

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

SMART TOURISM VISION DEVELOPMENT

RFP # A10201 - 2023

The Resort Municipality of Whistler | November 2023

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Closing Location:	RMOW Municipal Hall
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. DESCRIPTION OF REQUIRED SERVICES.....	4
1.1 Project Overview	4
2. BACKGROUND.....	5
3. SPECIFIC PROJECT REQUIREMENTS.....	7
3. 1. GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR PROJECT DELIVERY	7
3. 2. INITIATIVE OBJECTIVES	7
3. 3. MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS / DELIVERABLES.....	8
4. PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS.....	9
4.1 PROPOSAL FORMAT	9
4.2 PROPOSAL METHODOLOGY	10
4.3 PROPOSED PROJECT TIMELINE	10
4.4 PROPOSED PROJECT BUDGET	10
4.5 PROPONENT PROFILE.....	10
4.6 QUESTIONS & CORRESPONDENCE	10
5. PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA.....	10
6. ADDITIONAL TERMS & CONDITIONS.....	12
APPENDIX A – PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA	14
APPENDIX B: SMART TOURISM STAKEHOLDER MAP.....	15

1. DESCRIPTION OF REQUIRED SERVICES

1.1 PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW) is seeking a qualified consultant to lead the facilitation of a Smart Tourism visioning journey, designed to guide Whistler’s collaborative approach to destination management and stewardship. This process will involve the facilitation of multiple workshops with Whistler’s key resort stakeholders to think collaboratively about the future of tourism in Whistler.

Smart Tourism emerged as one of four strategic priorities for Whistler Council’s 2023-26 term in addition to housing, climate action and community engagement. Smart Tourism questions what it is for Whistler to be a global leader. It challenges our community to consider how they can contribute to a sustainable future and shape a destination of which they are proud. It represents a unified approach to destination management to deliver economic success through balancing community, culture, and environment.

Work around Smart Tourism is designed to align with and complement Whistler’s vision, as articulated in the Official Community Plan (OCP): “Whistler: a place where our community thrives, nature is protected, and guests are inspired”. For Whistler to thrive, we must define a successful approach to tourism that is based on the fundamentals of sustainable tourism management practices, incorporating social, environmental, cultural, and economic sustainability.

Due to the breadth and collaborative nature of Smart Tourism, it is important to understand the different perceptions of successful destination management in Whistler. The process will be built upon the foundation of stakeholder workshops that will ultimately seek to create a vivid description of what we want the future of tourism to look like in Whistler. The outputs of these workshops will help identify key threats and opportunities that will later be incorporated into a Smart Tourism Strategic Plan.

By understanding the challenges and opportunities that Whistler faces now and into the future, we can come together to develop a clear roadmap for a destination management strategy that is shared amongst Whistler’s community. It is envisaged that the outcomes can be considered by each stakeholder to align on key attributes and enable individual organizational strategies and actions to support achievement for the broader good.

This thinking is already underway at the provincial level through Destination BC’s (DBC) Corporate Strategy¹, which is centered on seeking to create the best visitor experience while increasing the economic, social, and environmental benefits throughout BC. The DBC Sea to Sky Destination Development Strategy² takes this further by focusing on the supply and experience of tourism and ensuring that “the natural life cycle of tourism... is managed to ensure a destination evolves to remain desirable for the consumer and therefore, competitive in its target markets”.

These commitments from DBC support the transformational shift from destination marketing to destination management that we are seeing across the globe. They are concentrating on three

¹ [DBC-Corporate-Strategy-Summary-2023_FINAL-Sept-20-LR-Updated.pdf](#)

² [Sea-to-Sky-Corridor-Destination-Development-Strategy_Final.pdf](#)

pillars of destination management - to mobilize, empower, and transform. Through these pillars, DBC is trying to encourage alignment and collaboration of tourism initiatives, develop deeper networks within the industry and enhance experiences to increase competitiveness.

Smart Tourism aligns with this thinking, and it will be important to factor in the provincial vision as we look to identify what successful tourism in Whistler looks like and how we support our community and environment while preserving authentic Whistler experiences.

