

Request for Qualifications for Ashford Bike Trail Feasibility Study

Mount Rainier Business Alliance (MRBA) requests Statements of Qualifications from qualified multidisciplinary teams to complete research and development of the Ashford Bike Trail Feasibility Study. The result of this RFQ process will be the negotiation and award of a Professional Services Agreement (PSA). One firm may be selected for the award and negotiation of a PSA. MRBA may elect to assign only specific portions of a project, or in other cases, the entire project including auxiliary associated work to the Consultant.

General Information

Submittals Due

Statements of Qualifications (SOQs) will be accepted electronically until **4:00 PM PST on January 15, 2024**. Note that Statements of Qualifications received after the appointed time set for receipt or received incomplete will not be considered.

Project Location

Ashford is a community in the unincorporated area of Pierce County, WA that is located west of Mount Rainier National Park's Nisqually River Entrance on SR 706. The nearby river is the southernmost border of Pierce County that separates it from neighboring Lewis County.

Contact Information

MRBA President: Kerry Samudio

Phone: (208) 721-1085

Email: kerry@whittakermountaineering.com

IMPORTANT NOTICE

The project is funded by a Pierce County lodging tax grant secured in the County's 2024-2025 adopted budget. It is paid out on a reimbursement basis and billing arrangements might be needed to accommodate MRBA's cash flow.

Submittal, Review, Award Schedule

DATE	ACTIVITY
January 15, 2024 by 4:00 PM PST	SOQ packets due
January 25, 2024	Establish "Short List" of Applicants
January 26-31, 2024	Applicant Interviews (as needed)
February 1, 2024	Award PSA

Project Information

Project Background

Ashford and other Mount Rainier National Park "gateway communities" are heavily reliant on recreational tourism for their economy. National Park closures and underutilized recreation potential in the area are significant limiting factors affecting local economic health. MRBA seeks to address these by activating spring and fall "shoulder seasons" and developing recreational opportunities outside the national park. The main opportunities MRBA is focusing on relate to the development of a mountain bike (MTB) trail system on the many lands owned and managed by state and federal agencies and nonprofit organizations in the area. Ideally,

this would entail attracting multi-day trips to the area, resulting in both patronage of restaurants and other services as well as stays at local lodging businesses.

Project Goal

The goal of this project is to analyze and make recommendations about the feasibility of a mountain bike trail system in the area to generate multi-day visitation, either by individuals or via organized events. Following a market analysis research and stakeholder process, a report will be developed that contains research findings, including economic and demand analysis, and recommendations if and how MRBA should pursue its interests in diversifying the local tourism economy as mentioned above.

Scope of Work & Deliverables

1. Complete market analysis of an Ashford-area MTB trail system that will generate multi-day (i.e. overnight) visitation to the area. The inclusion of other activities that could use this trail system in whole or in part (e.g. gravel biking, trail running, hiking, snowshoeing/skiing) should also be included. The analysis should include a stakeholder process and include relevant local tourism-oriented businesses, event organizers, and the MTB user community. This may include interviews, virtual or in-person meetings, online surveys, etc.
2. Develop materials for stakeholder outreach based on the topics described above.
3. Complete a feasibility analysis regarding developing a trail system and supporting facilities the market analysis indicates are needed. The primary areas to consider are Elbe Hills State Forest, Tahoma State Forest, the Mount Osborne area of the Snoqualmie/Gifford Pinchot National Forest, Nisqually Community Forest, and Ashford County Park, however, other areas may be included. The consultant is not expected to provide technical trail design services.
4. Draft a report including maps/graphics on the findings of both the market and feasibility analyses along with recommendations for achieving the stated purposes of diversifying the Ashford area’s outdoor recreation-based economy via the development of an MTB trail system that generates multi-day tourist stays.
5. Coordinate with MRBA or any entity it indicates regarding the above process.
6. Revise the draft report based on feedback received from MRBA or any entity it designates to review the draft.

Project Budget

The budget for the entire project shall not exceed \$80,000.

Project Term

The PSA period is anticipated to be from February 1, 2024 through May 31, 2024, unless sooner terminated as provided elsewhere in the PSA.

