



PUBLIC SECTOR PERFORMANCE GROUP

DBA of: A Word In Edgewise, LLC

PROPOSAL IN RESPONSE TO
Historic Town of Wilkeson
Fairfax/Wilkeson/Carbon River SR-165 Bridge Closure Mitigation

Submitted May 21, 2026
Submitted per RFP instructions

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May 21, 2026

Will Gunderson, Town Attorney Town of Wilkeson PO Box 89 Wilkeson, WA 98396

Re: Proposal Submission — SR 165 Fairfax Bridge Closure Mitigation, FY2026-2029

Dear Mr. Gunderson:

I grew up in Lynd, Minnesota. Population 450. Every spring, my family planned trips to the big city (Marshall, population 10,000) around flooded bridges that had been built too low and never adequately maintained. When the bridges went out, we were fine. We had root cellars, wild game, and three channels on the antenna. What we did not have was reliable emergency response, and commuters had no good options. That was forty years ago. The infrastructure has changed. The consequences of neglect have not.

I am submitting this proposal because the Fairfax situation is not abstract to me. I understand what it means for a small, self-reliant community to be told, implicitly or explicitly, that its access needs do not rank high enough to fix. I also understand, from direct professional experience, exactly how that message gets delivered, and why.

Before founding a company focused on improving government, I spent the 2025 as Strategic Communications Manager for the Washington State Department of Transportation Southwest Region. Before that, I served 18 years as a Regional Communications Director for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. I know how both of those agencies operate from the inside. I know where rural communities fall in their priority calculations, and I know what it takes to move the needle. I am not coming to this project as an agency representative. I left that world to build something smaller, leaner, and more directly accountable to the clients it serves.

Public Sector Performance Group is a veteran-led small business with no junior staff and no overhead bloat. Every client works directly with a senior practitioner. I founded it on the belief that small communities deserve the same quality of senior-level expertise that large agencies and urban governments can access, without paying for a firm's infrastructure or waiting for a senior person to show up after the junior team has already spent the budget.

I have driven rural roads in every season. I have sat in evening community meetings in small towns. I have negotiated with private timber companies when the conversation was difficult and the interests were genuinely in conflict, and I have found workable agreements. I have administered federal grant programs with audit-ready documentation. And I have spent a career translating between what government agencies say they are doing and what rural communities actually need them to do.

As a 15-year Camas, WA resident, I would be honored to bring that experience to Wilkeson and to the residents of Fairfax. I can be ready to begin work within one week of contract execution.

Respectfully submitted,



Jason D. Holm

Managing Member, Public Sector Performance Group

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I: INTRODUCTION NARRATIVE

Public Sector Performance Group (PSPG) is a veteran-led consulting firm organized under A Word In Edgewise, LLC, based in Camas, Washington. We are a Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business with no junior staff. Every client works directly with a senior practitioner. There are no hand-offs. All consultants share in a belief that the government works for the people, and are committed that it does so efficiently.

Jason Holm, the practitioner who would lead this engagement, spent three decades inside federal agencies. He knows how they work. He also knows how they fail. He served 18 years as a Regional Communications Director for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and most recently as Strategic Communications Manager for WSDOT Southwest Region. He has sat in the rooms where rural access needs get weighed against agency priorities and quietly deprioritized. He has written the communications that explained those decisions to the communities that had to live with them. He left that world to advocate for those same communities.

Additionally, Jason grew up in a Minnesota town of 400+ people that had their own frustrations with the pace and prioritization of state and federal governments. He knows that small-town residents are resilient and self-reliant, but also have distinct needs from the governments they help fund. He has been a Camas, WA resident for the past 15 years, and has experienced his community's frustration with crippling regulation and an occasionally indifferent government.

The residents of Fairfax do not need another agency liaison. They need someone who understands why the response has been slow, who knows where the decision authority actually sits inside these agencies, and who will not accept a process answer when a community needs a practical one. That is what this role requires, and is what Jason spent a career preparing to do.

