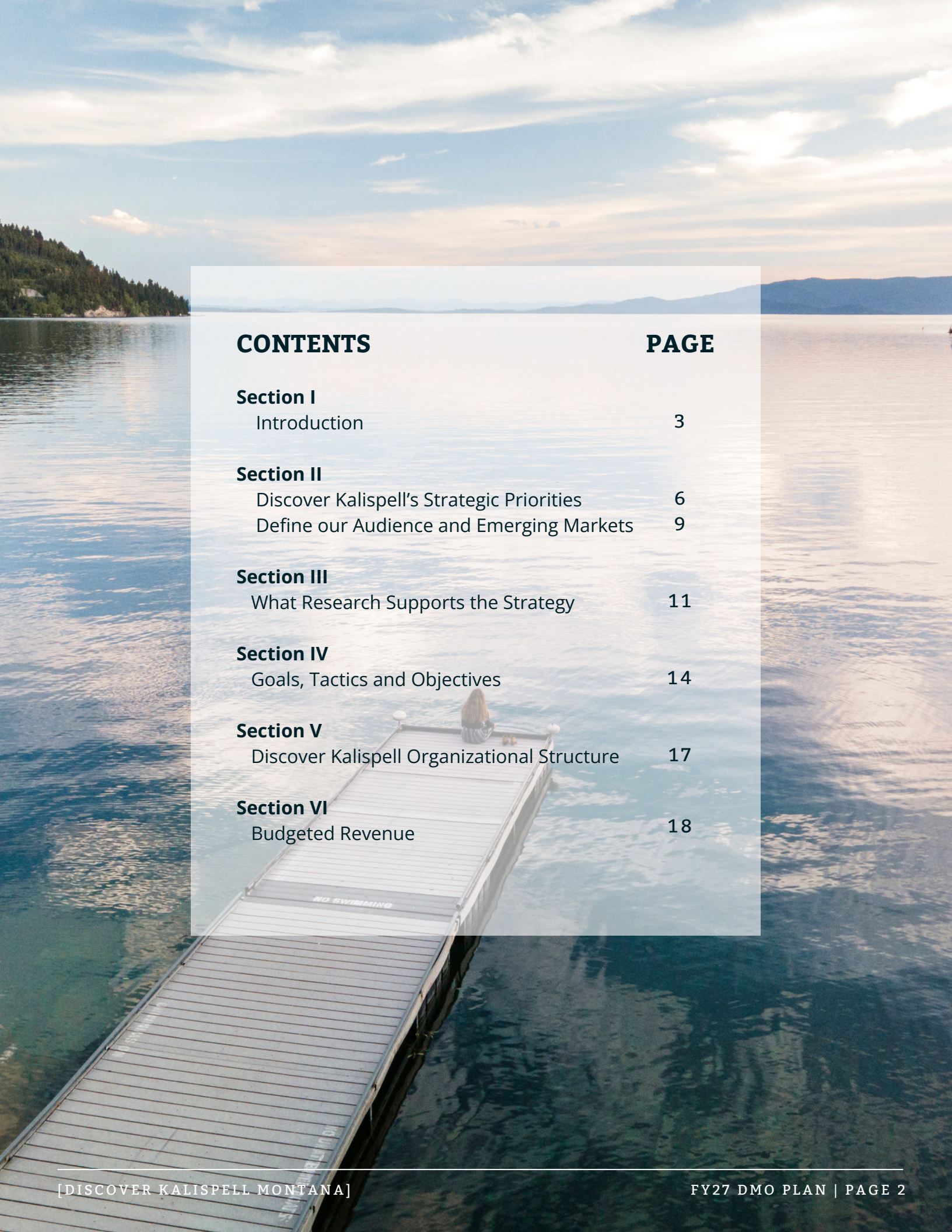




DISCOVER
Kalispell
MT

FY27 Destination Organization Plan



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SECTION I INTRODUCTION

Discover Kalispell serves as both a destination marketing and stewardship organization, guiding tourism in a way that supports long-term community vitality. As Kalispell continues to grow and evolve, the organization remains focused on advancing a sustainable level of tourism, strengthening the local economy and preserving the character that defines the community.

