



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

RFP 2022-04

FIVE-YEAR WAWA TOURISM PLAN: A COVID-19 TOURISM RECOVERY STRATEGY *(Subject to Funding)*

Issue Date: Monday, May 2, 2022

Closing Date: Tuesday, May 24, 2022 – 12:00 P.M.

Contact: Maury O'Neill, CAO
Municipality of Wawa
40 Broadway Avenue
Wawa, ON P0S 1K0

Telephone 705-856-2244 Ext. 223
Email moneill@wawa.cc

Table of Contents

1.	Overview	2
2.	Introduction	2
	Important Dates.....	2
3.	Background.....	3
4.	Purpose of this Request for Proposal.....	5
	Vision and Goals.....	5
5.	Scope of Work	5
	Budget	7
6.	Project Deliverables	7
	Minimum Project Requirements	9
7.	Project Timelines	9
8.	Bidder Minimum Requirements	10
9.	Proposal Evaluation	10
10.	Submission Instructions.....	10
11.	General Terms and Conditions	11

1. Overview

This Request for Proposal (RFP) identifies the requirements to develop a Five (5) year Wawa Tourism Plan – COVID-19 Recovery Strategy for the Municipality of Wawa (Wawa). The Tourism Plan and Strategy will be produced for the community and the project will be managed by the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) or designate.

Wawa is seeking an experienced and creative tourism consultant with a strong economic diversification and community development background who can identify opportunities to further strengthen the community and tourism assets to build a resilient and sustainable tourist destination.

Part of this sustainability objective must focus on ensuring that all major stakeholders such as the local First Nations, Algoma Kinniwabi Travel Association, Destination Northern Ontario, Ontario Parks, Parks Canada, clubs, operators, and local accommodations can all reference and implement aspects of the strategy in their respective areas.

The Municipality is seeking an experienced consultant who will look at the community and tourism region (RTO13) with an innovative and futuristic approach and make recommendations that will the community to grow the appeal of the community to tourism businesses, entrepreneurs and investors to make it a tourist destination.

2. Introduction

The Municipality of Wawa (Wawa) is seeking proposals from qualified consultants to provide services for the development of a five-year Wawa Tourism Plan - COVID-19 Recovery Strategy to assist the local tourism sector to recovery from the adverse impacts of COVID-19 and to set a community vision with actionable items to improve and increase visitation and visitor experiences in Wawa and area. The Wawa Tourism Plan will also support the Municipality to make better and informed decisions about tourism marketing and product development based on returns on investment and measurable outcomes.

This project is subject to the receipt of federal funding.

Important Dates

Date	Item
RFP Release Date	May 2, 2022
Question Submission Deadline	May 20, 2022 12:00 p.m.
Question Response Deadline	May 20, 2022 4:00 p.m.
Proposal Submission Deadline	May 24, 2022 12:00 p.m.
Award Date (<i>subject to funding</i>)	July 12, 2022

3. Background

Wawa is a unique community with a rich and diverse history and culture. The community is in the Algoma District, about 240 kilometers north of Sault Ste Marie, in Northeastern Ontario situated along the shoreline of Lake Superior. Wawa is best known for the famous Wawa Goose monument that overlooks the entrance to the community. Wawa is surrounded by countless freshwater lakes and rivers, and it is a trail head to adventure in the region.

The Municipality of Wawa neighbors the shore of Lake Superior in Northern Ontario with Michipicoten First Nation. In the spirit of collaboration and inclusion, a Wawa COVID 19 Tourism Recovery Plan will also engage, in advance, Michipicoten First Nation examining any identify any new partnership opportunities for tourism development opportunities.

Wawa is an excellent destination for a variety of outdoor recreational activities including soft adventure such as fishing, paddling, waterfall viewing, blueberry picking and powersports adventures including snowmobiling and ATVing. Wawa has many tourism assets including beaches, waterfalls, a golf course, marina, abundance of well-stocked fishing lakes and wildlife for hunting, access to a multitude of trails in Lake Superior Provincial Park, Cross Country Ski and Snowshoeing trails and places of special interest such as First Nation cultural sites. Many of these assets are within natural areas identified as prime locations for outdoor recreation including Lake Superior. The past use of these activities has not been sufficiently promoted to target groups generating tourism business development and substantial community revenue/benefit.

Wawa is the entrance of the Boreal Forest and is strategically located between Pukaskwa Federal Park and Lake Superior Provincial Park. It is also an integral community on the popular *Lake Superior Circle Tour* and the new *Group of Seven Travel Route* and the drive between Sault Ste. Marie and Wawa is a top-ten drive in the Fall in Canada.

