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FINANCE OFFICER/CITY CLERK  
Andrew Lehr

## Request for Qualifications

The City of Hardin has been awarded a Pilot Community Tourism Grant through the Montana Department of Commerce to support the development and marketing of sustainable tourism practices.

The City of Hardin is seeking RFQ responses from qualified firms with specific experience in developing comprehensive plans for marketing and sustainable tourism strategies and practices. The selected consultant will work in conjunction with the City Finance Officer, Economic Development Director, and other identified stakeholders, to develop a Sustainable Tourism Management Plan (STMP) within the Pilot Grant requirements and deliverables. Qualifications should include information demonstrating experience in the fields of marketing and sustainable tourism strategies requested in this RFQ.

Copies of the detailed request for qualifications (RFQ), including a description of the services to be provided by respondents, the minimum content of responses, and the factors to be used to evaluate the responses can be obtained by contacting Andrew Lehr, Finance Officer/ City Clerk, 406 North Cheyenne Avenue, Hardin, Montana 59034, phone 406-665-9260 Ext. 102, or by email [cityfinance@hardinmt.com](mailto:cityfinance@hardinmt.com), reference in the subject line: Sustainable Tourism Management Plan. The RFQ can also be found on the City of Hardin website, [hardinmt.com](http://hardinmt.com), under the public notices page.

All responses to the detailed RFQ must be sealed, include five copies of the proposal, include Attachment A, and be marked on the outside of the envelope "Sustainable Tourism Management Plan", and must be submitted by Friday, June 20, 2025, by 3:00 p.m. to Andrew Lehr, Finance Officer/ City Clerk, 406 North Cheyenne Avenue, Hardin, MT 59034.

All Proposals will be evaluated Friday, June 20, 2025 and Monday, June 23, 2025 – Tuesday, June 24, 2025.

Dated this 28<sup>th</sup> Day of May 2025

Andrew Lehr, Finance Officer/City Clerk

Publish: May 28 and June 4, 2025

**REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS  
(RFQ)**

**For Professional Services  
Sustainable Tourism Management Plan**

**RFQ Submittal Deadline:** **June 20, 2025 3 p.m.**

RFQ Contacts: Andrew Lehr or Tina Toyne

Email Address: [cityfinance@hardinmt.com](mailto:cityfinance@hardinmt.com)  
[ttoyne@hardinmt.com](mailto:ttoyne@hardinmt.com)

Phone Number: 406-665-9260

**City of Hardin  
406 N Cheyenne Ave  
Hardin, MT 59034**

**[hardinmt.com](http://hardinmt.com)**

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## **Executive Summary**

The City of Hardin has been awarded a Pilot Community Tourism Grant through the Montana Department of Commerce to support the development and marketing of sustainable tourism practices. As the grant recipient, the City of Hardin will be responsible for administering the funds and overseeing project activities in collaboration with a dedicated steering committee. This committee, referred to as the Big Horn Tourism Breakthrough Project (BHTBP), is identified in this Request for Qualifications (RFQ). A total of \$74,000 in grant funds will be allocated to support a contract established through this RFQ. Correspondence concerning this RFQ is to be sent to the following individuals:

Andrew Lehr

Finance Officer/ City Clerk

City of Hardin

406 N. Cheyenne Ave.

Hardin, MT 59034

406-665-9260 Ext. 102

cityfinance@hardinmt.com

Tina Toyne

Economic Development Director

City of Hardin

406 N. Cheyenne Ave.

Hardin, MT 59034

406-665-9260 Ext. 103

ttoyne@hardinmt.com

Project Manager TBD

City of Hardin

406 N. Cheyenne Ave

Hardin, MT 59034

406-665-9260

## **1. Introduction**

The City of Hardin is seeking RFQ responses from qualified firms with specific experience in developing comprehensive plans for marketing and sustainable tourism strategies and practices. The selected consultant will work in conjunction with the City Finance Officer, Economic Development Director, and other identified stakeholders, to develop a Sustainable Tourism Management Plan (STMP) within the Pilot Grant requirements and deliverables. Qualifications should include information demonstrating experience in the fields of marketing and sustainable tourism strategies requested in this RFQ.

