



# PURE MICHIGAN<sup>®</sup>

a plan  
FOR THE INDUSTRY BY THE INDUSTRY  
2012–2017 Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan

*Prepared by Dr. Sarah Nicholls, Michigan State University*



## From the Michigan Travel Commission

Michigan's tourism industry has seen impressive growth over the past few years.

As a \$17.7 billion industry that generated nearly \$1 billion in state tax revenue and supported nearly 200,000 jobs in 2011, tourism remains a vital sector in Michigan's economy.

Since the implementation of the 2007–2011 Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan, this industry has made great progress to regain our share of the overall tourism market. We are seeing record numbers in out-of-state visitor spending, as well as record hotel occupancy rates across the state. This is the extremely promising foundation upon which the 2012–2017 Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan will build.

This plan identifies a series of goals and objectives important to the industry's continued growth and vitality. It was shaped from the input of hundreds of industry members from every region in the state and will ensure tourism continues to play a role in overall economic development in Michigan.

We are proud that Michigan is one of the only states in the country that has engaged in a strategic planning process that is this comprehensive in scope and inclusive in design. This is not a marketing plan; rather, it is a blueprint for identifying and taking action on the critical issues that will drive the tourism industry forward for the next five years and beyond.

We express our sincere gratitude to all those who participated in developing this plan —whether it was serving on the Advisory Council, participating in a visioning session or taking one of the online surveys. This plan is truly “for the industry, by the industry” and that is its true strength.

As members of the Michigan Travel Commission, we were committed to leading the effort to secure funding for this plan and guiding its creation. We now look forward to working with the tourism industry on the most important step of the process, its successful implementation.

*The Michigan Travel Commission*



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## From the Strategic Plan Advisory Council

It has been a privilege to help lead this strategic planning process during such an exciting time for Michigan's tourism industry.

The levels of interest, participation and support from the industry over the course of the past year have been remarkable and have instilled great confidence as this plan moves from the planning stage into implementation. As a result of your financial, travel and time commitments, we have developed a dynamic plan to guide our industry over the next five years. Our appreciation also extends to Michigan State University's Dr. Sarah Nicholls as well as Travel Michigan for their assistance in facilitating the planning process.

It has been incredibly gratifying to see so many people within Michigan's tourism industry take an active role in helping to shape a plan that is truly "for the industry, by the industry." By coming together to share ideas, priorities and concerns, we were able to create a vision and a set of goals, objectives and suggested strategies that put us in the best possible position to realize continued growth in the industry in the coming years.

The development of the strategic plan has concluded and it is now time to put the plan into action. The Michigan Travel Commission will provide the critical leadership necessary to ensure that the 2012–2017 Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan is implemented effectively and with the support of the industry. We are confident that the commission's commitment to the long-term growth of our industry will keep this plan moving forward.

It has been a true honor to serve on the Advisory Council for the 2012–2017 Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan. Thank you for trusting us to help lead such a critically important effort.

*The Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan  
Advisory Council Members*



## About the plan

Tourism is one of the largest industries in Michigan, generating \$17.7 billion of direct spending, \$995 million in state taxes and 200,000 jobs in 2011. In addition to the attraction of more visitors, an engaging and enjoyable travel experience can also be a critical first step in attracting new residents, entrepreneurs, and businesses to move to Michigan. The intent of the 2012–2017 Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan is to lay the foundation upon which tourism will continue to grow and prosper over the next five years, further contributing to the overall economic development of the state.

While awareness of the Pure Michigan campaign, and Michigan as a national travel destination, has grown—especially with the introduction of Michigan’s first ever national advertising effort—the vast majority of tourism business still comes from residents here in the state. In 2011, 67 percent of tourists were Michigan residents and 33 percent of visitors came from outside the state. The fact that increases in visitor spending over the past several years have been primarily a result of increased out-of-state expenditure is a positive indication that the industry is on the right path. Further supporting this are record hotel occupancy rates in 2012 and continuing into 2013.

Michigan’s tourism industry is at an important crossroads. By coming together as a united industry there is a tremendous opportunity to achieve the future envisioned in this strategic plan. The power of the plan is that it is “for the industry, by the industry.” Hundreds of people have already claimed a stake in the success of this plan—by participating in sessions, responding to online surveys and by sharing their feedback on how best to work together to grow tourism in Michigan. After more than a year of preparation, the next chapter begins to achieve the vision that Michigan is one of America’s favorite four season travel experiences.

The fundamental purpose of the 2012–2017 Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan is to define the Michigan tourism industry’s desired future state and identify the actions necessary to make the desired state a reality.

