



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) DESTINATION MASTER PLAN

THURSTON COUNTY
WASHINGTON STATE



Released by:

Experience Olympia & Beyond

Release Date: June 30, 2023

Proposal Deadline: July 31, 2023, 5:00 PM PST

Proposed Contract Period: August 15, 2023 – June 30, 2024

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Stevens Amendment Statements/Acknowledgement

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Introductions & Definitions

Experience Olympia & Beyond (EOB) is the official destination marketing organization for Thurston County in southwestern Washington State. Our mission is to reveal Thurston County's most iconic experiences for the world to discover.

EOB may be referenced throughout this document as the Client.

EOB seeks the services of a professional consulting firm to facilitate and develop a 10-Year Destination Master Plan to provide an inclusive roadmap that will enhance Thurston County's competitive position relative to other desirable tourism destinations, balancing visitors' needs and wants with quality-of-life protections for local stakeholders and residents. Throughout the remainder of this document, this service provider may be referred to as the Consultant.

The ideal Consultant will have expertise in the field of long-range destination planning, a successful track record with the complexities of multiple public and private stakeholders, experience and ability to report in accordance with federal funding requirements, and expertise in organizational development—each essential components for bringing the completed plan to life.



Background & Objectives

In 2021, EOB contracted with a firm to facilitate a 3-Year Strategic Plan to guide EOB work planning. The strategic plan combined findings from over 100 Thurston County stakeholder interviews, board, and staff input. The consultant provided specific guidance pertaining to Sales & Marketing, Destination Management, Sustainability, and Community Alignment. They also recommended that EOB expand our organizational focus to destination management, and that we conduct a Destination Master Plan to help improve our community alignment, and destination strength.

Since that time, the EOB team has integrated feedback captured in the strategic planning process into our annual Business & Marketing Plans, and related internal work plans. We convened a year-long taskforce that evaluated destination management as an approach. The group recommended to the Board, and the Board agreed, to launch a Destination Master Planning process to not only develop the much-needed roadmap to reveal Thurston County's "ideal shared future" ten years down the road, but also to identify what resources would be needed to bring that vision to life.

While EOB serves as the organization convening and leading this Destination Master Plan on behalf of Thurston County, the process must be rooted in collaboration, and integrate the input of community stakeholders (coalition partners) that have expressed their support for the project, helping pave the way for project funding. The following organizations represent initial coalition partners:

- Thurston County
- Thurston County Chamber of Commerce
- City of Olympia
- City of Lacey
- City of Tumwater
- Olympia Downtown Alliance
- Thurston Economic Development Council

Thurston County's Destination Master Plan is funded with support from a Pacific Mountain Workforce QUEST—Quality Job, Equity, Strategy and Training (QUEST) grant in effort to help Thurston County's hospitality and tourism industry as it continues to rebound from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Destination Master Planning process must evaluate Thurston County's current hospitality and tourism supply and overlay with current and anticipated future demand. The plan should result in and articulate recommendations that shore up identified supply and demand gaps within the County's hospitality and tourism sectors. These gaps will represent opportunities to provide access to hospitality career pathways and expanding entrepreneurial opportunities. The Destination Master Plan should provide linkage between the identified career pathways and entrepreneurial opportunities and our region's underserved communities and those most negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through this process we also aim to evaluate the current state of tourism in Thurston County.

1. Define a purpose and Scope of Work for future phases of the Destination Management Plan.
2. Assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to Thurston County.
3. Describe tourism related management strategies to prevent, mitigate, and/or adapt to visitor and resident impacts.
4. Document, review, and analyze current community initiatives that relate to sustainable tourism and destination management, identify gaps in current policies and practices, and meet set goals for the community to achieve.
5. Develop goals and actions for a sustainable community and sustainable tourism plan that integrate various stakeholder efforts and empower community innovation and involvement.
6. Create [pathways to high quality jobs](#) with family sustaining wages and, for those who may have been disproportionately affected or dislocated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
7. Create performance indicators, actions required, and a timeline for plan development.
8. Propose a 10-year vision for the future of tourism in Thurston County that includes assumptions, goals, and actions to mitigate those assumptions.
9. Outline outreach and media strategies to engage stakeholders, communicate and educate the public on the Destination Master Plan, offer opportunities to contribute and support the Plan, and leverage already existing partnerships.



Scope of Work

Develop Destination Master Plan that includes long-term (10-year) recommendations for Thurston County as a competitive, sustainable tourism destination. This shall include but not be limited to conducting a comprehensive state of Thurston County assessment rooted in primary and secondary research obtained from stakeholders, residents, and visitors using surveys, town hall-style meetings/charrettes, etc. soliciting information including but not limited to:

1. Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats (SWOT)
2. Workforce needs and career pathways
3. Infrastructure and transportation
4. Accessibility
5. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
6. Review and consider existing master plans and publicly-noticed projects for Thurston County. How can these plans be integrated into this plan and leveraged to achieve the optimal result for lodging and adjacent tourism and hospitality sector businesses, and residents within Thurston County?

