Request for Qualifications (RFQ)

Climate Smart Glacier

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Interactive Flood Scenario Map and Storytelling Platform Development

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1. Invitation to Submit Qualifications

Climate Smart Glacier invites qualified contractors or small teams to submit qualifications and begin a dialogue for the development of an interactive mapping platform and story-sharing portal focused on flood awareness and preparedness in Flathead County, Montana. The responses will be the basis for seeking funds to create this mapping platform.

This project will result in a public-facing tool that integrates mapping, historical context, future projections, and narrative storytelling to help residents and professionals better understand flood risk and take informed action. We anticipate this being a phased project built through completion of successive tasks as funds permit. RFPs will be sent to qualified contractors.

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2. Organizational Context & Purpose

Climate Smart Glacier is a non-profit community-based organization that was formed in 2016 with the following mission.

We foster thriving and resilient communities by addressing challenges from a changing climate. We rely on collaboration, community engagement, citizen empowerment, and local solutions to seed hope and take meaningful action for a more sustainable Flathead.

The purpose of the flood awareness project is to facilitate information sharing, increase awareness of flood risks, and promote flood preparedness among local governments, businesses, and residents in Flathead County.

Objectives:

1. Develop and maintain an online interactive mapping tool showing flood risks in Flathead County, including links to disaster preparedness, mitigation, and recovery resources for residents, businesses, and local governments.
2. Participate in partnerships and initiatives aimed at reducing flood insurance costs and improving insurance availability for property owners in the County.
3. Promote and support activities that protect water quality, reduce property damage from floods, and protect lives during flood events (public education, best-practice guidance for property owners, stormwater and riparian management, emergency planning, etc.).

As part of this initiative, Climate Smart Glacier has formed a GIS work group of interested stakeholders to provide input on development of the map. Stakeholders include representatives from Western Montana Conservation Commission, Flathead County Conservation District, ESRI, Flathead Lake Biological Station/University of Montana and several community representatives with GIS expertise. Climate Smart Glacier is also in discussion with Flathead County Planning & Zoning on coordinating the flood awareness project with the FEMA Community Rating System (CRS) program to reduce flood insurance rates in the county.

Climate Smart Glacier has secured partial funding for the project from Whitefish Community Foundation, Northwest Montana Association of Realtors, and Western Montana Conservation Commission. The final budget will be determined in cooperation with the work group and the selected contractor.

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3. Project Objectives & Success Criteria

In addition to mapping functionality, the platform will integrate historical photographs, video, archival aerial imagery, and location-based storytelling to create a compelling and locally grounded user experience. The platform will also include links to accessible emergency preparedness information to help homeowners and residents better understand steps they can take to reduce risk.

This initial StoryMap is intended to serve as a foundational product that can be expanded over time. Future phases of this work will include additional pictures and stories expanding on the documentation of the 1964 flood and may also include more advanced flood modeling scenarios, including analysis of how 500-year and 1964-scale flood events would impact different rivers, tributaries and regions of Flathead County. GIS-analysis will assess estimated economic impacts of flood scenarios, including impacts to public infrastructure and critical facilities. This future phase may include additional scenarios to account for climate change, such as First Street's projections of future climate-related flood risk.

The selected contractor will support the development of an interactive flood scenario map and storytelling platform:

- Uses the 1964 flood as a central narrative anchor
- Allows users to explore flood risk at an address or parcel level
- Displays and compares multiple flood datasets, including:
    - 100-year floodplain
    - 500-year floodplain
    - 1964 flood extent (where available)
- Creates the foundation necessary to communicate that flood risk extends beyond mapped boundaries of flood inundation zones.
    - Supported by verified reports of flooding in other areas and the cause of the flooding. This is a secondary endeavor to this RFQ and would rely on the foundational structure built to provide first hand accounts, written and pictures, of the 1964 flood.
- Is usable by multiple audiences, including:
    - Residents and homebuyers
    - Realtors, appraisers, and insurance agents
    - Educators and students
    - Community planners, public officials, and infrastructure managers
- Encourages actionable outcomes, including:
    - Increased flood preparedness
    - Increased consideration of flood insurance

Success will be defined by a tool that is clear, engaging, and practical for real-world use. It is not our expectation that mapping and GIS analysis will meet FEMA-specific requirements for Flood Risk Analysis.

