



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)
SUSTAINABLE TOURISM MANAGEMENT STRATEGY
TOWN OF BAR HARBOR, MAINE

Issued: March 31, 2025

1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The Town of Bar Harbor, Maine, located on Mount Desert Island, seeks the services of a qualified firm(s) to develop a Sustainable Tourism Management Strategy ("Strategy"). This Strategy will focus on achieving a balance between economic, environmental, and social well-being.

The Strategy must align with the following Bar Harbor 2035 Comprehensive Plan sustainable management objectives:

- A. **Equity** – Ensuring fair access to resources and opportunities for the entire community.
- B. **Sustainability** – Preserving natural and cultural assets for future generations.
- C. **Efficiency** – Optimizing resource use to minimize negative impacts.
- D. **Resilience** – Strengthening the community's ability to adapt to changing conditions.

2. PROJECT BACKGROUND

Location

Bar Harbor is located on Mount Desert Island in Maine. The island spans approximately 110 square miles and consists of four municipalities, with Acadia National Park occupying half of the land area. The Park land is interwoven throughout the Town of Bar Harbor.

History of Bar Harbor as a Tourist Destination

Since the mid-19th century, Bar Harbor has been a premier tourist destination. Originally attracting affluent visitors for its scenic beauty, it became a middle-class vacation destination following the Fire of 1947, which reshaped the town's economic and social landscape. Today, Bar Harbor is a major tourism hub.

Current Challenges¹

Visitation growth has affected both residents' quality of life and visitor experience, leading to community tensions. Key challenges include:

- A. **Visitations** – Balancing the economic benefits of tourism with concerns about congestion, pollution, and infrastructure strain.
- B. **Housing** – Addressing housing affordability and availability for residents and seasonal workers.
- C. **Lodging Development** – Managing accommodations expansion.
- D. **Quality of Life** – Mitigating concerns during peak tourist season such as congestion, parking shortages, and over-crowding of public space.
- E. **Environmental Conservation** – Ensuring sustainable tourism without harming natural resources.
- F. **Climate Change & Rising Sea Levels** – Preparing for future impact on infrastructure and the economy.

Bar Harbor 2035 Comprehensive Plan

The Town's recently completed Bar Harbor 2035 Comprehensive Plan highlights key issues, including housing shortages, labor deficits, infrastructure strain, over-tourism, and traffic congestion. It calls for a coordinated tourism management approach to ensure long-term sustainability. For access to the Comprehensive Plan — Bar Harbor 2035, the Existing Conditions Analysis, and the Engagement Report — please visit

<https://www.barharbormaine.gov/501/Comprehensive-Plan>.

3. SCOPE OF WORK & TASKS

A. Project Management

- Assign a project manager with proven experience in sustainable tourism management.
- Develop a project management plan, including a timeline, milestones, monthly reports, and cost estimates.
- Hold regular meetings with the Planning Director and with the chair and co-chair of the Sustainable Tourism Management Task Force to discuss progress and challenges,

establish clear goals for each meeting, ensuring that discussions are purposeful and aligned with the broader initiative.

- Develop meeting agendas and take meeting notes.

B. Community Engagement¹

- Design a comprehensive engagement plan, including:
 - Consultation – Identifying interested parties and developing strategies for meaningful collaboration and input.
 - Public Outreach & Communication – Implementing clear and transparent communication channels, including public meetings, surveys, workshops, and digital engagement tools.
 - Feedback Integration – Establishing mechanisms for collecting, analyzing, and incorporating community feedback into project development and decision-making.
 - Equity & Inclusion – Ensuring diverse community voices are heard.
 - Ongoing Engagement – Maintaining regular interaction with the community throughout project implementation to address concerns, provide updates, and ensure continued alignment with community expectations.

C. Framework Development

- Define sustainable tourism.
 - Establish a clear and localized definition of sustainable tourism that reflects Bar Harbor’s unique environmental, societal, and economic context.
 - Align this definition with sustainability best practices and with the Bar Harbor 2035 Comprehensive Plan.
- Understand desired resident and visitor experience.
 - Define quality of life standards for Bar Harbor residents.
 - Identify key factors contributing to a high-quality visitor experience, balancing tourism demand with local capacity.

¹ The Town of Bar Harbor subscribes to Polco, a surveying tool that can be utilized for data collection, community engagement, and public opinion research.

- Develop an integrated economic and sustainable tourism vision.
 - Establish Bar Harbor’s overall economic vision building from the Bar Harbor 2035 Comprehensive Plan; and
 - Establish a supporting sustainable tourism development and management vision with core foundational themes.

- Conduct a comprehensive situational analysis.
 - Analyze visitor trends, including seasonality, demographic shifts, and spending patterns.
 - Assess the economic impact of tourism, considering direct and indirect benefits, as well as costs.
 - Evaluate carrying capacity by examining infrastructure, transportation, environmental limits, and public service demands.²
 - Measure the effects of tourism on quality-of-life metrics, including housing, traffic, employment, and community well-being.

