



Mississippi Tourism Association
Request for Proposals: Long Range Strategic Plan

Proposals due on or before 3:00 p.m. CST June 14, 2019



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I. Summary of Proposal Request

Mississippi Tourism Association is seeking a professional firm to conduct an organizational and tourism services assessment with the final deliverable of a long-range strategic plan (3-year or 5-year).

Mississippi Tourism Association invites proposals from qualified organizations and/or consultants to ***examine the Mississippi Tourism Association's membership services and current core focuses in support of the tourism industry in Mississippi through a qualitative and quantitative analysis.***

The proposed scope of work and outcomes for this project will include:

- Analysis of current membership services and organizational components
- Conduct interviews with organizational and industry stakeholders
- Review economic impact of the statewide tourism industry and supporting data
- Identify target services areas and organizational strategies for support of Mississippi's tourism industry
- Present an overall strategic action plan for state tourism association operations and effectiveness
- **Overall goal** of this planning project is to provide Mississippi Tourism Association's leadership with an action-driven strategic plan that outlines key focus areas for growing and strengthening the state's tourism industry while also engaging its stakeholders.

The final product will be a comprehensive written report and executive summary presented to the MTA strategic planning committee upon completion of project start. Ultimately, the final recommendations will be presented to the full MTA board and shared with membership.

The comprehensive report should be written for a non-technical audience, with the project recommendations and overview combining all statistics, analyses, graphs, maps, and tables where appropriate.

The selected organization/consultant will work closely with the MTA Strategic Planning Committee and the Executive Director of the Mississippi Tourism Association, offering feedback and providing guidance and requesting information as needed.

II. Mississippi Tourism Association

Background

In February 1986, an 18-member Governor's Task Force on Tourism was appointed to "assess the strengths and weaknesses of the hospitality industry in the state and return recommendations for improving this vital, but often overlooked industry."

The task force began their work in March 1986 and issued their "Tourism Development Report" in May 1986. The major objective of the report was the establishment of a statewide public/private sector promotional organization...THE MISSISSIPPI TRAVEL PROMOTION ASSOCIATION (MTPA).

On May 12, 1986, MTPA began operations with the primary objective of creating an industry-wide promotional force with a focus centering on private sector marketing to the traveling public. That mission, although somewhat broadened in recent years, remains basically the same.

The MTPA mission statement states, "MTPA, the voice of the Tourism and Hospitality industry, is to promote and advocate tourism, is to educate the public and is to provide services to its members which will result in increased economic vitality and a positive image for the State of Mississippi."

In our second decade of service to Mississippi, our major goal continues to be increased participation from every segment of the industry. These include hotels, restaurants, attractions, casinos, chambers of commerce, convention & visitor bureaus, all travel related businesses, and to remain a strong partner with the State of Mississippi's tourism development efforts.

Seeing the need to increase MTPA's scope, the Board of Directors voted to change the name of Mississippi Travel Promotion Association to MISSISSIPPI TOURISM PROMOTION ASSOCIATION in 1995. This move allowed the organization to keep the well-known MTPA identity but add the broadened scope of the full tourism industry to its name.

In 1997, the Board of Directors voted to change the name of the association for the last time to MISSISSIPPI TOURISM ASSOCIATION (MTA). The name change reflects that the association is about much more than promotion at this point.

Today a Board of Directors, representing all parts of the State and all segments within the hospitality industry, guides the member-based organization. Past Presidents of the Association have been a varied mix of professionals who have all left their mark on MTA.

Over the past few years, MTA has strengthened both its membership base and program offerings. The Association is now known statewide as a true “voice” for the industry and works extremely hard during each legislative session to make sure the hospitality business receives proper attention on all legislative matters.

For more than 20 years MTA has represented Mississippi’s tourism industry well and is poised to make even greater progress in the years ahead.

WHY WE EXIST?

The Mississippi Tourism Association is an association comprised of tourism professionals established to support and empower Mississippi’s tourism industry through advocacy and education. Membership is open to those in the hospitality industry as well as public service organizations and allied businesses.

Tourism is the 4th largest industry in Mississippi, employing more than 127,000 people and generating more than \$6.51 BILLION in visitor spending. More than 24 MILLION people visited Mississippi in the past year. Our association was created to be the voice of tourism for our industry partners around the state. We want to ensure all visitors to Mississippi have a positive experience within a variety of industry segments in travel and tourism, such as destination marketing organizations, attractions, hotels, restaurants and others.

MTA strives to provide quality education and training opportunities and networking tools for our members. Through collaborative advocacy, we work to strengthen the tourism industry in our state.

MTA CURRENT FOCUS AREAS

ADVOCATE

MTA tracks and monitors proposed laws and legislation affecting our members and the tourism industry. MTA also hosts a legislative reception annually during the legislative session, as well as sponsoring the “Friends of Tourism” Awards, which are presented to those legislators and government officials who have shown the strongest support for the industry.

