



GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

DEVELOPING A VIRGIN ISLANDS SUSTAINABLE TOURISM STRATEGY

REQUESTS FOR 'EXPRESSION OF INTEREST'

1. Preamble

The Government of the Virgin Islands (GVI) is inviting suitably qualified consultant firms to express interest in developing a National Sustainable Tourism Master Plan for the entire Territory. The National Sustainable Tourism Master Plan will define strategies and activities and provide distinct mapping that will catalyze the further development of the BVI's tourism sector to promote local participation and development based on sustainable tourism principles and practices, including the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC) being spearheaded by the United Nations Foundation. The overall objective of this consultancy is to strengthen national and local capacity for tourism sector policy, destination planning, and management through the preparation of a National Sustainable Tourism Master Plan for the entire tourism sector.

2. Brief Background

The BVI forms an archipelago comprised of 60 islands and cays, and is located approximately 50 miles east of Puerto Rico, in the northwestern region of the Caribbean Sea. The main islands are Tortola, Virgin Gorda, Anegada and Jost Van Dyke. Road Town, located on Tortola, is the British Virgin Islands' capital. The BVI is renowned as one of the world's premier sailing destinations. It's dynamic and vast topography provides a unique opportunity to "island hop" with ease. Each island is characterized by its own cultural and natural wonders. Among these attractions are The Baths on Virgin Gorda, Anegada's Flamingo Pond, White Bay on Jost Van Dyke, and Tortola's Sage Mountain. Destination highlights also include world-class yachting, snorkeling, hiking, sustainable tourism and, for diving enthusiasts, the Caribbean's most stunning wreck dives, such as the RMS Rhone. The British Virgin Islands are easily accessible for all travelers flying into Tortola/Beef Island's Terrence B. Lettsome International Airport (EIS) via frequent connecting service from nearby Puerto Rico, St. Thomas, Antigua, St. Kitts or St. Maarten/St. Martin, displaying several competitive advantages in the sector relative to other Caribbean and Central American countries. These also include a largely English-speaking population, diverse cultures, close proximity to the United States, and a stable political situation.

Tourism is one of the main economic pillars of growth in the British Virgin Islands (BVI) economy. The sector generated over US\$20.24million in visitor expenditures in 2016, and corresponding to approximately 33% of total GDP. In addition, over 53% of the employed labor force is estimated to be related to or driven by tourism, placing tourism at the forefront of the Territory's economy.

BVI's tourism sector caters to two distinct market segments: (i) overnight or 'stay-over' visitors; and (ii) cruise ship passengers. A total of 407,764 overnight visitors were recorded in 2016, approximately 40% of all arrivals. There are important differences between cruise and overnight visitors that have to be taken into account in planning for the sector. Overnight visitors contributed 88% of total direct tourist expenditures compared to 12% by cruise ship visitors. In addition, the overnight segment has proven less volatile, rising since the late 90s and expected to continue to rise in spite of the slight downturn in 2008, while the cruise segment has grown faster but has been more susceptible to external events such as natural disasters.

The Government of the Virgin Islands confirmed the central position of the tourism sector in its economic development strategy and therefore desires to ensure that this essential pillar continues to develop in a sustainable manner. Promoting a product focusing on the preservation of the natural environment and rich cultural heritage of the territory, an equitable distribution of benefits through the promotion of the overnight sector, and the delivery of a world class visitor experience.

The sector faces several fundamental challenges that, if not addressed, could affect its continued contribution to the national economy. These challenges are related to: (a) natural resource degradation affecting the visitor experience at popular visitor sites and attractions; (b) insufficient product diversification; (c) lack of market understanding and; (d) poor physical planning resulting in resource use conflicts.

Investments in tourism to date have been largely ad hoc, underscoring weaknesses in the institutions responsible for the sector and related services and assets. This reinforces the need for more integrated approaches to destination planning, where needs for physical infrastructure can be assessed within the context of coherent, locally endorsed plans for zones or regions selected as priorities for tourism development.

Recognizing the need to further diversify the tourism product and promote a wider distribution

of benefits, complementary investments will also be made in addition to developing new products, expanding visitor services, and in capacity building. Emphasis is placed on ecotourism, adventure travel, and cultural tourism in recognition that these segments are often associated with higher expenditures, longer length of stay, and offer greater opportunities to get the outer islands and more district communities involved in the sector.

To strengthen institutional capacity in the sector, the Sustainable Tourism Strategy will support the development of the National Sustainable Tourism Master Plan and foster improvements in the way key institutions coordinate initiatives among themselves and with private investors, conduct market research, and monitor performance of the sector.