The renowned Wawa Goose is located at the Wawa Travel Information Centre (TIC) at the entrance to the town, just off the Trans-Canada Highway 17, which attracts tourists to stop and visit. Only a small percentage of tourists who stop at the Travel Information Centre come further into the community. Past surveys indicate that only ten percent of people who stop at the TIC come to the Wawa Beach Waterfront and downtown.

Efforts recently completed to attract visitors and tourists to come into the downtown area of Wawa include a two-million-dollar upgrade to the Wawa Lake Beachfront, a Board Walk and the Goose Nest outdoor seasonal market.

The economy of Wawa is currently experiencing a boom due primarily to the growth and expansion of the regional mining and forestry sector. Overnight accommodations are currently at a premium due to a multitude of contractors working in the region who stay overnight in Wawa. It is anticipated that the accommodations will increase occupancy over the next two years with older properties being redeveloped and as the expanding area gold mines build accommodations for its workers on-site, outside of the community's boundaries. There are a high number of overnight accommodations and restaurants in the town. The local economy is dependent on the attraction of tourists and visitors to the commercial and retail businesses.

For several decades, Wawa has focused its tourism efforts on attracting and serving the needs of visitors to the area including friends and families of residents, highway travellers stopping overnight, fishing enthusiasts, snowmobilers and nature buffs who enjoy visiting waterfalls and trail walking. Businesses that derive most of their revenues from visitors are clearly in the tourism industry by definition, hence, most local businesses sell goods and services to visitors meaning tourism has a substantial impact on the Wawa economy.

The impact of COVID-19, along with other changing travel trends, has put an increased focus on local destinations and staying close to home when making vacation and travel plans. Ontario Parks, such as Lake Superior Provincial Park, have experienced increased visitor activity and overnight bookings which has also put additional strain on Wawa's tourism accommodations, restaurants and local attractions.

Many organizations at the provincial, regional and local levels support tourism development and marketing in the northeast Superior region including Regional Tourism Organization (RTO) 13B - Destination Northern Ontario, Algoma Kinniwabi Tourism Association (ATKA) and Northern Ontario Tourism Outfitters (NOTO).

Municipal Council wants to provide strategic leadership in further developing Wawa's tourism economy. The goal is to work collaboratively with tourism partners and local stakeholders to enrich and grow the area's tourism industry and support entrepreneurship. Several recommendations to achieve this goal are included in the recently adopted Wawa Strategic Plan (available at <https://www.wawa.cc/en/your-government/resources/Documents/Wayfinders-Strategic-Plan-2021-2025.pdf>).

The Wawa COVID-19 Tourism Recovery Strategy is necessary to guide the community and support local businesses negatively impacted by COVID-19. The development of this plan will be supported by the selected consultant, CAO, Director of Community Services-Tourism and the Wawa Economic Development and Tourism Committee of Council (WEDTC).

The need for the Municipality of Wawa to understand and plan for how best to attract visitors and lengthen visitor stays in the community and to generate revenue to recover municipal costs of municipally supported tourism programs and services (e.g. marketing and TIC operations) is critical. The implementation of an Accommodation Tax is one way to support tourism marketing and the Consultant should review and make recommendations to support the Municipal goal of operating a Tourist Information Centre and supporting local tourism marketing and other efforts on a cost-recovery basis by generating additional revenues.

4. Purpose of this Request for Proposal

Vision and Goals

The impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic have had lasting effects on the local and regional tourism economy. Changing tourism trends present an opportunity to review and enhance tourism products and services, particularly to assist businesses to recover quickly from the Pandemic.

The vision of the Five-year Wawa COVID-19 Tourism Recovery Strategy is that it be actionable with a set of agreed upon strategies that will be collaboratively developed with tourism partners and local stakeholders. The plan will make recommendations to build, enhance and grow visitations to Wawa, and increase visitor spending in the community.

A Wawa COVID-19 Tourism Recovery Strategy is needed to leverage existing and future opportunities in alignment with Municipal Council priorities and Wawa's Strategic Plan and stakeholder activities within the Region. This will enable the Municipality to support annual budgets for tourism programs and services, hire appropriate staff and execute on initiatives accordingly.