The qualified proponent will lead the facilitation of Smart Tourism visioning workshops with key resort stakeholders, drawing inspiration from global sustainable tourism management practices with the goal of creating a vision that will later inform development of a roadmap and strategy that returns Whistler to its position as a global leader in tourism. Proponents will be expected to compile a creative summary report detailing required next steps to support the high-level vision.

The goal of the Smart Tourism initiative is to become organized in our approach to destination management and create a strong foundation to inform decision making in years to come. There are already many sustainable tourism practices and destination management policies in place in Whistler, so the Smart Tourism Strategy must draw these together, and build on them, toward a strong vision of a better future to unify Whistler's movement towards our common goals.

2. BACKGROUND

Whistler has a history of progressive and careful planning towards achieving and evolving its ongoing vision for success and sustainability as a year-round, international tourist destination and resort community. Whistler has established its vision articulating the high-level aspirations for our resort community and describing what we collectively seek to achieve over Whistler's long-term future.

While the Official Community Plan, adopted in June 2020, incorporates vision, goal and policy guidance for areas related to Smart Tourism, many factors have shifted or accelerated since then and a specific Smart Tourism vision is required. The challenges of our success are starting to show, as the world around us has changed, setting the stage for a renewed focus on how we define our path forward.

From 2015 to 2017 Whistler was ranked the #1 ski resort in North America but experienced a slow decline through to 2023 where it was ranked #5 in the west. For 2024, Whistler saw a significant shift where it fell to the #21 ski destination in the west with reviewers stating, "that the amazing terrain, scenery, village, and international vibe take a back seat to the crowds, prices, and poor customer service".

Whistler has returned to close to pre-pandemic levels of visitation, welcoming nearly 3.2 million visitors per year in 2022. As visitation returns to Whistler, it is becoming evident that we can only succeed as a destination if we prioritize our focus on social, environmental, and cultural elements that support our town and preserve the natural assets that helped Whistler grow into a world-class resort.

The draw of Whistler as a world-class, four-season resort destination suggests that demand and visitation will continue to grow, and our thinking and planning needs to evolve with it. We can expect Whistler's daily population equivalent to increase from 42,000 in 2023 to 50,000 in 2040³. Visitor volumes ultimately impact the need for employees and for infrastructure to support local and visiting populations, and an appropriate balance of these systems must be considered in a community designed and built to sustain a limit to growth.

Smart Tourism came to light as a council priority for the 2023-26 strategic plan to help the RMOW consider how key resort partners work together to manage our parks, trails, tourism programming and transportation options to encourage dispersion throughout the resort. It can also help identify linkages to many other areas that support success in sustainable tourism from attracting and housing workforce, to climate action and emergency activities and education. Whistler has many stakeholders currently contributing to sustainable tourism practices, visitor management and destination stewardship practices who will need to be involved in the planning process.

Whistler's Economic Partnership Initiative Committee was established in 2013 with the purpose to support the growth of Whistler's resort economy and strive for economic success following the economic downturn that arose following the hosting of the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. This committee has been extremely successful in driving collaboration amongst resort stakeholders and will now be leveraged in a new capacity as the Smart Tourism Committee to consider the evolving landscape required for sustainable economic success.

The committee is currently comprised of the below members:

- Mayor of Whistler
- Council representative
- President and CEO, Tourism Whistler
- Chief Operating Officer, Whistler Blackcomb
- President, Hotel Association of Whistler
- Executive Director, Whistler Chamber
- Member-at-Large
- RMOW
 - Chief Administrative Officer
 - General Manager of Climate Action, Planning and Development Services
 - Economic Development Officer

Appendix B shows a detailed breakdown of all stakeholders and their level of involvement in Smart Tourism, note that there are currently considerations of expanding the Smart Tourism membership.

A compelling Smart Tourism vision will strike a balance between the ongoing management and marketing of Whistler. Currently, the responsibility for marketing the destination is shared between the destination marketing organization Tourism Whistler and the resort operator Vail Resorts/Whistler Blackcomb. Marketing efforts have been focused on smoothing visitation levels

³ Conservative estimate based on RMOW's [Balance Model](#)

by bringing down the peaks and boosting the valleys of visitation through various programming initiatives.

