

**EXPLORE LIVINGSTON COALITION
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP AND TOURISM RESILIENCY PLAN**

OVERVIEW

Explore Livingston is seeking the services of a professional organization to help the Explore Livingston Coalition – which includes the Livingston DMO, the Livingston Tourism Business Improvement District and Downtown Livingston Business Improvement District – proceed with strategic vision planning to build year-round economic resiliency for the Livingston area tourism and hospitality stakeholders.

Initial work has already begun by the Explore Livingston Coalition. In addition, the Yellowstone Country Tourism Region, of which the Explore Livingston Coalition is a part of, is undergoing its own sustainability planning.

BACKGROUND

Livingston, Montana is an historic train town, the year-round gateway to Yellowstone National Park, and a laidback home base for vibrant arts, epic recreation and an array of unexpectedly sophisticated dining, lodging, shopping and cultural experiences. Livingston is looking to attract travelers who appreciate the welcoming, small-town vibe of a less populated Montana town, and who will recreate responsibly and relish Livingston as if it was their own.

The City of Livingston is more than the traditional gateway to Yellowstone National Park. It is a unique and desirable destination for international and national travelers, plus drive market visitors, with a wide range of interests that go beyond Yellowstone.

Livingston mixes casual small-town charm and world-class amenities with a twist of historic quirkiness and offers an impressive array of arts, culture, history, culinary, events, and recreation adventure amenities.

The Explore Livingston Coalition focuses on attracting high-value, low-impact visitors who appreciate all that Livingston has to offer, throughout all months of the year, but especially the cool weather season, including those visitors who live in Montana.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Overall objectives:

- Develop a strategic vision and plan to build year-round economic resiliency for Livingston area tourism and hospitality stakeholders
- Obtain input from others interested in economic resiliency including local representatives, business leaders, community leaders, Livingston area residents, etc.
- Consider what tourism may look like in the next 10+ years and how to best approach both potential growth and potential disasters

Overall approach:

- Work with the Explore Livingston Coalition to form a steering committee of tourism and hospitality stakeholders, plus others interested in economic resiliency
- Outline key learnings and best practices from other strategic planning and resiliency work that's been conducted across the state
- Summarize existing research and other community-wide data on tourism and its impacts
- Use the June 2022 sentiment survey as a benchmark (pre-Summer 2022 flood)
- Distribute new survey to understand and measure Livingston area hospitality and tourism-related businesses's thoughts on tourism, plus others interested in economic resiliency
- Obtain input and guidance from tourism and hospitality stakeholders, plus others interested in economic resiliency
- Conduct 2-3 listening sessions with community members to gather input
- Analyze and summarize findings into key takeaways and present to steering committee
- Outline plan and share with steering committee for review and adoption
- Present plan to Livingston area tourism and hospitality stakeholders, plus others interested in economic resiliency

Deliverables include:

- Stakeholder involvement and input
- Destination Stewardship and Tourism resiliency plan that includes:
 - Current state of tourism in the Livingston area, plus consideration for future
 - Integration of existing data, plans, etc.
 - Existing sentiments about local tourism and how compares to 2022 sentiments
 - Overall vision
 - Goals and objectives
 - Strategies and actions to address visitor and resident impacts
 - Timeline and metrics

Additional expectations include:

- Ongoing communication and collaboration with the Explore Livingston Coalition
- Monthly updates with the steering committee

PROJECT TIMELINE

- Estimated to be a 9-month project with work beginning in **September 2024** with the end completion goal date of **May 2025**.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Offerors shall carefully review the entire RFP. Offerors shall promptly notify the contact listed via e-mail or in writing of any ambiguity, inconsistency, unduly restrictive specifications, or error which they discover. In this notice, the offeror shall include any terms or requirements within the RFP that preclude the offeror from responding or add unnecessary cost. Offerors shall provide an explanation with suggested modifications. The RFP is issued under 18-4-304, Montana Code Annotated (MCA) and ARM 2.5.602.

Each proposal responding to this RFP must include the information requested in the Proposal Content section of this RFP:

- *Expenses related to the preparation and completion of a response to this RFP are the sole responsibility of the vendor*
- *The proposal with the lowest dollar amount will not necessarily be considered as the best proposal*
- *Incomplete and/or late responses will not be considered*
- *Preferred Format for Response: Email*

PROPOSALS

All bid proposal submittals should be submitted via email by no later than August 30, 2024, to Kris King, executive director, Explore Livingston, Livingston Tourism Business Improvement District, info@explorelivingstonmt.com.

Proposals should not exceed more than 10 pages and should include:

- Organization name and primary contact information
- Overview of organization and services offered
- Organization team members, brief bios and proposed roles and responsibilities
- Up to three references from previous or existing clients
- Up to three examples or case studies of relevant experience
- Recommended approach
- Proposed timeline
- Proposed fees and expenses

CRITERIA

The proposals will be reviewed and evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Demonstrated experience
- Understanding of the tourism industry
- Positive feedback from previous or existing clients
- Recommended approach
- Overall cost of the proposal

Explore Livingston Coalition reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids, proposals, or limited solicitation responses, wholly or in part, and to make awards in any manner deemed in the best interest of the Explore Livingston Coalition.

QUESTIONS?

Contact Kris King, executive director, Explore Livingston, Livingston Tourism Business Improvement District, info@explorelivingstonmt.com

APPENDIX: CHALLENGES

Economic Resilience Challenges: Livingston is experiencing increasing and unsustainable tourism, housing, workforce, small business, development, and recreation pressures. Demands outpace current capacity and without a robust plan, our celebrated community character, historic architecture, and fragile recreational and environmental assets are all imperiled. To retain our irreplaceable historic assets and build a sustainable economy we are in a narrow time window to create a strategic foundational plan to forge an achievable, resilient, and sustainable future.

Seasonality of Tourism: Overcrowding in the warm season months (May through October) and less tourist traffic in the cooler season months (November through April) makes keeping businesses open and staff employed year-round a challenge.

Housing and Affordability Issues: Increasing use of local housing as short-term rental, lack of inventory, and the recent spike in home sales due to telecommuters has made affordable workforce housing the biggest challenge for Park County's service and tourism industries. We will be participating with our partners on a "Housing Heros" campaign celebrating local efforts to offer workforce housing through ADU units and turning VRBO/AirBnB back into rental units for local workers.

Anticipating the Next Crisis: During the summer of 2022, our greater community was hit with significant flooding and the subsequent impacts that flooding had on tourism and the overall economic health of this area. More than ever, we need to consider and implement continued plans to be prepared for future crises, whether it be flooding, fires, global pandemics and more.

The lack of snowfall this winter led to a 70% decrease in ski sales at local shops, decrease in cross country skiing and dog sled visitors, and we anticipate the low snowfall will contribute to wildfires and low river levels in the coming year.

Perception of Only a Pass-Through Location: An additional challenge is the perception that Livingston is a pass-through into Yellowstone National Park and not a destination in itself to explore.

Popularity of Yellowstone Series: The popular Yellowstone series is fictionally set in Paradise Valley, increasing interest in the area by a more general audience who may have false expectations of what the area's experience may be based on what's been portrayed in the series.