



# MISSISSIPPI

TOURISM ASSOCIATION

**Request for Proposals: Long Range Strategic Plan**

**Proposals due on or before 5:00 p.m. CST  
Friday, February 14, 2025**



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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 (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 service 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 38 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 exists to connect and support our members, the ones who are creating and telling the great stories of the Hospitality state, through advocacy, education, and promotion. Unity, growth, and accountability guide us as we champion Mississippi’s people, spirit, and vision and eagerly lead the way toward a bright and prosperous future where the rich and unique stories of our homeland - Our Mississippi - can continue to be told.

The Mississippi Tourism Association is comprised of tourism professionals from all sectors. Membership is open to those in the hospitality industry, as well as public service organizations and allied businesses.

Tourism is the 4<sup>th</sup> largest industry in Mississippi, employing more than 133,880 people and generating more than \$11.5 BILLION in visitor spending. More than 43.7 MILLION people visited Mississippi last year.

Our association was created to be the collective voice of tourism for our industry partners around the state. We strive to empower our members to not only meet, but to exceed our visitors’ expectations in every touchpoint of tourism.

MTA also strives to provide quality education and training opportunities to help develop tourism leaders and provide networking tools for our members to help foster partnerships and unity. Through collaborative advocacy, we work to strengthen and grow the tourism industry in Mississippi.

## MTA CURRENT FOCUS AREAS

### ADVOCACY

MTA tracks and monitors proposed laws and legislation affecting our members and the overall tourism industry. MTA also hosts Tourism Day at the Capitol and co-hosts a legislative reception with the Mississippi Gaming and Hospitality Association annually during the legislative session. During our awards program held at the Governor’s Conference on Tourism, we award the “Governmental Leadership” Award, which are presented to those legislators and government officials who have shown strong support for the tourism 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 \$1.1 billion in state and local tax revenues.
- Value added is the contribution to state gross domestic product (GDP). Direct visitor spending generated a direct impact of \$5.4 billion in value added in 2023. This direct impact generated additional value-added impacts of \$2.9 billion in direct and induced impacts, resulting in a total value of \$8.3 billion in the state economy.
- Travel and Tourism is our fourth-largest private sector employer. It accounts for 98,382 direct jobs and an additional 35,498 jobs supported from the indirect and induced impacts of visitor activity, which equal 133,880 total jobs, one of every 13 jobs in the state.

### EDUCATION

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

MTA looks to regional and national travel industry organizations that provide research on tourism trends and helps carry those messages to our membership.

We have recently implemented a campaign called Heart of Hospitality that seeks to educate, strengthen and develop our tourism workforce and highlight tourism as a competitive and fulfilling career path. This initiative includes a storytelling element highlighting tourism professionals and their career journeys. We also implemented a statewide hospitality training program that designates those who complete the program as a “Certified Hospitality Expert”, providing a micro-credential for all employees who touch tourism and strengthening the soft skills and service experience for visitors.

## **EDUCATIONAL EVENTS**

MTA hosts various educational opportunities throughout the year in all regions of our state.

**Tourism Day at the Capitol & Legislative Reception**

**Spring Tourism Summit (April)**

**MS Governor's Conference on Tourism (Fall)**

**MTA/LTA Leadership Summit (partnership with Louisiana Travel Association)**

**Annual Board Retreat**

**Regional Training Sessions**

## **PROMOTION**

MTA is committed to promoting the economic impact of tourism on Mississippi's economy and spreading the good news of what our tourism partners are doing in communities throughout the state.

MTA also holds an awards programing during the Governor's Conference on Tourism that recognizes the accomplishments of members in many categories.

## **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:

### **Governmental Advocacy**

MTA and our governmental relations team tracks and monitors proposed laws and regulations affecting our members and the overall tourism industry not only during legislative sessions but year-round. During the session we provide weekly legislative updates to our members. We are always working on behalf of our members to support any legislation that advances the tourism industry and oppose any legislation that is not beneficial to tourism in Mississippi.

We also have the Tourism Mississippi PAC that helps build relationships and support lawmakers who support tourism.

### **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 and industry best practices and trends. MTA also offers E-Learning U online learning library as an added value to all MTA members. We also recently created the Heart of Hospitality program that designates those who complete the program as a Certified Hospitality Expert, providing a hospitality training micro-credential for all employees who touch tourism.

### **Educational Scholarships**

MTA offers many scholarships throughout the year for professional development opportunities. MTA partnered with Mississippi State University Extension on the Excellence in Tourism Leadership Program, which offers Associates and Master level certificates. We offer several scholarships for this program each year. Additionally, MTA offers scholarships for Southeast Tourism Society Marketing College and the Veneto Experience Lab. We are always looking for additional opportunities to expand our scholarship program.

### **Networking Opportunities**

MTA produces several events throughout the year that allow members to connect with other industry professionals as well as leaders and lawmakers. As a member of MTA, you receive special member pricing for our events.

### **Industry News & Updates**

We know that a connected and informed industry is a successful industry. MTA sends two newsletters a month. Members can include one item per newsletter upon request. MTA also hold monthly membership meetings where we provide updates from the organization, MTA committees and Visit Mississippi.

### **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.

### **Media Partnerships**

MTA offers a great chance for you to get to know representatives from national publications who often offer special pricing for MTA Members.

In addition to print, the program offers a variety of digital media and social media packages.

## **CURRENT OPERATIONS**

In 2024, MTA served a membership base of 174 members, employs a staff of two full-time employees and holds contracts with an accountant, workforce and leadership development coordinator and governmental affairs team.

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 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.

In 2024, MTA received a \$500,000 appropriation from the Mississippi legislature to create workforce and leadership development initiatives for tourism. This has significantly expanded our scope of work.

Additional information about the Mississippi Tourism Association can be found at [www.mstourism.com](http://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 to create advocacy strategies
- 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.



## IV. 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.

## V. Cost and Timing

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.

## VI. 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.

## VII. Proposal Submission

**Proposals are due on or before 5:00 p.m. CST Friday, February 14, 2025.**

Digital **proposals must also be e-mailed on or before the deadline** to [dmorgan@mstourism.com](mailto:dmorgan@mstourism.com). E-mail attachments should be no more than 10 MB. Proposals exceeding 10 MB, please send link for download. If you would prefer to mail proposals, we can provide mailing information.

Questions about this proposal should be directed to Danielle Morgan via email at [dmorgan@mstourism.com](mailto:dmorgan@mstourism.com).

**Deadline for questions is Friday, January 24, 2025**