Destination management is a shared responsibility spanning various organizations including the Resort Municipality of Whistler, Whistler Blackcomb, Tourism Whistler, and others. It is anticipated that the Smart Tourism vision will align future marketing efforts to focus on communication of community values and influence behavior to mitigate impacts to natural assets. It will also illuminate areas of destination management that require focus and attention.

The RMOW has also developed a “Balance Model” that forecasts Whistler’s numerous population segments through to 2040 and overlays our built capacity to project impacts of population growth on Whistler’s services and infrastructure. Through this model, we can run various scenarios that allow us to consider how policy and development decisions will impact our community. This model will be available to help support visioning exercises and help quantify the creative outputs from workshops.

Further, additional primary and secondary research in the areas of tourism is available from key stakeholders involved in the process and can be made available to help inform discussions as needed.

3. SPECIFIC PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

3. 1. GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR PROJECT DELIVERY

This initiative will follow the guiding principles throughout the work:

- Whistler’s Smart Tourism Vision Development will generate a vision for finding balance in Whistler’s economic, social, environmental, and cultural elements and should serve as a unifying agreement for all Whistler stakeholders to act upon.
- A Smart Tourism Vision will emerge from at least two committee workshops that will identify the common ground of various perspectives and points of view throughout the resort.
- Ensure appropriate consideration is given to existing references within the Resort Municipality of Whistler, such as the Official Community Plan, such that there is no duplicative effort.
- Facilitation will incorporate learnings from the global stage as well as alignment with provincial and federal initiatives.
- Creativity and inspiration are core to this exercise to produce a vision for tourism that unifies our community.

3. 2. INITIATIVE OBJECTIVES

The objective of this work is to:

- Work with resort stakeholders to create a vision for Smart Tourism that represents a holistic approach to destination management that builds a resilient economy through supporting social, environmental, and cultural assets.

- Develop a Smart Tourism vision summary report that summarizes the answers to the question of what it will take for Whistler to become a global leader 10 years from now.
- Consider the role of individual organizations throughout Whistler and how they can contribute to the Smart Tourism Vision
- Create an inventory of current activities/ initiatives already underway that support the Smart Tourism vision.
- Draw inspiration from global best practices to inform our visioning exercises.
- Identify next steps for further engagement with the Vision and for building a Smart Tourism implementation plan and roadmap.

3. 3. MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS / DELIVERABLES

The deliverables of this request for proposals have been split into two phases. The initial visioning phase (phase 1) is the primary requirement for the work and is what the proposal evaluation criteria (section 5) will be applied to. Phase two is provided as an optional deliverable and focuses on the strategy development and creation process that will follow the initial visioning exercise. The RMOW will determine whether and how to proceed with the optional deliverable of Phase 2 during or at the completion of Phase 1.

3.3.1 Minimum Requirements

Phase 1: Smart Tourism Visioning Exercise

The minimum requirement of the work will be:

- Facilitation of a minimum of two visioning workshops with the Smart Tourism Committee to develop a collective vision of what the future of tourism can look like in Whistler.
- A summary report detailing the proposed Smart Tourism Vision, which will act as the foundation to a future roadmap or implementation strategy.

3.3.2 Optional Requirements

Phase 2: Smart Tourism Strategic Plan

The minimum requirement of the work will be:

- Develop a Smart Tourism Strategic Plan and/or Roadmap, utilizing the outputs of Phase 1, and additional input initiatives as needed, to produce a detailed implementation plan for Smart Tourism that drives transformational change to meet our collective vision of being a sustainable, global leader in tourism.

Deliverables will include the following:

- Convert the creative visionary outputs of Phase 1 into an action plan that outlines a clear strategy that can be shared with the broader community to drive positive change in our approach to tourism management.
- Prioritize primary challenges and opportunities and develop recommendations based on phase 1 outcomes, identifying recommendations based on outcomes and identifying roles and responsibilities of key resort stakeholders.
- Detail how performance will be monitored and improved, including indicators and benchmarks to optimize performance.

4. PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

4.1 PROPOSAL FORMAT

An electronic copy (pdf) of the proposal should be submitted by 4:00pm on Thursday 14th December, 2023.