5. Scope of Work

The Wawa COVID-19 Tourism Recovery Strategy must include a clear vision thorough an assessment of the current state and future potential of tourism in Wawa and a clear plan of action for implementation. It should include the following components:

- An introduction that answers the following questions:
 - *What is the purpose of the plan? What are the community outcomes and milestones from the plan?*
 - *Who developed the plan and under what authority?*
 - *How it will be monitored and reviewed?*
 - *How should the plan be used within the department and community?*
 - *Why the plan is important to the community?*

- *A summary of the community's best tourism markets and identifying the community's tourism assets.*
- *Highlight potential opportunities, when presenting product and/or service gaps*
- *Create the tourism goals and objectives.*
- *Define the steps required to accomplish each objective.*
- *Create an implementation framework for successfully executing the plan along with key accountabilities.*

The Five-year Wawa COVID-19 Tourism Recovery Strategy will be based on solid research by the Consultant using an evidenced-based approach and will answer questions including, but not limited to:

- What is the ideal target audiences/markets, and what travel experiences are they seeking (e.g. festivals and events, activities, attractions, accommodations, other tourism infrastructure and services);
- Markets may include:
 - Visiting Friends and Relatives
 - Outdoor Sports and Recreation Enthusiasts
 - Festival and Events Participants (fishing derbies etc.)
 - Powersports Market
 - Niche Conferences and Meetings
- What products, experiences and events does Wawa have to offer and how do those align with what is sought and what more is needed to further develop these existing assets?
- How can the community work towards developing new products, experiences and events that meet the need?
- Where is investment needed to strengthen existing travel opportunities, creating new reasons to visit and giving visitors reasons to return again and again, throughout all four seasons?
- Which of the multitude of 'good tourism ideas' actually has the rationale behind it to justify its development?
- What potential issues or travel trends does Wawa need to be aware of, and how might they be addressed?
- Given a review of the provision of various tourism services and related best practices, what tourism structure will be most effective in delivering upon all the above and how would any costs be recovered to support that structure?
- How will the Municipality work with others so all stakeholders are aligned to collaboratively implement the Plan's recommendations?
- What performance measurement is most suited to tracking the community's tourism progress?
- What neighbouring relationships should be leveraged to implement the Plan (e.g. neighbouring municipalities, First Nations, tourism operators, Parks).

The Wawa COVID-19 Tourism Recovery Strategy will need to achieve a collective understanding of, and support for, the recommended strategy among stakeholders, including the community as well as provide a framework for collaborative action that supports successful implementation of the plan articulating how all can align and engage in achieving the desired outcomes.

Budget

The budget for this project is between \$80,000-\$100,000.

6. Project Deliverables

The successful proponent will prepare a realistic and comprehensive Five-Year Wawa COVID-19 Tourism Recovery Strategy for the Municipality of Wawa.

- Deliver a strategy that all local tourism stakeholders can relate to and can be implemented;
- Identify opportunities to incorporate regional plans from the Province of Ontario into the plan;
- Identify projects and actions that will assist stakeholders to further enhance community and tourism asset development;
- Work with key stakeholders, including elected leaders, government and industry professionals and sector-specific professionals;
- Identify typical demographics for these identified sectors together with a clear plan of how to effectively target and reach these people and entice them to visit Wawa.

Furthermore, the Municipality of Wawa five-year Tourism Plan will include four essential components as follows:

1) Baseline Research and Consultations

The successful Proponent will collect and review existing data available from a variety of sources. The consultant will complete extensive community consultations and conduct research to evaluate the current state of the tourism sector in Wawa. The Proponent will evaluate Wawa as a four-season visitor destination, including existing services, agencies and structures designed to support the growth of the local tourism industry. This step may include but is not limited to the following activities;

- Conduct consumer, resident and industry research to determine key local and regional trends in the tourism sector in Wawa. This step should include obtaining a general understanding of the economic impact of COVID-19 on the local tourism economy.

- Engage with associations and groups involved in provincial and regional tourism growth such as RTO 13b, Destination Northern Ontario, ATKA and NOTO.

Involve the WEDTC Committee, members of Council, local stakeholders and the public through extensive consultation during the development of the Plan through best practices and including surveys, workshops, meetings, face-to-face discussions and special events. The successful proponent shall identify an appropriate number of consultations in the proposal. Identify and engage local organizations.

2) Visitor Experience Assessment - Asset Mapping and Situation Analysis

The Consultant will complete a listing of unique community tourism assets including a list of gaps in tourism products and service offerings based on identified tourism opportunities. Activities will include but are not limited to;

- Create a comprehensive list of tourism products, services and unique assets specific to Wawa and immediate surrounding area.
- Develop a list of unique tourism strengths and challenges (SWOT).
- Identify gaps and opportunities in tourism product and service offerings.
- Develop a situation analysis from community and stakeholder consultation, research, asset mapping and gap analysis.
- Review best practices case studies.
- Review Tourist Information Center operations and the implementation of a Destination Marketing Fee and make recommendations for increasing revenues to be used for tourism development.

