

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

Part-Time Grant Writing Services

Town of Shepherdstown, West Virginia

Statements of Qualifications Due: June 12, 2026, 5:00 PM ET

INTRODUCTION

The Town of Shepherdstown, West Virginia, is soliciting Statements of Qualifications (SOQ) from interested individuals or firms to support the town in instituting an internal program for seeking grant funding to support town priorities, in developing annual plans for seeking grants, and in writing grant applications. It is anticipated that the selected individual or firm will provide these services on a part-time contractual basis.

The town seeks a skilled grant writing professional or firm who can hit the ground running. The successful candidate will bring expertise and strategic thinking needed to establish a durable grant-seeking program for the town from the ground up.

It is anticipated that the two primary outcomes of the first year of the engagement will be:

- Development of a strong grant-seeking function and annual Strategic Grant Seeking Plan for the town government including establishing relationships with funders, gathering information, developing planning tools, and setting up systems that will deliver results.
- Produce more than \$1,000,000 in grant funding for town priorities.

Outcomes of future years will be to update the annual Strategic Grant Seeking Plan to align with new priorities and to write grant applications that result in new grant funding for the town priorities.

This Request for Qualifications (RFQ) is not a solicitation for bids or a guarantee of contract award. Selected individuals and firms will be invited to contract with the Town for the requested services annually.

The Town reserves the right to reject any or all submissions, to waive technical irregularities, and to accept submissions deemed to be in the best interest of the Town.

BACKGROUND

Founded in 1762, Shepherdstown is an historic town nestled along the Potomac River, approximately 60 miles west of the core of Washington, DC. The population includes approximately 1,500 residents in the town proper with an additional 3,000–4,000 residents living in nearby unincorporated areas that call Shepherdstown their hometown. Shepherdstown's per capita income is among the highest in West Virginia.

Much of Shepherdstown comprises a historic district with many buildings dating to the late 1700s. The quaint downtown area includes small shops that cater to residents and tourists alike, with a strong focus on arts, crafts, and restaurants, many of which serve as music venues. The town is surrounded by breathtaking natural beauty, including its

iconic Town Run stream that winds throughout the town, scenic rural vistas, parks, and outdoor recreation opportunities.

Shepherd University, a component of the West Virginia University system, with upwards of 3,000 undergraduate students, is located in town. Tourism, recreation, and education are key drivers of the local economy.

The municipality operates under a strong mayor-council form of government. The town government is making significant investments to modernize town functions as a means to protect and preserve the character of the town for the long term. Priority areas include infrastructure expansion (water and wastewater systems); streetscape improvements; business development and entrepreneurship; the arts (visual and performing arts, music, and crafts); historic preservation; environmental protection both in town and in the surrounding county area; transportation; recreation; affordable housing; and services for residents.

The town currently has no dedicated staff position for grant identification or proposal development. This engagement is intended to establish a part-time grant writing function that will increase the volume and quality of grant applications submitted on behalf of the municipality.

SCOPE OF SERVICES

The selected individual or firm will administer the following services as an independent contractor (it is estimated that the services will require approximately 15 to 20 hours per week on average).

1. Create Strategic Grant Seeking Plan

The consultant will, with the guidance and input of town officials, establish an annual Strategic Grant Seeking Plan for the town. The plan will serve as a living document informing town grant-seeking practices and priorities. The consultant will update the plan at least annually.

2. Grant Research and Prospecting

The selected individual or firm will be responsible for thorough research and prospecting for sources of grants in keeping with the Strategic Grant Seeking Plan and town priorities through such activities as:

- Continuously monitor federal, state, and private foundation grant databases for funding opportunities relevant to municipal priorities including
- Develop and maintain an annual Grant Opportunity Calendar, identifying upcoming deadlines, eligibility requirements, award amounts, and application objectives aligned with town priorities.
- Develop and maintain a library of boilerplate language, town statistics, supporting data, and application templates for use in building future grant narratives and applications efficiently.
- Provide periodic briefings to municipal elected officials and staff on prospective funding opportunities.

- Correspond with funders regarding deadlines, program requirements, and application guidance, and attend informational sessions for upcoming grant opportunities.

3. Proposal Development and Writing

The selected individual or firm will be responsible for writing and submitting high-quality, thorough, and timely grant proposals in support of town priorities, as approved by town officials.

- Coordinate with town officials, department heads, and program staff to gather project data, narratives, and supporting documentation required for grant applications.
- Draft, edit, and finalize complete grant proposals to meet the funder criteria and requirements.
- Ensure all proposals comply with funder requirements, formatting standards, and submission procedures.
- Submit grant applications through appropriate portals (such as Grants.gov, state agency systems, foundation portals) by required deadlines.

For initial planning purposes, the cumulative fundraising goal for the first 12-months of this engagement is the successful submittal of approximately 5-8 applications valued at approximately \$1 million in grant funding sought. While the timing of the grant applications depends on funder deadlines, the consultant should plan to produce at least 1–2 applications from July – September 2026 and then progressively more applications in each successive quarter. For example, to 1-2 applications from July through September 2026, and an additional number in each succeeding quarterly with up to at least 4 – 6 applications submitted from in months April – June 2027.

4. Grant Management Support

The selected firm or individual will be responsible for assisting the town with grant management.