4.2 PROPOSAL METHODOLOGY

All proposals are to include a clear description of the proposed project methodology, including a description of the key phases, and individual phase budgets. Each phase should clearly describe the deliverable, as well as the method for achieving this output.

4.3 PROPOSED PROJECT TIMELINE

All proposals are to include a detailed description of the proposed project timeline by phase.

4.4 PROPOSED PROJECT BUDGET

Proposals are to include a table summarizing the total cost of the work, including a fee schedule for each member of the project team, all tasks and hours and hourly rates.

4.5 PROPONENT PROFILE

Proposals are to include a brief summary of key project team members, outlining individual skills, experience, qualifications as well as their proposed roles and responsibilities in delivery of this specific proposal. Please provide relevant experience with similar large, complex, multi-stakeholder scenario planning projects. Proposals may also include a brief outline of in-house corporate commitments to sustainability.

4.6 QUESTIONS & CORRESPONDENCE

The RMOW is committed to a fair and open process for all parties interested in this RFP. Please direct all queries and questions related to this RFP to Richard Kemble, Economic Development Officer rkemble@whistler.ca or 604 935 8116.

5. PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

The RMOW reserves the right to select the consultant best suited for this project and intends to evaluate Proposals as fairly as possible. The RMOW reserves the right to make changes to the evaluation process prior to the Proposal submission date.

The RMOW has disclaimed any intention to assume contractual or other obligations to consultants during the RFP process partly to ensure that it retains maximum flexibility in regard to whether it proceeds, whether it proceeds with one of the consultants, or how it will evaluate proposals. While the RMOW intends to evaluate proposals as fairly as possible, consultants should be aware the RMOW may evaluate proposals on any basis whatsoever, whether specifically identified in this document or not. Consultants should be aware that various matters may be considered by the RMOW when evaluating proposals, including, for example:

- Whether, or to what extent, a consultant has complied with the Proposal requirements set out in this document
- The RMOW's assessment of the ability of the consultant to successfully perform the work based on similar projects of experience
- Proposed budget
- Technical innovation
- The nature of any previous dealings the RMOW has had with a consultant

If a Proposal is determined to be unclear or deficient in some aspects, but these deficiencies are capable of being clarified or rectified, the RMOW may prepare a list of questions for the consultant, to clarify or remedy the deficiencies. If, in the opinion of the RMOW, these clarifications and rectifications do not overcome the deficiencies, the RMOW, at its sole and absolute discretion, may decide to reject the Proposal.

The RMOW may contact any or all of the consultants to seek further clarification and information before awarding the contract.

Finally, the RMOW intends to evaluate all proposals according to the scoring matrix outlined in Appendix A. Note that the RMOW will select the Proposal that it deems, in its sole and absolute discretion, demonstrates the best combination of corporate qualifications, skilled and experienced personnel, project understanding, vision, proposed approach to achieving the project goals, as well as project budget. The Resort Municipality of Whistler is not bound to accept the lowest price proposal, nor is the RMOW in any way bound to award the project to any of the Proponent bids. The RMOW is under no obligation to advance this project in any way whatsoever.

