

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
Whitefish Community Wildfire Protection Plan Update
Pathways to Removing Obstacles to Housing (PRO Housing) Grant

ANNOUNCEMENT

The City of Whitefish, Montana (City) is seeking proposals from qualified consulting firms to prepare an updated Community Wildfire Protection Plan. The plan should consider a delineation of the Wildland Urban Interface, high risk areas, wildfire response, community preparedness, firefighting capability, areas of insufficient water pressure, feasible evacuation routes, how emergency notification would occur and areas for most effective hazardous fuel treatments.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Located at the southern end of Whitefish Lake, the mountain gateway community of Whitefish, Montana abuts extensive forest lands on three of the four sides of the community. Local timberlands are owned and managed by the State of Montana, the US Forest Service, and private entities such as Stoltze Land and Lumber, Weyerhaeuser, and Whitefish Mountain Resort. Ranked as the second most vulnerable city in Montana to wildfire, Whitefish has valid concerns about the potential threat posed to the city and adjacent neighborhoods by wildfire activity within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) area.

A new Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) needs to be developed for the Whitefish area, based on an updated Wildfire Risk Assessment. These will identify the highest risk areas, strategies to reduce wildfire risks, and make recommendations for future land use patterns with respect to wildfire protection needs. The plan should account for current resident and business owner needs, goals and expectations, for both unincorporated area residents as well as residents and businesses within the Whitefish city limits within the Whitefish Wildfire Protection Plan Area (see map in Exhibit A).

Best management practices, emergency evacuation routes, and specific development construction and design standards would be considered. In addition to encouraging local resident and stakeholder input through public meetings and open houses, the planning effort is expected to be coordinated with appropriate County, State, and Federal officials and staff, and will build upon the 2021 Flathead County Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

PROJECT TASKS

1. A Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) for the forested areas adjacent and within Whitefish. The plan will include an active citizen participation process involving both resident and business owners within the plan area, including unincorporated area of Flathead County. At a minimum the plan should include:

- a. Independent review of current risk assessments available and create more detailed and specific risk assessment analysis for the Whitefish Plan Area.
 - b. Identification of priorities for wildfire risk mitigation, including possible fuel reduction areas and related management actions.
 - c. Community preparedness priorities for wildfire events.
 - d. Evaluation of current firefighting capabilities of all participating fire responders, including staffing, equipment, and response.
 - e. Assessment of existing and potential evacuation routes, particularly those on unpaved forest roads, to determine improvements, needed easements, and other strategies that could improve egress and provide directional information.
 - f. Identification of potential “safety zones.”
 - g. Description of how emergency notifications can and should occur.
 - h. Recommendations for how Whitefish can continue to develop as a fire adapted community.
 - i. Evaluation of building, zoning, and subdivision regulations for potential fire-wise improvements.
 - j. Recommendations for additional development regulations that could be authorized under Montana State Statute.
 - k. Review and evaluation of local mutual aid agreements and inter-governmental collaboration.
2. The final product would be a stand-alone plan that is coordinated with and adopted as a part of Whitefish’s updated Growth Policy, including preparation of a future land use plan consistent with the requirements of the Montana Land Use Planning Act (LUPA) enacted in 2023.

PROJECT TIMEFRAME

Not to exceed six months from date of contract execution.

FORMAT AND CONTENT OF SUBMITTAL

Information to be submitted by prospective firms in their proposals:

1. Firm Qualifications: Qualifications of proposed firm, professional staff members, their supervisors, and availability for the project.
2. The capability of the firm to meet time and project budget, including the total hours and compensation you expect will be required to complete the scope of work, including travel and/or additional expenses.
3. Proposed Technical Approach: Please submit a proposed plan for completing the project tasks.

4. The experience of the firm in doing comparable work for other clients.
5. Work the firm has performed for the City recently or is currently performing.
6. The firm's familiarity with the geographic location of the project or similarly situated communities in the Wildland Urban Interface.
7. The City also requests one copy of a community wildfire protection plan prepared by the firm for a community that is comparable in size and/or risk to the City of Whitefish.
8. Additional Information: Any additional information that is relevant for City officials to consider in reviewing and comparing the firm's proposal.

The submitted documents shall be limited to ten pages or less, excluding resumes and the single copy of a sample CWPP described above.

CLOSING DATE AND ADDRESS

Three copies and one digital copy of the proposal clearly identified as "Whitefish Community Wildfire Protection Plan Update" shall be submitted to the City Clerk, City of Whitefish, 418 E. 2nd Street, Whitefish, Montana 59937 on or before 4:00 PM local time on the 14th day of November 2025.

SELECTION PROCESS AND CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS

All proposals submitted will be evaluated and ranked by the Rating Panel to determine which candidates will move into the interview stage. Three to five qualified candidates will then be interviewed by the Consultant Selection Committee at which time additional information may be requested.

Selection criteria will consist of the following:

1. Qualifications of personnel.
2. Capability to meet time and project budget requirements.
3. Technical and administrative approach.
4. Present and projected workloads.
5. Related experience on similar projects.
6. Recent and current work for the City.
7. Familiarity with the geographic location of the project or similarly situated communities in the Wildland Urban Interface.

The scope of services and proposed costs will be discussed in more detail during the interview phase. The City's goal is to hold interviews during the week of November 17, 2025, so the City Council may consider awarding the project to the selected firm at the December 1, 2025, City

Council meeting. The project is expected to begin immediately upon award and execution of the contract.

The City of Whitefish reserves the right to select the firm and accept the proposal which the City Council deems is in the best interest of the City and to reject any proposals that the City Council deems not to be in the best interest of the City for any reason. Fire Chief, Cole Hadley, can be reached at (406) 863-2491 or chadley@cityofwhitefish.gov regarding questions.