

A Request for Proposal from Central Montana Tourism for

Central Montana Tourism Economic Impact, Advocacy, and Crisis Communication Plan

ISSUED

December 19th, 2025

DUE

3:00PM

January 23rd, 2026

- I. Introduction
- II. Background
- III. Scope of Work
- IV. Qualifications
- V. Proposal Requirements
- VI. Timeline
- VII. Evaluation
- VIII. Additional Information and Conditions
- IX. Sample Contract

I. INTRODUCTION

Central Montana Tourism is seeking proposals for a consultant to develop a data-driven regional tourism economic impact, advocacy and crisis communication plan. The purpose is to understand tourism in the region well enough to protect it, grow it, and communicate its value to residents, community leaders, and key stakeholders. This project will need to draw on both new research and existing data to develop a complete picture of visitor behavior, economic influence, and county level opportunities. The selected consultant will produce a comprehensive assessment and a clear communication framework that supports local government advocacy, resident education, and crisis readiness across the entire region.

II. BACKGROUND

Central Montana Tourism is a regional Destination Organization that advances the economic vitality of the following 13-counties:

- Fergus
- Toole
- Liberty
- Hill
- Blaine
- Teton
- Wheatland
- Meagher
- Judith Basin
- Pondera
- Chouteau
- Cascade
- Petroleum

This is done through effective marketing, destination development, advocacy, and knowledge growth that preserves the region's unique character, honors residents' quality of life, addresses visitor needs, and enhances business opportunities.

Central Montana is both rural and expansive. The 13-county region has a population of approximately 150,000 people. Great Falls, the only city in the region, is responsible for 80,000 of these people. More than half of the communities in the region have fewer than 100 residents, and only six exceed 2,500. Many towns have a single business, such as a bar or gas station, to serve local and visitor needs. Traveling across the region can take up to four hours, and amenities are often sparse.

The geographic footprint stretches from the Canadian border to White Sulphur Springs, roughly 235 miles north to south, and from the southeastern edge of Glacier National Park to the east side of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation, roughly 240 miles west to east.

Due to the rural nature of the area, collecting detailed tourism data is challenging, although foundational work exists. The Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research provides baseline insights. In 2024, for example, Central Montana welcomed an estimated 2.4 million visitors who contributed approximately \$534 million in tourism revenue. These insights are helpful, but they do not fully capture the depth, variation, or opportunity that exists across all counties. Some categories of data remain insufficient for our needs, and this project aims to build on that information and take analysis further. ITRR data is available here:

<https://itrashboard.com/>

Additional insight is available in the *Recreation, Hospitality, and Entertainment Market Assessment* commissioned by the Great Falls Development Alliance, which can be used as a supporting resource. That study can be found here:

<https://growgreatfallsmontana.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/RecreationEntertainmentAssess-Strategy-Opportunities-FIN-9-3-25.pdf>

While research is the foundation of this effort, the larger goal is to identify and grow tourism's role in the region. Communities across Central Montana face limited resources and gradual population decline, and while perspectives on tourism's value vary, it represents an underutilized opportunity to strengthen local economies and support community vitality.

The insights gathered through this project will support messaging that helps local leaders and residents understand tourism's value and how it supports community stability. This work will also inform a crisis communication plan that prepares the region to be resilient and respond with clarity when unexpected events threaten confidence or continuity.

Together, the research, advocacy focus, and crisis readiness will give the region a shared base of knowledge and a unified communication approach that strengthens tourism's contribution every day and steadies the region when challenges arise.

Funding for this project is provided through a subgrant administered by the Montana Department of Commerce from U.S. Economic Development Administration. All funds must be drawn down by June 30, 2026.

III. Scope of Work

Central Montana Tourism seeks to better understand and communicate the value of tourism across its 13-county region. The purpose of this project is to identify and grow tourism's contributions to the region by providing local leaders, stakeholders, and residents with reliable data, consistent messaging, and a framework for both advocacy and crisis response.

The tasks outlined below represent what Central Montana Tourism believes are the most important steps to achieving these goals. While we have a strong sense of what needs to be accomplished, we recognize that the best approach may vary, and we are seeking the guidance and expertise of the selected consultant to refine methods and propose additional strategies or deliverables that will maximize the impact of this project. We also acknowledge

that data collection in a rural, expansive region is challenging, and welcome innovative approaches or alternative methods that can achieve project objectives effectively.

This scope is meant to provide a foundation and a framework. We expect the consultant to bring professional insight, creative problem-solving, and methodological expertise to ensure that the final deliverables are actionable and relevant.