The FY27 DMO Plan outlines a strategic, data-informed roadmap that leverages Kalispell's momentum, natural assets and cultural experiences to drive year-round visitation. It reflects a balanced approach—one that positions Discover Kalispell not only as a promoter of the destination, but as a partner in shaping its future.

Recognizing shifts in traveler expectations, emerging market opportunities and increasing pressures on destinations, this plan prioritizes balanced tourism — welcoming visitors in ways that support our local economy while protecting the natural assets and quality of life that make Kalispell such a special place. Promoting responsible travel, supporting our business community and working collaboratively with partners to ensure tourism benefits residents, businesses and visitors alike.

The FY27 DMO Plan represents an opportunity to align strategy with action—utilizing targeted marketing, strategic sales strategies, enhanced visitor experiences and strong community collaboration to ensuring tourism continues to be a resilient, sustainable contributor to Kalispell's economy and a positive force for the community for years to come.

ABOUT KALISPELL

Kalispell sits at the center of a fast-growing regional economy shaped by in-migration, constrained housing supply and rising expectations for infrastructure, walkability and quality of place. The investment opportunity is strongest where private projects align with three realities: (1) continued demand for housing across price points, (2) a downtown that is ready for reinvestment and reuse, and (3) a planning framework that is shifting toward clearer, more predictable standards. (Discover Kalispell Chamber Investment Prospectus)

Strengths and Opportunities

- Kalispell's economy is fueled by: 1) tourism that remains a cornerstone of Kalispell's economy, driven by its role as the primary gateway to Glacier National Park, 2) Kalispell's Billings Clinic - Logan Health, which serves as the largest employer and provider of services for the region, 3) Flathead County, with Kalispell as the hub, leading Montana in the number of manufacturing firms, bringing outside dollars into the region, and 4) impactful redevelopment projects including the Parkline District—a revisioning of the Kalispell Center Mall, two new hotels properties 221 rooms to the market, Home2Suites by Hilton and Hyatt Studios, the opening of an Amazon Distribution Center and the new Wachholz Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center at the Flathead Valley Community College.
- Kalispell is home to arts, history, entertainment and sports. Examples include three museums that share the story of Kalispell and northwest Montana, a 1,000-seat performing arts venue, the Wachholz College Center, an indoor equestrian arena/multi-event center, the Majestic Valley Arena and Glacier Bank Park, home of the Glacier Range Riders.
- Kalispell is located 32 miles from Glacier National Park, 10 miles from Flathead Lake and surrounded by 2 million acres of Flathead National Forest. Eleven state parks in the Flathead Valley provide trails, interpretative visitor services and water-based activities.
- Kalispell's Glacier Park International Airport saw 1,113,491 total passengers in 2025, a 10.5% increase over 2024. 2025 also saw the completion of a \$150 million terminal expansion. GPIA is increasing the number of direct flights serving Kalispell with special emphasis on winter through the support of Glacier AERO, a non-profit organization represented by tourism and business organizations.



- Discover Kalispell and the Discover Kalispell Chamber of Commerce function as one organization, each working to support the local economy through a different lens. This includes the advancement of Downtown Kalispell Forward, a coalition of business leaders and key stakeholders united to champion a vibrant, thriving downtown, one that works for businesses, residents and visitors.

Challenges

Travel and hospitality industry:

- Continued decline in Canadian visitors.
- Glacier Park International Airport will be closed weekdays during July 2026 for a runway resurfacing project.
- Uncertainty in the U.S. economy and increased travel costs continues to play a role in travel decisions and spending.
 - Economic uncertainty can lead to shorter booking windows, increased price sensitivity and higher expectations for value and meaningful experiences.
- Increased fees for international visitors at Glacier National Park.
- The changing digital landscape for how travelers search and make decisions for travel.