The responding firm must be able to meet the Completion Schedule included in this RFQ. This agreement will span a two-year period from July of 2025 until June of 2027. Certain deliverables will be requested to be completed in year one and some will be requested in year, depending on availability of grant funding.

## **2. Background**

The City of Hardin, located in Big Horn County, Montana, serves as a gateway to the rich history of the American West and offers access to remarkable outdoor adventures. Incorporated in 1911, Hardin is home to approximately 3,808 residents (2020 Census) and is strategically situated at the junction of Interstate 90 and Montana Highway 47.

The city's economy is supported by a mix of agriculture, tourism, health care services, a historic downtown business district, restaurants, and lodging. The surrounding region is abundant with cultural and natural attractions that appeal to both residents and visitors. Regional development efforts are supported by a network of engaged partners, including the Hardin Area Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture, Visit Southeast Montana, Beartooth RC&D, and One Health.

The Big Horn Tourism Breakthrough Project Steering Committee aims to position Big Horn County as a premier destination for responsible travelers seeking authentic and immersive outdoor experiences. By promoting sustainable tourism and marketing practices, the project seeks to stimulate local economic growth, celebrate cultural heritage, and preserve the area's unspoiled natural environment. The ultimate goal is to increase visitation and enhance tourism-related revenue in a way that benefits the entire community.

### **3. Sustainable Tourism Management Plan**

The Sustainable Tourism Management Plan will attract and retain visitors by showcasing Big Horn County's cultural, historical, and natural assets. The Campaign will promote the BHTBP communities and local attractions, natural beauty, and cultural heritage while emphasizing sustainability efforts. The selected consultant will play a critical role in expanding the visibility and enhancing the overall impact of the BHTBP tourism initiative. Their work will lay the foundation for the cohesive and strategic marketing effort, with deliverables supporting both immediate goals and long-term sustainability.

#### **STMP Goals**

1. Increase Tourism to Big Horn County
  - Attract and retain visitors by showcasing the area's cultural, historical, and natural assets through coordinated, compelling promotion.
2. Promote Sustainable Economic Development
  - Build a diversified and resilient tourism economy that supports both local residents and businesses.
3. Strengthen Regional Identity and Branding
  - Develop a unified and authentic brand that highlights Big Horn County's unique story, culture, and offerings.
4. Enhance Visitor Experience
  - Identify and fill service or experience gaps to improve visitor satisfaction and encourage repeat tourism.
5. Engage Stakeholders in a Cohesive Tourism Strategy
  - Foster collaboration among local businesses, regional tourism organizations, and community members to create shared success.
6. Support Long-Term Sustainability
  - Establish systems for continuous improvement and performance evaluation to ensure lasting impact beyond initial implementation.

#### **STMP Deliverables**

1. Tourism Asset Inventory Report
  - A comprehensive list and analysis of all tourism-related assets (natural, historical, cultural, recreational, and commercial).
2. Visitor Market Analysis Report
  - Identification of target demographics, market trends, and current gaps in offerings or infrastructure.

3. Economic Viability Study
  - Recommendations to enhance the local economy through tourism, addressing diversification and sustainability.
4. Branding Strategy Document
  - A cohesive branding approach for Big Horn County tourism, aligned with community identity and future vision.
5. Promotional Messaging Toolkit
  - Key messages and storytelling strategies tailored to priority audiences, for use across platforms.
6. Stakeholder Engagement Summary
  - Documentation of stakeholder meetings, partnerships, and aligned messaging across organizations.
7. Activity Passport Program Design (Year 1)
  - Includes concept, layout, branding, implementation plan, and agreements with participating businesses.
8. Activity Passport Launch Plan (Year 2)
  - Finalized passport, rollout strategy, and participation agreements with featured businesses.
9. Marketing Materials Suite
  - General Big Horn County promotional materials (digital and print)
  - 150th Anniversary of the Battle of the Little Bighorn materials (event guides, merchandise, social media)
10. Performance Metrics and Evaluation Plan
  - Defined KPIs, baseline data, and tools for tracking impact, reach, and success over time.