3) Action Plan

Build on research, consultation, asset mapping and situational analysis to develop an action plan highlighting recommended short and medium-term actions and strategies to achieve the local tourism goals and objectives;

- Identify key opportunities for tourism product and service development that will boost private tourism investment, job creation, diversification and local tourism revenue.
- Create a streamlined tourism identity for Wawa which includes a positioning statement outlining Wawa's unique tourism selling position.
- Recommend marketing materials and tourism marketing strategies to reflect the new tourism identify.
- Prioritized Actionable Items with budget, timelines and responsibility assigned for the short and medium term.

4) Final Tourism Plan

- Presentation of draft Plan to Wawa EDC-Tourism Committee and Council.
- Obtain buy-in and approval of actions recommended and Five-Year Wawa COVID-19 Tourism Recovery Strategy from residents, businesses and Municipal Council.

Minimum Project Requirements

The successful contractor will conduct at a minimum the following activities to accomplish the above scope of work:

- Provide bi-weekly reporting to the CAO or designate and liaise with the EDC-Tourism (TAC) Committee as required.
- Create a communications plan at outset in consultation with TAC to outline how the process and opportunities for input are best communicated.
- Design and facilitate a representative stakeholder engagement process to include participation, from tourism operators and organizations active in some capacity in tourism both within and outside Wawa.
- Conduct limited research of trends and best practices with respect to delivery of tourism services in three similar sized and type communities (to be agreed upon).
- Commit to a minimum three-day on-site visit, getting to know the municipality, operators and tourism assets, and community members.
- Provide at minimum a five-year action/implementation plan with detailed recommendations developed from the report findings and public input. Recommendations must be prioritized, broken down into tactics, identifying the responsible organization, a timeline, evaluation strategies (including methodologies), and including realistic minimum budget amounts required to realize each recommendation, and opportunities to leverage funding.
- Evaluate recommended product, experiences and events (and related markets) considering the three pillars of sustainable tourism - environmental, economic and socio-cultural impacts in developing the Action Plan.
- Present draft report to Committee for approval.
- Provide final Study and report to Council for approval by January 31, 2023.

7. **Project Timelines–estimated (pending funding)**

Item	Due Date
Kick-off Meeting	July 2022
Market Research and Assessment	October 2022
Stakeholder Engagement	August - November 2022
Draft Strategy	December 2022
Final Strategy	January 2023

8. Bidder Minimum Requirements

- Demonstrated experience in tourism and economic development with a minimum of 5 years experience in related assignments
- Detail of the team working on the project and their related background/CVs
- Familiarity with small rural communities
- Ability to travel to Wawa, Ontario
- Demonstrated understanding of Northern Ontario and tourism market

9. Proposal Evaluation

Evaluation of responses will be based, in part, on the following criteria and qualifications of the proponent, including the following:

30%: Demonstrated project understanding and methodology. Proponents need to articulate their proposals, intentions, and expectations, indicating how they will fulfill the requirements of the RFP and what services they will provide.

35%: Experience of the proponent and the proposed project team members with projects of similar size and complexity, including experience with tourism destinations of similar size.

25%: Timelines/Proposed fee structure. A work plan, detailing all suggested steps in the process with an estimate of time and personnel required to complete each step should be provided.

10%: References. Proponents must provide a minimum of three (3) references that demonstrate successful competency with comparable work for similar clients. Provide a brief description of the project and all relevant reference contact information.

10. Submission Instructions

Proposals shall be received through the following method only:

- By Email at the only acceptable electronic address: moneill@wawa.cc

Please note: Maximum email file size limit is 10MB or less.

The Municipality of Wawa will not be liable for any delay for any reason including technological delays, spam, filters, firewalls, job queue, file size limitations, etc. It is the proponent's sole responsibility to ensure they allow themselves enough time to submit their Proposal before the posted closing date and time.

Select members of the Municipality of Wawa shall review and evaluate all proposals, and if appropriate, request a preliminary meeting/presentation.

It is the sole responsibility of the Proponent to submit their Proposal to the Municipality of Wawa before closing time. All proposals must be received by 12:00 PM EST on May 24th.