He administered federal grant programs requiring audit-ready documentation and compliance with federal financial standards. He has negotiated access agreements with private landowners, including timber companies, when the starting positions were far apart. He has run community meetings in rural areas where the government was not trusted and the frustration in the room was earned. And he has worked directly inside WSDOT, whose cooperation this project depends on, long enough to know how to move it.

PSPG can begin work within two weeks of contract execution.

II: APPROACH

Within the first thirty days of contract execution, PSPG will establish a working coordination structure for this engagement. That means an initial site visit to Wilkeson and Fairfax, a documented meeting with WSDOT Local Programs staff to establish reporting expectations and payment documentation requirements, and direct outreach to the private timber interests who control the detour route to confirm the current access framework and identify any gaps or vulnerabilities.

From that foundation, the ongoing work of this engagement falls into four areas:

Agency Coordination. WSDOT is not the only agency at the table. The U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service, Pierce County, and potentially federal transportation programs all have equities in this situation. PSPG will maintain active working relationships with each, track where decisions are being made, and confirm that Wilkeson's priorities are represented in those conversations before outcomes are finalized rather than after.

Community Communications. Fairfax residents currently have no reliable channel for receiving project updates or raising concerns. PSPG will establish a simple, consistent communications cadence that keeps residents informed, documents their input, and creates a record that the community was engaged throughout the process. That record matters both for grant compliance and for maintaining community trust across a multi-year timeline.

Grant Compliance and Documentation. Every deliverable, meeting, payment request, and agency communication will be documented to audit-ready standards from day one. PSPG will maintain a running compliance file that can be handed to a state auditor or WSDOT Local Programs reviewer at any point in the engagement without preparation.

Funding Development. State capital funding is the current foundation, but it is not the only potential resource. PSPG will identify and monitor federal infrastructure, emergency access, and rural transportation programs that could complement or accelerate the state investment, and will support Wilkeson in pursuing those opportunities as they become available.

III: ELEMENT 1

The Fairfax community sits south of the Carbon River Canyon in a remote section of east Pierce County, accessible for more than a century through a single 494-foot span over the canyon. When WSDOT permanently closed the SR 165 Carbon River/Fairfax Bridge in April 2025 after inspections revealed a support column bent in two directions and starting to buckle, it did not simply close a road. It cut off a community.

Geography and Access

Locals who live south of the bridge use a gated, unpaved logging road as a private emergency route. That road crosses private property and is not open to the public. It traverses approximately 12 miles of private timber land, requires gate access, and is not passable in all seasons without four-wheel drive or chains. There is no public alternate route. For Fairfax residents, every trip out and every resource coming in now depends on the continued goodwill of private timber interests and the operational condition of an improvised road that was never designed to carry daily community traffic.

Mobility Challenges

Dozens of property owners live in this area, many of them seniors. What used to take minutes is now miles, sometimes delaying emergency crews by as much as an hour and 15 minutes when responding to 911 calls. Groceries, medical appointments, family visits, and fuel deliveries all require navigating the detour. For elderly residents and those with mobility limitations, the

cumulative burden is not an inconvenience. It is a daily calculation about whether the trip is worth the risk.

Public Land Access

The bridge provided access to Mount Rainier National Park's Mowich Lake Entrance, Carbon River Ranger Station, and other outdoor recreation areas. Due to the closure, there is no public access from SR 165 to these areas. The Carbon River entrance to the park contains the only inland temperate rainforest in the national park system. Access to U.S. Forest Service areas and the Clearwater Wilderness is similarly lost. These are public lands, maintained with public funds, that the public cannot reach.

Economic Impacts

Wilkeson businesses scrambled to find ways to attract tourists to central Pierce County after losing access to sections of Mount Rainier National Park. The summer tourist season that historically sustained local businesses collapsed. Visitor traffic through Wilkeson dropped sharply. The economic damage is not limited to a single season. A prolonged closure, combined with a six-to-eight year replacement timeline, represents a structural threat to the economic viability of the businesses and families that anchor this community.