Northwest Montana:

- Climate conditions continue to be unpredictable and severe, creating challenges when promoting outdoor recreation and sports and events. Seasonal weather impacts include low snowpack, wildfires and unhealthy air quality, low water levels impacting water recreation on Flathead Lake and fisheries throughout the region. Outdoor recreation plays an important role as a driver of visitations for Kalispell and northwest Montana. As climate events become more frequent and severe, the need for other product development to attract and retain visitors becomes greater.
- Aquatic invasive species pose a threat to the Flathead Basin waterways. Introduction of non-native species disrupts the balance of native ecosystems threatening recreational viability in our area. Discover Kalispell will continue to support Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP) communications for its Clean, Drain and Dry initiative and watercraft inspection stations.





SECTION II

DISCOVER KALISPELL'S STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR FY27

At Discover Kalispell, we are dedicated to supporting the success of our community. As a division of the Discover Kalispell Chamber, empowering local businesses lies at the heart of our mission. By showcasing the unique charm, vibrant culture and breathtaking landscapes of our corner of Montana, we attract visitors while creating meaningful opportunities for the residents and businesses of the Flathead Valley.

While promoting Kalispell as a travel destination remains a core focus, we also recognize the challenges that can accompany growth. Our guiding principle is balanced tourism—welcoming visitors in ways that strengthen our community while protecting the places that make Kalispell special. Balanced tourism supports our local economy, enhances quality of life for residents and preserves our landscapes so they can be enjoyed for generations to come.

SUMMARY KEY SEGMENTS

Marketing – Implement a data-driven promotional strategy that strengthens Kalispell’s brand identity. Focus on winter and shoulder-season travel while leveraging 'always-on' messaging, highlight authentic and unique experiences, use compelling storytelling and imagery and engage new audiences through innovative partnerships and influencer collaborations.

Business Development – Expand group sales by positioning Kalispell as a premier sports and events destination, while attracting meetings and tour groups. Discover Kalispell’s group sales services also provide valuable support and resources for planners and event organizers.

Stewardship and Management – Take a community-first approach to tourism. Balance quality of life for residents with exceptional visitor experiences by promoting guided adventures, collaborating with local partners to protect natural resources, fostering responsible tourism through education and an investment in community projects through grant funding.

Visitor Services – Deliver modern, data-informed visitor services that align with evolving trip planning and booking behaviors—creating a seamless, year-round visitor journey that connects travelers to Kalispell’s experiences and businesses.

Through a strategic data driven plan, Discover Kalispell works to grow tourism in ways that strengthen our economy while preserving the character and natural beauty that make our community so special.

DESTINATION MARKETING 50% of the organization’s operations

Strategy: Increase visibility and engagement with target audiences through integrated digital marketing, storytelling and emerging AI discovery channels. Build awareness of Kalispell as a destination for sports and group events through targeted media. Develop comprehensive campaigns incorporating passion-based messaging and positioning Kalispell around authentic experiences and traveler motivation.

Key Tactics:

1. Build year-round visitation through targeted campaigns focused on niche markets, shoulder seasons and direct flight markets.
2. Position Kalispell as an authentic gateway community through compelling storytelling that highlights local experiences, outdoor recreation and community character.
3. Grow high-value niche markets through paid media including sports tourism, meetings and conventions and group travel.
4. Promote responsible visitation that protects community character, natural resources and quality of life for residents.

DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT – Business Development/Tourism Sales

30% of the organization's operations

Strategy: Secure new destination events, sports tournaments and other group business, with a focus on driving visitation during shoulder seasons. Expand Discover Kalispell's digital presence among sports event organizers and meeting planners through targeted advertising and compelling planning resources.

