

# **The 2012-2017 Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan**

Prepared for

Travel Michigan, the Michigan Economic  
Development Corporation and the  
Michigan Travel Commission

by

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Michigan State University

December 2012

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## List of Acronyms

CVB	Convention and Visitor(s) Bureau
MDARD	Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
MDNR	Michigan Department of Natural Resources
MDOT	Michigan Department of Transportation
MEDC	Michigan Economic Development Corporation
MLTA	Michigan Lodging and Tourism Association
MSU	Michigan State University
ROI	Return On Investment

## Foreword and Acknowledgements

Completion of this strategic plan would not have been possible without the assistance and input of hundreds of industry members around the state. The planning team – Dr. Nicholls, Travel Michigan/Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), the Michigan Travel Commission and the Strategic Plan Advisory Council – greatly appreciates the participation of each and every industry member in the various online and in-person activities held throughout the year. One of the most critical guiding philosophies of this process was to develop a plan “by the industry and for the industry,” and the level of industry involvement in the process has been truly reflective of this ideal.

The sponsors of the overall planning process and of the twelve summer industry stakeholder meetings are highlighted below. A heartfelt thank you to each and every individual and entity listed for your financial and organizational support. All twelve stakeholder meetings were immensely successful, due in no small part to the contributions and consummate hospitality provided by the meeting sponsors.

A similarly heartfelt thank you goes to the members of the Strategic Plan Advisory Council who worked tirelessly throughout the year to hone the process and condense hundreds of pages of industry input into the final documents presented here. Advisory Council members each contributed dozens of hours of time and effort into this process and provided countless pearls of wisdom and words of encouragement over the course of the year. This was a truly wonderful and inspiring group with which to work. The members of the Strategic Plan Advisory Council are listed below.

Many individuals volunteered their time and expertise to facilitate the planning process, whether at the visioning and goal-setting session held in Grand Rapids in March or at one or more of the twelve summer industry stakeholder meetings. Sincere thanks to every individual who facilitated at one or more of these sessions. Special thanks to Ginger Hentz and Yvonne (Bonnie) Wichtner-Zoia from Michigan State University Extension for their expert assistance with development of meeting protocols and materials. And an extra special thank you to my student assistant, Alyssa Peterson, who worked tirelessly throughout the year, often at short notice and at all times of the day and night, to keep us on time and on task.

Finally, I would like to thank George Zimmermann (Travel Michigan/MEDC) and the entire Michigan Travel Commission (members listed below) for the opportunity to lead this planning effort. It has been an immense pleasure and honor to be involved in what is a critical activity for our industry and our state, and I very much look forward to continuing to serve the industry during the forthcoming implementation phase of the process.

Dr. Sarah Nicholls  
Michigan State University  
December 2012

## **Strategic Plan Sponsors (alphabetical by name of organization)**

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 (Annie Rummel)  
Holland Area CVB (Sally Laukitis)  
Jackson County CVB (Mindy Bradish-Orta)  
Livingston County CVB (Barb Barden)  
Michigan Lodging and Tourism Association (Steve Yencich)  
Petoskey Boyne CVB (Peter Fitzsimons)  
The Henry Ford (Patricia Mooradian)  
Travel Michigan/MEDC (George Zimmermann)  
Traverse City CVB (Brad Van Dommelen)  
Upper Peninsula Travel Association (Tom Nemacheck)

## **Summer Industry Stakeholder Meeting Sponsors**

Region One – Sault Ste. Marie (Tuesday July 10th 2012)

Meeting space and AV equipment: Best Western Sault Ste. Marie

Refreshments: Sault Area Convention & Visitor Bureau

Region One – Houghton (Wednesday August 13th 2012)

Meeting space, AV equipment and refreshments: Franklin Square Inn and Shelden Grill

Region One – Mackinac Island (Wednesday August 15th 2012)

Meeting space, AV equipment and refreshments: Grand Hotel

Region Two – Bellaire (Monday July 23rd 2012)

Meeting space and AV equipment: Shanty Creek Resorts

Refreshments: Cadillac Area Visitors Bureau, Charlevoix Convention & Visitors Bureau and Traverse City Convention & Visitors Bureau

Region Three – Hillman (Wednesday June 27th 2012)

Meeting space and AV equipment: Thunder Bay Golf & RV Resort

Region Four – Grand Rapids (Thursday August 2nd 2012)

Meeting space and AV equipment: Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Grand Valley State University

Refreshments: Experience Grand Rapids and Kent County Lodging Association

Region Five – Frankenmuth (Tuesday July 31st 2012)

Meeting space and AV equipment: The Bavarian Inn Lodge Hotel & Conference Center

Region Six – Kalamazoo (Monday July 30th 2012)

Meeting space and AV equipment: Holiday Inn West Kalamazoo

Refreshments: Discover Kalamazoo

Region Seven – Lansing (Thursday July 26th 2012)

Refreshments: Greater Lansing Convention & Visitors Bureau

Region Eight – Port Huron (Wednesday July 18th 2012)

Meeting space, AV equipment and refreshments: Blue Water Area Convention and Visitors Bureau and Acheson Ventures

Region Nine – Ypsilanti (Monday July 16th 2012)

Meeting space: Department of Geography & Geology, Eastern Michigan University

Refreshments: Monroe County Convention & Tourism Bureau

Region Ten – Dearborn (Thursday July 19th 2012)

Meeting space and AV equipment: The Henry Ford

Refreshments: Detroit Metro Convention & Visitors Bureau

## **Strategic Plan Advisory Council Members (alphabetical by last name)**

Donald Coe, Managing Partner/Co-owner, Black Star Farms and Member, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development  
Rick Hert, CEO, West Michigan Tourism Association  
Patty Janes, Associate Professor, Grand Valley State University  
Chris MacInnes, Senior VP/President Crystal Properties, Crystal Mountain Resort & Spa  
Gordon Mackay, President, Indian Trails  
George A. Moroz, Special Assistant to the President, The Henry Ford  
Jim Northup, Superintendent, Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore  
Mike O'Callaghan, Executive VP/COO, Detroit CVB  
Barry Owens, General Manager, Treetops Resort  
Bill Quiseng, Customer Service Speaker & Blogger, BillQuiseng.com (through August 2012)  
Christine Rector, Director of Regional Strategies, Northern Initiatives  
Annette Rummel, CEO, Great Lakes Bay Regional CVB  
Dan Sippel, former Travel Advertising Category Manager, mlive/Booth Newspapers  
Maia Stephens, Recreational Programmer, MDNR Parks and Recreation Division  
Brad Van Dommelen, President, Traverse City CVB  
Rick Winn, VP/Managing Director, Amway Hotel Corporation  
Steve Yencich, President/CEO, Michigan Lodging and Tourism Association  
Jennifer Zieger, General Manager, Fairfield Inn & Suites by Marriott Livonia

## **Advisory Council Meeting Sponsors**

June 5 meeting at the Amway Grand Plaza, Grand Rapids  
Rick Winn, VP/Managing Director, Amway Hotel Corporation

August 27 meeting at Alger County Heritage Center, Munising  
Gordon Mackay, President, Indian Trails  
Jim Northup, Superintendent, Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore

October 29 meeting at Crystal Mountain Resort & Spa  
Chris MacInnes, Senior VP/President Crystal Properties, Crystal Mountain Resort & Spa

## **Travel Commission Members**

Chair: Patricia Mooradian, The Henry Ford

Vice Chair: Judy Zehnder Keller, The Bavarian Inn

Mike Busley, Grand Traverse Pie Company

Rochelle Cotey, ALTRAN Transit Authority (through August 2012)

Roger Curtis, Michigan International Speedway

Frank Ettawageshik

Ken Hayward, Grand Hotel (through August 2012)

Sally Laukitis, Holland Area CVB

Jon Nunn, Grand Action

Jerry Preston

Susan Sherer, Sherer Inc.

