



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)
Tourism Master Plan

Issued: May 11, 2026

Deadline: June 12, 2026

About Visit Annapolis & Anne Arundel County

Visit Annapolis & Anne Arundel County (VAAAC) is a nonprofit, partnership-focused destination marketing and management organization dedicated to fostering a welcoming destination and promoting tourism for visitors, partners, and the community. The tourism and hospitality industry in Annapolis and Anne Arundel County significantly impacts Maryland's economy. In 2024, visitor spending injected \$4.3 billion into the state economy, attracting more than 7.2 million visitors, and sustaining more than 27,000 jobs (both directly and indirectly), according to the 2024 Economic Impact of Tourism in Maryland Report. That daily impact—an average of \$11.9 million in visitor spending—strengthens small businesses, supports the hospitality workforce, and enhances quality of life for residents across the region.

To learn more about VAAAC, please visit: www.visitannapolis.org.

Key contact: Kristen Schultz, kschultz@visitannapolis.org

Introduction & Opportunity

Visit Annapolis & Anne Arundel County is at an inflection point.

We are a high-performing destination with strong leadership, engaged public and private partners, and a growing portfolio of transformative initiatives already underway. From the revitalization of Annapolis City Dock—including a new Waterfront Welcome Center—to the exploration of a future arts and conference center, the opening of a Welcome Center at BWI Thurgood Marshall Airport this summer, and expanded regional and international marketing efforts, our destination is actively shaping its future.

We want to build on our momentum.

This would be the destination's first Tourism Master Plan, and represents an opportunity to challenge assumptions, test the boundaries of what is possible, and define a bold, long-term vision for tourism in Annapolis and Anne Arundel County. We are looking for a firm that will push our thinking—one that can help us explore not only what is realistic, but what is aspirational.

The selected partner will work alongside VAAAC staff and board leadership, government partners, and community stakeholders to co-create a Tourism Master Plan that is both visionary and actionable—grounded in data, but driven by ambition and possibility.

Purpose

VAAAC seeks a qualified consulting partner to co-develop a comprehensive and sustainable Tourism Master Plan that will guide the next decade and beyond.

This effort will:

- Define a bold, shared vision for the future of tourism in Annapolis and Anne Arundel County
- Challenge assumptions and expand the destination's long-term vision
- Identify transformative opportunities for product development, visitor experience, and strategic investment
- Align stakeholders around clear priorities and a common direction
- Deliver a phased, actionable implementation framework to guide near- and long-term decision-making and planning

The Tourism Master Plan should not simply reflect current conditions—it should reframe what is possible and provide a clear path to achieve it.

Scope of Services

Proposals should articulate a clear, phased approach to developing a Tourism Master Plan that is both visionary and actionable.

We anticipate a highly collaborative and iterative process between the selected firm, VAAAC staff and board, as well as key community and industry stakeholders. The selected partner should be prepared to actively engage leadership and stakeholders in shaping not only outcomes, but also shaping the environment that encourages the kind of broad thinking that leads to them. This includes testing

assumptions, exploring bold possibilities, sharpening opportunities, and building alignment around a shared direction for the destination.

We are not seeking a standardized or pre-packaged approach. We will hire a partner who will work alongside us to create a Tourism Master Plan that reflects the unique character, opportunities, and goals of Annapolis and Anne Arundel County.

The approach may include the following components:

1. Discovery & Challenge

Conduct a comprehensive assessment of tourism in Annapolis and Anne Arundel County to establish a strong foundation for the Plan.

This phase should:

- Analyze current tourism performance, including visitation trends, economic impact, and destination positioning
- Evaluate existing assets, including product offerings, infrastructure, brand identity, visitor experience, and policy environment
- Conduct competitive and peer destination analysis to understand positioning and opportunity
- Identify key stakeholders and recommend an approach to governance and engagement throughout the process
- Develop a detailed work plan, timeline, and stakeholder engagement strategy to guide a structured but adaptive process

In addition to documenting current conditions, this phase should surface constraints, assumptions, and untapped opportunities that may shape or limit the destination's future potential.

2. Engagement & Alignment

Design and facilitate a meaningful stakeholder engagement process to inform the Plan and build alignment across the destination.

This phase should:

- Engage a broad cross-section of stakeholders, including public officials, tourism and hospitality partners, business leaders, cultural institutions, community organizations, and residents
- Facilitate workshops, interviews, and engagement sessions designed to surface insight, perspective, and priorities
- Move beyond input-gathering to identify areas of alignment, tension, and opportunity for shared action

Engagement should strengthen long-term alignment across the destination. The plan should include a clear feedback loop and follow-up process for stakeholders who participate in engagement activities.

