

2015-2020

Iowa Tourism

INDUSTRY SECTOR PLAN



A PLAN
FOR THE INDUSTRY BY THE INDUSTRY

TOURISM COLLEAGUES:

As we are aware, tourism in Iowa is a major contributor to the state's economy, generating 5.3 % of the gross domestic product (GDP) in Iowa. According to data from the Iowa Tourism Office, Iowa's non-resident visitors spent \$ 8.06 billion in 2014. That spending supported an estimated 66,500 jobs and generated a total of \$374.7 in tax revenues.

Over the years, many businesses and organizations involved in tourism have recognized the need to work and plan together to ensure continued success. Over the last year, Iowa's tourism industry partners have participated in a statewide planning process designed to develop a shared vision and plan to maintain, and grow, our competitive position as a destination. The Plan provides focus and direction for our industry's individual and collective actions. We, the tourism industry, seek to build on our past successes and create an even stronger future for our industry and our state.

The Plan can, and will, bring the industry closer and allow us all to work toward common goals. All of us have an opportunity to participate as much as we are able, and we invite you to look over The Plan to see where you want to roll up your sleeves and help.

Iowa Tourism Industry Sector Plan Advisory Team





ABOUT THE PLAN

The 2015-2020 Iowa Tourism Industry Sector Plan

is industry driven, built on the vision and input gathered from hundreds of Iowa's tourism stakeholders. The plan envisions Iowa's tourism stakeholders working together to strengthen Iowa's tourism product by growing and fully utilizing all of its tourism assets; working in collaboration and pooling resources to strengthen Iowa's tourism marketing; and working to build broad public appreciation and support for the tourism industry as a major economic driver for Iowa.

The Plan sets out

FIVE PRIORITY OUTCOMES AND COMPETITIVE FACTORS

that are shared by the
tourism industry:

Increase economic
growth through
**TARGETED
MARKETING**

Improved
**COLLABORATION,
PARTNERSHIPS AND
EXPERTISE** among
industry stakeholders

Enhanced unique
TOURISM EXPERIENCES

**ELEVATED
UNDERSTANDING AND
RESPONSIVENESS** to the
changing visitor needs, offerings
and Iowa's competitive position

Increased
level of
**SUPPORT
AND
RESOURCES**
for the tourism
industry

Planning Process & TIMELINE



The Travel Federation of Iowa organized the planning effort and launched a broad based Iowa Tourism Industry Sector Plan Advisory Team (18 members) to lead and oversee the development of the Vision and Plan. The Institute for Decision Making at the University of Northern Iowa developed and implemented a customized approach to develop the **2015-2020 Iowa Tourism Industry Sector Plan** built on input from a diverse group of tourism stakeholders.

The Plan is designed to facilitate collaboration. It is structured in a way that outlines:

- 1 the shared vision for tourism in Iowa,**
- 2 desired outcomes for the tourism industry in the next five years,**
- 3 and objectives for achieving those outcomes.**

Various tourism industry core stakeholders are responsible for implementation.

KEY STEPS IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

include the following:

JANUARY
2015

Establishing Iowa Tourism Industry Sector Advisory Team

FEBRUARY-APRIL
2015

Conducting a statewide county-level tourism assets inventory and gathering stakeholder input regarding their desired vision for Iowa tourism for the next five years and analysis of the tourism industry including trending visitor volume, spending, tourism funding, travelers' preferences and other market and industry trends

APRIL – JULY
2015

Conducting three visioning and planning sessions with the Advisory Team to draft the plan

JULY – SEPTEMBER
2015

The adoption and endorsement process with entities and organizations endorsing the plan and adopting objectives

OCTOBER
2015

The final document prepared and presented at the Iowa Tourism Conference thus launching implementation

