

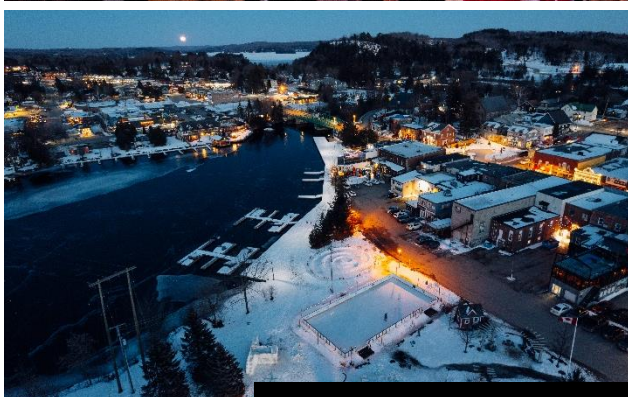
Huntsville



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS TO

**DEVELOP A STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN FOR
TOURISM PROMOTION AND PRODUCT
DEVELOPMENT**

**FOR THE HUNTSVILLE MUNICIPAL ACCOMMODATION
TAX ASSOCIATION (EXPLORE HUNTSVILLE)**



ISSUED: JULY 17, 2025

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: 5:00 P.M. EST ON AUGUST 6, 2025

WHO WE ARE

The Huntsville Municipal Accommodation Tax Association (HMATA) is the official Destination Marketing and Management Organization (DMMO) for the Town of Huntsville and operates the public-facing tourism marketing entity, Explore Huntsville.

HMATA was established in 2019 under an agreement with the Town of Huntsville and in consultation with local accommodators and tourism operators. We currently receive 62 per cent of the net revenue from the Huntsville Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT), which applies to all accommodation sold for a continuous period of less than 30 days in a hotel, motel, lodge, inn, or bed and breakfast.

Under provincial legislation, the MAT funds we receive must be used for promotion of tourism, including development of tourism products.

Huntsville was the first Muskoka municipality to implement a MAT. Of the six Muskoka municipalities, three have since implemented or will soon implement a MAT: the Town of Gravenhurst implemented a four per cent (4%) MAT on January 31, 2023; the Town of Bracebridge intends to implement a four per cent (4%) MAT on October 1, 2025; and the Township of Lake of Bays intends to implement a four per cent (4%) MAT in January 2026.

HMATA's primary focus is enhancing the overall appeal and competitiveness of Huntsville as a tourism destination. This involves marketing and promotion, collaborative partnerships, market research, visitor attraction grants, and attraction product development to draw and retain visitors and stimulate economic growth while preserving Huntsville's natural and cultural resources.

In January 2024, HMATA established Explore Huntsville for tourism marketing purposes and adopted creative assets under the Huntsville Community Brand, which was developed by the Town of Huntsville in consultation with stakeholders, to help ensure consistent community branding for visitors.

OUR COMPOSITION

We are a not-for-profit organization with three staff members: a full-time Executive Director, a full-time Marketing Manager, and a part-time Administration and Partnership Manager. Our Executive Director reports to a voluntary Board of Directors, comprised of:

- Four Directors who represent the Huntsville/Lake of Bays Accommodation and Restaurant Association (must be from a Huntsville-based business)
- One Director who represents the Huntsville/Lake of Bays Chamber of Commerce (must be from a Huntsville-based business)
- One Director who represents the Downtown Huntsville BIA
- One Town Councillor who represents the Town of Huntsville

OUR VISION

We will become Ontario's most visited year-round destination made possible by our engaged community and tourism industry.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to inspire year-round sustainable growth of Huntsville's visitor economy, by working with our local and regional partners to motivate visitors to enjoy our unique brand of community hospitality and Muskoka experiences.

OUR VALUES

Being collaborative, being creative, being progressive, being inclusive, and respecting our natural environment.

ABOUT HUNTSVILLE

Huntsville is the northernmost of six municipalities in the District Municipality of Muskoka (Muskoka) and a gateway to world-renowned Algonquin Provincial Park.

Surrounded by natural beauty, Huntsville is a magnet for both outdoor enthusiasts and those looking to relax lakeside or amidst our abundant, towering forests. Our historical downtown features diverse dining options and quaint shops, our thriving artistic community is anchored by the popular Group of Seven Outdoor Mural Gallery and the beautiful Algonquin Theatre, and festivals and events throughout the year add vibrancy and excitement.