Detailed consideration of the following needs:

1. Meeting and convention services
2. Sports tourism
3. Lodging
4. Retail
5. Culinary
6. Amenities and attractions
7. Outdoor recreation
8. Medical tourism
9. Higher educational tourism
10. Transformational tourism

Develop detailed recommendations and action plan including timelines, required resources and accountable parties to address:

1. Destination shortfalls or inefficiencies.
2. Opportunities to maximize “economies of scale” between current organizations tasked with marketing Thurston County and/or supporting economic expansion in the area: Chambers of Commerce, municipalities, Downtown Associations, Economic Development Councils, Port Districts, etc.
3. Unnecessary organizational overlaps and/or redundancies to reduce the resulting inefficiencies, operational frictions and/or marketplace confusion.
4. Best practices of tourism destinations in like comp sets and conditions. Please provide relevant comparisons for before and after competitor master planning, as well as published information regarding impact and performance.
5. Optimal strategy for regional event development and management.
6. Seasonality of events, promotions, and lodging needs periods.
7. Market differentiation and linked geographical and interest-based visitor dispersion strategies.
8. Future organizational funding growth and stability for EOB.
9. Optimal EOB organizational structure and funding and other resources needed to successfully implement action plan.



Budget & Billing

Please submit your project proposal based on deliverables with a maximum total, all-in budget of \$100,000.

Be sure to include all pertinent rates, cost center and billing structure details.

If you find you must eliminate elements of the project Scope of Work to accommodate this budget, please add a Budget Addendum that denotes itemized supplemental work descriptions and associated costs you have removed from the planned Scope of Work to accommodate the \$100,000 that you would recommend our Executive Committee consider when reviewing your proposal.

Important note about invoicing requirements: This project is funded in part by federal QUEST grant funds and therefore will employ specific billing requirements including federally mandated requirements. Detailed billing information and requirements will be supplied in the contract issued to the successful bidder.

Term

The terms of this Agreement shall commence on August 15, 2023, and shall expire on June 30, 2024.

Required Qualifications

- Consultant submitting a proposal must be fully qualified, staffed and equipped to properly perform any agreed upon conditions and work as requested in this RFP and as represented in their proposal.
- Understanding of and expertise in the hospitality and tourism industry.
- Demonstrated ability to engage with large, diverse stakeholder groups and ability to facilitate public outreach programs to garner input in a safe environment.

Proposal Requirements

The Proposal should incorporate the following:

Notice of Intent to Bid

- Consultant Name
- Federal tax ID number
- Contact Person
- Physical Address
- Mailing Address
- Website
- Email
- Phone
- Date
- Signature

Consultant Information

- Number of employees in your company.
- Primary team members that would be working on our account their roles and anticipated contribution to our Scope of Work.
- Date of company formation.
- Notice of intent to hire subcontractors to complete our project's Scope of Work--please list all companies and/or individuals that would participate in the project, their location, unique skills and work to be performed.
- Proof of insurance.
- List of all tourism-related clients for whom you have contracted in Washington State and Oregon during the past 12 months and certify that there is no conflict of interest between any existing contract, client relationship and the ability of your company to represent the needs of Experience Olympia & Beyond.
- Detailed account of what makes your agency unique--why should we choose your agency?

Relevant Work & References

Please include live links and/or hard copies of a minimum of (3) samples of relevant related work that you've completed in the past five years.

Please provide no fewer than (3) professional references from previous relevant work completed within the past five years. References should include name, role, relationship to project, direct phone number and email address.

Project Management

- Outline of project approach, strategy for carrying out the Scope of Work and methodology.
- Project timeline, milestones, and benchmarking.

Project Budget & Billing

Please provide your final all-in price to deliver associated Scope of Work with all pertinent billing and cost center details.



Submittal & Selection Process

Proposals shall be sent electronically to Annette Pitts, CEO, annette@experienceolympia.com by 5 p.m. PST July 31, 2023.

The EOB Executive Committee and staff will review proposals submitted and evaluate each submission on but not limited to the following criteria:

- Completeness of the proposal as outlined within the proposal requirements.
- Demonstrated expertise, technical capabilities, and applicable experience in areas of tourism planning, destination development, master planning, and long-term strategic planning.
- Familiarity with Thurston County—its strengths and areas of opportunity.
- Positive reference feedback from past clients.
- The process, manner, and methods of providing the service communicated in the proposal.
- Fees and costs of the proposal.

Experience Olympia & Beyond will contract with the Consultant selected and shall be the owner of all materials resulting from the Destination Master Planning application selection, and completion process.

RFP Schedule

1. RFP Issued June 30, 2023.

Questions can be sent to Annette Pitts, CEO, annette@experienceolympia.com

2. Virtual Q&A Session July 10, 2023, 10:00 AM PST.

Zoom Link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85129118492?pwd=NHloTU9XWGRQa2l5ekQxYjJPSzYvQT09>

3. Proposal Due July 31, 2023, 5:00 PM PST

Proposals shall be sent electronically to Annette Pitts, CEO, annette@experienceolympia.com by 5:00 PM PST, July 31, 2023.

If a bid proposal submission is received after this deadline, it will not be considered.

4. Notification of Award August 15, 2023