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4. Scope of Work

The contractor will support the technical development and configuration of an interactive map and storytelling platform using content and direction provided by Climate Smart Glacier and the GIS work group. Climate Smart Glacier has identified that Esri ArcGIS is the most likely platform to accomplish current and future requirements of this project, but CSG is open to other platforms and approaches. Climate Smart Glacier has a non-profit license that will provide access to ArcGIS. The anticipated tasks are listed below.

Task 1 ~ Interactive Map(s) Development

- Configure and build the interactive map or maps for the foundational structure so that Climate Smart Glacier can readily add additional content to expand the story content being delivered.

    - Address or parcel search functionality via Montana Cadastral database
    - Flood layers, including:
        - 100-year floodplain
        - 500-year floodplain
        - 1964 flood extent (if available)
    - Satellite basemap imagery
    - Historical aerial photograph base map (provided by Climate Smart Glacier)
        - 1950's aerial imagery we have access to vs the data layer available on ArcGIS online
- Work with client to ensure that the durability and hosted location of the interactive map and data will result in long term ease of access and ability to update with minimal cost and effort.

Task 2 ~ Story Map/Web Map Configuration

Develop and configure interactive web maps that:

- Creates a user experience that is intuitive and accessible to non-technical users - Leaning toward StoryMap interface
- Optimizes for both desktop and mobile use
- Provides a clean, visually engaging layout
- Organizes sections for logical flow, user engagement, and presentation
- Initially implements 5-10 pieces of narrative content that includes images, written stories, and media,(provided by the client), of the 1964 flood.
- Provides flood preparedness steps and information about mitigating risk
- Communicates that flood risk extends beyond mapped boundaries section
- For other potential components see Appendix: Interactive Map Journey

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5. Division of Responsibilities

To maximize cost efficiency and leverage internal expertise:

Climate Smart Glacier will develop and provide:

- Narrative content and story structure
- Select and organize historical images and firsthand accounts (5-10)
- Provide GIS datasets where available and necessary
- Identify key locations and story points
- Esri ArcGIS online organizational account
- Flood preparedness information and resource links
- Facilitate youth and high school clubs to assist in developing/collecting content
- Convene and provide staff support to GIS work group

Contractor will:

- Configure and build the Interactive Map(s) and StoryMap along with the corresponding foundational components to enable Climate Smart Glacier to continue adding content as it is developed.
- Develop and style web maps
- Implement interactive features
- Provide technical guidance and recommendations
- Coordinate with the GIS work group as needed for project scope and deliverables and incorporate feedback as necessary to build a product that meets intended objectives of the project.

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6. Submittal Requirements

Submittals should include:

- Cover letter demonstrating understanding of project
- Business information (Address, Phone, email, Key Point of contact. If applicable years in Business, web page, certifications ….)
- Relevant experience, particularly with ArcGIS StoryMaps or other interactive map creation - Include up to three relevant projects with references. No more than 3 pages.
- Resumes of individuals that will be assigned to the project.
- Current availability and interest in on-going relationship with CSG to work on additional phases of the project. (See Appendix B)

The following experience is not required but will be considered in ranking proposals.

- Experience working with stakeholder/advisory groups
- Experience with floodplain – FEMA data and CRS program

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7. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- Relevant experience – 30%
- Quality of submittal and understanding of project– 30%
- Work samples – 20%
- Availability and interest in phase 2 - 20%

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8. Process & Timeline

1. Submittals and questions should be directed to the following email:

   info@climatesmartglaciercountry.org

2. To receive updates regarding the review process and responses to questions regarding the RFQ, send an email with the subject line “Intent to Respond to RFQ”

3. Questions should be submitted by email no later than July 24th, 2026 Questions will be compiled and responses will be shared with all interested parties at least one week prior to the deadline.