It is the responsibility of the Proponent to request more information or any clarification prior to the question submission due date. All questions regarding this RFP must be submitted to moneill@wawa.cc by May 20th at 12:00 PM EST.

Proposals will not be accepted after May 24, 2022, at 12:00 PM EST.

11. General Terms and Conditions

11.1 Addendums

If the Municipality of Wawa determines that an amendment is required to this RFP, the Municipality of Wawa will send an electronic copy of the written addendum to each of the invited proponents. No amendment of any kind to the RFP is effective unless it is contained in a written addendum issued.

11.2 Withdrawal of Proposals

The Proponent may withdraw their Proposal at any time prior to the Proposal closing time by submitting a written withdrawal letter emailed to: moneill@wawa.cc.

11.3 Amendment to Proposals

Proposals may be amended in writing and delivered to the identified contact before the closing time. Such amendments should be signed by the authorized signatory of the Proponent.

11.4 Irrevocability

All Proposals are irrevocable for a period of (60) business days from the closing date.

11.5 Negotiation

The Municipality of Wawa reserves the right to negotiate enhancements or changes to the preferred Proposal with the proponent.

11.6 Indemnification, Hold Harmless and Insurance Requirements

In addition to other standard contractual terms, the Municipality will require the selected vendor to comply with indemnification, hold harmless and insurance requirements as outlined below.

The Consultant shall indemnify and hold harmless the Municipality (including any of its bodies, agencies, councils and associations and their servants, agents, officers, directors, elected officials, successors, assigns, employees and personal representatives and each of them) from and against any loss resulting from negligence, claim, demand, damages, liability, and costs and permitted assigns. This provision shall survive termination of any agreement resulting from this RFP.

The Consultant shall procure and maintain, for the duration of this contract, insurance against claims for injuries to persons or damages to property which may arise from or in connection with the performance of the work hereunder by the Consultant, his/her agents, representatives, employees or sub consultant. The cost of such insurance shall be paid by the Consultant. Insurance shall meet or exceed the following unless otherwise approved by the Municipality;

- a) Worker's Compensation Coverage as required by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act.
- b) Comprehensive or Commercial General Liability: \$2,000,000 combined single limit per occurrence for bodily injury, personal injury and property damage.
- c) Professional Liability Errors and Omissions: \$2,000,000.
- d) Automobile Liability: \$2,000,000 combined single limit per accident for bodily injury and property damage.

11.7 Equal Opportunity

The Municipality is an equal opportunity employer and requires all Respondents to comply with policies and regulations concerning equal opportunity. The Respondent, in the performance of this contract, agrees not to discriminate in its employment due to an employee's or applicant's race, religion, national origin, ancestry, gender, sexual preference, age, physical handicap or any other characteristic protected by law.

11.8 Accessibility – AODA Requirements

The Municipality is committed to and working toward ensuring municipal services are accessible to all. We strive to meet or exceed the standards set by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act ("AODA") which are rules established by the Province to help businesses and organizations identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility. The AODA requires accessibility of goods, services, facilities, accommodations, employment as well as information and communication. The successful vendor shall agree and provide proof of AODA training as required by the Municipality.

11.9 Sustainability – Community Engagement

The Municipality recognizes that being sustainable is a responsibility of the Municipality essential to long-term economic prosperity, the social well-being of its residents and protecting environmental capacity and can only occur through community engagement and involvement. All information and communication provided to the Municipality as part of this Study shall comply with AODA formatting requirements.

11.10 Accept or Reject Proposal

The Municipality reserves the right to accept or reject any or all quotations. The Municipality reserves the right to select a Consultant, who in and upon our approval provides the best solution and demonstrates their ability to provide the expected outcomes that will best serve the interests of the Municipality. Wawa is not obligated to award the contract based on the lowest price or any other particular factor. The Municipality will not be liable or reimburse any firm for the costs they incur to prepare their quotations. The RFP does not commit the Municipality to award a contract or to pay any costs incurred in the preparation of a quotation.

The Consultant shall note that this work is subject to approval of the Municipal Council and funding. The Consultant shall have no claim for payment or extra payment due to the Municipality's failure to secure approval necessitating cancellation of the project or portions of it, nor by reason of approval being granted so late that the work cannot be completed in the 2022 year.

11.11 Termination of Contract

Either the Consultant or Municipality may terminate the contract, once awarded, at any time upon giving notice in writing at least thirty (30) working days prior to the date of termination without penalty or recourse. In the event of such termination, the Consultant will be paid for services up to and including the date of termination.