- Regional Tourism and Economic Impact Research
 - Conduct a full analysis of overnight visitors, daytrips, and tourism drivers across all 13 counties, building on ITRR data and the recent Recreation, Hospitality, and Entertainment Market Assessment.
 - Categorize overnight stays by type within each county.
 - Categorize daytrips by type within each county.
 - Rank drivers by percentage within each county.
 - Conduct a three-year trend analysis of overnight travelers, including origin, by county.
 - Quantify economic impact per county, including spending categories (such as lodging, fuel, etc.) and visitor contributions.
 - Create a county level inventory of tourism assets and evaluate how visitors make trip decisions related to those assets. Include recommendations for utilization and activation.
 - Review deficiencies that limit visitor growth, such as transportation, lodging, experiences, and awareness.
- Advocacy Messaging and Stakeholder Communication Framework
 - Develop unified advocacy messaging that aligns with research findings and resonates with leaders, partners, and residents.
 - Recommend a communication system that expands and deepens stakeholder engagement across all counties.
- Crisis Communication Planning
 - Identify risks that could disrupt tourism or community stability and assess how they relate to tourism drivers and economic impact.
 - Develop a detailed crisis communication plan: how messages are delivered, who delivers them, and how the stakeholder system functions during urgent situations.
 - Specify which partners are involved in crisis communication versus general advocacy efforts.

- Deliverables
 - Full research report covering all analyses and defining the types of visitors to Central Montana, by County.
 - One-sheet profile for each county summarizing key data, economic impact, strengths, deficiencies, and advocacy messaging.
 - Regional one-sheet communicating overall tourism impact and value.
 - Messaging guide with core advocacy messages and crisis templates.
 - Recommended communication system map supporting both daily engagement and emergency response.
 - Any additional tools or deliverables recommended by the consultant based on best practices.

IV. QUALIFICATIONS

Bidders will have:

- Proven experience conducting tourism research, economic impact studies, regional planning, multi-jurisdictional assessments, or similar work in rural areas.
- Proven experience developing crisis communication plans in a regional context.
- Experience engaging with a broad mix of stakeholders including local governments, community organizations, tourism partners, businesses, and residents.
- Strong writing and communication skills with the ability to produce county-level one-sheets, regional summary reports, and stakeholder-friendly messaging.
- Flexibility and creativity, especially in offering additional value-added deliverables.

V. PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Proposals must be submitted by 3 PM Mountain Time on January 23, 2026 to Central Montana Tourism, Attention: Avery Hughes, 15 Overlook Drive, Great Falls MT 59405. Electronic submission is preferred in PDF format to Avery@CentralMontana.com. Electric submissions will be confirmed by email to the contact listed on the cover letter.

The submittal will follow the order below and include, at a minimum the following details:

1. A cover letter signed and dated by the person or an authorized representative of the organization making the submittal that includes the organization's legal name, address, website address, email address, and telephone number.
2. Narrative statement describing the proposer's understanding of the project goals and scope of work.
3. Description of the consulting team or firm, including relevant experience and summary of previous similar projects.
4. Proposed work plan and methodology, with timeline: detailed explanation of how the work will be done, data sources and research methods, stakeholder engagement

plan, county-level vs. regional research structure, timeline of major tasks, deliverables schedule.

5. Description of how existing data (e.g., from ITRR and the recreation/entertainment study) will be used, and what additional data collection or research will be proposed to fill gaps.
6. A narrative on the alternative approaches or additional deliverables they believe will best achieve project objectives.
7. A narrative regarding how you manage and bill for projects/activities.
8. A detailed budget, including, if applicable per hour cost structure of services provided.
9. A list of clients related to tourism/economic impact/crisis communication/advocacy plans, with the name of the contact most knowledgeable of project, address, telephone number and email for reference.

VI. TIMELINE

RFP Release	December 19, 2025
Submission of Letter of Intent to Respond & Written Questions Due	December 31, 2025
Written Answers to Questions Distributed	January 7, 2026
Responses Due by 3:00 PM	January 23, 2026
Review Committee Meeting	Before Feb 2, 2026

VII. EVALUATION

The consultants will be evaluated and ranked by consensus in accordance with the following factors, which are weighted as shown:

Cover Letter	5%
Organization History, Experience, and Team	20%
The Methodology and Scope of Services to be Provided	45%
Project Management and Billing	10%
Suggested Strategies	10%
Budget	5%
References	10%

The consensus scoring sheet will be made public. Negotiations will commence with the highest ranked consultant. Upon reaching agreement on a final work plan and price, Central Montana Tourism will award the contract. If agreement cannot be reached with the highest ranked consultant, negotiations will proceed with the second ranked consultant, and so forth.