#### **4. Qualifications Contents**

Consultants are expected to prepare qualification responses that address the following elements:

1. Name, physical and mailing address, e-mail contact, and telephone number(s) of the lead firm and any other firms listed as subconsultants.
2. Past experience of the consulting team with developing a marketing and sustainable tourism strategy.
3. References from at least three projects where the consultant has provided similar marketing and sustainable tourism strategy services. The references must include complete contact information as well as a brief description of the project completed.
4. The names and qualifications of the principal team members who will perform the proposed work, their responsibilities, and expected time commitment.
5. Capacity to assume new business.
6. Proposed scope of work that addresses the goals of the Marketing and Sustainable Tourism Strategy documented in Section 3.
7. Description of the public outreach process.
8. Deliverables, budget, and preliminary timeline for completion of the project. Include in the budget the personnel by name, including level of effort, the direct costs not attributable to personnel, to include travel, printing, and other (specify), and subcontractor costs.

#### **5. Qualifications Submission**

Five copies of the qualification's response must be submitted no later than 3:00 pm, Mountain Time, Friday, June 20, 2025, to the following:

Big Horn Tourism Breakthrough Project  
Attention: Andrew Lehr  
c/o: City of Hardin  
406 N Cheyenne Ave  
Hardin, MT 59034

## 6. Proposed Timeline

The tentative RFQ timeline is as follows:

RFQ Issued	May 28, 2025
Deadline for questions/clarifications	June 17, 2025, -3:00 p.m.
Qualifications Response Due	<b>June 20, 2025, -3:00 p.m.</b>
Evaluation Completed by City	June 20-24, 2025
Interviews (if applicable)	June 24-26, 2025
Contract Awards by City Council	July 1, 2025
Proposed Start Date	July 15, 2025
Final Plan Due	June 30, 2027

## 7. Evaluation And Consultant Selection Process

### *I. Initial Evaluation*

Qualifications received will undergo an initial review to determine:

- Compliance with RFQ submittal date and time.
- Compliance with RFQ contents.

II. Evaluation Criteria

The qualifications will be scored based on the following criteria

Qualifications and ability to perform requested services: (15 points subtotal)

Past experience with developing a marketing and sustainable tourism strategy with references	5 points
Firm and personnel qualifications	5 points
Location as it relates to the provision of services	5 points

III. Evaluation Qualifications

Quality of Qualifications Response: (35 points subtotal):

1. Description of proposed scope of work	5 points
2. Description of public outreach process	5 points
3. Present and projected projects	5 points
4. Deliverables, budget, and completion schedule	5 points
5. Adherence to strategic goals	15 points

TOTAL 50 points

IV. Selection of Consultant

The City of Hardin and BTBTP Steering Committee reserves the right to award the contract solely upon the consultant's submitted materials. The City also reserves the right to request oral interviews with the highest-ranked firms to allow expansion upon the written responses. If interviews are conducted, a maximum of three firms will be selected, with the final determination to be made through a qualification-based selection.

V. Disclaimer

This RFQ does not form or constitute a contractual document. The City of Hardin and the BTBTP Steering Committee shall not be liable for any loss, expense, damage, or claim arising out of advice given or not given or statements made or omitted to be made in connection with this RFQ. The City will not be responsible for any expenses that may be incurred in the preparation of this RFQ.

A professional services contract will be required of the selected firm, and if the contract fails to be negotiated in a timely manner, the City reserves the right to contract with another qualified firm.

## VI. Questions

Questions regarding the Request for Qualifications contents may be sent to the contacts listed in Section 1 via email no later than 3:00 pm, Tuesday, June 17, 2025. The City will provide a written response within three business days. Whenever responses to inquiries would constitute a modification or addition to the original RFQ, the reply will be made in the form of an addendum to the Request for Qualifications, a copy of which will be posted on the City's website, under the Public Notices page at <https://www.hardinmt.com>

### **8. Information For Consultants**

#### Non-Responsive Qualifications

Qualifications that offer no response on a response "to be determined" to any item will be deemed "non-responsive" and returned to the submitter without being scored.

