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For Immediate Release:

Big Sky CVB and Prospera Business Network Awarded Big Sky Economic Development Trust Fund Grant

Economic Development Grant Awarded to Complete the First Phase of a Tourism Master Plan

Big Sky, Montana | September 2, 2016 – The Big Sky Convention and Visitor Bureau (CVB) and Prospera Business Network were awarded the Big Sky Economic Development Trust Fund Grant from the Montana Department of Commerce for the first phase of a tourism master plan for the community of Big Sky. The first phase will consist of a workshop conducted by Paul Ouimet, Destination Marketing Association International's (DMAI) Managing Director of DestinationNEXT and CEO of NEXTFactor Enterprises Inc.

The goal of the first phase assessment is to determine the level of community support for the travel and tourism industry. The assessment will outline areas to improve visitor experiences while in the destination. Upon receiving the findings, the community will work to implement the recommendations to improve visitor experience and increase visitation to Big Sky. An increase in visitors, spending, and length of stay positively impacts the economy of our community, the tourism region, Yellowstone Country, and the state.

The DestinationNEXT comprehensive assessment will help the Big Sky community better understand the destination's assets. The first phase assessment will consist of surveys to be distributed to industry partners. The planning process will include a customized scenario plot that is shared during an in-depth

workshop to discuss major findings. Key industry stakeholders and tourism professionals will be asked to help identify key issues and potential solutions and strategic implications. This first phase will outline where Big Sky stands in terms of community support for growth and development and set the stage for implementation of key recommendations.

As stated by Governor Steve Bullock in the official notice letter, “Your project will help further economic development in Montana and provide opportunities for future job growth. I want to thank you for partnering with the State of Montana, Department of Commerce in making Montana’s future dynamic with innovative projects.”

With an increase in tax collections, there is a possibility for the community, region, and state to make more investments in infrastructure that will improve visitor experience, employ more individuals in the tourism industry, and have a positive impact on the quality of life for residents. The outcome of increased lodging and resort tax collections will help the community continue to fund important programs.

"This is great news for Big Sky. Support from the Big Sky Economic Development Trust Fund further demonstrates the need to conduct a unified tourism master planning program for the community of Big Sky," said Kitty Clemens, Executive Director of Visit Big Sky. "We are thankful for our partners, Prospera and Visit Big Sky, for taking the lead in defining community values for how the growth and development of our primary economic engine, travel and tourism, will be accommodated."

The Big Sky CVB could not have completed the grant application process without the expertise, time and support from Paul Reichert, Executive Director of Prospera Business Network. In addition to Reichert’s assistance throughout the application process, letters of support from community members and support from the Visit Big Sky board of directors are attributable to this award.

For additional information about Visit Big Sky or DestinationNEXT, contact Alex Mansfield, Visit Big Sky’s Marketing Manager, at 406-995-3000 or at alex@bigskychamber.com. To learn more about Prospera Business Network visit <https://www.prosperabusinessnetwork.org/>. To read about DMAI’s Destination Next visit <https://www.destinationmarketing.org/destinationnext>.

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About Visit Big Sky

Visit Big Sky is a private, nonprofit organization responsible for marketing Big Sky, Montana as a leisure and convention destination. Visit Big Sky is funded from the Big Sky Resort Tax administered by Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development lodging tax funds and collects private industry investments from business partners for public relations and advertising programs.