The planning process focused on three key questions:

1. Where is the industry and how is the industry performing at the present time?
2. Where and how would the industry like to be by 2017?
3. How can the industry achieve this desired future state?

The Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan lays the foundation upon which tourism will continue to grow and prosper over the next five years, further contributing to the overall economic development of the state.

Evaluation of the 2007–2011 Strategic Plan was a critical first step in the process. During the evaluation process, reoccurring themes were identified, which ultimately led to the eight goals outlined in the following pages. The growth in scope of the strategic plan—from three goal areas in 2007 to eight in 2012—is reflective of progress made in the past five years and the continued engagement of the industry in defining its own destiny.

Like the previous plan, the 2012–2017 Strategic Plan serves as a guide to address problems and create opportunities for collective action. It is not the solution in and of itself. The responsibility remains with the industry, with guidance from the Travel Commission and support from Travel Michigan, to implement and execute the objectives and strategies presented in the plan to achieve the eight goals. The plan offers a wide range of options for co-operative action, so everyone can find one or more action items to rally around that will benefit them while moving the industry forward as a whole.



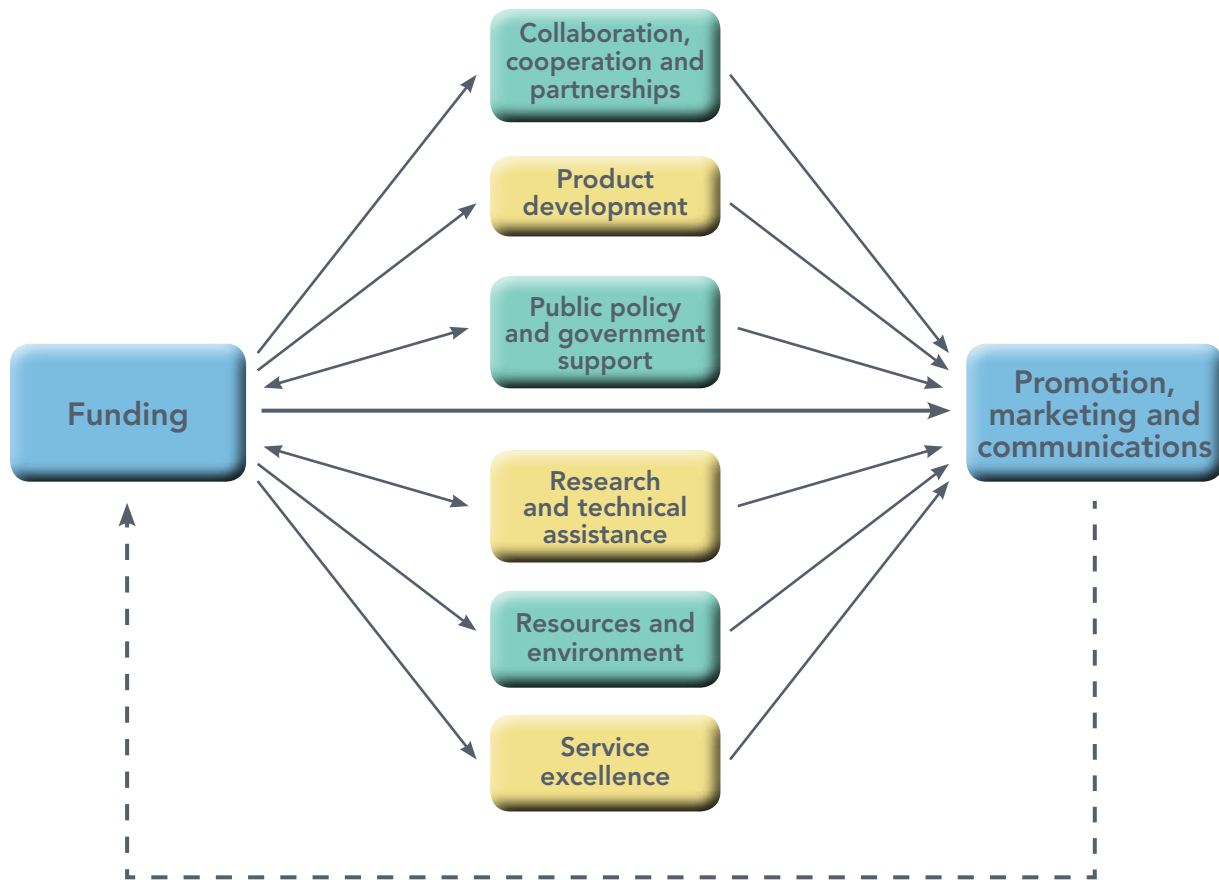
The planning process and timeline

- January 2012**  
First Travel Commission meeting/presentation, including preliminary evaluation of implementation of 2007–2011 plan
- January 2012**  
Establishment of Advisory Council
- February 2012**  
Industry-wide evaluation of implementation of 2007–2011 plan using online survey
- March 2012**  
Industry-wide vote on vision using online survey; 261 votes collected
- March 2012**  
Visioning and goal-setting session with 100 participants held at conclusion of annual Governor’s Conference on Tourism
- Summer 2012**  
Twelve stakeholder sessions held around the state to gather input from 264 industry members
- October 2012**  
Industry-wide review of plan goals and objectives through an online survey with 150 responses; draft strategic plan discussed by Advisory Council
- November 2012**  
Draft strategic plan presented to and discussed by Michigan Travel Commission
- December 2012**  
Industry-wide review of plan vision, goals, objectives and suggested strategies through an online survey
- February 2013**  
Michigan Travel Commission adopts and assumes primary responsibility for coordinating the implementation of the strategic plan
- April 2013**  
Michigan Travel Commission presents 2012–2017 Strategic Plan to the industry



Planning is an ongoing process that does not end with production of the plan. Implementation of the 2012–2017 Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan will commence early in 2013 and should continue throughout the 2013–2017 period. The Michigan Travel Commission will provide the leadership for implementing the recommendations contained within the plan. However, much like the planning process itself, widespread involvement, commitment and collaboration will be vital to successfully achieving the goals set for the next five years.

## Implementation of the plan



While all eight themes are inter-related to some extent, the most significant relationships between them are illustrated here. Funding is clearly critical to all seven of the other themes, since all require some level of financial support to enable their realization. The quantity, quality and form of promotion, marketing and communications are dependant on all seven of the other goal themes.