Our key tourism partners are Huntsville Festival of the Arts, the Downtown Huntsville BIA, and the Huntsville Lake of Bays Chamber of Commerce. We also have a collaborative and strategic marketing partnership with Muskoka Tourism. These partnerships are supplemented by Huntsville's many tourism and hospitality operators.

In addition to year-round residents, Huntsville is a home away from home for many seasonal residents (cottagers) and swells with both first-time and returning visitors

to the area in the summer and fall. And yet our market research shows that many people across Ontario have never heard of Huntsville.

PROJECT OBJECTIVE

HMATA is seeking the services of a qualified consultant to facilitate development of a Strategic Action Plan in consultation with our Board of Directors, staff, tourism partners, and tourism stakeholders. HMATA's current plan expires in December 2025, and we want to build on the momentum generated over the past three years to hone our approach to tourism marketing and product development, with emphasis on the shoulder seasons (late fall through early spring).

The Strategic Action Plan will guide our efforts from January 2026 through December 2028, providing a core direction and identifying key markets, initiatives, and investments to help position Huntsville as one of the most desirable places to visit in Ontario.

SCOPE OF WORK

The successful consultant will deliver a comprehensive three-year Strategic Action Plan that aligns with HMATA's mission, vision, values, and overarching objectives, as well as our agreement with the Town of Huntsville for use of MAT revenues.

Using existing available research — including recent market research that was commissioned by HMATA on traveller intentions and perceptions of Huntsville — stakeholder engagement, and other recommended tactics, the consultant will facilitate development of a robust yet focused action plan.

Tactics will include:

- Reviewing HMATA's 2023-25 Strategic Plan and assessing the organization's resulting achievements and missteps.
- An internal organizational review to ensure operations align with and are optimal for supporting HMATA's strategic goals.
- Analyzing existing and emerging tourism industry trends, priorities, and risks within Ontario.
- A comprehensive assessment of Huntsville as a visitor destination including:
 - Reviewing and comparing Huntsville with similarly sized visitor destinations within Ontario, such as Collingwood/Blue Mountains and Prince Edward County, and those with a similar funding structure.

- Identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, including both a clear articulation of Huntsville’s unique selling propositions and a gap analysis to identify opportunities for growth or development.
- Reviewing the Huntsville area’s key tourism demand generators to verify or correct HMATA’s assumptions.
- Identifying regional differences and dependencies.
- Reviewing the current services, agencies, and structures designed to support the growth of the local visitor economy.
- Analyzing how HMATA supports local tourism stakeholders and providing an action plan for improvement.
- Identifying opportunities for growth, including:
 - Untapped visitor demographics and geographic markets.
 - Improvements in local tourism services and amenities.
 - Feasibility of and demand for tourism package offerings.
 - Attraction of corporate conferences, conventions, and meetings.
 - Existing and potential community partnerships.
- Facilitating stakeholder consultations, including:
 - Developing objectives and a framework for both one-on-one consultations with key stakeholders and group consultations with the broader tourism community. (HMATA will provide a stakeholder invitation list for consideration and feedback.)
 - Reporting on findings of stakeholder consultations, including identifying creative opportunities, solutions, and partnerships.

The consultant will incorporate the above intelligence into prioritized strategic goals and action plans for HMATA to implement in 2026-2028. The strategic goals will be designed to unite stakeholders in a shared vision for growth, including clearly defined actions with measurements of success, as well as a defined process for renewing and updating the plan as future opportunities and challenges present.

The strategic goals will support future investment and policy decisions.

PROJECT MILESTONES AND DELIVERABLES

Our preferred timeline for activities and deliverables is:

- August 18 – Project launch
- Late August to early September – Discovery phase (initial consultations with staff and Directors, document transfer, etc.)

- September to mid-October – Group stakeholder consultations
- November 14 – Draft plan received for review and feedback
- January 20, 2 p.m. – Final Strategic Action Plan presented at HMATA’s regular Board meeting

Components of the Strategic Action Plan may include, but not be limited to:

- Strategic context
- Board and governance
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Guiding principles
- Strategic priorities and framework
- Action plan
- Measurements of success

In addition to the Strategic Action Plan, the consultant will:

- Design a presentation for the HMATA Board of Directors, to be presented at its January 20 regular meeting, outlining key findings, strategic priorities, and measurements of success.
- Provide consolidated project materials in digital format, containing all background information, research, and original stakeholder input.