Key Tactics:

1. Implement a sales strategy that targets small-market meetings to align with Kalispell's conference facilities.
2. Provide grant funding to grow events that generate a measurable number of room nights.
3. Develop comprehensive digital resources and assets to position Kalispell as a sports destination.
4. Increase lead generation and offer a streamlined booking process for groups through event pages on lodging booking engine.

DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP/MANAGEMENT 20% of the organization's operations

Strategy: Reinvest visitor-generated taxes and fees into responsible recreation initiatives and community projects.

Key Tactics:

1. Promote responsible recreation by advocating for eco-friendly practices and encouraging voluntourism to give back to the community.
2. Provide the local tourism workforce with educational resources that help them assist visitors and residents. These materials and programs promote responsible visitor behavior and share essential information about all there is to do in Kalispell.
3. Maintain partnerships with federal and NGO land managers to provide residents and visitors with accurate and timely information during crises and travel disruptions.
4. Provide grant funding to local nonprofits to support projects that enhance Kalispell as a great place to live and visit. Includes support and collaboration of Downtown Kalispell Forward initiatives.
5. Use effective online resources, AI tools and collateral resources to disseminate information to visitors in market promoting unique activities and attractions and local businesses.



DEFINE THE KALISPELL AUDIENCE

WHO WE WISH TO ATTRACT – Kalispell’s high-value visitor:

- Visitors who will stay more than one night in Kalispell
- Visitors who are interested in fall, winter and spring travel
- Visitors who are respectful of natural resources and strive to recreate responsibly
- Visitors who are interested in local restaurants, craft beverages and shopping
- Visitors who seek adventures beyond heavily traffic areas and popular recreation sites
- Visitors who are seeking: sporting events, destination events, and mountain town culture
- Corporate/business travelers
- Group travelers—meeting planners, domestic and international tour trade, other group travel segments such as reunions, incentive travel, niche interest groups

VISITORS THAT ENGAGE WITH KALISPELL

Top origin markets engaging with Kalispell through website sessions and visitor guide orders:
MT, CA, FL, WA, MN, TX, IL, WI, OH, AZ

Top origin markets to Kalispell (% of total visitors; 2025, Zartico):

Spokane - 12%	Great Falls - 6%
Missoula - 10%	Seattle - 5%
Denver - 7%	Salt Lake City - 5%

Share of visitor spending by category (2025, Zartico):

1. Food & Bev – 46%	4. Arts, Entert. & Attractions – 36%
2. Retail – 25%	5. Transportation – 4%
3. Gas & Service Stations – 11%	6. Outdoor Recreation - 1.6%

Visitor Visa credit card spending in Kalispell (2025, Visa Destination Insights):

- Visa credit card spending by domestic non-resident visitors was \$225.6 Million, a 3.5% increase YoY. 9.3% increase dining; 8.6% increase retail; 2.1% increase “other” market segments; 0.6% increase hotels and lodging.
- Visa credit card spending by international visitors equaled \$13 Million, a 31% decrease YOY.
- 47.9% decrease lodging; 31.5% decrease dining; 29% decrease “other” segments.

Visitor credit card spending in Kalispell by domestic CMAs (2025, Visa Destination Insights):

- Q1: Missoula, Seattle, Los Angeles, Bozeman, Helena
- Q2: Missoula, Phoenix, Seattle, Bozeman, Los Angeles
- Q3: Missoula, Seattle, Phoenix, Los Angeles, Bozeman
- Q4: Missoula, Seattle, Bozeman, Los Angeles, Helena

ITRR Nonresident Travel Survey Data:

- Nonresident visitors spent \$850 million in Flathead County. Top spending categories: Restaurant-bar, hotel, outfitter-guide, rental cabin, groceries, retail. (*ITRR, 2023-2024 avg.*)
- 7.6 million nonresident visitors travel to/through Glacier Country region per year on average (2023-2025).
- Average group size 2.2 people per group
- Average length of stay is 5.9 nights

Mobile location data, credit card spending, website analytics, campaign CTR tracking and VIC data inform Discover Kalispell's seasonal evergreen and retargeting campaigns.

