



Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan

"a plan for the industry, by the industry"

Collaboration and Partnership

IWT Report to the Council
November 2, 2006

Section 1: Overview

The Collaborations & Partnerships Issue Work Team (C&PIWT) was co-chaired by Lee Hladki, President of the Greater Lansing CVB and George Moroz, Special Assistant to the President at The Henry Ford. The other participating members of C&PIWT are:

- Chris Dancisak, Michigan Department of History, Arts and Libraries (HAL)
- Carol Eavou, Kewadin Casino
- Ron Garbinski, AAA Michigan Living Magazine
- Linda Hoath, Sault Ste. Marie Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Frank Kelly, Michigan Department of Transportation
- Mary Kerr, Ann Arbor Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Nancy Krupiarz, Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance
- Dave Lorenz, Travel Michigan
- Christina MacInnes, Crystal Mountain Resort
- Mickey MacWilliams, Michigan Snowsport Industries Association
- Tracy Padot, Greater Lansing Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Joan O'Neil, Crystal Mountain Resort

The C&PIWT held two meetings, one on August 30 and the second on October 13, at the Greater Lansing CVB. Minutes for each meeting were taken by Deb Bough, Greater Lansing CVB, and distributed to all team members.

The goal of the first meeting was to identify the requirements for and hurdles to successful collaborations and partnerships within the tourism industry and to draft an Issue Statement that captured those ideas in summary form. The process employed for this first meeting was for members to brainstorm their ideas in conversation facilitated by Dave Lorenz. The Issue Statement was then synthesized from the ideas expressed in that conversation.

To have a common starting point of understanding the IWT adopted the following definition of 'collaboration' for their subsequent discussions:

Collaboration: a voluntary and purposeful relationship between individuals, organizations, sectors, or industries in which all parties involved strategically choose to cooperate in order to accomplish a shared desired outcome.

The C&PIWT's Issue Statement is as follows:

Collaboration can be far more widely and effectively employed by the Michigan tourism industry as a tool for achieving its strategic objectives. Collaboration creates opportunities to leverage the

industry's diverse assets and resources through sharing information, raising awareness of the possibilities for cooperative activity and strategic alliances, and creating new or enhancing existing tourism products. Successful collaboration can result in more effective advocacy and public policy, a better appreciation of the industry's value by the public, continuous improvement and growth within the industry, and greater benefits for the industry's stakeholders and customers.

Section 2: **Challenges and Opportunities**

Following the drafting of its Issue Statement, the C&PIWT next identified a number of barriers to and requirements for successful collaboration as summarized below.

Barriers to Successful Collaboration:

- Lack of awareness of and/or access to collaborative opportunities
- Lack of trust between potential collaborative partners
- Lack of communication
- Parochialism
- Risk aversion
- Lack of "big picture" vision
- Inflexibility, unwillingness to change

Corresponding requirements for successful collaboration include:

- Regular opportunities for exploring collaborative possibilities
- Familiarity with competent and willing partners
- Frequent, candid and empathetic communication among partners
- Subordination of parochial interests to a greater common good
- Willingness to accept shared risk
- Broad vision for the industry
- Openness to change

Among the other challenges to successful collaboration identified by the C&PIWT was the very nature of the tourism industry. It is an incredibly diverse industry, and that could be one of its greatest strengths; however, the team thought that at present, this diversity of product, interest, geography, etc., is regarded more as a problem than an opportunity.

Another identified challenge was that even where successful collaboration does take place within our industry (e.g., among CVBs, on-line connection of people and resources through Destination Management Association International, cross promotion initiatives, etc.), there are few opportunities to widely share those success stories with others in the industry.

There is also a mind-set challenge operating within this sphere. While the value of collaborating can be in its ability to generate "win-win" results, industry members need to recognize and accept the fact that "mutual benefit" does not necessarily mean "equal benefit." It must also be recognized that the benefits from a collaboration may be direct or indirect, and may be immediate or realized over a longer period of time.

Section 3: **Recommendations**

The recommendations of the C&PIWT are based on the challenges to and opportunities for successful collaboration that it had identified, as well as the online comments that responded to the team's posted Issue Statement. Those long-term and short-term actionable recommendations are as follows.

