



TALBOT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

TALBOT COUNTY VISITORS CENTER FEASIBILITY STUDY

PUBLICATION *INSERT DATE*

PROPOSALS DUE BY: *INSERT DATE*

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Talbot County Department of Economic Development and Tourism, through the Talbot County Council, is seeking to engage in a contract with a Consultant to provide a feasibility study for a Talbot County Visitors Center.

PROJECT SUMMARY

Tourism is one of Talbot County's leading industry sectors. Post-pandemic numbers were at their highest point in history, with more than 662,000 visiting the county. According to a study by Tourism Economics, visitors spent \$303 million and directly supported 1,986 jobs in Talbot County in 2021. The industry generated \$64.3 million in federal, state, and local taxes.

The Talbot County Department of Economic Development and Tourism in partnership with the Talbot County Tourism Board, has begun to envision the Visitors Center of the future. The county is located at the epicenter of the newly designated Chesapeake Country All-American Road, with U.S. Route 50 forming the spine of this internationally significant byway as it passes through Talbot County. This facility would offer visitor services including bathroom facilities, as well as storage space and office space for the staff and volunteers who will be needed to operate an expanded facility.

A feasibility study will help the Talbot County Council understand the capital investment and operational considerations required for such a project.

VISITORS CENTER HISTORY AND FUTURE

Talbot County passed legislation in 1986 to collect accommodations tax to be used for tourism marketing. At this time, the County government employed the Talbot County Chamber of Commerce to implement its tourism marketing efforts, including operating a Visitors Center.

In the early 90s, the County withdrew the funding for the Chamber and received a grant to hire a consultant to determine the best way to market tourism. This resulted in the formation of the Talbot County Office of Tourism, which was recognized by the Maryland Office of Tourism Development as the County's official Destination Marketing Organization. In 2016, Talbot County merged its offices of economic development and tourism to form one department to create efficiencies, leverage existing assets, and provide strategic opportunities for a stronger unified structure.

The Visitors Center has been located in a number of County-owned buildings. In 2000, it moved to its current location in the historic firehouse in downtown Easton, owned by the Town of Easton. In 2023, the Talbot County Visitors Center will move to the Easton Airport terminal, but it will be unmanned.

SCOPE OF WORK AND DELIVERABLES

The project concept will provide an analysis of the current situation and provide comprehensive recommendations for locating, funding, and building a new Visitors Center. The report will give the Talbot County Department of Economic Development and Tourism, the Tourism Board, and the County Council a clear indication of the capital investment required, alternative sources of funding, and operational considerations required for such a facility. The visitors center shall create a positive experience and clear understanding of Talbot County attractions.

A feasibility study of the Talbot County Visitors Center should include, at a minimum:

Needs Assessment

- Assess current trends and future projections for Visitors Centers, including industry definitions, current trends, and industry growth or decline.
- Review existing facilities in the region and current facilities within Talbot County to understand services offered, practical capacity, and gaps in services.
- Prepare situational analysis of the tourism industry in Talbot County and one the Eastern Shore.
- Analyze economic impact to the businesses of Talbot County.
- Meet with industry stakeholders to gain insight into needs and wants.
- Develop a vision for the Talbot County Visitors Center, including staffing, building features, services offered, and auxiliary uses.

Facility and Site Assessment

- Recommendation for one primary site and one alternate site for new Visitors Center.
- Proposed site characteristics summary including benefits of proposed location(s) and potential concerns to be addressed in a possible Phase II study.
- Traffic analysis based on available data at proposed sites.
- Operational analysis including projected capital investment and operating costs based on market conditions, as well as potential sources of revenue.
- Anticipated sources of funding.
- Projected volume of visitors.
- Short-, intermediate-, and long-term goals of bringing the project to fruition.

Final Deliverables

- Executive Summary
- Comprehensive Study
- USB drive containing final summary and study.
- At least one (1) original color copy of the final summary and study.

Proposal Requirements

- Service provider name, date, and contact information.
- Resumes of principal(s) and working team members.
- Concise description of the services proposed for the work.
- Estimated costs for services and deliverables.
- Master schedule that includes milestones, deliverables, and delivery dates.
- Description of past experience with at least three (3) examples of similar efforts.
- At least three (3) references for similar projects.
- An original and six (6) copies of the proposal.

Schedule

- June 2023 Publish RFP
- July 2023 Review Bids
- August 2023 Interview(s)
- September 2023 Award Bid
- January 2024 Present completed study to Talbot County
Tourism Board

Attached Documents

- Conflict of Interest Disclosure and Employment of Aliens Statement;
- Talbot County Vendor Application; and
- Contract for Professional Services.

SUBMITTING PROPOSALS

Sealed bids MUST be delivered to:

Office of the Talbot County Manager
 Courthouse, South Wing
 11 North Washington Street
 Easton, MD 21601

DATE
By 10:00 a.m.

Envelopes MUST be marked: "**Bid No INSERT: Talbot County Visitors Center Feasibility Study**" in the lower left corner.

** Proposals not received by the time and at the place indicated will not be considered.*

INQUIRIES CONCERNING THIS PROPOSAL

Please direct any questions or comments to:

Cassandra Vanhooser
Director, Economic Development and Tourism
Talbot County, Maryland
215 Bay Street
Easton, MD 21601

Email: cvanhooser@talbotcountymd.gov

Telephone: 410-770-8000

The Talbot County Visitors Center Feasibility Study will undergo review and approval by representatives from the Talbot County Department of Economic Development and Tourism, the Talbot County Manager's Office, and the Talbot County Tourism Board. A consultant will be selected based on a combination of design quality, professional experience, and price.

*Talbot County Department of Economic Development and Tourism Department reserves the right to accept or reject, in whole or in part, any and all proposals received in response to this **Request for Proposal**; to waive or permit cure of minor irregularities; and to conduct discussions with any or all qualified Service Providers in any manner necessary to serve the best interests of the County. This **Request for Proposal** creates no obligation on the part of the County to award a contract.*