

2023 Summer Grant Re-Cap

The Foundation for Montana History

Total Grant Amount: \$7,500

Total Impact:

The grant funding enhanced the tour schedule, by adding private tour bookings and components that increased participation to over 2,000 people and saw a significant increase in bus tour offerings: 652 participants. 40% of attendees were non-residents which brought an overall significant hotel impact to 607 room nights. This would measure an economic impact of \$81,945 for hotels. Overall, the occupancy of hotels ranging from June – to September has remained flat slightly down from last year. This offering is bringing more opportunities to host group travel businesses.

Overall, this product offering is bringing a positive economic impact to the community. Visit Helena is thrilled to continue the partnership and see this program evolve over the next several years.

Queen City Oktoberfest

Total Grant Amount: \$7,500

Total Impact:

Grant funding helped Queen City Oktoberfest launch its second annual event. Grant money was allocated to digital and print marketing with over \$10,000 invested into TV ad sales. This year saw an increase in booth space sales and classic car entries. Unfortunately, the attendance was significantly down from the first-year event. With a total of 4,000 people coming to the event and 500 from out-of-town, there was a large drop in ticket sales to boost revenue. The event produced rooms at 3 of the 8 participating hotels. That week, we received an occupancy of 75%+ at most of the hotels. The total economic impact of this event is estimated at less than \$20,000.

That week, the city hosted the League of Cities and Towns and HYSA Soccer. Organizers' initial reporting is that the event is overextended in bills and not optimistic this event will return in 2024.

West Mont's Wake the Giant Music Festival

Total Grant Amount: \$5,000

Impact Report:

West Mont reported another great multi-day music festival to benefit their organization. This year's attendance did report a drop in overall attendance but did increase the exposure for the organization. Overall, there was a positive and uplifting experience of the event, bringing more vibrancy to the community. With the increasing costs to produce music events, it was hard to bring this event into breaking even this year. Event organizers reported an increase in out-of-town guests and estimated \$17,000 worth of hotel room impact to the community. Based on the reporting received in our audits, Wake the Giant produced minimal room nights. Overall, the

organization is unsure if the event will return in 2024. The true impact was helping the organization increase its exposure to the mission and services to the Helena community.

Montana Learning Center Beyond the Big Sky

Total Grant Amount: \$7,500

Impact Report:

Montana Learning Center increased the programming from three nights to six nights of public viewing/presentations. The organization reported a total attendance of 451 attendees, with a total of 140 of those people reported from outside the Helena area. The overall economic impact of the event on hotels is unknown. Throughout the summer Visit Helena had a hard time measuring room night occupancy, we roughly estimate the total rooms booked of those 140 is 50 or fewer rooms providing an economic impact of less than \$10,000. The organization did report that attendees from outside of Helena 55% came specifically to attend *Beyond the Big Sky*.

We find this to be a vital and growing program for the Helena area. Providing that the programming is easy to maintain and requires minimal overhead cost to operate. Most programming is funded through grant dollars and will need a steady stream of sponsorship in the future to maintain the growth of this offering. The Executive Director reported that this program will continue if the State of Montana's Event Grant is offered in 2024.

Dess Fest

Total Grant Amount: \$5,000

Impact Report:

The event organizer reported a well-received event, with great music, people, and weather. The organization did report a drop in sales for this year's music festival. The third annual event did come with an increase in sponsors but did see a significant increase in operational costs. The organization's average spending was \$430 per person. Overall, they saw effective marketing with an increase in social followers, website traffic, and printed materials. With the increased cost of production and decline in ticket sales, the event organizer is not optimistic this will return in 2024. Overall, Helena saw less than 20 room nights for the event, as reporting for that weekend from the hotels was down.

Montana Balloon Sculpture Festival

Total Grant Amount: \$1,500

Impact Report:

Overall, the event organizer reported a successful event in downtown Helena. Business owners reported an increase in visitation through their retail locations. The event raised \$7,000+ for local non-profit organizations and bringing awareness to their missions within the community. The promoters and businesses report roughly 3,000+ people in downtown, bringing economic impact to retail shopping. With over 20+ sponsors it was truly a local event. Unfortunately, hotel reporting indicates this did not extensively impact hotel occupancy in our area. Three hotels

report room nights produced from the event. Overall, the economic impact measured from this event is less than \$5,000 in hotels. The overall awareness of digital marketing was a measurable impact with over 35K impressions in September 2024.

Gold Rush Days (Downtown Helena Inc.)

Total Grant Amount: \$13,500

Impact Report

The first annual Gold Rush Days reported a high level of visitation despite the pitfalls of organization within the event. A new concept brought by an organizer to showcase Helena's heritage as an 1800s gold rush town illuminated its history through re-enactments, tours, and interactive offerings from local businesses. The overall draw from the event extended Montana's longest-running event Vigilante Days. Unfortunately, Visit Helena did not receive any data from hotels to measure hotel impacts from Gold Rush Days. Overall, the customer feedback was that the event needed to be more well-organized. We are unsure if this event will come back to 2024.

Last Chance Community Pow Wow Grant

Total Grant Amount: \$10,000

Impact Report

Visit Helena hasn't received the final report from the event organizer.

Grandstreet Theatre Summer Productions

Total Grant Amount: \$2,500

Impact Report

The organization failed to submit final reporting by deadline.

Last Chance Curling Club – Creepy Sweepy Bone Spiel

Total Grant Amount: \$2,500

Impact Report:

Waiting for the final report, due November 20, 2023.