Lawrence Schuler, Schu's Hospitality Group (new member as of September 2012)

Julie Sprenger, Laurium Manor Inn (new member as of September 2012)

Art Tebo (through August 2012)

Jerome Toney, Grand Hotel (new member as of September 2012)

Elizabeth Workman, Vacation Trailer

## **The Purpose of 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. The laying of this foundation is predicated on the desirability of the continued unification of the tourism industry; as such, while the planning process was facilitated by Dr. Sarah Nicholls of Michigan State University under the leadership of the Travel Commission, the contents of the plan itself were generated based on input from hundreds of industry members, from multiple industry sectors and from all areas of the state. As such, the contents of this document truly represent a plan developed by Michigan's tourism industry and for Michigan's tourism industry.

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 move the industry towards that ideal future state. As such, the planning process concentrated on answering 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 Key Components of the Plan

Development of the plan centered on identification of four key components:

1. A vision;
2. A set of goals;
3. A set of objectives underlying each goal; and
4. Suggested strategies for each objective.

**The Vision:** The vision represents the guiding light of the planning process and document. The purpose of generating a vision was to create a shared picture of how Michigan's tourism industry would like to look and feel by 2017. As such, the vision gives Michigan's tourism industry a commonly-agreed upon model state to move towards over the next five years. A vision can be emotive and should be a source of inspiration, offering the possibility of fundamental industry change. Progress towards the vision does not need to be measurable.

**The Goals:** The goals represent the primary outcomes the industry will need to achieve in order to realize the vision it has set for itself. Goals should be broadly applicable (in this case, to all elements of the industry and to all parts of the state). Goals should strike a balance between being lofty enough to inspire commitment and action, yet also strategic enough to anchor objectives and strategies. Good goals are action-oriented (i.e., they begin with a verb) and are specific, concise and brief. The 2012-2017 Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan contains eight goals.

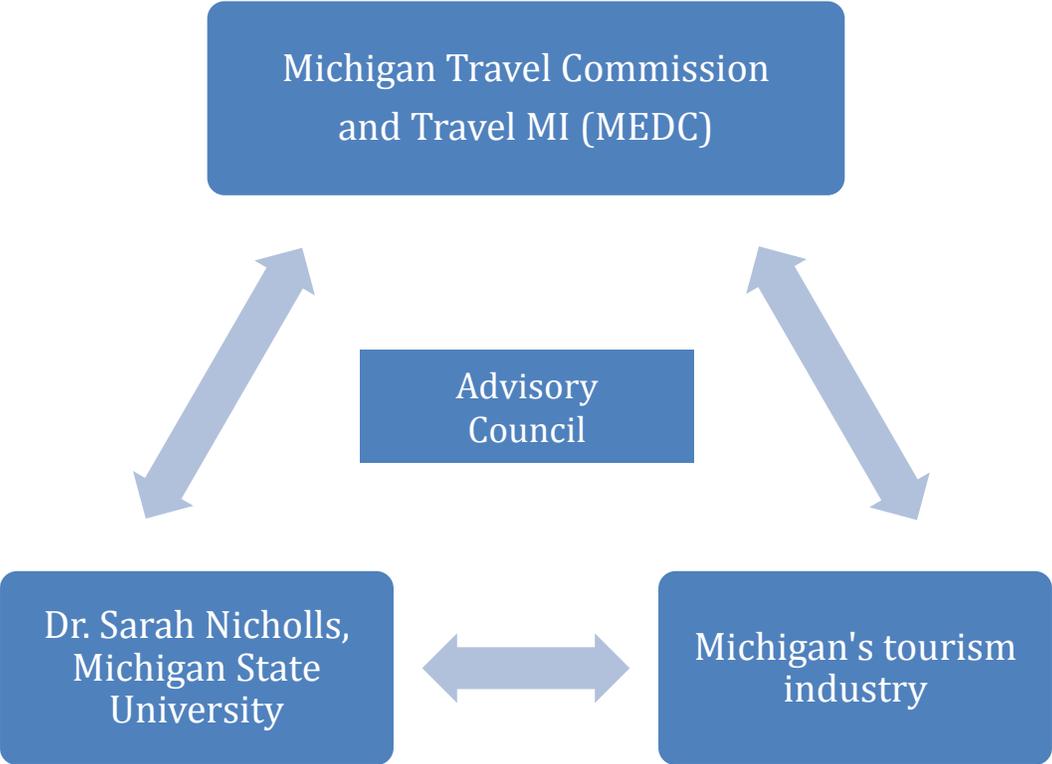
**Objectives:** Objectives are subsets of goals that reflect broad action categories. They answer the question of *what* needs to be accomplished to reach the goal and, ultimately, realize the vision. Objectives should ideally be specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented and time-sensitive. Each of the eight goals in the 2012-2017 Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan is underpinned by two or more objectives.

**Suggested Strategies:** Strategies represent the activities or actions required to fulfill the objectives, i.e., they answer the question of *how* each objective is to be accomplished via identification of *who needs to do what and when*. Strategies are the most specific element of the plan. Like objectives, strategies should be measurable, attainable, results-oriented and time-sensitive. Rather than prescribing any one or particular set of strategies for each objective, a series of suggested strategies is offered for each of the objectives presented in the plan. Decisions regarding the particular strategies to be deployed to achieve each objective will be made during the implementation phase of the planning process.

# The Planning Process

Development of the 2012-2017 Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan took place over the course of calendar year 2012. The founding philosophy of the strategic planning process was, as with the previous plan, one of “by the industry and for the industry.” Participation was sought throughout the year and via a variety of in-person and on-line channels. These activities are described in more detail below. Figure 1 illustrates the relationships between the three core sets of individuals and organizations involved in the planning process: the Michigan Travel Commission and Travel Michigan (MEDC), Dr. Sarah Nicholls and Michigan State University, and the tourism industry. Members of the industry were invited to participate in multiple in-person and on-line planning activities and were also represented throughout the process by the Strategic Plan Advisory Council, an eighteen person group of individuals from across the industry and around the state that advised and assisted Dr. Nicholls, the Michigan Travel Commission and Travel Michigan throughout the planning process.

**Figure 1. Stakeholders in the Strategic Planning Process**



Planning is an on-going process. As shown in Figure 2, development of the current plan began with evaluation of the degree of success associated with implementation of the previous (2007-2011) plan. An assessment of current industry conditions was then conducted, and updated over the course of the year, as appropriate. Results of these first two activities were then employed in development of the current plan, which will be implemented over the years 2013-2017. Preparation of the next strategic plan should then commence with evaluation of the current plan's implementation.