## Collaboration, cooperation and partnerships

The tourism industry is fragmented in nature, involving a wide variety of types and sizes of public and private entities. Informal and formal collaboration and cooperation between these entities is increasingly recognized as vital to the success of both individual tourism businesses and entire tourism destinations.

### GOAL

Foster a culture of public-private collaboration, cooperation and partnerships—across the state and beyond—to continue to unify the tourism industry and help grow Michigan's economy.

### Objective 1

Grow and strengthen partnership programs and communicate their success to the industry.

### Objective 2

Establish an online statewide toolbox or clearinghouse to support collaboration, cooperation and partnerships.

### Objective 3

Support the establishment or revitalization of regional tourism development organizations.

### Objective 4

Increase the number and diversity of participants in the annual Governor's Conference on Tourism and in the associated industry awards programs.

## Funding

Adequate funding—of the Pure Michigan campaign and of other strategic plan initiatives—was one of the most fundamental and critical issues identified during the planning process.

### GOAL

Secure adequate and stable funding for all strategic plan initiatives.

### Objective 1

Increase funding for the Pure Michigan tourism campaign to \$50 million by 2017 and establish Michigan in the top five highest funded states for tourism marketing.

### Objective 2

Identify sources of and raise sufficient funds to meet costs of other (non-promotion/marketing) strategic plan initiatives.

## Product development

An adequate, accessible and interconnected supply of tourism products and services, including accommodations, public and private transportation, and attractions and events, is an essential characteristic of a successful tourism destination.

### GOAL

Enhance infrastructure to support the delivery of a world class Pure Michigan travel experience.

### Objective 1

Support the improvement and increased awareness of the quality, connectivity and diversity of tourist transportation options into and throughout the state.

### Objective 2

Support the establishment and showcasing of Michigan as a state with a diverse, extensive and high quality network of motorized, non-motorized and water-based routes and trails.

### Objective 3

Enhance the visitor's in-state travel experience.

### Objective 4

Increase access to capital for travel-related businesses.

## Promotion, marketing and communications

Many more opportunities exist to strengthen and diversify the Pure Michigan brand and to increase the volume and extend the reach of the Michigan tourism industry's promotional, marketing and communications efforts.

### GOAL

Strengthen and grow the Pure Michigan brand through effective mediums at the regional, national and international levels to attract first-time and repeat visitors.

### Objective 1

Increase regional and national awareness of the Pure Michigan campaign from 70 percent and 36 percent, respectively, in 2011, to 80 percent and 50 percent by 2017.

### Objective 2

Increase visitor spending from \$17.7 billion in 2011 to \$21.5 billion in 2017.

### Objective 3

Increase the return on investment on the Pure Michigan campaign from \$4.90 in 2011 to \$6 by 2017.

### Objective 4

Improve Michigan's desirability as a place to visit (per the Portrait of the American Traveler Report) from 28th in 2010 to 15th or better by 2017.

### Objective 5

Increase the Pure Michigan campaign's presence in international markets.