NOVEMBER – MARCH
2015 2016

Implementation sessions with tourism stakeholders and implementing organizations





Implementation OF THE PLAN

The foundation of Iowa's tourism industry rests upon the many **FRONTLINE STAKEHOLDERS** that interact with the visitor to deliver the Iowa experience. These stakeholders are mostly small businesses and organizations along with some federal and state agencies. They have no obligation to work in support of the Iowa Tourism Industry Sector Plan, and they will differ in their ability to participate in these efforts. But regardless of their level of engagement, the frontline stakeholders are crucial to the implementation of the plan and the overall long-term success of the tourism industry sector – they alone deliver the Iowa brand promise and provide quality visitor experiences. Those that take an active role can experience concrete benefits such as leveraging to expand the reach

and effectiveness of marketing, stronger business and marketing capabilities, and improved customer satisfaction.

The **CORE STAKEHOLDERS** who will take the lead in implementing the plan consist primarily of the public sector and non-profit entities who work on behalf of Iowa's tourism businesses and organizations. Implementation work sessions with tourism stakeholders and implementing organizations identified in the plan will be held November 2015 through March 2016 to outline specific strategies to accomplish the objectives in the plan. The Iowa Tourism Industry Sector Plan Advisory Team will monitor and report progress on an annual basis during the implementation phase of the five-year plan period.

STATE, REGIONAL, LOCAL AND FRONTLINE CORE STAKEHOLDERS

Arts & Cultural Organizations	Iowa Department of Transportation	Professional Developers of Iowa
Attractions	Iowa Destination Marketing Alliance	Restaurants
Central Iowa Tourism Region	Iowa Economic Development Authority-Iowa Tourism Office	Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area
Chambers of Commerce	Iowa Group Travel Association	Sports/Recreation
Convention & Visitors' Bureaus	Iowa Lodging Association	State Historical Society of Iowa
Eastern Iowa Tourism Region	Iowa Museum Association	Tourism-Related Retail
Economic Development & Industry Associations	Iowa Regional Councils of Government	Tour Operators
Elected and Appointed Officials	Iowa Restaurant Association	Trail Organizations
Iowa Association of Business and Industry	Iowa Workforce Development	Travel Federation of Iowa
Iowa Community Colleges	Lodging	Visitor Information Centers
Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs	Main Street Organizations	Western Iowa Tourism Region
Iowa Department of Natural Resources	Parks	Wineries/Breweries/Distilleries



FOR IOWA'S TOURISM STAKEHOLDERS, PROMOTING OR PROVIDING THE IOWA TOURISM EXPERIENCE IS A CORE FUNCTION, BY MANDATE OR BY CHOICE. COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION ALLOW STAKEHOLDERS TO LEVERAGE THEIR EFFORTS AND RESOURCES TO ACHIEVE GREATER SUCCESS.

PRIMARY *Outcomes and Objectives*

MARKETING & PROMOTIONS

The synergy of Iowa's marketing brand – offering an escape to the unexpected, seeing the real Iowa and seeing an authentic experience is central to the visitor experience. By clearly projecting a relaxing, peaceful and inviting visitor experience, Iowa's tourism information can make the potential visitor aware of this special location, increasing the appeal of Iowa as a destination. Co-branding and providing seamless information is essential for converting potential visitors to actual visits.

OUTCOME 1: INCREASED ECONOMIC GROWTH THROUGH TARGETED MARKETING

Objective 1.1: Develop strategies for leveraging and expanding co-branding local, regional and statewide tourism assets with the Travel Iowa brand to provide a consistent message to travelers and elevate Iowa tourism within and outside of Iowa.

Objective 1.2: Increase offerings and participation in the Iowa Tourism Office's Cooperative Partnership Program.

Objective 1.3: Increase the amount of public and private investments and collaboration in tourism marketing at the local, regional and state levels.

Objective 1.4: Collaborate with other economic development organizations and the private sector to integrate workforce retention and attraction strategies into tourism marketing efforts.

Shared Vision

FOR TOURISM IN IOWA



IN 2020 IOWA IS A VIBRANT TOURISM DESTINATION WITH ...

