



Destination Master Plan RFQ

Issued By: Visit Duluth

1. Introduction

Visit Duluth, the official Destination Marketing and Management Organization for the City of Duluth, is seeking proposals from qualified consulting firms to develop a comprehensive, actionable Destination Master Plan (DMP) that will guide Duluth's tourism growth, investment, community alignment, and visitor experience strategy over the next five years.

This plan will serve as a roadmap for how Duluth evolves as a destination—balancing visitor demand, community priorities, economic impact, and sustainable development. The selected firm will work closely with Visit Duluth, the City of Duluth, tourism partners, business leaders, and community stakeholders to shape a shared vision for the future.

2. Background

Duluth is a year-round destination known for its natural beauty, outdoor recreation, connected waterfront, cultural attractions, and strong sense of place. Since renewing its five-year agreement with the City of Duluth in 2025, Visit Duluth has undergone organizational restructuring, expanded sales and marketing efforts, and reestablished itself as the city's primary tourism leader.

The 2026 Destination Master Plan will build on this work by a strategic framework for the strongest long-term investment to sustain and grow the tourism economy. The plan should be rooted in data, stakeholder engagement, and realistic, prioritized recommendations.

3. Project Objectives

Visit Duluth seeks a partner to deliver a Destination Master Plan that:

1. **Define a clear, future-focused vision** for Duluth as a destination, grounded in market demand, trends, and competitive positioning.
2. **Identify priority opportunities for growth and development**, including infrastructure, visitor experiences, programming, and amenities.
3. **Deliver integrated recommendations** for sales, marketing, and experience development, aligned with industry best practices and Duluth's unique differentiators.

4. **Provide an actionable implementation framework**, including tourism tax investment guidance, DEAI, accessibility and sustainability principles, measurable KPIs, timelines, and resource requirements.

4. Scope of Work

The scope may include, but is not limited to, the following components:

- **Research & Market Assessment**
Review destination assets, visitor segments, demand trends, seasonality, and Duluth's competitive position, informed by existing tourism and community plans.
- **Stakeholder & Community Engagement**
Engage public leaders, tourism partners, businesses, and community voices through interviews, workshops, and listening tools that reflect accessibility, cultural, and Indigenous perspectives.
- **Strategic Framework Development**
Establish a future destination vision, guiding principles, and strategic priorities, with recommendations for market growth, visitor experience, placemaking, accessibility, sustainability, and stewardship.
- **Economic & Investment Analysis**
Assess current and future economic impact, evaluate growth scenarios, and provide investment, incentive, and partnership recommendations with projected ROI.
- **Implementation Roadmap**
Deliver a phased, actionable plan outlining timelines, responsible partners, required resources, and performance metrics.
- **Final Deliverables**
Produce a comprehensive Destination Master Plan, executive summary, and presentations for key audiences, with an optional design-forward public version.

6. Project Budget

Visit Duluth has allocated funding for this project and anticipates a total investment of up to \$100,000, inclusive of all professional fees, travel, facilitation, research, and final deliverables.

Proposals should include a detailed budget breakdown by project phase. Visit Duluth welcomes creative approaches that maximize value within the available resources.

7. Proposal Requirements

Proposals must include:

- Firm Overview & Qualifications
- Project Approach & Methodology
- Work Plan & Timeline
- Budget Breakdown
- Comparable Work Samples
- Client References

8. Evaluation Criteria

- Experience with DMOs and destination planning
- Quality and clarity of methodology
- Strength of stakeholder engagement approach
- Understanding of Duluth's opportunities and challenges
- Creativity, feasibility, and alignment with project goals
- Cost competitiveness relative to value

9. Submission Instructions

Proposals must be submitted electronically in PDF format no later than Monday, March 9, 2026 at 5:00 p.m. CT.

Please email proposals to:

Haley Hedstrom
Executive Director, Visit Duluth
hhedstrom@visitduluth.com

The subject line of the email must read: RFQ Submission – Destination Master Plan – [Firm Name].

Proposals should be submitted as a single compiled PDF document. If file size exceeds email limits, a secure file-sharing link may be provided.

Late submissions may not be considered.

Questions regarding this RFQ must be submitted via email to hhedstrom@visitduluth.com.