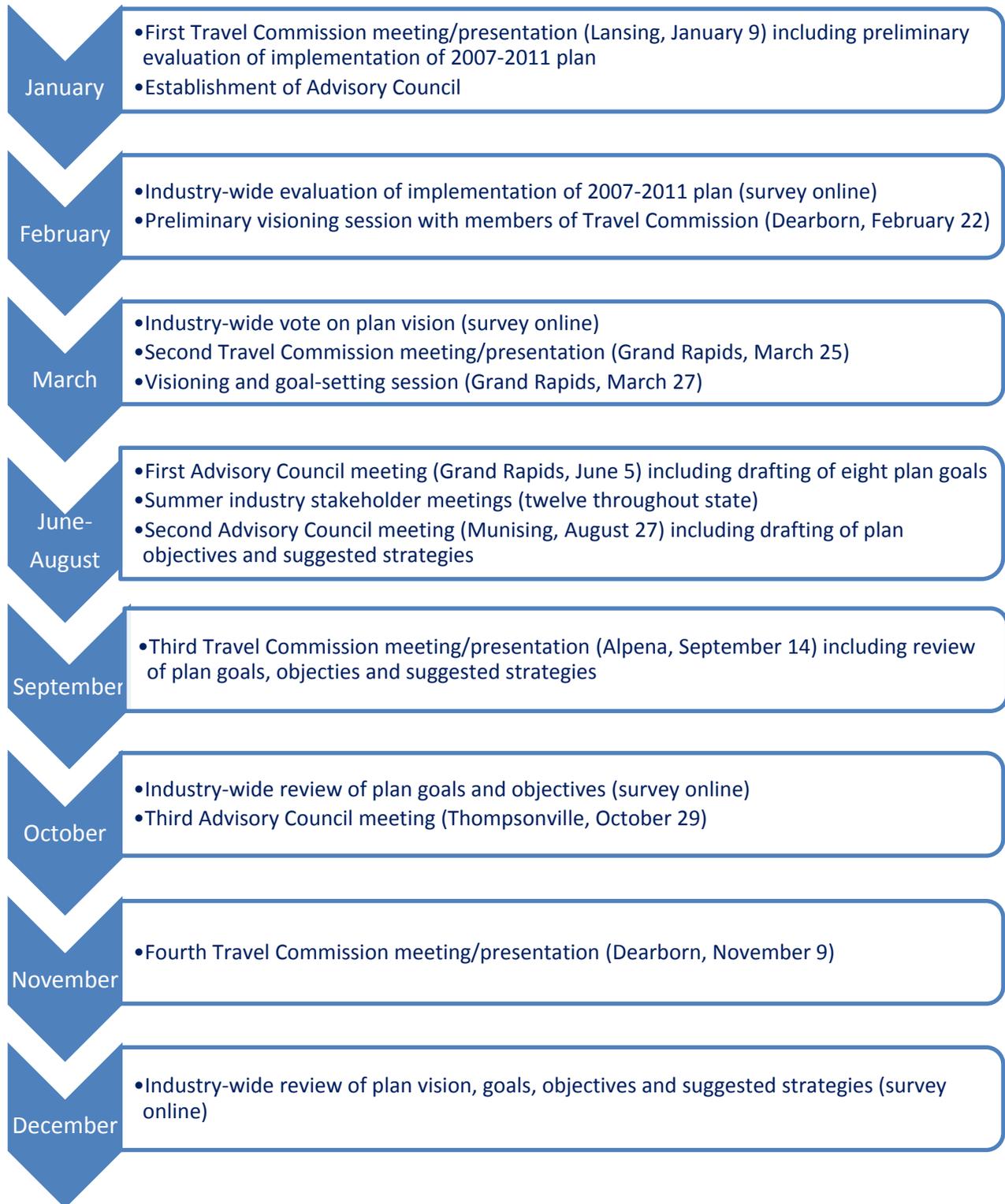
**Figure 2. The Four Key Stages of the Planning Process**



### **Timeline of the Planning Process**

A timeline of key milestones in the planning process is presented over the page (Figure 3). Each component of the process is then described in more detail in the pages following.

**Figure 3. A Timeline of the Planning Process**



## Evaluation of the 2007-2011 Plan

Evaluation of the previous plan and of the extent of its implementation was a critical first step in the planning process. First, it provided an opportunity to identify and celebrate the achievements and successes of the industry over the past five years. Second, it helped in the identification of ongoing needs and concerns within the industry. Third, it helped in the establishment of where and how to build on previous work, and where to start afresh. Fourth, the evaluation served as a preliminary step in the next stage of the plan, the visioning process.

Preliminary evaluation of the 2007-2011 plan took place at the Travel Commission meeting held January 9 in Lansing. Members of the 2007-2011 planning team were in attendance to provide a review of their activities during the development of the plan and to present short summaries of the progress made over the 2007-2011 period. Attendees were each then asked to assess the extent to which they thought various items identified in the 2007-2011 plan had been accomplished using a simple scale from 'fully implemented' to 'no progress.' These evaluations and the ensuing discussion were then used to inform development of a more extensive survey which was sent out to industry stakeholders in February.

One hundred forty industry members completed the evaluation survey. A full set of numeric results is included in Appendix One A and open ended comments are listed in Appendix One B. Key findings of this survey are summarized below:

- In response to the question, "In your opinion, what has been the Michigan tourism industry's greatest achievement over the past five years?" the Pure Michigan campaign was clearly perceived to be the greatest achievement. Sixty-four percent of respondents mentioned the campaign and its success, and another 20% referred more specifically to the securing of funding for the campaign.
- In response to the question, "In your opinion, what is the one most critical need or issue currently facing Michigan's tourism industry?" results were much more mixed, with many more and a more diverse set of items identified. The four issues mentioned by at least 10% of respondents were as follows:
  - (i) Securing long term funding for Travel/Pure Michigan (mentioned by 26% of respondents);
  - (ii) Gas prices (16%);
  - (iii) Raising the awareness of Michigan as a destination (11%); and
  - (iv) The economy (10%).
- When asked to rate a specified set of items in terms of their importance for the development of tourism in Michigan over the next five years, the following items were rated as 'extremely important' by at least 50% of respondents:

- Continued funding for the Pure Michigan campaign (rated 'extremely important' by 82% of respondents);
- Improvement of Michigan's image as a vacation destination (74%);
- Elevated status of tourism in the eyes of state leaders and officials (67%);
- Improvement in the level of customer service throughout the industry (58%);
- Increased collaboration and partnerships within the industry (56%);
- Establishment of the economic impact of tourism within the state (50%).

## **Establishment of the Vision**

The vision represents the shared picture of how Michigan's tourism industry would like to look and feel by 2017. It gives the industry a commonly-agreed upon model state to move towards throughout the implementation phase of the strategic plan period, in this case the five years 2013-2017.

A preliminary visioning exercise was completed with members of the Travel Commission on February 22, 2012. Participants were asked to imagine their ideal state for Michigan tourism, and to identify what was different about this ideal state compared to current conditions and what changes would have to be made to achieve this ideal (see Appendix Two A for a copy of the visioning exercise). Facilitated discussion of the results of this exercise eventually generated a set of four potential vision statements.

Between March 19 and March 26, 2012, a poll of the industry was conducted to assess reaction to these four potential vision statements. Respondents were given the opportunity to: (i) rank the four options from most to least preferred; (ii) indicate that they had no strong preference between the four options, i.e., that they liked all four of them; or (iii) indicate that they did not like any of the given options. Respondents were also given the opportunity to provide comments about the four options provided, as well as to make suggestions regarding additions, changes, etc. A total of 261 individuals took part in this voting process. Over 91% of respondents were supportive of the vision statement that was ultimately adopted. Full results of this voting process are presented in Appendix Two B.

## Setting of Goals

Goals represent the primary outcomes Michigan's tourism industry will need to achieve in order to realize its vision. The intent of the goals is to be broadly applicable – to all elements of the industry and to all parts of the state.