WHAT ARE KALISPELL'S EMERGING MARKETS

- Leisure—
 - Direct flight markets (new and with increased seat capacity): Dallas (warm season), Chicago (warm and winter), Los Angeles and San Diego (warm and winter), San Francisco (warm and winter) and Austin (warm and winter).
 - Use of AI and the role it plays in marketing, PR, website content, bookings and communications to be competitive in travel research and decision making.
- Sports Tourism—Kalispell area sports clubs are launching new and expanded tournaments in the spring and fall, including collegiate level events.
- Group—reunion and retreat group events.

These insights directly inform Discover Kalispell's strategic focus on year-round visitation, target market development and experience-driven marketing.





SECTION III

WHAT RESEARCH SUPPORTS THE FY27 DMO STRATEGY

1. Decline in Canadian Visitations

The decline is anticipated to continue for the foreseeable future, at least through 2026. Credit card spending in Kalispell by Canadians during 2025 decreased 36% compared to 2024. Border crossing data and shifts in the level of investment by Canadians in our market signals a strong pull back from the U.S. due to geopolitical tensions. Canadians, particularly from Alberta, have historically been a top market for year-round visitations to Kalispell. This shift has altered our marketing and seasonal visitation expectations.

2. Year-Round Lodging Availability

While Discover Kalispell will continue to emphasize promotions to boost shoulder season visitations, data is showing a decline in peak season occupancy due to increased supply of hotel and short-term rental inventory in the Flathead Valley. ITRR nonresident visitation trends for 2025 also showed that visitation to Montana declined 7% during the peak season (Q3 summer).

Kalispell Hotels - avg. annual (2025 STR/Co-Star, YoY):

OCC	+0.0%	Demand	+1.2%
ADR	+1.0%	Supply	+1.2%
RevPAR	+1.8%		

Kalispell short term rental data indicates a slowing in occupancy and demand (2025 AirDNA):

- 2.3% growth in available listings
- 0.2% increase in occupancy rate
- 1.7% increase in ADR
- 0.5% decrease in demand

3. Montana Residents' Sentiment Towards Tourism

The 2025 Montana Residents Attitude Towards Tourism report by ITRR shows that 66% of Montana residents agree that the benefits of tourism outweigh the negative impacts (-2% YoY). 33% of residents disagree or strongly disagree that the state is becoming overcrowded because of more tourists. 36% of respondents agreed that if tourism increases in Montana, the overall quality of life for Montana residents will improve.

Respondents from the Glacier Country (GC) region responded differently:

- GC had the lowest mean score of the six regions for these questions:
 - If tourism increases overall quality of life will improve (2.84/5)
 - Overall benefits of tourism outweigh the negative impacts (3.61/5)
- GC had the highest mean score of the six regions in response to:
 - "The state is becoming overcrowded because of more tourists" (3.32/5)

This data reinforces the importance of Discover Kalispell's work towards balanced tourism and making strategy decisions using a community-first approach.

4. Marketing Trends

- AI-Driven Travel Discovery & Planning (*Destinations International, eTourism Summit*)
 - AI is transforming how travelers search, plan, and book trips, with more users relying on conversational tools and assistants for recommendations. (51% of all web traffic is now bots.)
 - This shift requires destinations to evolve beyond traditional SEO to Generative Engine Optimization (GEO)—ensuring content is structured, credible, and easily surfaced in AI-generated responses.
 - Destination websites are becoming trusted sources of truth, feeding both search engines and AI tools with itinerary content, FAQs, and trip-planning resources.
- Experience-Led & Passion-Based Travel (*Kayak, Destinations International*)
 - Travelers are choosing destinations based on interests, experiences, and personal passions rather than geography alone.
 - Outdoor recreation, wellness, sports tourism, and authentic local experiences continue to drive decision-making.
 - This aligns with a shift toward storytelling that connects emotionally and highlights what visitors can do, not just where they can go.
- Authentic Content, UGC & Trust (*Crowdriff, eTourism Summit*)
 - Authentic, user-generated content (UGC) and creator partnerships are increasingly influential in travel decisions.
 - Travelers seek real experiences, trusted recommendations, and local perspectives over polished advertising.
 - Content that is credible, community-driven, and widely shared across platforms also strengthens visibility in AI-driven discovery.