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VIII. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

1. STATEMENT OF NONCOMMITMENT. Issuance of this RFQ/RFP/Bid does not commit Central Montana Tourism (CMT) to award a contract or to pay any costs incurred in preparation of proposals responding to the RFQ/RFP/Bid. The CMT reserves the right to reject any or all proposals and re-advertise. All proposals become the property of CMT.
2. EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY. In accordance with state and federal requirements, the consultant (hereinafter referred to as "contractor") must agree as follows:
 - a. COMPLIANCE WITH TITLE VI OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964 FOR FEDERAL AID CONTRACTS
 - i. Compliance with Regulations: Successful contract bidders must comply with provisions of all applicable federal law, Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Any subcontracting by the successful bidder subjects subcontracting firm(s) to the same provisions of federal law.
 - ii. Nondiscrimination: The Contractor, with regard to the work performed by it during the Agreement, shall not discriminate on the grounds of sex, race, color or national origin in the selection and retention of subcontractors, including procurement of materials and leases of equipment. The Contractor shall not participate either directly or indirectly in the discrimination prohibited in 24CFR Part 21.
 - iii. Solicitations for Subcontractors, Including Procurements of Materials and Equipment: In all solicitations, whether by competitive bidding or negotiation by the Contractor for work to be performed under a subcontract, including procurements of materials or leases of equipment, any potential subcontractor or supplier shall be notified by the Contractor of the Contractor's obligations under this Agreement and the Regulations relative to nondiscrimination.
 - iv. Information and Reports: The Contractor will provide all reports and information required by the Regulations, or directives issued pursuant thereto, and permit access to its books, records, accounts, other

sources of information and its facilities as may be determined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to be pertinent to ascertain compliance with Regulations or directives. Where any information required of the Contractor is in the exclusive possession of another who fails or refuses to furnish this information, the Contract shall so certify to the Department (HUD), as requested, setting forth what efforts it has made to obtain the information.

- v. Sanctions for Noncompliance: In the event of the contractor's noncompliance with the nondiscrimination provisions of this Agreement, the Department may impose sanctions as it determines appropriate, including, but not limited to:
 - 1. withholding payments to the Contractor under the Agreement until the Contractor complies, and/or
 - 2. cancellation, termination or suspension of the agreement in whole or in part.
- vi. Incorporation of Provisions: The Contractor will include the provisions of paragraph (a) through (f) in every subcontract, including procurement of materials and leases of equipment, unless exempt by the Regulations or directives issued pursuant thereto. The Contractor will take such action with respect to any subcontract for procurement as the Department of Housing and Urban Development may direct to enforce such provisions including sanctions for noncompliance. Provided, however, that in the event the Contractor is sued or is threatened with litigation by a subcontractor or supplier as a result of such direction, the Contractor may request the Department to enter into the litigation to protect the interests of the State of Montana, and in addition, the contractor or the State may request the United States to enter such litigation to protect the interests of the United States.
- b. COMPLIANCE WITH THE MONTANA GOVERNMENTAL CODE OF FAIR PRACTICES, 49-3-207. MCA. In accordance with 49-3-207, MCA, the Contractor agrees that for this agreement all hiring will be made on the basis of merit and qualifications and that there will be no discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, creed, political ideas, sex, age, marital status, physical or mental disability, or national origin by persons performing the Agreement.
- c. COMPLIANCE WITH MINORITY & WOMEN BUSINESS ENTERPRISES. Contractor will make efforts to encourage the use of minority and women's business enterprises in connection with Agreements activities in accordance with 2 CFR Part 200.321. which describes the actions to ensure that minority and women's business enterprises are used when possible in the procurement of property and services.

3. VENUE. The laws of the State of Montana govern this contract. The parties agree that any litigation concerning bid, proposal, or subsequent contract must be brought in the Eighth Judicial District of Cascade County, State of Montana and each party shall pay its own costs and attorney fees. (Reference 18-1-401 MCA)
4. RFP AUTHORITY. This RFP has been issued in accordance with Title 18, Montana Code Annotated and the Administrative Rules of Montana, Title 2, Chapter 5. The RFQ/RFP/BID process is a procurement option, allowing awards to be based on stated criteria or evaluation factors. The evaluation factors to be used in this procurement have been specified in Section IV of this RFQ/RFP/BID.

WRITTEN QUESTIONS. For more information or details regarding this RFP, submit written questions to Avery Hughes, Tourism Director, Central Montana Tourism, 15 Overlook Drive, Great Falls, MT 59405 or by email at Avery@CentralMontana.com

IX. Sample Contract

Regional Tourism & Economic Impact Research, Advocacy Messaging, and Crisis Communication Planning

This Professional Services Contract ("Contract") is entered into as of [Date], by and between [Client Organization Name], located at [Address] ("Client"), and [Consultant Firm Name], located at [Address] ("Consultant"). Client and Consultant may each be referred to individually as a "Party" and collectively as the "Parties."