Evaluation of the 2007-2011 plan – in particular the questions regarding critical issues and needs – and discussion with the Travel Commission and various other industry members led to the identification of eight recurring themes around which specific goals were eventually set. The final versions of these eight themes are as follows (minor wording changes were made throughout the course of the process, thus, the list below differs slightly from the materials presented in the corresponding appendices):

- Collaboration, Cooperation and Partnerships
- Funding
- Product Development
- Promotion, Marketing and Communications
- Public Policy and Government Support
- Research and Technical Assistance
- Resources and Environment
- Service Excellence

On March 27, a Visioning and Goal-Setting Session was held in Grand Rapids, immediately following the concluding luncheon of the 2012 Governor's Conference on Tourism. Approximately one hundred industry members attended this facilitated session. Participants selected one of the eight themes and worked through a series of exercises that encouraged them to identify the importance of the theme, assess its current status, and identify how the situation with respect to the theme could or should improve in the future. A full set of session materials is presented in Appendix Three A, and the input received during this session is reported in Appendix Three B. A summary of the process and the input received appears in Appendix Three C.

The input received at the March 27 session was examined in fine detail and used to draft a set of preliminary goal statements for each theme. The full set of input and these draft statements were then reviewed by the Advisory Council at their June 5 meeting. Teams of Advisory Council members worked to craft single statements from the multiple options generated. These were then presented to, and discussed and edited by, the full advisory group. Once consensus had been reached regarding a goal statement for each theme, these statements were submitted to the Travel Commission for their review. With some minor wording changes the final set of goal statements – one per theme – was finally reached.

## Development of Objectives and Suggested Strategies

Objectives are subsets of goals that reflect broad action categories. They answer the question of *what* needs to be accomplished to reach the goal and, ultimately, realize the vision. Strategies represent the activities or actions required to fulfill the objectives, i.e., they answer the question of *how* each objective is to be accomplished via identification of *who needs to do what and when*. The suggested strategies are the most specific element of the plan.

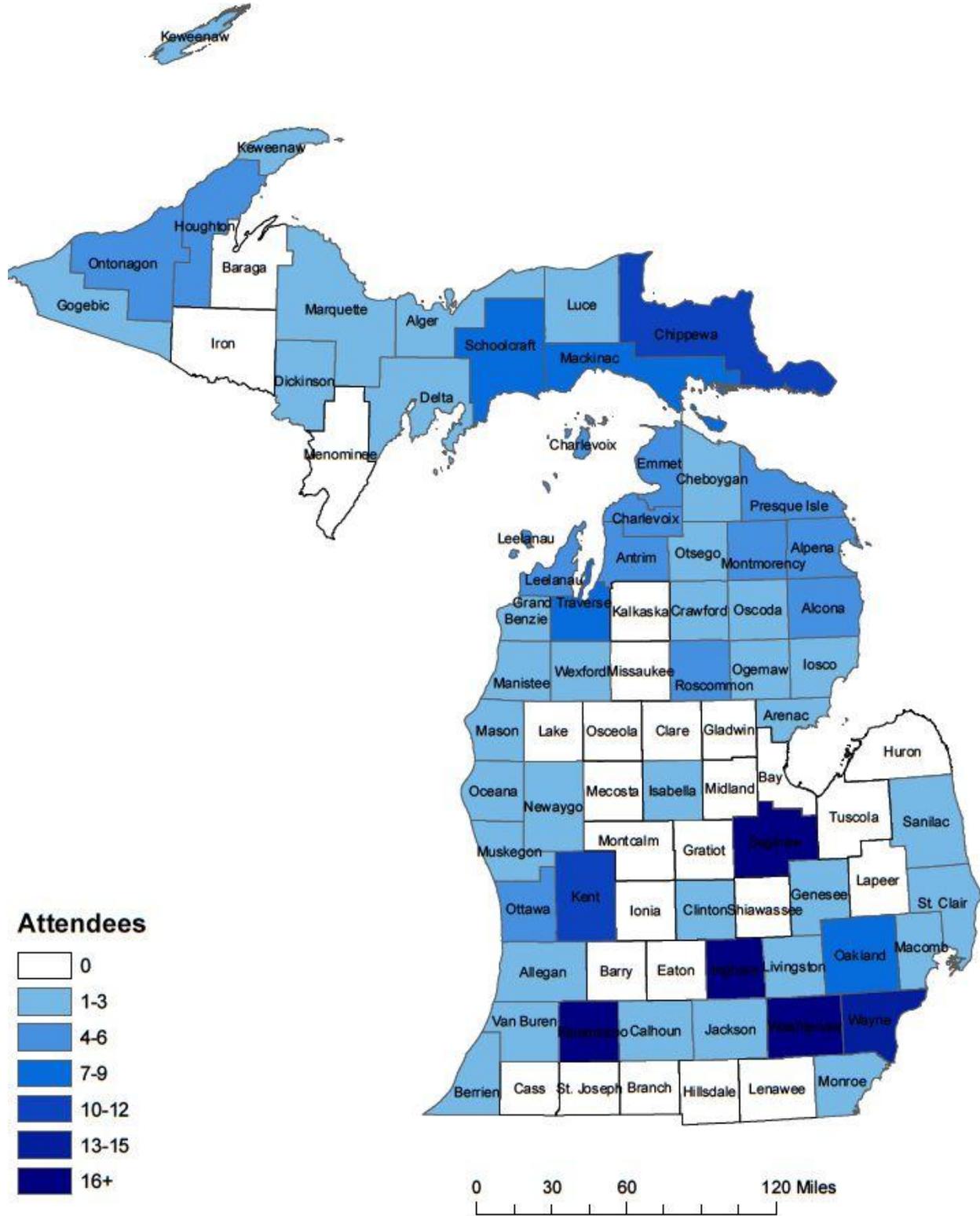
The development of objectives and suggested strategies was the most intensive in terms of interaction with industry members and the volume of input received. A series of twelve facilitated industry stakeholder meetings was held throughout the state between late June and mid-August. Locations were selected so as to ensure at least one meeting in each of MEDC's ten service delivery regions, with an additional two meetings in the Upper Peninsula. Each meeting lasted four and a half hours, and a total of 264 industry members participated (Figures 4 and 5). Meetings consisted of a combination of formal presentations and round-table working sessions. Each participant selected two of the eight goal themes on which to focus during the round-table portions. The working portions of the meeting enabled participants to deliberate on the specific objectives and associated strategies that they believed necessary to achieve in order to accomplish the goal that had been set for each theme. The materials used during the working portions of each session are available in Appendix Four A. Copies of the formal presentations made to attendees are provided in Appendix Four B. Meeting sponsors are acknowledged in the preliminary portion of this document.

A vast amount of input was received from industry members at the summer stakeholder meetings. A full copy of this input is provided in Appendix Four C. Attendees' ideas regarding each theme were reviewed in depth and on multiple occasions. The intent of each iteration of review was to condense the input provided into a set of objectives and associated suggested strategies for each goal. During this process, similar suggestions were combined and clearly unattainable or impractical ideas were eliminated. A considerably abridged set of potential objectives and suggested strategies was presented to and discussed by the Advisory Council at their August 27 meeting and the Travel Commission on September 14. A survey of industry stakeholder meeting attendees was then conducted to seek additional feedback on selected items. Based on input from these three activities, much additional reviewing and editing was then conducted. A further abridged set of objectives and suggested strategies was presented to and discussed by the Advisory Council at their October 29 meeting and the Travel Commission on November 9. The final set of objectives and suggested strategies was then integrated with the existing vision and goals and these items distributed to industry stakeholder meeting attendees for a final review. The final vision, goals, objectives and suggested strategies follow in the next portion of this document.