Challenges for Law Enforcement, Fire, and EMS

More than 35 residents live beyond the bridge in Carbon Canyon with no phone service and no dependable way to reach 911. Families are forced to rely on radios, or even air horns, to call for help during emergencies. When a call does go out, response times on the detour route add 45 to 60 minutes or more to what should be a routine emergency run. Law enforcement faces the same detour. There is no quick-response option for a structure fire, a medical emergency, or a crime in progress. The gap between what these residents pay for in public safety services and what they can actually receive is not marginal. It is the difference between a survivable emergency and one that is not.

IV: ELEMENT 2 *(Past Project Demonstrating Successful Coordination)*

In January 2016, an armed militia group occupied the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge outside Burns, Oregon. The occupation drew national and international media attention and was framed broadly as a confrontation between the rural American West and an overreaching federal government. That framing was wrong, and making sure the right story got told was consequential.

Jason Holm was the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Regional Communications Director for the Pacific Region at the time. Malheur National Wildlife Refuge fell within his region. He was not new to Harney County or to Burns. In the years before the occupation, he had been directly involved in candidate conservation agreements between USFWS and the ranching and landowner communities in Harney County, built around keeping the Greater Sage-Grouse off the Endangered Species Act listing. That work required federal staff and local landowners to find

common ground where the history between them was complicated and the stakes were real. They found it. USFWS staff had been part of the Burns community for over a century. They were not strangers.

When the militia arrived and chose Malheur as the site of their standoff, they had, without knowing it, chosen a refuge that was a working example of what a federal and local relationship could actually look like when both sides were willing to do the hard work. That fact mattered, and Jason understood that it needed to be said clearly and repeatedly.

The FBI held lead federal authority over the response. Mindful of the failures at Waco and Ruby Ridge, they chose to stay well in the background. That left a communications vacuum at the center of a story the entire country was watching. Jason stepped into it. He became the lead federal communicator for the response, working daily in Burns, meeting with tribal representatives, ranchers, city staff, and local elected officials. He stayed in the same hotel as FBI agents and militia members who came and went. There were always weapons visible. Tensions in the community rose steadily through the occupation. He conducted hundreds of media interviews, local, state, national, and international, and held to a consistent message throughout. The story was not the federal government versus the rural West. The story was a community that had built something real with its federal partners, and was not going to let an outside group define them.

The framing was deliberate: we and us, not us or them.

The anticipated wave of militia reinforcements did not arrive. The broader mobilization the occupation's organizers had hoped to trigger did not happen. The community held. When the occupation ended, Harney County was intact. Public interest in the region that had grown during the coverage translated into tangible economic benefit. Attendance at the annual Malheur bird festivals and other community events increased exponentially. Awareness and outside funding came into a rural community that needed both.

Malheur is, to this day, an example of the explosion that never happened. The relationships Jason built and maintained during that period did not end when the occupation did. He still counts many of those community members among his friends.

The situation the Town of Wilkeson faces is different in its particulars but has some similar underlying structure. A rural community is being defined by outside forces and outside timelines. The agencies with authority over the outcome are not moving at the speed the community needs. The coordinator's job is to make sure the community's story is the one that gets told, keep the relationships intact across a long and frustrating process, and move the institutions toward outcomes the community can actually live with. That is work Jason has done before, in an angry room, with potential life or death consequences. He knows the cost of a government that is too slow or hard-of-hearing, and he is committed to helping Wilkeson and Fairfax overcome that.

V: ELEMENT 3 (*Grant Administration Experience*)

Grant administration is not a peripheral skill for this engagement. It is a core requirement. The FY2026-2029 funding flows through WSDOT Local Programs, which means the coordinator

carries responsibility for compliance documentation, financial reporting, and audit-ready recordkeeping from day one.

Jason Holm administered federal Tribal Wildlife Grants during his tenure as Regional Communications Director for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Those grants required compliance with federal financial standards, progress reporting tied to specific deliverables, documentation sufficient to withstand audit, and coordination across multiple agency and tribal partners. The structure of that work, tracking expenditures against approved budgets, maintaining supporting documentation for each payment request, and reporting outcomes to the funding agency, is directly parallel to what WSDOT Local Programs requires of its grant recipients and their consultants.