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

WHAT YOUR PROPOSAL SHOULD INCLUDE

- A cover letter stating the bidder’s company name, physical address, telephone, email address, primary contact person, and date of submission. The letter should be submitted by a person authorized to sign on behalf of and to bind the bidder to its proposal and the terms of the RFP.
- An overview of the bidder’s recent experience (within the past five years) and qualifications related to the project objective and scope.
- Examples of previous similar work supporting tourism marketing organizations.
- A proposed approach, work plan, and timeline.
- A pricing breakdown aligned with deliverables, stated in Canadian dollars and exclusive of applicable taxes. Pricing must remain valid for the duration of the project.
- Payment terms.

- Two letters of reference from recent clients for whom the bidder has provided similar services, including current contact information. These references may be contacted during the proposal evaluation phase to determine their satisfaction with the work completed.
- A self-assessment of any potential conflicts of interest in completing the project.

WHAT WE WANT TO SEE

- A clear understanding of HMATA's mandate and objectives, and how these relate to the project objective.
- Proven use of current technologies, standards, and best practices.
- Excellence in project management.
- Proven results in developing actionable strategies for similar organizations.
- The ability to differentiate Huntsville from other Ontario destinations.
- An experienced, professional in-house project team to meet the project objective and deadlines.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

ELIGIBILITY

The bidder must be a registered company with the legal authorization to conduct business in the Province of Ontario. Project activities must be completed in-house by the bidder's employees or contractors who are legally entitled to work in Canada.

INQUIRIES

Direct inquiries related to this RFP to Kelly Haywood, Executive Director, at kelly@huntsvillemat.com (cc: info@huntsvillemat.com) by 5:00 p.m. on July 30. Information obtained from any other source is not official and may be inaccurate. Inquiries and responses may be recorded and may be distributed to all proponents at the option of HMATA.

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS AND PROJECT TIMELINE

- Deadline: Proposals must be received electronically by 5:00 p.m. EST on August 6, at kelly@huntsvillemat.com (cc: info@huntsvillemat.com)
- Project award: August 13
- Project launch: August 18
- Project schedule: See preferred timeline above
- Project completion: January 20, 2026

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Proposals will be evaluated and scored according to the following criteria:

- The bidder has significant experience and a demonstrable successful track record in similar projects.
- The proposed approach and workplan demonstrate an understanding of the project objective, scope, and required deliverables, and is clearly articulated, complete, and feasible.
- The quoted price (before applicable taxes) demonstrates cost-effectiveness and exceptional value for money in achieving the project objective.
- The quality of references.

CERTIFICATION (BIDDER MUST SIGN AND RETURN)

I certify that this information is complete and correct to the best of my understanding. I am authorized to submit this information on behalf of the company, and to bind it to both this proposal and the Terms and Conditions of this RFP.

Name: _____

Title: _____

Company: _____

Authorized signature: _____

Date: _____

RFP CONTACT INFORMATION

Kelly Haywood, Executive Director

kelly@huntsvillemat.com (cc: info@huntsvillemat.com)

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- Submissions in response to this RFP assume acceptance of the terms and conditions described herein.
- All costs associated with the preparation of the proposal are the sole responsibility of the bidder and HMATA shall neither bear responsibility nor incur liability for such costs.

- Neither HMATA's receipt of a bidder's proposal, nor the completion of any of the RFP's evaluation and selection stages, constitutes an obligation on the part of HMATA to award a contract.
- HMATA reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals received, and to seek clarification from one or more bidders on the contents of their submissions.
- Confidentiality of all submissions and communications will be maintained throughout the process.
- All communications with HMATA related to this RFP must be directed only to the contact person above.
- HMATA reserves the right to terminate the RFP process at any time subsequent to the closing date and issue a new RFP.
- HMATA reserves the right to disqualify a proposal based on evidence of conflict of interest in HMATA's sole discretion.
- HMATA may interview bidders and, in cases where the proposal alone is not sufficient for a decision to be made, use information from these interviews to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the submission.
- HMATA shall negotiate in good faith on such matter(s) as it chooses with the selected bidder without obligation to communicate with other bidders.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!