

Approved Audits/Applications Committee 7/1/09

Organization Name: Billings Chamber of Commerce / CVB
Project Name: VIC; Staffing, Toll Free Line, Signage
Project Date: Fiscal Year 2009 - 2010
Application Completed by: Joan E. Kronebusch

Approval Requested
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Final
<input type="checkbox"/> Preliminary

Please explain the need for this project as well as a clear overview of the concept of the project. Narrative must provide enough details that those reviewing the application can comprehend or visualize the full scope of the project. Narrative should be a full overview, yet explicit and to the point.

Year Round VIC Staffing:

The Billings Chamber/CVB is requesting \$20,000 to employ 2 part-time, year-round travel counselors. During the past 5 years, our resource of VIC volunteers has steadily declined. As a result, the Billings VIC needs to employ two part-time travel counselors to eliminate dead-spots in the schedule, and effectively manage the day-to-day operations of our VIC. The Staff help us achieve the VIC's goal of increasing tourism through effective communication and accessibility.

After an extensive remodeling of the VIC, we launched a significant community relations campaign to raise awareness and visits to the VIC. In turn, it is absolutely paramount that we have staff available. As stated earlier, our number of available volunteers has decreased dramatically. It would be detrimental and counter to the VIC's most basic mission, if we were to make tourist assistance unavailable. However, that is precisely what may happen without travel counselors. Our available pool of volunteers has dropped from nearly ninety to under sixty, during the past four years. And with volunteers unwilling to commute during the winter, we currently have ten volunteers scheduled to staff the VIC from Labor Day until Memorial Day.

Travel Counselor duties would include the following:

- Respond to tourism inquiries in person, via phone, fax and e-mail.
- Compile and input visitor information data.
- Research and fulfill visitor information requests.
- Inventorying, ordering, and stocking VIC materials, e.g. maps and brochures.
- Maintaining the cleanliness of the VIC.
- Coordinating the VIC volunteer schedule.
- Serve visitors by being highly knowledgeable on area attractions, maps / brochures / guides / etc., know resources for visitor information, e.g.: road condition reports, traffic, construction, alternate routes, weather reports; and be knowledgeable of special events/local attractions listed in the news and guides.
- Assist in assembling and mailing of convention and tourism materials/packets.

VIC Toll Free Telephone Line

Every advertisement and our Vacation Guide contain a toll free phone number that rings into the VIC. The number is intended only for visitor questions – not administration or convention recruitment. When dealing with large groups or rallies, the toll free VIC number is printed for general tourism information. Our VIC volunteers are trained to answer a myriad of tourism questions involving transportation, lodging, attractions and general information. The toll free number is an integral part of the operation of the VIC and necessary.

VIC Inside Signage

In 2005 the Billings CVB's VIC underwent a complete renovation – updated look, updated logo, updated thinking. Budgetary constraints allow us to only change a little of the inside signage at a time. This budget season we anticipate changing a large portion of the inside informational signage and the back lit sign to reflect the new brand.

Develop Objective

1. Increase citywide room demand by 4% from 927,000 to 964,000.

Identify the portions of your marketing plan, which support this project.

Regional Leisure Recruitment

*Does this project support the Strategic Plan? **Yes** If so, describe how.*

Goal 1; Action 1.4 - Improve Montana's VIC system to extend visitor stays and expenditures.

Goal 9; Action 9.2 – Foster opportunities to pool public and private marketing dollars.

*Detail pages attached **Yes***

**Billings CVB PROJECT BUDGET
VIC**

	State Tourism Funds		Other Funds		Total
Toll Free Line	1000	+			1000
Staffing	21,300	+	5000	=	26,300
Inside Signage	7500	+		=	7500
TOTAL	29,800		5000		34,800