

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Consulting Partnership: Destination Ann Arbor Tourism Impact Plan

Responses Due By: Friday October 31, 2025

DESTINATION
**ANN
ARBOR**



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Destination Ann Arbor (DAA) seeks a qualified partner to develop a comprehensive 10-Year Tourism Impact Plan (TIP) that aligns with community values, enhances visitor experiences, and supports sustainable economic growth across Washtenaw County. This master plan will serve as a strategic roadmap for tourism development, stakeholder engagement, and infrastructure investment from 2027-2036. It will also be used to create tourism investment strategies, identify destination priorities, and establish processes that will shape our destination's evolution over the next decade.

The ideal consulting partner will demonstrate extensive experience working in similar sized destination environments and possess a proven track record of engaging diverse public and private partners to create bold, actionable roadmaps.

Please indicate your firm's interest in this project following your review of this request for proposal. The deadline to respond to the RFP with a formal proposal is **Friday, October 31, 2025**. Work is expected to begin in early 2026 with a plan ready for implementation starting January 2027.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Destination Ann Arbor seeks a unified, county-wide vision for tourism development that respects and incorporates the unique character and visions of each of our communities. The selected consultant will facilitate a collaborative planning process that emphasizes community engagement, balanced growth strategies, and future growth opportunities.





ABOUT THE DESTINATION AND ORGANIZATION

Destination Ann Arbor was established in 1993 and serves as Washtenaw County's destination marketing organization. A 501(c)(6) private nonprofit primarily funded by the Washtenaw County Accommodations Ordinance, the organization is governed by a board of 21 voting members representing the breadth of the hospitality industry and destination stakeholders. With an annual budget of \$8 million, Destination Ann Arbor employs 22 professionals across specialized teams focused on leisure tourism, meetings, sports, research, and community engagement.

Included in Washtenaw County are University of Michigan, Eastern Michigan University, and Washtenaw Community College, each of which are key partners. In addition to a thriving academic scene, Washtenaw County is home to world-class medical facilities, a growing start-up and tech scene, and a diverse array of arts, culture, and humanities opportunities with numerous theaters, museums, and venues. Located throughout the county, people will find ample opportunities for outdoor recreation (hiking, biking, trails, etc.) and discover the unique character and charm of each community they visit.

SCOPE OF WORK AND DELIVERABLES



The following represent desired outcomes for the master planning process:

- Comprehensive analysis and integration of existing community master plans and development strategies from all Washtenaw County communities and townships, as well as the Ann Arbor Sports Commission strategic plan, which was completed in 2024.
- Development of a destination-wide tourism framework that balances economic growth with community values.
- Assessment of current tourism infrastructure capacity and future development needs across all communities. The firm would be able to denote where Destination Ann Arbor can primarily make meaningful impact and in other areas where our organization can serve in an advocacy role.
- Assessment of current destination strengths and differentiators to drive overnight stays, not limited to University of Michigan.
- Assessment and recommendations of meetings, events, and sports business opportunities, within the context of a midwestern college town that does not have a convention center.
- Design of a comprehensive, ongoing stakeholder engagement process that ensures meaningful participation from all community sectors, including residents.
 - *Optional: Establish best practices for membership program to meet community business needs.*
- Development of metrics and monitoring systems to evaluate tourism's impact on resident quality of life. This includes the existing economic impact of tourism and resident tax savings as a result.
- Development of strategies to ensure fair, representative distribution of tourism benefits throughout the County.
- Creation of actionable implementation timelines with clear milestones and accountability measures.
- Establishment of international market strategy from both a sales and leisure perspective to increase and enhance Washtenaw County's recognition globally.
- Evaluation of how people within the county view other communities within Washtenaw County - places where our residents are visitors.
- Budget proposal for this project with payment schedule and allocation. If optional components or additional opportunities are part of your proposal, and not included in your project dollar amount, please include these optional costs with your proposal for evaluation by the committee.



OPTIONAL COMPONENTS

- An option to engage with the selected vendor for an additional year to help implement year 1 of the plan, to be defined in a separate scope of work and budget.
- Benchmark of Destination Ann Arbor to other, similar college communities and their DMOs, in terms of relationship and engagement with higher education partners.
- Gauge stakeholder desire from the market to continue workforce development efforts.
- Analysis of lodging market, saturation of market, and capacity/needs for the market.





DELIVERABLE REQUIREMENTS

The consultant will ensure all deliverables:

- Align with Destination Ann Arbor's organizational mission and vision
- Support sustainable, community-focused tourism development
- Provide clear, actionable implementation guidance
- Include measurable outcomes and success metrics
- Consider both short-term wins and long-term sustainability
- Integrate stakeholder feedback and community priorities

Each deliverable should include:

- Clear methodology
- Specific action steps and timelines
- Resource requirements
- Success metrics
- Implementation guidelines
- Stakeholder engagement components

PROJECT TIMELINE

- Proposals due October 31, 2025
- Final presentations to committee - November or December 2025
- RFP awarded December 2025
- Vendor onboarded - early 2026
- Quarterly updates presented throughout the project duration
- Preliminary findings discussed with the committee June or July 2026
- Tourism Impact Plan presentation November or December 2026

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

The firm will help craft strategies that leverage our unique assets, while ensuring tourism development benefits across all communities within our destination. The firm will also present key growth opportunities and vision that will elevate the destination. A successful impact plan will demonstrate tourism's role in thriving communities, align tourism with community benefits, and provide a tool that fosters collaboration.

Proposals should include:

1. Firm Overview

- Company history and experience
- Proposed account team
- Relevant project examples from similar destinations
- References from similar projects
- Firm specialties

2. Project Approach

- Detailed explanation of how you will accomplish the scope of work and deliverables
- Community engagement strategy
- Timeline and milestones
- Anticipated needs from Destination Ann Arbor team

3. Budget Breakdown

- Detailed cost estimates, including costs associated with any required research/data
- Payment schedule options
- Resource allocation



EVALUATION

Proposals will be evaluated by a review committee of Destination Ann Arbor staff and committee members based upon, but not limited to, the following criteria:

Strategic Capability & Experience (40 points)

- Demonstrated understanding of destination master planning (5 points)
- Track record of community-engaged planning processes in destinations with similar scale to Washtenaw County (15 points)
- Quality and relevance of provided case studies (5 points)
- Team experience and qualifications (5 points)
- Understanding of sports and meetings/event business (5 points)
- Knowledge of midwest and college town tourism landscape (5 points)

Methodology & Approach (40 points)

- Comprehensive stakeholder engagement strategy (20 points)
- Data collection and analysis methodology (10 points)
- Project management and communication framework (5 points)
- Inclusion of strategies that incorporate diverse and historically underrepresented stakeholder groups (5 points)

Implementation Framework (25 points)

- Clarity of proposed timeline and milestones (10 points)
- Measurement and monitoring systems (10 points)
- Resource allocation and management plan (5 points)

Budget & Value (15 points)

- Cost effectiveness and clarity (10 points)
- Resource allocation transparency (5 points)

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Proposals must be submitted by October 31, 2025 to:
Tim Crouson, Director of Research, tcrouson@annarbor.org

CONTACT INFORMATION



For questions regarding this RFP, please contact:

Tim Crouson, CHIA, CTA

Director of Research

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