5. Group Travel and Events

- Bolstered by mega event drivers such as FIFA World Cup, 2026 is predicted to be a banner year for sports tourism and event driven travel. Planning sports-cations and immersing yourself in the local culture, not just traveling to watch the game or music event, is a growing trend. (*Travel + Leisure, Expedia*)
- Traveling for sports is also popular for Montana residents. ITRR resident study on sports tourism shows that 59% of respondents indicated they traveled in Montana for youth sports, most of those for a high school event. 90% mainly traveled in-state but for the 10% that were more likely to travel out of state it was due to lack of relevant competitions in the state. Reinforcing Discover Kalispell's focus to host and develop more state-wide youth sporting events.
- International FIT and travel trade market – it is estimated that international arrivals to the U.S. will continue to increase over the next three years, possibly surpassing 2019 in 2026 (*NTTO data*). Discover Kalispell will partner with Destination MT and Western Montana Glacier Country for FIT and travel trade opportunities.
- Meeting and corporate travel will be dependent on economic trends. Although corporate travel budgets are expected to rise in 2026 by 5%, airlines and hotel rates are also predicted to rise leading to an increased focus on cost savings (*Morgan Stanley Corporate Travel Trends*). Tourism Economics data shows that hotel demand for group travel decreased 2% in 2025, versus transient demand which increased 1.4%.

6. U.S. Economy's Impact on Travel in 2026

- DestiMetrics reports that consumer confidence is mixed, “consumers felt worse about short-term prospects but better about the longer-term outlook.” “While some intentions to purchase services improved, travel services were not among them.”
- CoStar's U.S. hotel forecast shows +0.4% in demand, +10% in ADR, and +0.6% RevPAR.
- International inbound travel to rural destinations such as Kalispell, especially from Canada, is anticipated to remain soft in 2026. “US inbound travel fell 5.5% in 2025, leaving the US 14% below 2019.” (*Tourism Economics*)
- Gas prices and airline ticket costs put a strain on the continued desire to travel. While travel demand remains solid the number of anticipated trips and length of trip may be impacted by the cost of travel. Travel spending is being driven disproportionately by higher-income households, reflected in the increased demand for upscale and luxury class hotels versus a decrease for midscale and economy (*Tourism Economics*). Kalispell's lodging inventory mix is impacted negatively by these trends.
- Travel trends indicate that 2026 may be the year for road trips with consumers considering vacations closer to home. Communities such as Kalispell that are further away from population centers will need to connect with travelers interested in national parks and nature-based, affordable recreation activities.

These insights directly inform Discover Kalispell's strategic focus on year-round visitation, target market development and experience-driven marketing.



SECTION IV

GOALS, TACTICS and OBJECTIVES

Goal 1. Increase year-round visitation through data-informed marketing and sales strategies that leverage Kalispell's assets, cultural experiences and evolving travel trends.

Objectives:

Execute integrated, data-informed marketing campaigns grounded in visitor insights, booking behaviors and market performance data, highlighting Kalispell's natural assets and cultural experiences to drive demand in shoulder and winter seasons.

Tactics:

Launch and promote two value-add campaigns targeting shoulder and winter travel that generate measurable room nights at Kalispell hotels.

Goal 2. Expand group sales by positioning Kalispell as a premiere sports destination, refining strategies for attracting meetings and tour groups, identifying major destination events and providing valuable resources for planners and event organizers.