6. ADDITIONAL TERMS & CONDITIONS

- i. **Signed Proposals** The proposal must be signed by the person(s) authorized on behalf of the Proponent or company and binds the Proponent to the statements made in the RFP response.
- ii. **Irrevocability of Proposals** At the appointed closing time, all proposals become irrevocable. By submission of a proposal, the Proponent agrees that should its proposal be selected, the Proponent will enter into a contract with the Resort Municipality of Whistler.
- iii. **Changes to the Proposal Wording and Content** The Proponent is entitled to amend its proposal at any time before the deadline for submission of proposals. After the closing date and time, the Proponent will not change the wording or content of the proposal and no words will be added to the proposal, including changing the intent or content of the proposal, unless requested by the Resort Municipality of Whistler.
- iv. **Proponent Expenses** Proponents are solely responsible for their own expenses in preparing the proposal, presentations of their proposal, and travel costs incurred presenting and negotiating their proposal.
- v. **Proposal Pricing** Proposal prices must be firm for a minimum of 90 days after closing.
- vi. **Acceptance of Proposals** The Resort Municipality of Whistler is not bound to accept the lowest price proposal, nor is the RMOW in any way bound to award the project to any of the Proponent bids. The RMOW is under no obligation to advance this project in any way whatsoever.
- vii. **Alternative Solutions** Please submit alternative options as a separate proposal. If any other type of alternative options is proposed, proponents are also requested to submit the alternative or option as a separate proposal.
- viii. **Negotiations** If a written contract cannot be negotiated within 20 days of notification to the lead proponent, the Resort Municipality of Whistler may, at its discretion at any time thereafter, terminate negotiations with that proponent and either negotiate a contract with the next qualified proponent, or cancel the RFP process and not enter into a contract with any Proponent.
- ix. **Subcontracting** Proposed subcontractors must be listed with attached resumes. Joint proposal submission must indicate which proponent has overall responsibility of the project.
- x. **Liability for Errors** The information contained in this RFP is supplied solely as a guideline for proponents. The information is not guaranteed or warranted to be accurate by the Resort Municipality of Whistler, nor is it necessarily comprehensive.
- xi. **Agreement with Terms** The Proponent, through the submission of a proposal, agrees to all terms and conditions of this RFP.
- xii. **Modification of Terms** The Resort Municipality of Whistler reserves the right to modify the terms of the RFP at its sole discretion at any time prior to the submission deadline.
- xiii. **Availability of Information** The consultant shall be permitted access to Resort Municipality of Whistler files and reports that relate to this project.

xiv. **Confidentiality of Information** Information pertaining to the Resort Municipality of Whistler obtained by the Proponent as a result of participation in this project is confidential and must not be disclosed without written permission from the Resort Municipality of Whistler.

xv. **Confidentiality of Proposals** The Owner (Resort Municipality of Whistler) is subject to the British Columbia Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. That Act creates a right of access to records in the custody or under the control of the Owner, subject to the specific exceptions in that right set out in the Act. The Owner will receive all proposals submitted in response to this RFP in confidence. Because of the right of access to information created by that Act, the Owner does not guarantee that information contained in any proposals will remain confidential if a request for access in respect of any proposal is made under the Act. Proponents are required to keep their proposals confidential and must not disclose their proposals, or information contained in them, to anyone else without the prior written consent of the Owner.

xvi. **Payment** The Consultant's invoices for this contract will be payable, net 30 days, upon submission of monthly progress claims. The Consultant's invoices must be submitted in a manner acceptable to the Resort Municipality of Whistler.

xvii. **Responsibility** The Proponent shall not transfer responsibility to meet the obligations of this contract to a third party without the consent, in writing, of the Resort Municipality of Whistler project manager.

xviii. **No Collusion** Proponents shall not directly or indirectly communicate with any other Proponent regarding the preparation or presentation of their proposals, or in connection with the Proposal engage in any collusion, fraud or unfair competition.

xix. **Laws of the Jurisdiction** Any contract resulting from this RFP will be governed by and will be interpreted in accordance with the laws of the Province of British Columbia.

xx. **Intellectual Property Rights** The Resort Municipality of Whistler will be the owner of the intellectual property rights, including patent, assignment of copyright, waiver of moral rights, trademark and industrial design in any product, business process, and software or training program developed specifically through this contract. Licensing and marketing rights of the developed product, if appropriate, will be negotiated separately.

APPENDIX A – PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

All complete Proposals received by the established deadline will be evaluated against the following evaluation criteria:

CRITERIA	% EVALUATION
Project Understanding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Solution adapted to goals, guidelines and objectives - Clarity of the proposal 	10%
Proponent Qualifications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reputation, proven performance and relevant experience - Technical and management capability, capacity, skills and qualifications of the proponent - References based on past performance for similarly complex projects 	40%
Methodology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demonstrates sector leading approach towards achieving the project goals - Demonstrates a level of effort to adequately deliver the project objectives and outcomes 	20%
Proposed Schedule <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work plan and schedule by tasks - Realistic timetable 	10%
Cost <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Total pricing within the proposal - Proposed hourly fees and disbursements 	20%

APPENDIX B: SMART TOURISM STAKEHOLDER MAP