THRIVING COMMUNITIES

inspiring visitors through unique attractions, accommodations, local foods, beverages, events and an authentic sense of place

A RECOGNIZED BRAND

showcased through innovative marketing built around increased public-private collaborations

A TOURISM INDUSTRY RECOGNIZED AS A LEADER

in growing Iowa's economy and creating compelling reasons for individuals to choose to live, work and travel in Iowa



TOURISM PRODUCT ENHANCEMENT

Consumers are becoming more and more aware of creative options to stay and spend time. Research shows the importance of reducing the perceived “riskiness” of a destination by assuring travelers the amenities, services and comfort they seek will be available in Iowa communities. Enriching visitor attractions and helping visitors find unique tourism experiences will improve visitor satisfaction, contributing to extended stays, return visits and positive word-of-mouth. The visitor experience can also benefit from the “little things” that offer comfort — welcoming coffee shops, unique restaurants, directional signage, trails, lodging, quaint downtowns, interesting architecture, and local events — to help them feel a connection to the community.

OUTCOME II: ENHANCED UNIQUE TOURISM EXPERIENCES

Objective 2.1: Develop a customizable hospitality training program to increase the customer service skills of frontline workers and better meet the needs of visitors.

Objective 2.2: Challenge and assist communities to enhance their visitors' experiences by improving their attractiveness and tourism-related infrastructure, policies, services and amenities.

Objective 2.3: Develop strategies to improve visitor experiences at tourism attractions through enhanced interpretation, engaging presentations, tailored amenities, and appealing facilities.

INDUSTRY COLLABORATION & BETTERMENT

The Iowa visitor experience is a complex product: comprised of many products and services, provided by many independent businesses and organizations and scattered along a travel path of cities, towns, counties and regions. The visitor experience is largely marketed by one set of stakeholders but delivered by a different set of stakeholders. Success requires coordination, partnerships and collaboration of many stakeholders (marketers and providers) and their individual efforts. Effective communication and innovation among all stakeholders, with a statewide private sector organization providing leadership and guidance, is fundamental for achieving the goal. Tourism stakeholders also need the support of professional organizations to build the skills, knowledge and professionalism that will help them to compete in a global tourism market and to deliver the quality experiences desired by the visitors.

OUTCOME III: IMPROVED COLLABORATION, PARTNERSHIPS AND EXPERTISE AMONG INDUSTRY STAKEHOLDERS

Objective 3.1: Establish a statewide private-sector led organization to foster collaboration and partnerships, encourage innovation and advocate on behalf of the tourism industry.

Objective 3.2: Establish a statewide “Iowa Tourism Foundation” to support the tourism industry through the oversight of grant funds and the provision of education, training and research.

Objective 3.3: Develop a collaborative training program for tourism professionals and volunteer leadership across Iowa.

PRIMARY *Outcomes and Objectives*

SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT & RESOURCES

Every Iowa stakeholder has an interest in increasing the economic benefits of tourism. For some, the primary economic goal will be increased revenues or a smoothing of revenues across seasons. For others, it may be more dollars flowing to downtown businesses, fewer vacant storefronts and a better survival rate among those businesses. The economic goal might be to diversify the economic base of a small town or the income of a small farm. It might be creating more or better jobs; or increasing tax collections; or creating a bigger market for Iowa products. Tourism is an economic and business activity. Stakeholders rely upon the technical and financial support to realize some tourism projects. Whatever the focus for each stakeholder, the combined efforts will increase the economic benefits from tourism and produce a stronger, more sustainable economy for Iowa.

OUTCOME IV: INCREASED LEVEL OF SUPPORT AND RESOURCES FOR THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

Objective 4.1: Raise the awareness among policy makers and business leaders of the critical contributions tourism makes to business development and the Iowa economy.

Objective 4.2: Create a new source of grant funding for tourism-related projects through a statewide prepared food and beverage tax.