4. Submittals must be received by email by: August 7th, 2026.

5. It is anticipated that Climate Smart Glacier will review submissions within 3 weeks of the deadline. The deadline may be extended until we have received sufficient responses to effectively evaluate qualified respondents.

6. Climate Smart Glacier may schedule follow-up interviews with contractors as needed.

Appendix A: Proposed Story Map Content

Interactive Map User Journey:

The webpage will display a quick intro about the map, what information can be found below, as well as the intended purpose of the map. The header of the webpage will have quick links to the sections of the webpage below so users can quickly navigate to the experience/area they wish to see. The contractor will work with the client to develop a framework that can be expanded upon and ultimately may include the following information. The contractor will work with the GIS work group to determine the initial information to be included in the story map.

1. Recalling the 1964 Flood - The user journey will begin with a map that provides information from the 1964 flood. This topic, an electronic presentation of the 1964 flood, is our hook to get users onto the website. This map will include the 1964 flood inundation layer, the 100 Year inundation layer, and geolocated first hand accounts from the 1964 Flood which can include pictures and possibly videos.
    a. 1964 flood inundation
    b. 100 year and 500 year inundation layers
    c. 1964 accounts of the flood with images and possibly videos imbedded and geolocated, 5-10
    d. Historic Aerial images
    e. Satellite imagery base layer
2. What this means for my property - The second map will present the user with the opportunity to view their address as it pertains to the 100 year, 500 year, and 1964 flood inundation areas. This map should also introduce the variability in determining the 100 year and possibly 500 year flood inundation areas by presenting the various flood inundation maps that show different impacts for the same level of flooding. We would also include in this section, in writing, the historical record of flooding events in Flathead County to show that frequencies are much more regular than the designations imply.
    a. Critical infrastructure potentially impacted
    b. 100 year, 500 year, and 1964 inundation layer
    c. Montana Cadastral location data
    d. Septic systems within flood inundation zones
    e. Flood insurance resources
3. What's been done to prepare for future flooding - Proactive flood prevention work done to date - This section would be primarily text driven and would outline efforts and work done to minimize the impact of future flooding events as well as what can still be done to minimize flood impacts going forward.
    a. Conservation easements (mapped)
    b. Levees (mapped)
    c. Infrastructure improvements
        i. Storm Water system
        ii. Waste Water Treatment
    d. Improvement options

        i. Culvert improvements
        ii. Bridge enhancements
4. Preparation and prevention steps you can take - This section will highlight the action that local residents can take to prepare for a flood and what they should do in the event of a significant flood.
    a. Evacuation routes
    b. Evacuation Centers
    c. Hazardous Materials
    d. Emergency preparedness kit
    e. What to know when buying in the floodplain

Functionality:

- Toggle between flood datasets (e.g., 100-year, 500-year, 1964)
- Address lookup
- Clickable map points for:
    - Historical images
    - Flood accounts tied to specific locations
    - Videos (personal account of 64 flood)

Other map features may be identified through work with the GIS work group.

Appendix B: Phase 2 – Expanded Scenario Impact Assessment

In addition to the primary scope of work, Climate Smart Glacier is considering a future effort to add analysis related to scenarios for economic impacts of flooding beyond the 100 year floodplain. This future scope would be incorporated into the initial product to seamlessly integrate with the foundational structure of the initial build.

Existing data via the Western Montana Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan are available regarding the estimated financial impacts of a 100-year flood event within the region. Climate Smart Glacier is interested in exploring how this data could be incorporated and utilized to create a similar economic impact for a 500 year flood as well as a 1964-scale flood in Flathead County.

This information would then be integrated into the interactive mapping platform or developed into a complementary analytical or visualization component and may include:

- Integration of existing economic impact data into the platform
- Visualization of potential financial impacts at a community or parcel level (if feasible)
- Development of additional tools, dashboards, or map layers that communicate economic risk
- Recommendations for how to effectively present this information to a public audience

A list of potential publicly available data layers for the scenario planning has been compiled and can be viewed at the following link:

<Insert link>