Long-Term Recommendations:

Michigan's tourism industry must be cognizant of and open to possibilities for collaboration on a number of different levels. Successful collaboration can occur between individual organizations, various sectors within the industry (e.g., hotels and cultural attractions), various associations within and outside the tourism industry, between geographic regions, between the tourism industry as a whole and other Michigan industries (e.g., education and health industries), and between various elements of the tourism industry and public sector entities (e.g., MI Departments of Agriculture, Natural Resources, MDOT, History Arts & Libraries, etc.). [time frame: begin now; ongoing]

We should also actively explore opportunities for non-traditional collaborations (e.g., vacation rental home/cottage proprietors and realtors, active recreation enterprises and community health agencies, etc.), and possibly, collaborations with other Great Lakes States tourism agencies and enterprises (i.e., work on collaborative strategies, like multi-state park passes, to promote the Great Lakes region as a multi-destination, multi-state travel opportunity for those living outside the region). [time frame: begin now; ongoing]

We should also ensure that in considering collaborative opportunities, we recognize the potential of partnering with new, emerging market segments, like birding, kayaking, family reunions, environmental tourism, etc. [time frame: begin now; ongoing]

Establish some industry norm for tourism enterprise front-line staff that will promote both the welcoming of visitors to a particular site and the proactive encouragement of those visitors to extend their Michigan experience by visiting other Michigan sites/attractions. [time frame: within next 1-2 years]

Expand and strengthen the industry's relationships with state, county and local government officials, particularly cabinet and department heads at the state level, building a broad base of public sector support for the industry's value and strategic initiatives. [time frame: begin now; ongoing]

Short-Term Recommendations:

Establish a Tourism Collaboration Task Force to promote, stimulate and monitor collaborative activity within Michigan's tourism industry, and to explore possibilities for securing incentive funding from the public (e.g., MEDC) and private sectors (e.g., Kellogg Foundation) to encourage new creative and effective collaborative activity. [time frame: within next 1-2 years]

Make more widely known to industry members existing collaborative opportunities, like Travel Michigan's Cooperative Marketing Program designed to encourage smaller communities to pool marketing funds that can then be matched by Travel Michigan marketing dollars. [time frame: urgent; begin now; ongoing]

Promote industry-wide knowledge of best collaborative practices. Have a Tourism Collaboration Task force call for and collect case studies that can be presented at an Annual Tourism

Conference, in regional tourism meetings, and on an industry accessible web site. [time frame: within next 1-2 years]

Work to reconfigure and revitalize Michigan's Annual Tourism Conference. Specifically: infuse the theme of collaboration throughout the conference's set of schedule activities; provide formal and informal opportunities at the conference for potential industry partners to meet and explore collaborative opportunities; extend invitations to the conference to an identified set of non-traditional, but potential collaborative partners; recognize and celebrate the industry's success stories of collaborations with an annual "Creative Collaborations Awards" segment at the conference and make a big deal out of it—it should be the annual "can't miss it" highlight of each year's event (think of it along the lines of an Academy Awards model); secure funding from the public and/or private sectors needed to enhance the conference to attract the kind of audience it generated in the 1980s; secure the Governor's direct involvement and support for the event (e.g., rename the conference as the Governor's Annual Conference on Tourism in Michigan); the conference should not only be an educational forum, but also a terrific (and widely noticed) annual party that celebrates the industry's many successes. [time frame: within next three years as funding for enhancements will need to be identified & secured]

Budget Implications:

We have not assigned any specific dollar costs for implementing the recommendations listed above. The long term recommendations will likely require the investment of time and energy of people from within the industry, but no significant hard cash costs.

For the short-term recommendations, there may be some costs associated with hiring a grant researcher/writer to help secure funding for an incentive pool that could be used to reward, support and promote creative collaborations and some relatively minor expenses for organizing and hosting regional forums at which possibilities for collaboration can be discussed and explored. Likely the largest budget expenditure would be for funding to enhance the annual tourism conference as described above and to support the proposed "awards" program that would become a focal point for that annual event.

Section 4: **The Process**

Strengths of the process (thus far):

The visioning process was helpful in identifying industry priorities with regard to developing a strategic plan. A lot of good and smart people from diverse segments of the industry have been actively involved—that's particularly true of the C&PIWT—and are willingly investing their time, expertise and experience in helping develop an actionable plan. That's a tremendous resource to have behind this effort.

Weaknesses (thus far):

Still no official participation by the Metro Detroit CVB; they need to be involved.

Some lingering slight suspicion that the information that the work teams are developing might in its final output be reshaped into a more "academic" document by the Planning Council.

Some question about whether the industry will be able to organize and sustain itself given the diverse self-interests, goals and missions of the many independent organizations who compose it.