**Figure 4. Industry Stakeholder Meeting Attendance by Meeting Location**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Number of Attendees</b>
Hillman	6/27/12	29
Kalamazoo	7/30/12	28
Bellaire	7/23/12	27
Grand Rapids	8/2/12	27
Lansing	7/26/12	25
Dearborn	7/19/12	22
Frankenmuth	7/31/12	22
Ypsilanti	7/16/12	21
Sault Ste. Marie	7/10/12	18
Houghton	8/13/12	18
Mackinac Island	8/15/12	15
Port Huron	7/18/12	12
TOTAL		264

Figure 5. Industry Stakeholder Meeting Attendance by Attendee Origin



## Michigan Tourism: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

A SWOT analysis identifies and appraises the internal **s**trengths, internal **w**eaknesses, external **o**pportunities and external **t**hreats currently or potentially impacting a business or industry. Internal strengths and weaknesses refer to issues or factors that the business or industry has some control over, whereas external opportunities and threats refer to issues or factors over which the business or industry has little or no immediate control. The Michigan tourism SWOT analysis was prepared in light of historical and current tourism data as well as the input received from industry stakeholders over the course of the year. Items identified in the SWOT analysis are reflected in the goals and objectives of the plan itself, with the intent of capitalizing or continuing to capitalize on the industry's identified opportunities and strengths while to the greatest extent possible mitigating the industry's identified weaknesses and preparing to counteract identified threats.

### Strengths

- Michigan enjoys an abundance of natural resources, including borders with four of the five Great Lakes; the longest freshwater coastline in the country; 11,000 inland lakes and 36,000 miles of rivers and streams; over 100 state parks; the largest state forest system in the nation; and, five National Park Service sites.
- Michigan's temperate latitude creates four distinct seasons, offering tourism opportunities all year round. Summers are especially pleasant in comparison to the temperatures and humidity levels experienced in the southern states. Fall colors are comparable to those in New England. For winter sports enthusiasts there are some 6,470 miles of groomed snowmobile trails in Michigan as well as the second highest number of ski areas in the nation after the state of New York.
- Michigan enjoys a distinctive visual geography – two peninsulas surrounded by four of the Great Lakes.
- Michigan enjoys a rich and vibrant cultural history, particularly in terms of its Native American population, its automotive heritage and its musical roots.
- Michigan is home to Mackinac Island – a truly unique destination.
- Michigan is the second most diverse agricultural state in the nation in terms of crop productivity (after California), offering tremendous potential for the continued growth of the agricultural and culinary tourism niches.
- Michigan hosts a range of regionally and nationally acclaimed annual festivals, e.g., National Cherry Festival, Tulip Time, The Woodward Dreamcruise.
- Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport (DTW) is one of the busiest airports in the United States and among the world's largest air transportation hubs. It is the second-largest hub and primary Asian gateway for Delta, the world's largest airline, as well as a major base of operations for Spirit Airlines. Combined with its fourteen other passenger airlines – including four foreign flag carriers – DTW's airlines and their regional partners offer service to more than 160 non-stop destinations around the globe, all of which represent potential inbound traffic.

- Michigan is home to four major league national sports teams, a significant draw for the Detroit area.
- The nationally acclaimed Pure Michigan brand – Pure Michigan has been awarded at least one Mercury Award by the United States Travel Association every year since its inception in 2006, and Pure Michigan appeared in the number six position of the Forbes (2009) ranking of the ten best tourism promotion campaigns of all times.
- The current administration (2011-2014) is committed to continued funding of Pure Michigan at the \$25 million level.
- The advertising partnership program continues to expand – in 2012, the program generated \$3.9 million in additional Pure Michigan funding from 42 private-sector partners.
- Established partnerships with nationally recognized brands and celebrities such as Coca Cola, NASCAR, the Detroit Tigers, and Mario Batali.
- The Travel/Pure Michigan site is the most visited state tourism website in the nation (8,646,540 web visits in 2011) and Travel/Pure Michigan has more Facebook likes than any other state tourism Facebook site.
- The industry has coalesced considerably since 2006 (the development phase of the last strategic plan). For example, attendance at the Governor’s Conference on Tourism has increased from 478 in 2008 to 930 in 2012, and grassroots legislative and lobbying activities have led to passage of various legislation favorable to tourism (e.g., post Labor Day schools, funding for Pure Michigan).
- All geographic areas of Michigan are represented by a Convention and Visitors Bureau and/or a regional tourism association, providing a "constituent voice" to elected officials across the state.
- Legislators, media outlets and the public are increasingly aware of the tourism industry and its contributions to Michigan’s economy.

## **Weaknesses**

- Michigan’s location and shape limit drive-through leisure traffic.
- Despite increases in the absolute volume and relative proportion of out-of-state visitation, Michigan remains a regional destination – 54% of domestic visitors in 2010 originated within Michigan, with another 18% originating from neighboring states.
- Public transportation options are very limited, particularly in terms of inter-destination travel.
- Air lift is limited (besides into/out of Detroit).
- Transportation options from Detroit Metro to popular destinations are quite limited and not always well publicized.
- Communications service (in terms of cell phone service and internet access) is not consistent across the state.
- Michigan is somewhat lacking in terms of the number and variety of (inter)nationally-recognized tourism attractions.
- Michigan is somewhat lacking in terms of five-star accommodations and restaurants.

- The image of urban areas such as Detroit and Flint remains problematic.
- Sense of pride about their state is lacking among some Michiganders, thereby limiting their positive interactions with potential and current visitors.
- The quality of customer service is inconsistent across the state. There is no standard customer service training or approach within the tourism/hospitality sector.
- Michigan's temperate latitude combined with the lake effect combine to generate unpredictable weather conditions – this reduces the ability of tourism entities to plan effectively and can disrupt signature events, e.g., Tulip Time 2012.
- Funding for Pure Michigan is not dedicated and therefore never guaranteed beyond the commitments of the current state government/Governor's term. To dedicate such funding would require a constitutional amendment.
- The current Governor's support for Pure Michigan funding – and the apparent absence of the need to lobby for that funding during his term – could reduce contact and rapport with legislators and lead to undue complacency.
- Michigan legislators are term-limited (six years for the House, eight years for the Senate). Institutional memory is short and new members may not be aware of or understand the importance of the industry.
- Funding for many elements of the tourism product, e.g., state and national parks, cultural and heritage venues, is inadequate. This limits both maintenance/renovation activities and marketing potential.
- Tourism activity is unevenly distributed across the state – 45% of leisure person days occurred in the southeast Lower Peninsula in 2011, compared to only 7% in the Upper Peninsula. There is (perceived to be) somewhat of a disconnect between the peninsulas in terms of support for tourism development and growth. Levels of communication between the various regions are also sometimes low.
- Fine scale, statewide data are lacking – with the demise of MSU's Travel, Tourism and Recreation Resource Center, consistent and timely data collection and analysis no longer takes place below the level of the state, whereas most entities seek data at the city, township or county level.
- Though significant progress has been made in the last few years, the tourism industry is ill-defined and fragmented, reducing its presence and lobbying power vis-à-vis more well-defined and cohesive industries such as agriculture.
- Communication of activities and accomplishments is sometimes lacking, e.g., awareness of the Governor's Awards for Innovative Tourism Collaboration is low.
- There are some concerns about the partnership program – including oversaturation in some markets, the inability of smaller destinations to buy into the program, and actual or measurable returns to partners.