Proposed Contract Schedule

DATE	ACTIVITY
February 2024	Award PSA – Begin work
March 2024	Market analysis, stakeholder process
April 2024	Feasibility analysis
May 15, 2024	Draft report
May 31, 2024	Final report

Submittal Requirements

Team Qualifications

1. The selected team must meet all requirements and provide, with their submitted SOQ, any exceptions and alternate language to the general conditions in the Professional Services Agreement that will be used for contracting the work:

Statement of Qualifications Contents

1. **Letter of Interest:** Maximum one page, identify the lead firm, project manager, and key staff proposed to work on the project.
2. **Proposal:** The proposal shall include the following
 - a. Profiles of the lead firm, including number of employees, location, number of years in business, and identification of any sub-consultants. Resumes of the project manager and key staff assigned to work on the project, including relevant sub-consultants.
 - b. Qualifications of the team as it relates to meeting the scope of this project.
 - c. Description of your project understanding and your approach to satisfying the requirements of the scope.
 - d. Relevant experience with outdoor recreation market analysis, feasibility analysis, and familiarity with Washington State and federal recreation regulatory and funding context.
 - e. Descriptions of similar projects completed recently. Include the year completed, how well the project met the scope, timeline, budget, and contact information of the entity the work was completed for.
 - f. A detailed budget for the activities specified in the scope of work, not to exceed the Project Budget maximum specified above.
 - g. Any requested changes to the proposed contract schedule.

Formatting Requirements

SOQs should be formatted to 8 ½" x 11", with 12-page faces maximum. The letter of interest and title page are not counted toward page limitation. Use a minimum font size of 11.

Delivery

Via email, deliver one PDF copy of your submittal not exceeding 20MB to the MRBA President at info@mt-rainier.com. Statements of Qualifications must be received prior to the due date/time listed on page 1 to be considered.

Evaluation Criteria

All valid statements of qualifications will be evaluated in accordance with the criteria established below. Evaluators will use points to score each submittal. At the MRBA's option, interviews may be held. MRBA's selection committee will rate and select the consultant team based on the following criteria:

SELECTION CRITERIA	WEIGHT
Qualifications of the team as they relate to this project	20%
Relevant experience conducting market analyses of outdoor recreation, particularly mountain biking, focused on generating multi-day visits	20%
Relevant experience of the team interviewing diverse stakeholders and interest groups and preparing easy-to-understand public outreach materials	20%
Relevant experience conducting feasibility analyses of outdoor recreation, particularly mountain biking, focused on generating multi-day visits	20%
Quality and completeness of submittal and/or presentation	20%

Final evaluation for short-listed firms will be determined by the following criteria:

- Customer references may be requested to be submitted from a firm.
- Project interviews as invited by MRBA, when deemed necessary. MRBA will notify invited teams of the interview schedule, agenda and any additional information being requested.

Attachments

2023 MRBA Lodging Tax grant application.

PIERCE COUNTY LODGING TAX — SUB-APPLICATION:

➤ **2024 ASSET/PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT (CAPITAL PROJECT) (E)**

Applicant/Organization Name: Mount Rainier Business Alliance	Project Name: Ashford Bike Trail Feasibility Study
--	--

Project Information

Projected room night generation: Over 1,000 room nights annually.

The Asset/Product Development (Capital Project) efforts must support these priorities of the Pierce County Tourism Strategic Plan:

- Drive Overnight Visitors
- Leverage Proven or Identified Demand Generators
- Focus on specified Target Markets

This priority is designed to encourage innovation in creating new visitor experiences and are longer-term projects that have the potential of permanently enhancing an experience or creating a new attraction that will materially impact visitation to Pierce County. Projected room night generation: Minimum 1,000 room nights annually.

The goal of the Asset/Product Development (Capital Project) fund is to provide resources to help support the overall development of new experiences or assets that will have long term tourism impacts. The funds are not contemplated to be the sole source to complete a capital project, but to support the needed steps that will encourage additional funding to be raised for a project (such as required land and usage studies).

Project must be located on property owned by Pierce County within unincorporated Pierce County or property owned by a Pierce County municipality whose lodging taxes go to Pierce County (excludes Fife, Gig Harbor, Lakewood, Puyallup, and Tacoma).

Describe the following areas of your Asset/Product (Capital Project) effort(s): (For definitions of terms used below, please see the Appendix.)

- Attach to your application packet, any drawings, maps, blueprints, photos, etc. related to the project, if applicable.