For those of us in the tourism industry, we know the impact of what we do for the Mississippi economy. Share the impact with those around you.

- Travel and Tourism produced \$477 MILLION in state tax revenues and \$188 MILLION in city/county tax revenues from visitor spending and other revenue sources...a combined \$665 MILLION.
- Travel and Tourism tax revenues contributed about \$405.2 million to our state's \$5.49 billion General Fund, or 7.4%.
- Travel and Tourism is our fourth-largest private sector employer. It accounts for 89,610 direct jobs and an additional 37,950 indirect jobs which equal 127,560 total jobs...11% of jobs in Mississippi.

EDUCATE

Education is an important part of our mission, and we are committed to administering strong, comprehensive opportunities to further the industry.

MTA looks to travel industry organizations that provide research on tourism trends.

U.S. Travel Association
Southeast Tourism Society
American Hotel & Lodging Association
Destination Marketing Association International

MEETINGS

MTA hosts two large annual events...our Governor's Conference on Tourism in the Fall and MTA Spring Conference & Media Day in the Spring. We have various educational opportunities throughout the year in all regions of our state.

Legislative Reception
Annual Spring Conference
MS Governor's Conference on Tourism (Fall)

MEMBERSHIP

MTA is the voice of the Tourism and Hospitality industry, our goal is to promote and advocate tourism, educate the public and to provide services to our members which will result in increased economic vitality and a positive image for the State of Mississippi.

Membership is open to those in the hospitality industry as well as public service organizations and allied businesses.

Whether you are in the hotel, casino or restaurant business, manage a Convention Bureau or Chamber of Commerce or provide goods and services to the industry, you should be a Member of Mississippi Tourism Association.

Published Membership Benefits:

Mississippi Tour Guide

The official tour guide for the State of Mississippi is published by MTA. Copies are distributed through the statewide network of Welcome Centers, plus all inquiries received by the State from advertising and through the Internet.

Government Representation

MTA tracks and monitors proposed laws and regulations affecting our members and the tourism industry. MTA also hosts a legislative luncheon at the beginning of each new legislative session, as well as sponsoring the “Friends of Tourism” Awards, which are presented to those legislators and government officials who have shown the strongest support for the industry.

Educational Workshops and Seminars

Various workshops and seminars are offered throughout the year to MTA members. Topics and speakers are carefully chosen in response to membership surveys. Seminars in past years have favored such topics as state spending laws, the sports/outdoor recreation development market, social media strategies and how to conduct familiarization tours.

Consumer Advertising Program

MTA offers a great chance for you to advertise in national publications such as Southern Living at a negotiated lower price. In addition to print, the program offers a variety of digital media and social media packages. There are a number of programs in which MTA and the State cooperate bringing further savings to marketing budgets and bigger bang for your buck.

Governor’s Conference on Tourism

MTA produces the Governor’s Conference on Tourism each year and brings together tourism professionals from all sections of the State. As a member of MTA you get a front row seat as the hospitality industry gathers for an exciting, fun experience. Plus, there’s reduced registration fees and numerous added member benefits during the conference.

CURRENT OPERATIONS

In 2019, MTA served a membership base of 130 members, employed a staff of two full-time employees and contracted with a meeting planner and a lobbyist.

In the 2019 Mississippi Legislative Session, a permanent funding solution for state tourism marketing was proposed, passed, and, ultimately, signed into law in April 2019. The Mississippi Tourism Association has championed this mission for the last several years in cooperation with Visit Mississippi.

As part of the legislation, the MTA Board of Directors will annually serve in an advisory capacity for dedicated funds allocated to Visit Mississippi's marketing fund. This special measure provides industry inclusion in the state's marketing and positioning efforts for visitor attraction. To that end, the Mississippi Tourism Association's long-range strategic plan shall include focuses that uphold this statute.

Additional information about the Mississippi Tourism Association can be found at www.mstourism.com

III. Scope of Work

The proposed scope of work for this strategic planning project will include:

- Analysis of current membership services and organizational components
- Conduct interviews with organizational and industry stakeholders
- Review economic impact of the statewide tourism industry and supporting data
- Identify target services areas and organizational strategies for support of Mississippi's tourism industry
- Present an overall strategic action plan for state tourism association operations and effectiveness

The organization/consultant must submit two printed copies of the final report, as well as electronic versions in Adobe PDF and Microsoft Excel for all relevant data sets as used and cited in the project. Additionally, an in-person final presentation on strategic recommendations desired.

V. Technical, Management, and Cost Proposal Contents

A. Technical Proposal (Narrative should not exceed 12 pages, not including the abstract and accompanying resumes and organizational background materials.)