3. Vision, Strategy & Prioritization

Develop a bold, shared vision for the future of tourism in Annapolis and Anne Arundel County, supported by clear strategic direction and priorities.

This phase should:

- Facilitate a visioning process that challenges assumptions and explores aspirational futures for the destination
- Define a long-term vision that reflects community values, visitor expectations, and economic opportunity
- Identify strategic priorities across areas such as product development, infrastructure, marketing, visitor experience, and destination management
- Develop a prioritized set of strategies and actions to achieve the vision
- Provide a financial framework that includes estimated costs, funding considerations, and potential revenue sources
- Establish clear performance metrics and success indicators
- Include the ability to synthesize complex stakeholder input, data, and market conditions into clear, actionable strategy

4. Implementation & Activation Framework

Translate the vision and strategies into a clear, actionable roadmap for execution.

This phase should:

- Develop a phased implementation plan with defined timelines, sequencing, and responsibilities
- Recommend governance structures, policy shifts, partnerships, and coordination mechanisms to support execution
- Identify resource requirements, including funding, staffing, and organizational capacity
- Provide tools and frameworks to support implementation, measurement, and adaptation

The selected firm will support VAAAC in preparing for implementation including guidance, structure, and recommendations for effective activation of the Plan.

Evaluation & Selection Process

VAAAC is seeking a strategic partner to co-create a Tourism Master Plan that is audacious, destination-specific, and actionable. This selection process is designed to identify the firm best positioned to bring strong strategic thinking, facilitation capability, and collaborative leadership to the process and project.

Proposals will be reviewed holistically, with emphasis on the following areas:

- **Strategic Thinking & Approach (Primary Consideration)**
The clarity, originality, and strength of the firm’s approach to destination strategy, including its ability to challenge assumptions, expand opportunity, and avoid templated or pre-packaged solutions.
- **Ability to Work Collaboratively in Complex Environments**
Demonstrated experience facilitating multi-stakeholder processes that build alignment, surface meaningful insight, and support shared decision-making.
- **Understanding of Destination Dynamics**
Evidence of the firm’s ability to quickly understand and engage with the unique characteristics, opportunities, and complexities of Annapolis and Anne Arundel County.
- **Team Strength & Leadership**
Qualifications of the proposed team and the degree to which key personnel will be directly engaged throughout the project.
- **Clarity of Thought & Communication**
The ability to clearly articulate ideas, frameworks, and approaches in a way that reflects strong strategic thinking.
- **Cost & Value**
VAAAC is positioned to invest in this effort. Cost will be considered in relation to the overall quality, depth of thinking, and strategic value of the proposal.

VAAAC anticipates conducting interviews with shortlisted firms prior to final selection.

Submission & Questions

Proposals must be submitted to Kristen Schultz at kschultz@visitannapolis.org in PDF format and received no later than **June 12, 2026**. Late submissions will not be considered.

Please include the following in the submission package:

1. **Cover Letter:** Introduce the firm, key personnel, statement of interest and summary of qualifications.
2. **Company Profile:** Legal name, address, history, and organizational structure
3. **Relevant Experience:** Portfolio of at least three similar projects within the last five (5) years including size, scope, location and a minimum of three (3) client references with contact details.
4. **Anticipated Project Approach:** A narrative outlining the firm’s proposed approach to this engagement, including key phases, methodologies, and engagement strategies. Responses should describe how the firm will facilitate a collaborative, co-creative process.

5. **Potential Schedule:** Provide an illustrative project timeline including key phases, major milestones, deliverables, and points of stakeholder engagement. This schedule is intended to reflect your anticipated approach and sequencing and may be refined in collaboration with VAAAC following selection.
6. **Cost Proposal:** Detailed line-item estimate with allowances, exclusions, and assumptions clearly identified.

Key Dates (Anticipated)

May 11, 2026	Issuance of Request for Proposals
May 29, 2026	Question/Clarification Submission Deadline
June 12, 2026	Proposal Submission Deadline
<i>through</i> July 10, 2026	Proposal evaluation & interviews with shortlisted firms
July 17, 2026	Award of Contract
September 1, 2026	Project Start Date

Closing

The Tourism Master Plan is a strategic opportunity to help shape the next chapter of tourism, hospitality, and community in Annapolis and Anne Arundel County. We are seeking a partner who will help us define what comes next—and what is possible beyond it.