#### Examination of Documents

Before submitting the qualifications, the responding firm shall carefully review the terms of this request, be informed of the existing conditions and limitations, and include with the qualifications sufficient information to cover all items required in the specifications and evaluation. Upon the submission of the RFQ, the consultant acknowledges that all information is accurate and complete.

#### Qualification Modifications

Modifications, additions, or changes to the terms and conditions of this request for qualifications may be cause for rejection of the qualification. No oral, telephone, email, fax or telegraphic qualifications, responses, or modifications will be considered.

#### Certification of Alteration or Erasure

A qualification response shall be rejected should it contain any material alteration or erasure, unless, before the qualification's response is submitted, each such alteration or erasure has been initiated in ink by the authorized agent signing the qualifications response.

### Signature

All qualifications shall be typewritten or prepared in ink and must be signed in longhand by the responding firm or firm's agent or designee, with his/her usual signature. Qualifications submitted by a partnership must be signed with the partnership name, followed by the signature and designation of two partners. Qualifications by corporations must be signed with the legal name of the corporation, followed by the name and signature of an authorized agent or officer of the corporation. Qualifications submitted by the proprietorship must be signed by the owner, and the name of each person signing shall be typed or printed legibly below the signature. Signature for qualifications shall be required on Attachment A – Proposer Information form, as well as any other formal letter or documents the consultant(s) deem necessary.

### Withdrawal of Qualifications

Consultants may withdraw their qualifications response either personally or by written request at any time prior to the due date set for receiving responses. No qualifications may be withdrawn or modified after the due date and time, unless and until the award of the contract is delayed for a period exceeding 90 days

### Quote Valid

The responding firm must honor its budget/cost proposal for a period of 90 days after the RFQ due date.

### Certification

The consultant certifies that the qualification has been arrived at independently and has been submitted without any collusion designed to limit competition. The responding firm further certifies that the materials, products, services, and/or goods offered herein meet all requirements of the stated specifications and are equal in quality, value, and performance to the highest quality, nationally advertised brand, and/or trade names.

### Disposition of Qualifications

All materials submitted in response to this RFQ become the property of the City of Hardin. One copy of each RFQ response submitted shall be retained for the official files.

### Contract

Within 14 calendar days after the date the Professional Services Contract is sent to the successful firm, the successful firm must fully execute and deliver the contract to the City of Hardin. Contract delivery may be completed through a scanned copy of the executed document, followed by a fully executed original copy sent via mail or other delivery service. If the successful firm fails

to execute the contract, the City has the right to cancel the recommended award and reject the response. The City may then proceed with the next most responsive firm.

**ATTACHMENT A – Proposer Information**

**Proposer’s Information Form**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The undersigned declares that she or he:

- 8. Has carefully examined the RFQ specifications
- 9. Is thoroughly familiar with its content
- 10. Is authorized to represent the proposing firm; and
- 11. Agrees to perform the work as outlined in the specifications of this request for qualifications.

**PROPOSER (please print):**

Firm Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Contact person, title, email, and telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Proposer, if selected, intends to carry on the business as (check one):

\_\_\_\_\_ Individual (sole proprietor)

\_\_\_\_\_ Partnership

\_\_\_\_\_ Corporation

When incorporated? \_\_\_\_\_

In which state? \_\_\_\_\_

Other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

**PROPOSER'S SIGNATURE**

No proposal shall be accepted that has not been signed in ink in the appropriate space below:

1 If the Proposer is an INDIVIDUAL/SOLE PROPRIETOR, sign here

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Proposer's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Proposer's typed name and title

2 If the Proposer is a PARTNERSHIP, at least two (2) Partners shall sign here:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Partnership Name (type or print)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Member of Partnership Signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Member of Partnership Signature

3 If the Proposer is a CORPORATION, the duly authorized officer shall sign as follows:

The undersigned certifies that he/she is respectively:

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Title

Of the corporation named below; that they are designated to sign the Proposal Cost Form by resolution (attach a certified copy, with corporate seal, if applicable, notarized as to its authenticity or Secretary's certificate of authorization) for and on behalf of the below named CORPORATION, and that they are authorized to execute same for and on behalf of said CORPORATION.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Corporation Name (type or print)

By: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_