1. Purpose

Client desires to engage Consultant to provide regional tourism research, economic impact analysis, advocacy messaging, stakeholder communication framework development, and crisis communication planning for a 13-county region. Consultant agrees to perform the services described herein under the terms of this Contract.

2. Scope of Work

Consultant shall perform the following services ("Services"):

A. Regional Tourism & Economic Impact Research

1. Regional Tourism and Economic Impact Research
 - o Conduct a full analysis of overnight visitors and tourism drivers across all 13 counties, building on ITRR data and the recent Recreation, Hospitality, and Entertainment Market Assessment.
2. Recommend and implement appropriate data collection methods (primary and secondary).
3. Categorize overnight stays by type within each county

4. Rank tourism drivers by percentage within each county.
5. Conduct three-year trend analyses of overnight travelers, including visitor origins.
6. Quantify county-level economic impact, including spending categories such as lodging, food, fuel, retail, recreation/entertainment, and other.
7. Inventory tourism assets by county and recommend activation and utilization strategies.
8. Identify deficiencies limiting visitor growth (e.g., transportation, lodging supply, experiences, seasonal gaps, awareness).

B. Advocacy Messaging & Stakeholder Communication Framework

1. Develop unified advocacy messaging based on research findings.
2. Create a scalable communication system to expand and deepen stakeholder engagement across all 13 counties.

C. Crisis Communication Planning

1. Identify risks that could disrupt tourism or community stability, and assess how risks relate to tourism drivers and regional economic impact.
2. Develop a detailed crisis communication plan specifying message types, message deliverers, response timing, and partner roles.
3. Define which partners are included in crisis response communication versus standard advocacy communication.

D. Deliverables

Consultant shall provide the following deliverables:

1. Full written research report covering all analyses.
2. One-sheet profile for each county (13) summarizing key data, economic impact, strengths, deficiencies, and messaging.
3. Regional one-sheet communicating overall tourism impact and value.
4. Messaging guide with core advocacy messages and crisis communication templates.
5. Communication system map outlining daily engagement workflow and emergency response structure.
6. All additional tools or materials recommended by Consultant and approved by Client.
7. Slide deck for presentation of findings and a final project briefing.

3. Timeline

The anticipated project will have the following milestone dates:

- X
- X
- X

And final project deliverables received by 6-15-2026.

4. Compensation

Client agrees to compensate Consultant as follows:

- **Total Contract Amount: \$_____**
(Based on agreed-upon scope and level of data collection)
- Payment Schedule:
 - 25% upon contract execution or other milestone
 - 25% upon completion of data collection phase or other milestone
 - 25% upon delivery of draft research report or other milestone
 - 25% upon final delivery of all deliverables or other milestone

5. Ownership of Work Product

All reports, summaries, data visualizations, design templates, messaging guides, and deliverables produced under this Contract become the property of Client upon full payment. Consultant retains the right to reference the project in portfolios or proposals unless Client requests confidentiality in writing.

Raw survey microdata and proprietary third-party licensed data (e.g., mobile-location vendors, STR datasets) are subject to vendor licensing restrictions and may not be legally transferable; Consultant will provide de-identified datasets where allowed.

6. Confidentiality

Both Parties shall maintain confidentiality of non-public information received during the project. Confidential information shall not be disclosed to third parties without written consent, except as required by law.

7. Independent Contractor Relationship

Consultant is an independent contractor and is not an employee, agent, partner, or joint venture participant with Client. Consultant is responsible for all taxes, insurance, and employment obligations associated with its personnel.

8. Changes in Scope

Any changes to the Scope of Work must be agreed to in writing via a Change Order signed by both Parties. Changes may affect the project timeline and/or compensation.

9. Termination

Either Party may terminate this Contract with 30 days' written notice. If terminated:

- Consultant will provide all work completed through the termination date.
- Client shall pay Consultant for all work performed and expenses incurred up to the termination date.
- Any prepaid funds beyond the value of completed work will be refunded.

10. Indemnification

Consultant shall indemnify and hold Client harmless from claims arising out of Consultant's negligence or willful misconduct. Client shall indemnify and hold Consultant harmless from claims arising out of Client's negligence or willful misconduct. Neither Party is liable for indirect or consequential damages.

11. Insurance

Consultant shall maintain commercially reasonable general liability insurance and professional liability insurance throughout the project term and provide proof of insurance upon request.

12. Governing Law

This Contract shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the **State of Montana**.

13. Entire Agreement

This Contract constitutes the entire understanding between the Parties and supersedes all prior proposals, negotiations, or communications. Any amendments must be in writing and signed by both Parties.

14. Signatures

CLIENT:

Name: _____

Title: _____

Organization: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

CONSULTANT:

Name: _____

Title: _____

Firm: _____
Signature: _____
Date: _____