- Develop strategic goals and actionable policies.
 - Establish clear goals and objectives that address identified challenges and opportunities.
 - Create economic and land-use strategies that supports the Town’s sustainable tourism development and management vision.
 - Recommend tourism principles that could be integrated into zoning, development, and business regulations.

- Design an implementation plan.
 - Outline short-term, mid-term, and long-term action steps with a focus on achievable, high impact initiatives.
 - Identify potential funding sources, including grants, public-private partnerships, and tourism-generated revenue streams.

² Town staff has been actively collecting this data (excluding environmental limits), utilizing both internal sources and insights from Placer.ai, a location intelligence platform providing visitor analytics.

- Establish data-driven sustainability standards.
 - Develop measurable sustainability benchmarks, including environmental, social, and economic indicators.

- Implement a monitoring and reporting system.
 - Establish an ongoing tracking and reporting process to measure progress towards sustainability goals.
 - Explore the integration of smart tourism tools, such as digital dashboards, geospatial data, and real-time visitor analytics.
 - Develop a feedback mechanism for continuous partner engagement, ensure adaptability and responsiveness to emerging challenges.

4. DELIVERABLES

- A. Sustainable tourism definition report
- B. Integrated economic and sustainable tourism vision.
- C. Resident and visitor experience framework
- D. Comprehensive situational analysis
- E. Strategic goals and policy recommendations
- F. Implementation plan
- G. Standards and benchmarks
- H. Monitoring system
- I. Community engagement report

5. OVERSIGHT & LEADERSHIP

The selected firm(s) will report to the Sustainable Tourism Management Task Force, which will, in turn, report to the Town Council. The Planning Director will serve as the primary point of contact.

6. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Interested firms must submit the following information. Proposals must not exceed 15 letter-size pages and must include:

A. Firm Contact Information

- Please provide the following contact details:
 - Firm Name
 - Primary Contact Person
 - Title/Position
 - Mailing Address
 - Phone Number
 - Email Address
 - Website (if applicable)

B. Proposed scope of services

- Provide a detail description of services to be provided including methodologies to meet project objectives.

C. Organizational Chart

- Provide an organizational chart with hourly costs for key personnel, as well as mileage and other direct expenses.

D. Project Timeline and Major Milestones

This is a high priority project with an expected expedited scope of work.

- Submit a detailed project timeline in the form of a Gantt chart or an equivalent project management tool that includes phases and tasks, milestones and deliverables, task dependencies, project duration.

E. Fill out the project deliverables and cost breakdown table below

Deliverable	Estimated Hours	Labor Cost (\$)	Materials & Expenses (\$)	Total Deliverable Cost (\$)
Sustainable tourism definition report				
Integrated economic and sustainable tourism vision				
Resident and visitor experience framework				
Comprehensive situational analysis				
Strategic goals and policy recommendations				
Implementation plan				
Standards and benchmarks				
Monitoring system				
Community engagement report				
TOTAL BID AMOUNT				

F. Qualifications

- Statement of Qualifications and team bios.
- At least three examples of similar projects completed in the past five years.
- Demonstrated record of completing similar projects within budget and on schedule.
- References from these projects, including contact details.

7. SELECTION CRITERIA

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- A. **Experience & Expertise (30%)** – Proven track record in tourism management and sustainability planning.
- B. **Approach & Methodology (25%)** – Effectiveness and feasibility of the proposed strategy.
- C. **Community Engagement Strategy (15%)** – Strength of stakeholder engagement approach.
- D. **Budget & Cost Effectiveness (15%)** – Alignment with project needs.
- E. **Project Timeline (10%)** – Feasibility of the proposed schedule.
- F. **References & Past Performance (5%)** – Success of at least three previous projects.

8. SUBMISSION DETAILS

Proposal Deadline: May 16, 2025

Submission Method: Proposals must be sent electronically in PDF format to Michele Gagnon

Contact Person: Michele Gagnon, Bar Harbor Planning Director

Email: mgagnon@barharbormaine.gov

Phone: 207-288-1789

9. GENERAL TERMS & CONDITIONS

- The Town of Bar Harbor reserves the right to accept or reject any and all proposals at its sole discretion, with or without cause.
- Award of a contract resulting from this RFP is contingent upon the availability of funding. The Town reserves the right to cancel, change, or delay this solicitation if funding is not secured or if budgetary constraints arise.
- All costs associated with preparing and submitting a proposal are the sole responsibility of the proposing firm and will not be reimbursed.
- Following selection, the Planning Director, in consultation with the Town Manager, will finalize the scope of work in alignment with project objectives and available funding.
- The work is expected to begin in early June, 2025.

¹ For more information on current challenges please visit:

Cruise ships — <https://www.barharbormaine.gov/190/Cruise-Ship-Information>

Safe Streets for all — <https://www.barharbormaine.gov/666/Safe-Streets-for-All-SS4A>

Housing Policy Framework V2 — <https://www.barharbormaine.gov/202/Planning>

2025 Workplan — <https://www.barharbormaine.gov/202/Planning>

Acadia National Park Transportation Plan — <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectId=58482>