## **Opportunities**

- Educate all residents and business owners of the importance of tourism to the state, thereby instilling greater awareness of and respect for the state's tourism industry and

resources, and encouraging a statewide sense of hospitality and pride. Tie to the definition and implementation of “The Pure Michigan Promise.”

- Continue to capitalize on the local and natural/organic foods movements, both in urban centers and in rural areas, e.g., culinary routes, the microbrew phenomenon.
- Continue to capitalize on Detroit’s reputation (particularly outside of the US) as a leader in auto innovation and music.
- Develop regional transportation initiatives which would ease travel to and within destinations (and especially appeal to Asian and European visitors used to a wide array of public transportation options).
- Establish Michigan as “The Trails State” (in partnership with agencies including the Department of Natural Resources and organizations such as the Michigan Trails and Greenway Alliance and the Michigan Snowmobile Association).
- Capitalize on the new Brand USA initiative to increase potential international visitors’ awareness of Michigan as a destination. Brand USA was recently ranked first by Bloom Consulting in its 2012 Country Branding Ranking for tourism, ahead of Spain, France and China.
- Increase Pure Michigan’s presence internationally, particularly in established markets such as Canada (especially Toronto), the UK, Germany, Switzerland and Austria.
- Launch the Pure Michigan campaign in new and growing international markets such as Japan, China, Korea and Brazil.
- Utilize existing and generate new sister city partnerships to increase international awareness of Michigan as a tourism destination.
- Capitalize on the large number of international students at Michigan’s colleges and universities, particularly those from target inbound markets in Asia, and on the potential for visitation to Michigan by their friends and relatives.

## **Threats**

- Economic recession or uncertainty, whether in the US or at the global level.
- Rising gas prices (nearly four-fifths of Michigan tourism activity is by car).
- Political insecurity and unrest, e.g., in the Middle East.
- Perceived dilution of the Pure Michigan brand as the partnership program continues to expand and the brand is adopted by non-tourism agencies and entities.
- Excessive and/or overly rapid tourism-related growth, which could generate negative impacts for local people, e.g., rising property prices and taxes, congestion, etc.
- Excessive and/or overly rapid tourism-related growth, which could generate negative impacts on the environment, thereby tarnishing the Pure Michigan image.
- Climate variability and change: Climate variability can negatively influence conditions at short notice and at any time of the year, e.g., the success of scheduled outdoor events. Climate change could influence the quality of the fall leaf viewing season and could also negatively impact the feasibility and the long-term sustainability of some segments of the winter sports/recreation sector.

- Invasive species such as Asian carp, zebra mussels and Eurasian watermilfoil, which threaten the pristine image of the state and have negative implications for a range of outdoor recreation and tourism activities.
- Disease and pests such as the emerald ash borer, West Nile virus and epizootic hemorrhagic disease, which threaten the pristine image of the state and have negative implications for a range of outdoor recreation and tourism activities.

## The Vision

The vision statement developed as a result of the visioning process described earlier in this document is as follows:

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

## The Goals

Goals were established around eight critical issues or themes:

- Collaboration, Cooperation and Partnerships
- Funding
- Product Development
- Promotion, Marketing and Communications
- Public Policy and Government Support
- Research and Technical Assistance
- Resources and Environment
- Service Excellence

A brief description of the intended emphasis of each of these themes is as follows:

**Collaboration, Cooperation and Partnerships:** The tourism industry is fragmented in nature, involving a wide variety of types and size of public and private entities. It is hard for any one entity to succeed in isolation. 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.

**Funding:** Adequate funding of the Pure Michigan campaign, other promotional and marketing efforts and all other strategic plan initiatives was the most fundamental and critical issue identified during the planning process.

**Product Development:** An adequate, accessible and interconnected supply of tourism products and services such as accommodations, public and private transportation, and attractions and events is an essential characteristic of a successful tourism destination. Visitors who enjoy a satisfying and seamless stay are more likely to return and to recommend the destination to others based on these positive experiences.

**Promotion, Marketing and Communications:** The Pure Michigan campaign has experienced phenomenal success since its inception in 2006. Nevertheless, 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.

**Public Policy and Government Support:** Despite being one of the largest contributors to the state's economy, the fragmented nature of the tourism industry often limits its effectiveness in the policy and governmental arenas. Given the widespread distribution of visitors, and their interactions not only with hospitality employees but also non-tourism businesses and the general population, better understanding of and support for the industry is needed among state legislators, county and local officials, businesses and residents.

**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. Currently, the industry lacks access to affordable, relevant, reliable and consistent industry data and research.

**Resources and Environment:** Michigan offers a rich variety of high quality natural, cultural, agricultural and built resources. These resources serve as attractions for both Michigan residents and visitors. However, these resources are not limitless and they are sensitive to a variety of naturally occurring and human-induced threats. 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.

**Service Excellence:** As all hospitality employees well know, Michigan and its tourism industry has only one opportunity to make a positive first impression on its guests, whether these encounters occur at traditional tourism locations or with any individual or business throughout the state. 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?

While all eight themes are inter-related to some extent, the most significant relationships between them are illustrated below (Figure 6). Funding is clearly critical to all seven of the other themes since all require some level of financial support to enable their realization. Of these seven, appropriate public policy, adequate government support and the execution and sharing of accurate and reliable research have the most direct influence on levels of funding. The quantity, quality and form of promotion, marketing and communications conducted are dependent on all seven of the other themes. Promotion, marketing and communications obviously necessitate funding; however, the content of that messaging, and its ultimate effectiveness, is also influenced by the degree of attention afforded the other themes. Expenditure on promotion, marketing and communications is essentially meaningless unless the experience delivered to visitors meets or exceeds their expectations; these experiences are directly impacted by the appropriateness and the quality of the product provided, where product includes not only traditional tourism infrastructure but also natural, cultural and other kinds of tourism and amenity resources as well as interactions with hospitality employees and Michigan businesses and residents. In turn, effective promotion, marketing and communications – of tourism products and

tourism experiences that meet or exceed expectations – generate higher levels of visitation and spending and are, ultimately, likely to precipitate increased levels of funding for tourism.

**Figure 6. Relationships between the Eight Goal Themes**



The eight specific goals established as a result of the goal-setting process described in the process portion of this document are as follows:

- **Collaboration, Cooperation and Partnerships:** 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.
- **Funding:** Secure adequate and stable funding for all strategic plan initiatives.
- **Product Development:** Enhance infrastructure to support the delivery of a world class Pure Michigan travel experience.
- **Promotion, Marketing and Communications:** Strengthen and grow the Pure Michigan brand through effective mediums at the regional, national and international levels to attract first-time and repeat visitors.
- **Public Policy and Government Support:** Empower the industry to encourage policy-makers at all levels to support the travel industry.
- **Research and Technical Assistance:** Establish a central, easily accessible and inclusive information system to capture and share timely, relevant and reliable industry research.
- **Resources and Environment:** Be internationally recognized for our stewardship of – and rich opportunities to experience – our natural, cultural, and heritage resources.
- **Service Excellence:** Foster a culture of service excellence that allows us to deliver on the Pure Michigan promise.