	[Type Project/Event Name Here]
Brief Project Summary	To create a destination for a mountain biking with a trail system accommodating various levels of riders, to hold mountain bike festivals, races, and skills camps in the Spring/Fall seasons. The project would create many new trails and link into existing gravel trails with the main trailhead located at Ashford County Park. In the winter, the trails can be utilized for snowshoeing/hiking.
Start and End Date	1/1/24 - 12/31/24
Identify the Demand Generator	There is a vital need for more recreation/tourism in the Ashford area outside of Mt. Rainier National Park (MRNP). The sport of mountain biking continues to grow and there is a need for more terrain and options for enthusiasts of all levels.
Target Market <i>(Must be supported by research and/or actual prior results)</i>	The feasibility study will provide the support documentation and research needed to identify the target market.

PIERCE COUNTY LODGING TAX — SUB-APPLICATION:

➤ 2024 ASSET/PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT (CAPITAL PROJECT) (E)

	[Type Project/Event Name Here]
Source(s) used to identify the Target Market	The Feasibility Study will include various surveys of regional visitors along with statistical data from the following entities: Travel Tacoma – Mt. Rainer Tourism & Sports, Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance, ForeverGreen Trails, Visit Rainier, Whittaker Mountaineering, South Pierce County Mountain Bike Association.
Geographic Target	Primarily regional Pacific Northwest Visitors and Western States (WA, OR, ID, MT, CA., CAN), however, our area does see visitors from all over the US and abroad.
Marketing Channel(s)	Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance, Travel Tacoma – Mt. Rainer Tourism & Sports, Visit Rainier, Whittaker Mountaineering, ForeverGreen Trails, South Pierce County Mountain Bike Association, Mt. Tahoma Trail Association, Mount Rainier Business Alliance, e-marketing campaigns, and social channels for all entities.
Call to Action	Ride, Play, Stay – come ride Ashford’s extensive Mountain Bike Trail system, play in the lush forests at the foot of Mt. Rainier, and stay in one of the many nearby lodging options. Specific marketing/Call to Action campaigns will be created for each specific events.
Partnerships/Sponsorships	Travel Tacoma – Mt. Rainer Tourism & Sports, Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance, ForeverGreen Trails, Visit Rainier, Dept. of Natural Resources, Nisqually Land Trust, Nisqually Community Forest, Mt. Tahoma Trail Association, Whittaker Mountaineering, South Pierce County Mountain Bike Association
Project management experience of firm handling the Asset Development Project	We are in the process of creating an official Request for Proposal (RFP) to obtain further consultant quotes for the scope of work. We have received two consultant proposals to-date and will secure another 1-2 prior to determining the most appropriate fit for the study. A brief summary of the experience of the two firms we have received proposals from can be found on page 5.
Projected number of lodging nights asset / product will generate	Once the trail system is developed, we anticipate well over 1,000 lodging nights per year with a specific focus on events in the slower seasons. Two-day Bike Festivals including music, skills clinics, DIY repair workshop; races of all levels, gravel races, Mountain Bike races, kids’ specific clinics and events, as well as winter guided and non-guided snowshoeing on the trails.
What are your plans for growth and the anticipated return on investment (ROI) in Year One, Two, and Beyond?	Year one, 2024: Feasibility Study Year two, 2025: Trail Build Development Year three, 2026: Kick-off Bike Festival Event, two race events (one in Spring/one fall) with two different courses at each event. ROI – 500-800 Room nights. Year four, 2027: continued growth of all events, ROI 1,000+ lodging nights.
Method of Measurement	This is part of the feasibility study and still yet to be fully determined. The following partners will all be instrumental in assisting with this data: Travel Tacoma – Mt. Rainer Tourism & Sports, ForeverGreen Trails, USA Cycling, Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance.
Other Projected Milestones	

PIERCE COUNTY LODGING TAX — SUB-APPLICATION:

➤ 2024 ASSET/PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT (CAPITAL PROJECT) (E)

Joint Legislative Audit & Review Committee (JLARC) Required Information

Applicants applying for use of LTAC funds must provide estimates of how it will result in increases in the number of people traveling for business or pleasure on a trip as required by RCW 67.28.1816:

Activity Type: (Check box or place an “x” by it) <input type="checkbox"/> Event/Festival <input type="checkbox"/> Facility <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing			
	2024 Projections	Methodology	Comments
Overall Attendance: Enter total number of people projected to attend this activity	N/A	Choose an item.	
Number of attendees who traveled 50 miles or more to attend:			
Total:	N/A	Choose an item.	
Of total above, attendees who traveled from another state or country:		Choose an item.	
Attendees who stayed overnight:			
Paid accommodations (paid lodging establishments such as hotels, motels, B&Bs, etc.):	N/A	Choose an item.	
Unpaid accommodations (such as family and friends):		Choose an item.	
Paid Lodging nights: Enter total projected number of paid lodging nights. One Lodging night = one or more persons occupying one room for one night.			
Paid lodging nights	N/A	Choose an item.	