1. Summary Abstract (up to 300 words)

In this section, provide a brief abstract of the proposal by summarizing the background, objectives, proposed methodologies, and expected outputs and results of the research.

2. Methodology / Strategic Approach

Define the step-by-step tactics or methods planned to complete the tasks specified in this RFP. The proposal should provide a detailed explanation of the tactics to be used. The proposal should identify the points and tasks in the survey or research portion of the project that will require

participation by the MTA staff, MTA Strategic Planning Committee, MTA Board of Directors, or others as determined.

3. Project Work Plan and Milestones

The proposal should describe the stages into which any proposed research can be divided and performed. A schedule of benchmarks and deadline should be included. Routine call-ins with MTA Strategic Planning Committee and/or Executive Director and MTA Strategic Planning Committee Chair should be part of the reporting and project schedule.

4. Key Personnel

Personnel conducting any research or data requests should be described in this section of the RFP, including the titles, short biography and contact information for each. (e.g., project director, economist, analyst, business consultant, etc.). The selected contractor will be required to furnish the services of those identified in the proposal as key personnel. Any change in key personnel is subject to approval by the MTA Strategic Planning Committee.

B. Organization/Consultant Proposal

Planning capability and program management experience in completing the outlined tasks in the will be considered in the proposal selection process.

1. Organization and Personnel

Furnish a brief narrative description of the organization, including the division or branch planned to perform the proposed effort, and the authority responsible for controlling these resources and personnel. A brief history of the organization, including number of years in business, should be included in this section.

2. Staffing Plan

A staffing plan is required that describes the contractor's proposed staff distribution to accomplish this work. The proposal should identify the relationship of key project personnel to the contracting organization, including consultants and subcontractors.

3. Relevant Prior Experience

The proposal must describe the qualifications and experience of the organization and the personnel to be assigned to the project. Information provided should include direct experience with the specific subject-matter

area and must provide **examples of the three most similar projects** undertaken by the applicant's organization and the extent to which performance goals were stated and achieved. Provide associated organization names and addresses, names of contact persons, and telephone numbers for reference.

4. Contract Agreement Requirements

This section of the proposal should contain any special requirements that the contractor wants to have included in the contract.

C. Cost Proposal

Each proposal submitted must contain all cost information. The cost information should include direct labor costs (consistent with the staffing plan), transportation, estimated cost of any subcontracts, other direct costs (such as those for databases), and overhead.

VI. Cost, Timing and Supplementary Information*

This RFP is for a planning and research project with a budget not exceeding \$10,000, including travel and other associated expenses.

Internally, MTA has completed several strategic items that provide some measure of industry feedback and goal setting. These items will be shared with the organization that is awarded the contract for this project. An April 2019 membership feedback survey along with a compiled strategies and tactics document from a May 2019 MTA Board Retreat will be shared upon contract award.

The contract awarded for this research project will be a FIRM FIXED-PRICE CONTRACT, with payments on a fixed schedule. The contract terms shall remain firm during the project and shall include all charges that may be incurred in fulfilling the terms of the contract.

Firms should include a timeline with specific deliverable dates for each phase of the plan process. A final comprehensive plan shall be presented in Jackson, Mississippi to the MTA Strategic Planning Committee no later than **Tuesday, September 17, 2019**. The details of this report will be shared the following week at the 2019 Governor's Conference on Tourism to membership in Columbus, MS.

VII. Evaluation of Proposals

All proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Complete, clearly articulated, logically presented and technically competent narrative;
- Qualifications, relevant prior experience, knowledge of existing tourism and state association trends and key goals, and ability to present findings in a useful manner;
- A credible management proposal for staffing, and the capability to carry out and support the project in a timely fashion;
- The quality of interviews, focus group, surveys, case study protocols proposed, and use of tourism sector current or trend data
- Cost effectiveness of the proposal.

Finalists may be asked to present proposals in-person to review committee. MTA will assume travel costs for firm representative to make the presentation.

VIII. Proposal Submission

Proposals are due on or before 3:00 p.m. CST Friday, June 14, 2019. This includes both hard copies and electronic versions.

An original and three hard copies of the proposal must be submitted to:

Rochelle Hicks, Executive Director
Mississippi Tourism Association
P.O. Box 2745
Madison, MS 39130

In addition to the hard-copy submission, ***proposals must also be e-mailed on or before the deadline*** to rhicks@mstourism.com. E-mail attachments should be no more than 10 MB. Proposals exceeding 10 MB, please send link for download.

Questions about this proposal should be directed to Marlo Dorsey, MTA Strategic Planning Chairperson at 601-296-7475 or mdorsey@visithburg.org.

Deadline for questions is Friday, May 31, 2019, at 12:00 p.m. CST.