

Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan Project
SW Lower Michigan Stakeholder Listening Session
Issue Areas Comments/Feedback
July 10, 2006
Battle Creek, MI

“Top Four Issues” vote:

Industry Organization and Leadership (16)
Collaborations and Partnerships (10)
Funding (10)
Research and Market Segmentation (10)
Public Policy and Government Relations (11)
General Promotion (Media) (15)
Training/Leadership (4)
Visitor Experience (15)

1) Industry Organization and Leadership

- 1.) Voice in Lansing
- 2.) Who’s in charge of product development?
- 3.) More focus on culture/heritage tourism
- 4.) Leadership should be “flat” so decisions can be made quickly
- 5.) Clear decision-making process
- 6.) Need regional plans: recognize regional differences
- 7.) Tourism cabinet level position in state government
- 8.) Include hunting, birding and biking as part of natural resource base for strategy
- 9.) Develop niche marketing as basis of a tourism strategy
- 10.) Partnerships between Travel Michigan and niche marketing groups

2) Collaboration and Partnership

- 1.) Niche marketing partnerships for different demographics segments – i.e. grandparents, grandchildren – a coordinated effort
- 2.) Create an industry alert network (like an “Amber Alert”)
- 3.) Why does the industry need a common voice? Of what value is it?
- 4.) Plan needs to be perceived as having a great value by the industry
- 5.) We don’t need to recreate the wheel, we only need to make it spin differently
- 6.) How to get message out to a larger audience?
- 7.) Translate plan value to individual “businesses” – what can it do for me?
- 8.) Will the plan drive more people to Michigan? How do we get people to come back?
- 9.) “Sourcing and tracking” system should be created
- 10.) Information-sharing system

3) Funding

- 1.) A cabinet level position could bring more priority to tourism funding
- 2.) Need funding advocate in Lansing
- 3.) Grants to individuals and organizations for promotion or product development

- 4.) Matching funds for enhancement and development without so much overhead and restrictions– push money down and let folks with ideas figure out what to do with it - entrepreneurship
- 5.) Funding to help with local and regional strategic planning initiatives
- 6.) “You gotta fund stuff you can touch” – product development, infrastructure
- 7.) Put money into developing existing state park properties – not just buying new ones
- 8.) Make grant process feasible for everyone, not just larger organizations with more money
- 9.) TDA – Tourism Development Authority – How do we bring in more money for tourism development?

4) Research and Market Segmentation

- 1.) Somebody’s got to figure out something we can use (for economic impact) at the state level, on the local economy – MEASUREMENT
- 2.) Survey of industry resources – does an inventory exist? I think we have a lot of product here already that we don’t know about/ - STATEWIDE INVENTORY (updated regularly and everyone has access to it)

5) Public Policy and Government Relations

- 1.) Identify partners and non-government partners with which to work
- 2.) Create an economic impact tool (formula) simple enough to use by every local community – UNIFORMITY, COMPARABLE
- 3.) What is “tourism”? What is the “tourism industry”? (10,000 industries that are not integrated)
- 4.) How do you have a political voice or raise money if you don’t know who you are?!
- 5.) Travel Michigan is now just a part of MEDC. – no longer a separate travel bureau

6) General Promoting (Media)

- 1.) How does tourism promotion sit in with preservation of resources? Ecotourism. Is stewardship part of the plan?
- 2.) Education (promotion training workshops) for tourism providers in Michigan...integrate local efforts with Travel Michigan’s promotions efforts in specific markets to “hit them harder”
- 3.) Sustainability – industry needs engage in debates of the day on issues such as land use
- 4.) Promote products and experiences that will generate revenue; what will generate ROI, not just more visitors
- 5.) Need a way for industry stakeholders to communicate to Travel Michigan about local attraction news for the media.
- 6.) Address the “Detroit Issue”: how to help fix Detroit’s image
- 7.) It’s about the perceived value of what we have in Michigan and how we put in together

7) Training/Leadership

- 1.) Look at other industries and organizations to see what works (ex.. town of Marshall) – leverage existing resources that exist in the state
- 2.) A lot of folks don't know how to be "green" – who is there to teach about how to be stewards of the environment? – Being environmentally sound can save money.
- 3.) Being people in to educate about what's new in tourism (ex. Austin, Texas) and take field trips to see what's new elsewhere.
- 4.) Educate the industry employees in the less obvious portions of/businesses in the industry. (ex. Gas station attendants)

8) Visitor Experience

- 1.) Lack of cohesiveness – how to bring the different parts together so they work well together: coordinated approach (ex. Maps, festivals, birding in Florida)
- 2.) Need to Improve
- 3.) Do they want to come back?
- 4.) Would they recommend it?
- 5.) Perceived value
- 6.) Did they get what they expected?
- 7.) "PLACE" is important to me as a traveler
- 8.) What will be experience be? Is the Michigan travel experience defined? Does message match actual experience?

Other Issues

- 1.) Transportation is a huge issue in the state. You need a car to get almost everywhere in the state. No statewide bicycle routes, lack of mass transit
- 2.) Need to look at the aging of population – changing demographics, baby boomers

Comment Cards:

- 1.) Statewide industry emergency plan - bird flu, flooding, terrorist attack, etc.
- 2.) Do not attempt to access funding from additional room tax
- 3.) Base leadership on a variety of population destinations – make sure everyone has a voice
- 4.) Develop training/hands-on that can be taken to local levels like: How to write and distribute a press release. How to make your package unique, etc.
- 5.) Promote "Great Lakes PGA Challenge" - Michigan has great and challenging golf courses little known by major golf players and organizations
- 6.) Remove barriers to create such things as casinos, etc. which provide recreation along with scenic/historical events/activities
- 7.) Partnerships: Tourism organizations need to partner with land use organizations. How Michigan looks is of vital importance to travelers – sprawl and sameness will not attract people.
- 8.) Need to develop a beautification aesthetics program to raise awareness about design and land use and its importance to the broader tourism experience.
- 9.) Detroit is the widow to Michigan – need a state level task force to assist Detroit in its revitalization efforts and to market a new image for the city. This will help with international tourism/expansion.