## **The Goals, Objectives and Suggested Strategies**

The objectives and suggested strategies identified for each of the eight goals are detailed below. As described in the process portion of the document, the list of suggested strategies is intended to be illustrative rather than exhaustive. Additional ideas regarding potential strategies that might be employed to help achieve the objectives stated can be found in Appendix Four C, which documents the entirety of input received at the twelve industry stakeholder meetings held across the state during summer 2012.

## **Collaboration, Cooperation and Partnerships**

**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 One**

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

#### ***Suggested Strategies***

- *Find ways to increase participation in partnership programs, e.g., in terms of numbers of participants in and reach of the advertising partnership program.*
- *Continue to assess the status and effectiveness of the advertising partnership program using clear and consistent metrics, and share these findings with the industry on an annual basis.*
- *Investigate potential tax incentives for participation in partnership programs.*

### **Objective Two**

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

#### ***Suggested Strategies***

- *Solicit volunteers to establish and manage the system.*
- *Use system to list potential partners, ideas, and resources.*
- *Showcase success stories and best practices, e.g., via a best practices e-library.*

### **Objective Three**

Support the establishment or revitalization of regional tourism development organizations.

#### ***Suggested Strategies***

- *Identify regions where a new or revitalized regional tourism development organization is desired by industry members.*
- *Seek broad representation from federal, state, county, and local government, non-profits, associations and the private sector.*
- *Encourage regional organizations to host annual tourism forums – for both industry members and elected officials.*

### **Objective Four**

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

#### ***Suggested Strategies***

- *More widely publicize Governor's Conference, e.g., to local, county and state government, to other industry associations.*
- *Make attendance more affordable for smaller entities and/or first-time attendees.*
- *Encourage/challenge CVB Directors to recruit one new attendee each year.*
- *More widely distribute submission materials for awards programs such as the Stars of the Industry Awards and the Governor's Awards for Innovative Tourism Collaboration, e.g., on michigan.org and all other Travel Michigan media channels, via all industry associations and state agencies.*

## **Funding**

**Goal: Secure adequate and stable funding for all strategic plan initiatives.**

### **Objective One**

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.

#### ***Suggested Strategies***

- *Lobby, lobby more, lobby more effectively.*
- *Continue to commission Longwood's ROI study and disseminate findings to the industry and to all levels of government.*
- *Estimate additional spending, jobs and tax generation associated with incremental increases in Pure Michigan spending and disseminate findings to the industry and to all levels of government.*

### **Objective Two**

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

#### ***Suggested Strategies***

- *Determine base costs of other (non-promotion/marketing) strategic plan initiatives.*
- *Prioritize objectives (and their costs, both within and between goals) as necessary.*
- *Solicit funding from public and private entities including CVBs, Chambers of Commerce, industry associations, foundations, etc.*

## **Product Development**

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

### **Objective One**

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

#### ***Suggested Strategies***

- *Encourage the establishment of a statewide transportation taskforce to:*
  - *Inventory current transportation options both in to the state and between major gateways and major destinations.*
  - *Identify gaps in service provision and connectivity.*
  - *Investigate options to fill said gaps using existing private and public service providers.*
  - *Advocate for transportation improvements that could enhance the visitor experience, e.g., road repairs, mass transit, regional airports, etc.*
- *Encourage the creation of a transportation page on michigan.org.*

### **Objective Two**

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.

#### ***Suggested Strategies***

- *Collaborate with federal and state agencies and other organizations in their efforts to :*
  - *Inventory existing routes and trails.*
  - *Identify key gaps/opportunities (by mode and theme).*
- *Encourage communities and niche markets to develop more themed routes/trails and submit them for posting on michigan.org (e.g., bicycling routes, culinary routes, etc.).*

### **Objective Three**

Enhance the visitor's in-state travel experience.

#### ***Suggested Strategies***

- *Support adequate/increased funding of public tourism resources, e.g., state and national parks, cultural attractions.*
- *Support the establishment of consistent communication service across the state, e.g., cell service and wireless access.*
- *Work with MDOT to standardize and improve the Welcome Center experience.*
- *Work with MDOT to open selected rest areas year-round.*
- *Work with appropriate authorities to place Pure Michigan kiosks in high visitor traffic areas, e.g., Welcome Centers, airports, train stations, convention centers, etc.*
- *Expand standardized Pure Michigan signage to all public areas, e.g., Welcome Centers, airports, train stations, convention centers, etc.*
- *Continue/accelerate switch from Great Lakes to Pure Michigan signage.*

### **Objective Four**

Increase access to capital for travel-related businesses.

#### ***Suggested Strategies***

- *Identify and communicate sources of capital for travel-related projects including incentives, matching funds and grant monies.*

## **Promotion, Marketing and Communications**

**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 One**

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

### **Objective Two**

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

### **Objective Three**

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

### **Objective Four**

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

### ***Suggested Strategies for Objectives One – Four***

- *Continue to develop national campaigns for all four seasons, highlighting Michigan's unique strengths.*
- *Identify and target the most lucrative niche markets across all four seasons.*
- *Increase promotional/marketing activity in Delta hub cities (in US) and in cities with direct flights to Detroit Metro (internationally).*
- *Encourage the development of additional partnerships with national brands, teams, personalities and events.*
- *Develop joint communication strategies with allied industries, e.g., the transportation sector.*
- *Create more/new promotional events to encourage Michigan residents to "sell" Michigan.*
- *Create a "Pure Michigan Passport" loyalty program.*

## **Objective Five**

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

## **Objective Six**

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

### ***Suggested Strategies for Objectives Five and Six***

- *Launch Pure Michigan in Toronto.*
- *Translate michigan.org into relevant languages such as German, Portuguese, Chinese and Korean.*
- *Encourage CVBs to translate their websites.*
- *Continue to partner with Brand USA.*
- *Increase the number of participants in International Pow Wow.*
- *Expand Michigan's presence at international sales shows such as ITB and WTM.*
- *Create a program for international students at Michigan colleges and universities to become "Pure Michigan Ambassadors" to their home countries.*
- *Establish a statewide forum focused on international tourism issues and task this forum with development of internationally-oriented items as identified under the Service Excellence goal.*

## Public Policy and Government Support

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

### Objective One

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

#### *Suggested Strategies*

- *Continue to develop clear and unified state and regional lobbying efforts.*
- *Increase attendance at industry-related legislative events.*
- *Invite all state legislators, county/local elected officials and representatives of entities such as Chambers of Commerce to the Governor's Conference.*
- *Continue to identify and develop relationships with lobbyists whose agendas complement those of the tourism industry.*
- *Identify and implement new strategic partnerships with related industries and entities, e.g., gas station owners, retail, restaurants, etc.*
- *Work with Travel Michigan/MEDC to establish the potential impact of increased Pure Michigan funding on tourism spending, tax receipts and jobs.*
- *Develop a short presentation highlighting key tourism statistics/impacts; work with MSU Extension, associations and CVBs to share with every County Commission once per annum.*
- *Work with CVBs to encourage more "Be a Tourist in Your Own Town" events.*
- *Encourage the development of an internal Pure Michigan advertisement that highlights the importance (i.e., economic impact) of tourism in Michigan.*
- *Encourage MEDC to consider tourism as an economic development tool in the same way as high-tech and manufacturing, and to add tourism to their (inter)national missions.*

## **Objective Two**

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

### ***Suggested Strategies***

- *Continue to work with/support the work of the Travel Commission.*
- *Continue to work with/support the work of the House Natural Resources, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation Committee and the Senate Natural Resources, Environment and Great Lakes and Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Committees.*
- *Support the establishment (or revitalization) of a system of regional tourism organizations (per Objective Three under the Collaboration, Cooperation and Partnerships goal).*
- *Establish a "Tourism Leadership Academy" to support development of a cadre of tourism industry leaders.*