RESEARCH & DATA

Knowledge of market trends and a better understanding of the Iowa visitor, as well as what Iowa has to offer, will help Iowa's stakeholders make informed decisions that lead to success. This information is difficult for each small organization or business to gather, but the industry's leadership can effectively produce and share it with stakeholders to the benefit of the whole tourism community. Currently, the industry lacks access to affordable, relevant, reliable and consistent industry data and research. Maintaining access to these resources is critical for planning and long-term development of individual tourism entities and the broader tourism industry.

OUTCOME V: ELEVATED UNDERSTANDING AND RESPONSIVENESS TO THE CHANGING VISITOR NEEDS, OFFERINGS AND IOWA'S COMPETITIVE POSITION

Objective 5.1: Update the County Tourism Asset Inventory on an annual basis for building awareness of what Iowa has to offer and for benchmarking.

Objective 5.2: Produce an "Annual State of the Tourism Industry" report which highlights tourism's impact on the Iowa economy and key data and trends by niche areas (i.e. food, lodging, museums, recreation, etc.).

Objective 5.3: Establish an online repository of tourism data, case studies, presentations, impact studies and other research to serve as a resource tool for the tourism industry.

Objective 5.4: Develop presentation templates and other customizable materials that local and regional tourism organizations can utilize in their funding efforts.

Objective 5.5: Provide technical assistance and resources to assist local tourism organizations with the development and implementation of marketing plans and strategies.

Objective 5.6: Develop case studies of best practices that tourism attractions and organizations can utilize and model to respond to the changing needs of visitors and changes in the tourism industry.



Industry Leadership

IOWA TOURISM INDUSTRY SECTOR PLAN ADVISORY TEAM

Tracy Arthur, Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs

R. Lee Belfield, Kirkwood Community College
Culinary & Hospitality Program

Kirk Brandenberger, Keokuk Convention and
Visitors Bureau

Aaron Buzza, Waterloo Convention and Visitors
Bureau

Mark Eckman, Council Bluffs Convention and
Visitors Bureau

Carla Eysink, Marion County Development
Commission

Mathew Harris, Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs

Carrie Koelker, Eastern Iowa Tourism Association

Tammie Krausman, Iowa Department of Natural
Resources

Shawna Lode, Iowa Tourism Office

Megan McKay, Peace Tree Brewing Company

Andrew Milam, Shrine of the Grotto of the
Redemption

Shirley Phillips, Western Iowa Tourism Region

Jack Roeder, Prospect Meadows

John Sutter, National Mississippi River Museum

Ann Vogelbacher, Central Iowa Tourism Region

Michelle Wilson, Iowa Department of Natural
Resources

Sherry Vavra, Mahaska Community Recreation
Foundation

Sandi Yoder, Iowa Museum Association

THE 2015-2020 IOWA TOURISM INDUSTRY SECTOR PLAN WAS PREPARED BY

**THE INSTITUTE FOR DECISION MAKING,
BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES,
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA**



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INDUSTRY SECTOR PLAN

Sponsors

THE IOWA TOURISM INDUSTRY SECTOR PLAN WAS MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH THE SUPPORT OF THE FOLLOWING TOURISM ORGANIZATIONS FROM ACROSS IOWA. THEIR LEADERSHIP FOR UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF ADVANCING THE IOWA TOURISM SECTOR IS TRULY VISIONARY.

PLATINUM

Iowa Destination Marketing Association (IDMA)
Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA)
Travel Federation of Iowa (TFI)

GOLD

Okoboji Tourism Committee

SILVER

Ames CVB
Central Iowa Tourism Region (CITR)
Eastern Iowa Tourism Association (EITA)
Iowa Gaming Association
Western Iowa Tourism Region (WITR)

BRONZE

Cedar Falls Tourism & Visitors Bureau
Cedar Rapids Area CVB
Fort Dodge CVB
Greater Des Moines CVB
Iowa State Fair
Marshalltown CVB
Pella CVB
Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area

FRIEND

Council Bluffs CVB
Danish Mill
Great Burlington CVB
Harrison County Historical Village
& Welcome Center
Mike & Lisa Riggs
Ottumwa Area CVB
Visit Mason City

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