

Strategic Planning Process

The strategic planning process was organized into three distinct phases, with the primary goal of maximizing stakeholder input from across the state.

Get Clear

During the discovery phase, we analyzed industry data, listened to and learned from industry stakeholders, and developed the Situation Assessment to serve as the current context for strategic planning. The process included:

- An evaluation of existing tourism programs and products.
- Two industry surveys (653 respondents).
- Four cross-industry focus group meetings.
- Eighteen interviews with tourism leaders and decision-makers.
- Ten stakeholder listening sessions across the state.

The resulting Iowa Tourism Situation Assessment identified the following themes:

1. Improved alignment between industry leaders and state and local officials can enhance the competitiveness of Iowa's tourism industry.
2. Iowa's tourism industry is currently fractured.
3. Stakeholders want the Iowa Tourism Office to lead statewide tourism efforts but are concerned about their lack of resources and support infrastructure.
4. Increased and stable funding is needed to drive growth of the industry.
5. Development of tourism offerings and infrastructure is needed to improve access and experience.
6. Iowa needs a unified brand and enhanced industry marketing to elevate the state's competitive position.
7. Tourism growth requires strategies that ensure diverse communities feel welcome.
8. Tourism industry programs are underutilized, lack broad awareness, and fail to articulate measurable impact and value.

Get Focused

A strategic planning team consisting of Iowa Tourism Office staff, Iowa Economic Development Authority leaders, and regional and local tourism representatives utilized the Situation Assessment and additional stakeholder input to develop Iowa's first ever Five-Year Iowa Tourism Industry Strategic Plan. The team developed a plan that seeks to unite stakeholders, grow the industry and enhance tourism investments across the state.

Get Moving

To bring the strategic plan to life and ensure successful implementation, Iowa Tourism Office staff and industry stakeholders are engaged in a process to operationalize the plan, including identifying resources and partners, prioritizing and sequencing initiatives, and collecting data to monitor success.

Interested in getting involved or looking for ongoing updates on the implementation of the strategic plan?

Visit: <https://www.traveliowa.com/industry-partners/>

Destination Vision

We invite curious explorers to discover Iowa as an extraordinary adventure.

Imperatives



Objectives



Initiatives



Unify industry around shared long-term vision

- Encourage 100% of local, regional and state tourism organizations (by 2025) to pledge support for Iowa tourism's shared long-term vision and strategic plan goals.
- Engage 100% of all stakeholders in at least one statewide event, meeting and/or program annually by 2027.

- Develop communications plan in support of strategic plan imperatives to align stakeholders and influence awareness, advocacy, and engagement.
- Establish and enable statewide industry networking, mentorship, collaboration infrastructure, and resource-sharing framework.

Amplify awareness of Iowa's tourism brand

- Attain 5% growth in year-over-year visitor spending through 2027.
- Achieve 65% of total visitation from out-of-state visitors by 2027.

- Communicate and develop statewide destination messaging and partner engagement campaign, toolkits, and tactics.
- Continue to invest in and share relevant data and research to inform strategic insights and drive strategic campaign development, audience expansion and economic impact.

Ensure Iowa's tourism experience is welcoming to all

- Improve Iowa's tourism reputation as "Welcoming to all" (Situation Assessment, Fig. 41), by raising score to an average of 4.0 by 2027.
- Commit 15% of resources provided (grants, marketing, etc.) to support tourism diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives.

- Conduct Diversity, Equity & Inclusion market research to identify program needs, drive resource development and ensure resources and experiences are in alignment with DE&I and accessibility best practices.
- Establish an incentive for grant programs to encourage alignment and partnership with DE&I principles and improve accessibility for diverse communities.
- Develop improved partnership opportunities with Iowa's Office of Human Rights, Iowa's Civil Liberties Union and other representative organizations.

Ensure tourism readiness

- Engage 75% of all local destinations/attractions in statewide tourism readiness assessments and training programs by 2027.
- Achieve year-over-year increase in visitor and resident sentiment scores based on 2022 baseline.
- Increase investment in readiness infrastructure (i.e. wayfinding, parking, safety, sustainability, etc.) based on 2022 baseline.

- Develop resource toolkits that leverage best practices and templates for use by attractions, DMOs and industry professionals.
- Establish a framework for public/private partnerships, and incentive and grant programs to encourage investment in wayfinding, technology and infrastructure updates.

Drive an increase in long-term tourism investments

- Generate a 5% increase year-over-year in tourism revenue and taxes generated through 2027.
- Drive an increase in public (local, regional, state) and private investments to support Iowa's tourism marketing and development based on 2022 baseline.

- Explore opportunities to align existing state resources (IEDA/IFA, DCA, DNR, DOT, IDALS, etc.) to tourism infrastructure needs that benefit both visitors and residents.
- Catalog tourism infrastructure needs and identify funding sources in collaboration with local/state/federal economic development organizations, natural resources agencies and private industry leadership.
- Explore growth-dependent funding options to increase resources available to support tourism.