Objectives:

Attend trade shows and FAMs for direct contact with meeting planners and sports event organizers while implementing a targeted sales strategy for out-of-market sales calls and client events.

Tactics:

Attend one sports conference in FY27 to promote Kalispell as a year-round sports event destination. Produce a sports focused video to use in promotions.

Goal 3. Position Kalispell as an authentic gateway community through storytelling and by leveraging its natural assets, cultural experiences and downtown vibrancy.

Objectives:

Leverage 'always-on' messaging and imagery and engage new audiences through innovative partnerships and influencer collaborations.

Tactics:

Capture three new stories highlighting locals and/or businesses through the Rediscovering Kalispell campaign, influencers, UGC or other original content for sharing and promoting with target audiences.

Goal 4. Encourage residents and visitors to travel and recreate responsibly while fostering opportunities to give back to the community.

Objectives:

Implement a coordinated responsible tourism strategy by deploying educational messaging across owned and paid channels, distributing visitor-facing materials through local businesses, and partnering with community organizations to promote volunteer opportunities and stewardship initiatives.

Tactics:

Enhance and promote the volunteer page on DiscoverKalispell.com promoting programs that support natural resource protection and community well-being. Increase the Discover Kalispell volunteer webpage visits by 2% YoY.

Goal 5. Advance visitor services to align with evolving travel planning and booking trends, creating a cohesive and engaging visitor experience with Kalispell.

Objectives:

Increase connection with visitors beyond the traditional VIC services during the trip planning phase and when in-market. Use online resources, AI tools and local partners to disseminate visitor resources and promote member businesses.

Tactics:

Implement an AI support agent on DiscoverKalispell.com web chat feature to deliver seamless and always-on customer service.



Goal 6. Be a partner in destination, product and experience development that benefits residents and visitors.

Objectives:

Provide grant funding for events and sports tournaments that generate room nights in Kalispell and for community development projects that enhance the visitor experience.

Tactics:

Support two new destination events during FY27 through grant funding and marketing support.

Goal 7. Support tourism workforce development and hospitality training.

Objectives:

Provide resources to local businesses for hospitality guest services training. Partner with Kalispell Public Schools to host high school interns to build awareness of tourism industry careers.

Tactics:

Launch the Discover Kalispell Insider program, an online and digital education program for front-line workforce and students. Achieve at least 10 program certification completions.

Goal 8. Be an active partner on initiatives for natural resource sustainability.

Objectives: Partner with local organizations such as Flathead Rivers Alliance, Flathead Trails Association and FWP to support conservation projects related to visitor amenities and visitor impacts.

Tactics:

Champion two projects led by local natural resource groups through sponsorships, messaging and volunteering.





SECTION V

DISCOVER KALISPELL ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND TEAM

Discover Kalispell, the Kalispell Convention & Visitor Bureau, is a division of the Discover Kalispell Chamber of Commerce. Discover Kalispell is funded through the Lodging Facility Use Tax and the Kalispell Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID).

The FY27 Discover Kalispell DMO plan serves to direct the initiatives and spending for Discover Kalispell and inform and educate the Discover Kalispell Chamber and TBID board of directors, community stakeholders, Tourism Advisory Council, City of Kalispell and the state legislature. Kalispell's two funding sources, Bed Tax and TBID, work collaboratively to facilitate the annual DMO plan.

The Discover Kalispell team:

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SECTION VI

FY27 BUDGETED REVENUE

Tourism Business Improvement District \$1,120,000

Bed Tax/Lodging Facility Use Tax \$228,000

BALANCED TOURISM

At Discover Kalispell, our goal isn't simply to bring more people here. It's to attract visitors who value authentic experiences and respect our community. Driving what is needed for a community to become a destination where people want to visit, live and work.

Balanced tourism means welcoming visitors in a way that strengthens our community while protecting the places that make Kalispell special. Tourism that works for our community, our businesses and our landscapes—today and for the future.





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