### Objective 6

Increase Canadian visitation to Michigan from 1.54 million in 2011 to 2.15 million by 2017.





# THE VISION

Michigan is one of America's favorite  
four seasons travel experiences.

## Public policy and government support

Visitors interact not only with hospitality employees but also with non-tourism businesses and the general population. As a result, better understanding of and support for the industry is needed among state legislators, county and local officials, businesses and residents.

### GOAL

Empower the industry to encourage policy-makers at all levels to support the travel industry.

### Objective 1

Improve understanding of the value of tourism and support for the tourism industry among state legislators, county and local officials, businesses and residents.

### Objective 2

Improve existing and develop new organizational structures to enhance public sector interaction with and support of tourism policy and planning activities.

## Research and technical assistance

The availability of accurate and timely research at appropriate spatial resolutions is critical to the planning and long-term development of individual tourism entities and the broader tourism industry.

### GOAL

Establish a central, easily accessible and inclusive information system to capture and share timely, relevant and reliable industry research.

### Objective 1

Define and prioritize the research and technical needs of the other seven plan goals.

### Objective 2

Develop a financially sustainable online information system to capture and share relevant industry research.

## Resources and environment

Michigan offers a rich variety of high quality natural, cultural, agricultural and built resources. Maintaining access to these resources, while simultaneously preserving their integrity, is critical to their long-term sustainability and integral to conserving the quality of life that makes Michigan a great place to live and a premier travel destination.

### GOAL

Be internationally recognized for our stewardship of—and rich opportunities to experience—our natural, cultural, and heritage resources.

### Objective 1

Support and expand efforts to inventory resources critical to Michigan tourism and communicate results to relevant entities.

### Objective 2

Identify key issues facing and threats to the integrity of Michigan's tourism resources and raise awareness of and support for these issues.

### Objective 3

Raise the profile of Michigan's tourism industry as a national leader in resource quality and stewardship.

## Service excellence

Michigan and its tourism industry have only one opportunity to make a positive first impression on its guests. What can the tourism industry do to foster a welcoming atmosphere throughout the state, among all residents and employees? The notion of "southern hospitality" is well-established; what is Michigan's equivalent ethos of service?

### GOAL

Foster a culture of service excellence that allows us to deliver on the Pure Michigan promise.

### Objective 1

Define "service excellence" and "The Pure Michigan Promise" and share these definitions with the industry.

### Objective 2

Improve our D.K. Shifflet leisure visitor satisfaction scores and maintain a ranking in the top five states.

### Objective 3

Establish and increase satisfaction and intention to return/recommend levels among national and international visitors.



## Conclusion and next steps

The 2012–2017 Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan is ambitious, but it is grounded in objectives that are possible to achieve—provided the cooperation and collaboration that drove the planning process remains present during implementation.

No one organization or entity will enjoy the ability to successfully implement any of the goals and objectives independently. Concerted and coordinated effort on the part of many organizations and entities across the state over an extended period of time will be required for success.

One of the first steps in the implementation process will be to prioritize the objectives underlying each goal and identify private, public and non-profit partners that could assist with implementation. Identification of funding sources for those items that require financial support is also clearly critical.

The Michigan Travel Commission, with assistance from Dr. Sarah Nicholls, the Advisory Council and Travel Michigan, will lead this process. The complete plan and all source documents are available at [michigan.org](http://michigan.org) and at [tourismplan.anr.msu.edu](http://tourismplan.anr.msu.edu).

This plan is the culmination of more than a year's work with participation of hundreds individuals who volunteered their time to make this first step in the strategic plan a success.

It is the hope of those involved that this plan will inspire others to join the effort to grow and strengthen the future of tourism in Michigan.



**Strategic Plan Advisory Council Members**

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- Hert, Rick**  
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**Financial support for the plan was provided by:**

Amway Grand Hotel Group (Rick Winn)  
Ann Arbor CVB (Mary Kerr)  
Detroit CVB (Larry Alexander)  
Discover Kalamazoo (Greg Ayers)  
Experience Grand Rapids (Doug Small)  
Frankenmuth CVB (Jamie Furbush)  
Grand Hotel/Mackinac Island (Ken Hayward)  
Great Lakes Bay Regional CVB (Annette Rummel)  
Holland Area CVB (Sally Laukitis)  
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Livingston County CVB (Barb Barden)  
Michigan Lodging and Tourism Association (Steve Yencich)  
Petoskey Area/Boyne Country CVB (Peter Fitzsimons)  
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Travel Michigan/MEDC (George Zimmermann)  
Traverse City CVB (Brad Van Dommelen)  
Upper Peninsula Travel Association (Tom Nemacheck)