

Montana Film Office Overview



About the Montana Film Office

The Montana Film Office was created in 1974 as a central information source for on-location filmmakers. It is a component of the Montana Promotion Division, a division of the state’s Department of Commerce, and is funded entirely by the 4% lodging facility use tax.

The primary role of the Montana Film Office is to bring productions (feature films, commercials, documentaries, television programs, and still shoots) into Montana for the overall economic benefit of the state. As the number of productions filmed in Montana continues to grow, so do the job opportunities for Montanans and the amount of direct expenditure to Montana businesses generated by out of state production companies.

It is the responsibility of the Montana Film Office to ensure that the state is “film friendly.” We not only work with producers to find locations that fit their script, we also act as their liaison through every phase of production. Montana Film Office also administers The Big Sky on the Big Screen Act, Montana’s production incentive program.

Producers have come to depend on the Montana Film Office to help them cut through any red tape that may slow them down in the whirlwind world of shooting on location—time is money. A state’s willingness and ability to accomplish this can weigh heavily in a production company’s decision in choosing a location.

Impact of the film industry in Montana

The economic benefits of film industry productions in Montana are many. First, there are direct economic benefits of the money spent on wages, products, and services. The production company itself spends dollars with local businesses on lodging, clothing, groceries, restaurants, fabrics, lumber, hardware, office supplies, laundry services, etc. Individual cast and crew members may spend money on any or all of the above plus leisure activities, books and magazines, souvenirs—the list could go on and on. Even temporary “extras” and curious visitors from neighboring areas will leave additional dollars within the community hosting a production company.

Because most of the money spent is “new” money brought in from out of state (which otherwise wouldn’t be here), economists project that it has a impact in buying power for Montana businesses and employees that is three and one-half times the actual amount.

Productions also play a part in creating and retaining jobs within the state, as they allow Montana’s freelance film crew members and support services to earn their living. These commercial media projects are much like having a new, medium-size business move into the community, except that they generate thousands or millions of dollars of activity over a few months instead of a few years.

Film Industry Services

Scouting

This includes location photography as well as information and assistance in finding and securing locations. An extensive photo library is used to provide photo presentations of Montana locations which are customized to meet the needs of inquiring production companies.

Production Assistance

Information and assistance regarding accommodations, equipment, transportation, crew members and local services available in Montana are provided through direct contact and the *Montana Production Guide*.

Liaison

Information and assistance are offered with federal and state agencies, city and county offices and local businesses, as well as individual landowners and the general public.

Montana Production Guide

The *Montana Production Guide* is an all-encompassing reference for shooting a production in Montana. The 190-plus page guide details the following information: production services and crews; contacts for federal, state, and city/county agencies; weather data; aircraft charter; and major locations, towns and cities, along with photos of Montana locations. Approximately 300 freelance Montana crew members and 700 Montana businesses are listed in the *Montana Production Guide*.

Film Production Incentive

The Montana Film Office administers the Big Sky on the Big Screen Act, Montana's film production incentive enacted in 2005. Montana offers a refundable tax credit to qualified production companies that film in Montana. Production companies earn a 14% refundable tax credit on the first \$50,000 in wages paid to Montana crew members, and a 9% refundable tax credit based on qualified Montana expenditure by the production company. There is no minimum spend or cap, however there is a \$500 administrative fee, and the production company must file a Montana income tax return in order to claim the credit.

Production Crews and Production Services

The Montana Film Office compiles and routinely updates a list of available and qualified production crews and a list of support companies who are experienced in working with productions. These two lists are also included as part of the *Montana Production Guide*. A list of auxiliary support services is kept on file in the Montana Film Office.

Requests to be added to the production crew or support company list should be directed to Maribeth Goodrich, the crew & support company liaison in the Montana Film Office.

Montana Film Office Staff

Sten Iversen, Film Office Manager

Promoting Montana as an ideal place to make a movie or shoot a commercial is the job of the Film Office under Sten's direction. He manages the Film Office budget and personnel matters, and is responsible for location scouting with film companies making it as convenient as possible for them to shoot in the state. He ensures that the Film Office staff is available to assist or make local contracts once filming begins, and also works with Montana businesses and individuals to foster a productive working

relationship with film crews. Sten acts as Travel Montana's liaison with other state and federal agencies regarding the needs of production companies. As a marketer, he attends trade shows and film festivals, and oversees advertising targeted to the film industry.

John Ansotegui, Location Coordinator

Responding to the needs of film production companies interested in Montana, John scouts the state, shoots hundreds of location photos and compiles location information. He works to offer several options to fit the storyboards or scripts of people seeking locations for feature films, documentaries, commercials, and print ads. John assembles customized photo presentations using the Film Office's extensive file of location photos—a file continually restocked with new photos. His work includes traveling with film location managers or directors scouting the state, contacting local people for assistance and facilitating during filming, and attending trade shows and film festivals.

Maribeth Goodrich, Office Coordinator/Crew Liaison

Providing a vital service to Montana businesses and free-lance crew members, Maribeth develops, coordinates, and maintains the Film Office crew and production support listing program. These listings are distributed as a section of the Montana Production Guide and as a searchable section of the Film Office website. Additionally, working cooperatively with the Film Office Manager and the Film Office's advertising consultant, Maribeth coordinates and supports Film Office advertising and marketing activities. Maribeth provides office management services by coordinating and administering Film Office functions and support services.

Sage Dubois, Multimedia and Project Coordinator

Sage is responsible for maintaining the extensive Reel-Scout contact, project, and location database, and serves as the web designer for the Film Office website. She is also in charge of web, multimedia, and graphic design needs for the Film Office, as well as video editing projects. Sage provides direct customer service to production companies, assists with scouting and logistics, prepares online presentations of Montana locations, and assists in responding to requests for information about filming in Montana.

How to contact us

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