Activity Notes:

This is a feasibility study to obtain the above information. The Feasibility Study outline will include the following steps:

1. Various Project management meetings with MRBA and other partners
1. Data Collection
2. Trends Analysis
2. Usage Projections
3. Operational Model; Create detailed base maps with existing and proposed routes, refine trail use standards, estimate costs
3. Design Recommendations
4. Economic Impact Analysis
5. Report Development, Review, and Final Presentations

PIERCE COUNTY LODGING TAX — SUB-APPLICATION:

➤ 2024 ASSET/PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT (CAPITAL PROJECT) (E)

Additional Project Plan Specifics: The trail system event opportunities will focus on the slower lodging seasons of Fall, Winter, and Spring. Snowshoeing will replace mountain biking in the winter months on the same trails system with plans to expand into winter biking trails in the future.

NOTE: Fat biking trails require less steep terrain, thus the reason that this will be a future expansion plan, where snowshoeing will be available in the winter months as soon as the trails are in place.

Project Narrative: Provide qualitative explanation for each item below (expanding upon your short answers earlier in the form).

1. Brief Project Summary

To create a destination mountain bike/recreational trail system accommodating various levels of riders; to hold mountain bike festivals, races, and skills camps in the Spring/Fall seasons. The project would create many new trails and link into existing gravel trails with a main trailhead located at Ashford County Park. In the winter, the trails can be utilized/promoted for snowshoeing/hiking. Long-term plans include trail use for all modalities of off-road cycling, including but not limited to all-mountain, touring, gravel, fat-tire, single-track, recreational, advanced, event based, and specialized racing interests. Guided and non-guided snowshoeing excursions would be promoted/offered in the winter months.

2. Start and End Date

1/1/24 - 12/31/24

3. Identify the Demand Generator

There is a vital need for more recreation/tourism in the Ashford area outside of Mt. Rainier National Park (MRNP). The Ashford, Elbe, and Mineral communities of unincorporated Pierce County rely on tourism in the park and are heavily impacted when MRNP cannot meet visitors' needs. This plan targets the shoulder and winter seasons with mountain biking in the Spring and Fall and snowshoeing in the Winter, with the potential to expand into winter fat biking trails in the future, all utilizing the same trail system. Lodging rooms in this area are often empty/under-utilized in the Fall, Winter, and Spring seasons. In December of 2022, MRNP closed the road from the National Park Inn to Paradise Monday-Friday. This essentially cut off the prime recreational opportunities of Snowshoeing, Backcountry Ski Mountaineering, Cross-Country Skiing, and sledding within the Park. This has had a tremendous negative impact on all lodging, restaurants, and small businesses in the Ashford, Elbe, and Mineral communities. As of the submission of this grant application, the road to Paradise continues to remain closed from Monday-Friday.

The sport of mountain biking continues to grow and there is a need for more terrain and options for enthusiasts of all levels. Ashford has the terrain and is a prime location for a recreation destination, outside of MRNP. The winter closure of the road to Paradise in MRNP demonstrates the strong need for our community to offer tourism opportunities that are not reliant upon the park. This is crucial to the survival of the small business community within are area.

4. Target Market (Must be supported by research and/or actual prior results)

The Feasibility Study is the first step towards accumulating the support documentation and research needed to specifically identify the target market in further detail. Our projected target is entry to expert level mountain bikers and winter recreation snowshoe enthusiasts.

Source(s) used to identify the Target Market

Each of the partner entities noted below will be key in providing market data, analysis of similar trail builds in other rural areas, and to assist in the research, surveys, and data that will be obtained in the Feasibility Study.

Travel Tacoma – Mt. Rainer Tourism & Sports, Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance, ForeverGreen Trails, Visit Rainier, Mt. Tahoma Trail Association, Whittaker Mountaineering, South Pierce County Mountain Bike Association.

PIERCE COUNTY LODGING TAX — SUB-APPLICATION:

➤ 2024 ASSET/PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT (CAPITAL PROJECT) (E)

5. Geographic Target

Primarily regional Pacific Northwest Visitors and Western States (WA, OR, ID, MT, CA., CAN), however, our area does see visitors from all over the US and abroad.