- Assist town staff with preparation of grant acceptance documentation and compliance agreements upon award.
- Work with the town Finance Department to track and follow up on applications, awards, and reporting requirements.
- Maintain a grant tracking log documenting applications submitted, awards received, reporting deadlines, and performance benchmarks.
- Prepare a monthly grant report summarizing the status of all active applications, recent awards, upcoming deadlines, and other relevant updates. Review this report with the town Grant Committee at its monthly meetings.
- Support program staff with progress report preparation and financial reporting as required by grant agreements.

5. Strategic Advisory

The selected firm or individual will be responsible for providing the mayor and other town leaders strategic advice and input on grant-seeking activities.

- Advise the Mayor and other elected officials, department directors on grant readiness, matching fund requirements, and alignment of projects with available funding streams.
- Identify options for innovative grant-seeking such as leading multi-jurisdictional or regional grant applications in coordination with neighboring municipalities or regional planning agencies.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

Respondents must demonstrate all the following minimum qualifications to be considered for this engagement:

A minimum of three (3) years of successful experience writing grant proposals for government agencies, nonprofit organizations, or public institutions.

1. Demonstrated success securing grants from private and corporate funders, federal agencies (e.g., HUD, DOT, EPA, USDA, EDA, DOJ, Appalachian Regional Commission) and/or state agencies.
2. Proficiency in federal grant submission systems including Grants.gov.
3. Availability to devote approximately 15-20 hours per week to this project during regular business hours, with flexibility for occasional deadlines.
4. Ability to work independently with minimal supervision while coordinating effectively with town leaders and staff.

PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS

The following qualifications are not required but will strengthen a respondent's evaluation:

- Prior experience working directly with or for a municipal or county government.
- Familiarity with private and corporate funding and West Virginia-specific grant programs, including WV CDBG, WV SHPO, and WV Development Office programs.
- Experience with historic preservation funding, funding for arts programming and related topics, Transportation Alternatives Programs (TAP/RAISE), Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) or related funding streams.
- Established relationships with program officers at relevant private sector and foundation funders and state or federal agencies.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Interested individuals and firms must submit a complete Statement of Qualifications (SOQ) by June 12, 2026, 5:00 PM ET that includes all of the following components, in the order listed:

1. Cover Letter (1 page maximum)

A brief letter of interest signed by the respondent (or authorized representative, if a firm) confirming availability, the proposed hourly rate or retainer structure, and a statement of interest in the required services.

2. Qualifications and Experience (3 pages maximum)

A summary of the respondent's relevant experience, including:

- Number of years of grant writing experience.
- Types of grants pursued (federal, state, corporate, foundation) and subject areas (infrastructure, housing, public safety, historic preservation, parks, transportation, human services, etc.).
- List of grants applied for and awarded within the past five (5) years, including funder name, grant amount requested, award amount, and project description.
- Grant award rate (total awards divided by total applications submitted).

3. Sample Grant Proposal

One complete grant proposal narrative (or substantial excerpt of no fewer than five pages) that had been submitted within the past three years. The sample should demonstrate the respondent's ability to write clearly, make a compelling case for funder investment, and meet funder requirements. Proprietary or confidential content may be redacted with notation.

4. Cost Proposal for Services

The respondent's proposed compensation structure, including:

- Proposed hourly rate OR monthly retainer amount.
- Reimbursable expenses (e.g., application fees, printing, travel).

Note: Cost proposals will be evaluated as one component of the overall selection criteria. The Town is not obligated to select the lowest-cost respondent.

5. References

Contact information for three (3) professional references from prior grant writing engagements. At least two references must be from representatives of local governments or nonprofit organizations that employed or contracted with the respondent for grant writing services. References must include the representative's name, title, organization, email address, and telephone number.

6. Submission Instructions

Statements of Qualifications must be submitted electronically in PDF format to:

Gino Sisco, Town Administrator Town of Shepherdstown Email: GSisco@Shepherdstown.gov Subject Line: RFQ — Grant Writing Services — [Respondent Name]

Submissions received after the deadline will not be considered. The Town is not responsible for transmission failures or technical errors.

EVALUATION AND SELECTION

All complete, timely submissions will be evaluated by a review panel. Evaluation factors will include relevant experience, quality of writing sample, qualifications and credentials, demonstrated understanding of the municipal grant landscape, cost proposal and availability.

The town may invite respondents to participate in a brief interview (in-person or virtual) prior to making a final selection. The town will notify all respondents of its selection decision in writing.

The selected respondent will be invited to negotiate a professional services contract. If negotiations are unsuccessful, the town reserves the right to initiate negotiations with the next-ranked respondent.

GENERAL CONDITIONS AND RESERVATIONS

- This RFQ does not constitute an offer of employment or a commitment to contract.
- The town reserves the right to reject any submissions, to waive informalities, and to re-solicit at any time.
- Costs incurred in preparing and submitting a Statement of Qualifications are solely the responsibility of the respondent.
- Submissions become public records upon contract execution and may be subject to disclosure under applicable open records laws.
- This engagement is subject to annual appropriation by the Town of Shepherdstown government. Continuation of services beyond the initial contract period is contingent upon available funding.
- The town is an equal opportunity employer and encourages submissions from minority-owned, women-owned, and veteran-owned businesses.

QUESTIONS?

If you have questions or require additional information, please send email to Gino Sisco, Town Administrator, at Gsisco@Shepherdstown.gov