672 page views and an average time on page of 01:50 for the remainder of the fiscal year.

In an effort to increase our communication channels through our organic social media, we set an objective to increase our Instagram followers by 20%. Unfortunately, CMT did not achieve this metric, but did achieve a 9% increase for a total of 15,296 Instagram followers at the end of the fiscal year. While a 20% increase in growth was an aggressive metric, we feel that we can still view a 9% growth as a strong accomplishment. It should be noted that traditionally, the Executive Director for Central Montana handled the organization's organic media. However, given the nature of how fast social media continues to evolve and change, we will be considering to allow our marketing agency on record to take over our organic social media so that we can create a stronger alignment between our organic and paid social media.

A second way we strove to increase our communication channels was to add an additional 10,000 email addresses to our email list for our monthly newsletter. With a growth of 5,700 subscribers, we accomplished just under 60% of our goal for the fiscal year. Given that we have missed this goal, we are taking steps to continually add subscribers to our email list by making it more inviting to subscribe to our newsletter on our website. Additionally, we will be adding an auto response email thanking new subscribers and directing them to other marketing assets such as our annual travel planner and our social media platforms that they can follow.

Our last objective was to raise more awareness of Central Montana as a Montana destination by achieving a 3% increase in overnight stays over FY22. We are happy to report that we saw a 9% increase in overnight stays for the fiscal year. We attribute a large amount of this success due to our paid media efforts meeting or exceeding all relative benchmark metrics. As a region, we were particularly excited to see that Central Montana surpassed \$3,000,000.00 in Lodging Tax Collections for the first time within a fiscal year.

Looking forward, Central Montana completed a strategic planning process in October of 2023, and is working hard to implement initial recommendations. This will give us a 5-year vision on how to best grow the region not only as a destination marketing organization, but also a destination development, management and stewardship organization as well. While there will be challenges ahead as we grow and evolve, we feel that we are ready to align ourselves in a way that is best for all aspects of tourism within the region.