## Research and Technical Assistance

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

### Objective One

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

#### *Suggested Strategies*

- *Inventory all existing sources of tourism data and identify gaps, to answer/address questions such as:*
  - *What pieces of data are most critical to the plan's success and at what spatial resolution?*
  - *Which of these data exist already, and which require primary data collection?*
  - *For existing data, how/from whom/at what cost could they be acquired?*
- *Charge each goal committee with identifying the research needs related to the accomplishment of their goal's objectives and strategies.*

### Objective Two

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

#### *Suggested Strategies*

- *Determine developer and manager of the system, e.g., using an RFP system.*
- *Determine fee structure for access to the system.*
- *Work with system developer/manager to develop standards for data collection and sharing.*
- *Develop a list of desired data and associated reports.*
- *Maintain consistency of data collection and publication, i.e., focus on the development of comparable, longitudinal datasets.*
- *Require successful bidder to publish an annual report highlighting key activities and findings.*
- *Continue to inform the industry why tourism research is important and a worthwhile investment.*

## Resources and Environment

**Goal: Be internationally recognized for our stewardship of – and rich opportunities to experience – our natural, cultural, and heritage resources.**

### Objective One

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

#### *Suggested Strategies*

- *Identify a subset of resources to be included in the inventory.*
- *Develop a standard format for the inventory, to ensure consistency and minimize duplication.*
- *Identify partners to assist with the inventory process (federal, state, non-profit, etc.).*
- *Identify and assign primary responsibility for each county (or appropriate spatial unit) to a single individual or entity, e.g., local CVB, college or university.*
- *Encourage posting of results on CVB websites and on michigan.org.*

### Objective Two

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

#### *Suggested Strategies*

- *Partner with natural resource entities/advocacy groups with similar concerns/agendas to raise awareness, lobby, etc.*
- *Develop position statements with regards to issues and share with the industry.*
- *Include presentations on these topics at the Governor's Conference and on industry legislative days.*
- *Cross-reference this objective with the Public Policy and Government Support goal.*

## **Objective Three**

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

### ***Suggested Strategies***

- *Develop a "Keep Michigan Pure" campaign – in concert with other state and national resource agencies – that highlights stewardship practices and encourages residents and visitors to treat resources respectfully. Incorporate activity rules and regulations including explanation of why these are in place. Identify and dovetail with existing programs/schemes.*
- *Raise awareness at all levels of existing stewardship standards and highlight examples of stewardship excellence. Start by inventorying current standards and certifications, including green programs such as LEED. Track and publish key indicators such as water quality, and highlight these indicators in promotional efforts.*
- *Actively support other agencies' and organizations' programs and campaigns focusing on stewardship practices that protect Michigan's resources.*
- *Develop and distribute a list of Michigan resource records and (inter)national certifications, designations and awards to all CVBs and industry associations.*
- *Highlight and encourage attendance at conferences related to tourism, resources and the environment, e.g., in 2013, the National Outdoor Recreation Conference, the National Extension Tourism Conference and the National Association of State Park Directors Conference will all be held in Michigan.*

## Service Excellence

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

### Objective One

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

#### *Suggested Strategies*

- *Identify key words that define “service excellence” and “The Pure Michigan Promise,” e.g., via an online survey of or focus groups with industry members.*
- *Identify and analyze the service statements/models of other states and countries with excellent service records (the leading states for satisfaction according to D.K. Shifflet include New Hampshire, South Dakota and South Carolina).*
- *Identify and analyze service statements/models of Michigan tourism businesses known for their exceptional service, e.g., based on visitor reviews on Trip Advisor, etc.*
- *Post “The Pure Michigan Promise” on michigan.org and on/in all other Travel Michigan (social) media.*
- *Ask all tourism entities to post “The Pure Michigan Promise” in prominent places (front and back of house).*
- *Distribute “The Pure Michigan Promise” to all CVBs, Chambers, County Commissions and other elected officials (local and state).*
- *Ask all Michigan colleges/universities to incorporate “The Pure Michigan Promise” into their introductory tourism and hospitality courses, e.g., via MLTA’s Education Committee.*
- *Encourage the creation of an external Pure Michigan ad that showcases “The Pure Michigan Promise,” i.e., that focuses on our service and people.*
- *Encourage the creation of an internal Pure Michigan ad that showcases the Pure Michigan promise and explains its importance to all residents. Link to return on investment data or the amount by which tourism revenue reduces personal taxes.*
- *Develop a short “This is Pure Michigan” video or webinar and encourage/require all state and tourism employees to watch it, e.g., when hired, during staff meetings, etc.*

## **Objective Two**

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

### ***Suggested Strategies***

- *Develop an ongoing state-wide certification program focused on “Delivering the Pure MI Promise.” Use the CTA program that Lansing and Kalamazoo participate in as a model, or look at the American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute’s new Guest Service Gold program. Establish a target number of graduates per annum.*
- *Develop a “Delivering the Promise” chat-board where employers/ees can share success stories, best practices and training resources (books, classes, etc.).*
- *Develop a “Delivering the Promise” e-newsletter – short, statewide, weekly – containing service tips and statistics.*
- *Continue to include service-related sessions at Governor’s Conference.*

## **Objective Three**

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

### ***Suggested Strategies***

- *Determine who will develop and implement the survey (cross-reference this task with work on the Research and Technical Assistance goal).*
- *Develop the survey. Suggested items to include: (i) basic socio-demographics and trip characteristics; (ii) level of satisfaction (on a scale out of 5 or 10); (iii) intent to revisit MI (on a scale out of 5 or 10); (iv) intent to recommend MI to a friend or relative (on a scale out of 5 or 10); and (v) open-ended section for comments.*
- *Track and publish responses by month, region and entity type (lodging, attraction, etc.).*
- *Establish an annual awards program for entities that receive the highest scores, e.g., at the Governor’s Conference.*
- *Establish a statewide international tourism forum to create a set of service pointers/primers for tourism businesses regarding international travelers, with specific guidelines by country or region of origin (cross-reference with suggested strategies relating to Objectives Five and Six of the Promotion, Marketing and Communications goal).*
- *Establish a statewide international tourism forum to develop an online diversity training related to high target nations including customs, basic phrases, etc. (cross-reference with suggested strategies relating to Objectives Five and Six of the Promotion, Marketing and Communications goal).*

## **Implementation 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 planning team recommends the formation of working groups around each of the eight plan goals. Given the especially intensive involvement of the Advisory Council throughout the planning process, it is suggested these working groups be Co-Chaired by a Travel Commissioner and an Advisory Council member. Additional membership should be sought from throughout the industry.

First steps in the implementation process will likely include prioritization of the various objectives underlying each goal, and identification of private, public and not-for-profit partners who might assist with implementation. These partners might include CVBs, industry associations, state and federal agencies, and educational institutions. It is important to recognize that no one organization or entity will enjoy the ability to successfully implement any of the items identified in this document – rather, the achievement of the goals and objectives listed here will require concerted and coordinated effort on the part of many organizations and entities across the state and over an extended period of time. Much like the development of the plan and the planning process itself, involvement, commitment and collaboration will be essential. Identification of funding sources for those items that require financial support is also clearly critical.

A general session regarding the plan and its implementation is scheduled to take place at the 2013 Governor's Conference on Tourism, to be held April 14-16 in Detroit.