6. Marketing Channel(s)

Mount Rainier Business Alliance, Travel Tacoma – Mt. Rainer Tourism & Sports, ForeverGreen Trails, Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance, Visit Rainier, South Pierce County Mountain Bike Association, Whittaker Mountaineering, Mt. Tahoma Trail Association - e-marketing campaigns, and social channels for all entities.

7. Call to Action

Ride, Play, Stay – come enjoy Ashford’s extensive Mountain Bike Trail system accommodating riders of all levels, play in the lush forests at the foot of Mt. Rainier, and stay in one of the many nearby lodging options from a cozy cabin in the woods, to a modern hotel room or private home with your own hot tub. Specific marketing/Call to Action campaigns will be created for various targeted demographics dependent upon the specific event – mountain bike festivals, multi-day skills clinics/camps, races for advanced riders, intro clinics for beginner and intermediate riders, junior (kids) races, winter guided and non-guided snowshoeing.

8. Partnerships/Sponsorships

Travel Tacoma – Mt. Rainer Tourism & Sports, Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance, ForeverGreen Trails, Visit Rainier, Department of Natural Resources, Nisqually Land Trust, Nisqually Community Forest, Mt. Tahoma Trail Association, Whittaker Mountaineering, South Pierce County Mountain Bike Association.

9. Project management experience of firm handling the Asset Development Project

We are in the process of creating an official Request for Proposals (RFP) to obtain further consultant quotes for the scope of work. We have received two consultant proposals to-date and will secure another 1-2 before determining the most appropriate fit for the study. Of those submitted, their experience includes the following:

- Pierce County Foothills Trail Master Plan/EIS – completed the award-winning master plan, environmental impact statement, operating ordinance, and voter referendum materials for the Foothills Trail segment of the Mount Rainier/Nisqually Delta Trail for the Pierce County Parks, Recreation, & Community Services Department.
- Completed an award-winning countywide non-motorized trails plan for the Island County Public Works Department funded with Interstate Transportation Enhancement Act (ISTEA) demonstration grant monies.
- Worked with the Kittitas County Board of County Commissioners, River Access Citizen Advisory Committee, Public Lands Advisory Committee members, river users, and landowners to develop an award-winning plan identifying significant river wildlife habitat, conservation potentials, public recreational opportunities, and river safety access of interest and economic value to residents and tourists alike.
- Island County Non-Motorized Transportation Plan – worked with County Commissioners to develop an integrated countywide system of on and off-road trails to provide commuter and recreational benefits.

10. Projected number of lodging nights product / asset will generate.

Once the trail system is developed, we anticipate updates of 2,000+ lodging nights per year with specific focus on events in the Fall and Spring seasons. Two-Day Bike Festivals including music, skills clinics, DIY repair workshops; races of all levels, gravel races, Mountain Bike races, kids’ specific clinics and events, winter guided and non-guided snowshoeing on the trails.

As noted previously, the focus of events in the Spring, Fall, and Winter is where the true economic growth can provide a positive impact on the small communities in our area that are dependent upon the tourism market.

In 5 years, we estimated upwards of 2,000 room nights or more. This is an untapped region that lags in overall off-road cycling infrastructure. We estimate the potential ROI for this development to generate a much-needed economic boost for our area and the surrounding communities.

PIERCE COUNTY LODGING TAX — SUB-APPLICATION:

➤ 2024 ASSET/PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT (CAPITAL PROJECT) (E)

11. What are your plans for growth and the anticipated return on investment (ROI) in Year One, Two, and Beyond?

Year one, 2024: Feasibility Study

Year two, 2025: Trail Build Development

Year three, 2026: Kick-off Bike Festival Event, two race events (one in Spring/one fall) with two different courses at each event. ROI – 500 Room nights. Local retailer to begin renting bikes and promoting trails with Visit Rainier in off season as multi-day getaways. Winter guided and non-guided snowshoeing excursions.

Year four, 2027: Continued growth of all events, ROI 1,000+ lodging nights.

Year Five, 2027: Continued growth of all events with a focus on expanding Winter Fat Biking opportunities and events.

ROI: 2,000-2,500+ lodging nights.

12. Method of Measurement

This is part of the Feasibility Study and still yet to be fully determined. In addition to the results of the Feasibility Study conducted by the selected Consultant Firm, the following partners will all be instrumental in assisting with further data: Travel Tacoma – Mt. Rainer Tourism & Sports, ForeverGreen Trails, USA Cycling, Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance.

13. Other Projected Milestones

N/A

14. Attach or include an organizational chart

See attached organizational chart and bio sheet for MRBA board members.