Jason understands the difference between a grant that is administered and a grant that is administered correctly. Agencies do not audit for effort. They audit for documentation. Every payment request, every meeting summary, every deliverable tied to a budget line needs to be traceable. PSPG will build and maintain that documentation structure from the first week of the engagement, not as a compliance afterthought, but as a condition of how we work.

PSPG certifies that it has experience with state and local grant administration, including reporting and supporting documentation required for payment and future auditing.

ELEMENT 4 (*Travel Certification*)

PSPG certifies that Jason D. Holm is able to travel to Wilkeson for in-person meetings and is prepared to traverse the primitive detour road into Fairfax in all four seasons with appropriate four-wheel drive transportation. He understands that access to Fairfax is not a conference logistics question. It is a field requirement, and he treats it as one. Jason has visited and is familiar with the Wilkeson area, and knows the Carbon River/Fairfax Bridge issue.

Jason grew up in rural Minnesota, has spent his career working in and traveling to remote areas across the Pacific and Midwest regions, and has driven primitive roads in all seasons as a routine part of that work. He is available for quarterly evening community meetings in Wilkeson and for site visits to Fairfax on the schedule the project requires. He will not send a delegate. The same senior practitioner who attends the first meeting will attend the last one.

ELEMENT 5 (*Letter of Support*)

A letter of support from Christopher P. Jensen is included with this submission. Mr. Jensen served as Chief of Staff for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Midwest Region and worked directly alongside Jason Holm for nearly two decades in senior federal roles involving complex multi-stakeholder coordination, community relations, and interagency negotiation. His letter speaks to Jason's direct qualifications for this engagement, including his work during the Malheur militia occupation, his WSDOT experience, and his federal grant administration background.

May 17, 2026

Town of Wilkeson
Attn: Will Gunderson, Town Attorney
PO Box 89
Wilkeson, WA 98396

Re: Letter of Support — Jason D. Holm / Public Sector Performance Group

Dear Mr. Gunderson and Members of the Wilkeson Town Council:

I am writing to recommend Jason Holm, without reservation, for the project coordinator role for the Fairfax Bridge Closure Mitigation effort. The Town of Wilkeson needs someone who can translate complex transportation, funding, emergency access, and public communication issues into coordinated action. Jason has done that kind of work repeatedly.

While I served as a senior business advisor and Chief of Staff for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Jason served as Regional Communications Director at the GS-15 level. We worked together on complex, multi-stakeholder situations where community trust, interagency coordination, and clear public communication were not optional; they were the mission. I directly observed Jason manage multiple stakeholder relationships simultaneously — elected officials, tribal governments, state agencies, county governments, local communities, and media — often under pressure and in situations where communities felt excluded from decisions. During the Malheur militia takeover, Jason held together local relationships that most people would have walked away from. His approach is to get the right people in the room, make sure they are heard, and keep the process moving toward a resolution the community can accept. His background as a small-town kid is reflected by an understanding that small communities deserve responsive, accountable government, as opposed to being an afterthought in larger bureaucratic processes.

Before founding his consulting firm (focused on government efficiency and accountability), Jason served as Strategic Communications Manager for WSDOT Southwest Region. He understands how WSDOT operates, how state transportation funding is administered, and what communications WSDOT customers should expect. That background is directly relevant to a project funded through WSDOT Local Programs. Additionally, Jason administered federal Tribal Wildlife Grants at USFWS, requiring compliance documentation, financial reporting, and audit-ready recordkeeping consistent with federal grant standards.

The Fairfax situation (a community cut off from normal access, dealing with emergency response gaps, economic disruption, and coordination across multiple jurisdictions and private landowners) is precisely where Jason does his best work. He is not a conference room consultant. Rather, he will work constructively but firmly with WSDOT, local officials, landowners, and residents to keep the project focused on successful outcomes, meaning he will hold WSDOT accountable, drive the road into Fairfax, attend the evening meetings, and build the relationships that will make this project succeed.

Sincerely,



Christopher P. Jensen
Senior Government Leadership & Operations Consultant
Former Chief of Staff, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Midwest Region
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