Project Scope

The National Sustainable Tourism Master Plan will guide the Government of the Virgin Islands and tourism industry stakeholders by providing them with an actionable plan, based on a clear road map that will focus on a sustainable approach to tourism development that has aligns with international best practices.

The intention is to strengthen, deepen and widen the tourism sector, and to diversify the economy by creating new nodes of growth and reducing geographic disparities across the Islands comprising the British Virgin Islands by consolidating the overnight, cruise and day trips tourism market with investments and activities along four inter-related fronts:

- (i) enhancing the tourism experience and resource sustainability at consolidated destinations sites to pressure;
- (ii) diversifying tourism products in emerging destinations for the overnight and cruise market segments;
- (iii) identify and develop proposal for niche tourism products; and
- (iv) strengthening tourism institutions for policy, destination planning, and management.

The strategy will consist of two components:

Component I: Investments in overnight tourism destinations; and



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Component II: Institutional strengthening and capacity building for policy, destination planning, and management.

3. Submission of Expressions of Interest by Prospective Consulting Firms.

Expressions of interest may be submitted by a consultant, company or firm (natural or legal) or in consortium with other consultants, companies or firms. If the Expression of Interest is from a consortium of consultants, companies or firms, information on all persons making up the consortium must be provided. It must be clearly indicated which person is the lead person of the consortium. The nature of the consortium arrangement should be specified, and evidenced by letter or agreement signed by all participating persons. The following should be submitted by interested persons:

- a. Full contact information of the consultant/company/firm.
- b. Detailed corporate profile of the consultant/company/firm.
- c. Summary and evidence of a proven track record, solid reputation, success, and qualifications and demonstrated experience in the planning, analysis, and design of sustainable tourism policies and programs, and specifically in the design of national tourism master plans, preferably in the Caribbean..
- d. Details of litigation history (past or current) in relation to the submitting consultant/company/firm or any significant (more than 25%) individual consultant thereof.
- e. Narrative description of the proposed strategy, which takes account of the matters outlined in the project scope above;
- f. Estimate of the project development budget, and evidence of the consultant/company/firm ability to undertake such a project.
- g. Details of the proposed work plan.
- h. Any additional information that the consultant considers appropriate to assist the Government of the Virgin Islands with a better understanding of its proposal.

4. Other Conditions

(a) GVI reserves the right to accept or reject any or all EOI without assigning any reasons and is not obliged to correspond with the Applicants in this regard. Further, GVI reserves the right to change and/or cancel this process or review/revise the details herein at any time without prior notice or without assigning any reasons whatsoever and without prejudice to its right to re-issue a new request for expressions of interests at any time in the future and in such case no person making submissions shall have any claim arising out of such action.

(b) GVI reserves the right to invite revised responses from the Applicants by issue of an addendum, at any stage, without liability or any obligation for such invitation and without assigning any reason. This request for EOI does not give rise to any rights and is not an offer or an invitation to offer.

(c) GVI, by this process, does not intend to assume any legal obligation whatsoever, including any binding relationship of any kind, with any Applicant, nor will the Government accept any liability howsoever arising, in relation thereto. By this document Applicants are so informed, and unconditionally acknowledge that they are fully aware that through an expression of interest, no entitlement whatsoever vests, or will vest in them.

(d) Participation by any party in this EOI pursuant to the invitation by GVI shall be considered to be an acceptance of all the terms and conditions of this invitation by such party and no claims or disputes raised by it during or subsequent to the award process shall be entertained by GVI.

(e) All documents and other information supplied by GVI or submitted by an Applicant to GVI shall remain or become the property of GVI. GVI will not return any application or any information provided along therewith.

(f) Scope of the requirement and qualification criteria may be modified at Request for Proposal (RFP) Stage.

(g) The applicants shall bear all costs associated with the preparation and submission of its EOI. GVI will in no case be responsible or liable for these costs, regardless of the outcome of EOI process.

One 1 original and three (3) hard copies of the Expression of Interest must be received by the Central Tenders Board at the address below, no

later than 10:00 a.m. EST on Tuesday, 18th September, 2018. The sealed envelope containing each submission must include the name and address of the applicant and shall be clearly marked "Expression of Interest" Consultancy Services to Develop the Virgin Islands Sustainable Tourism Strategy".

Central Tender Board
Ministry of Finance
Procurement Unit
Third Floor, East Atrium
33 Administration Drive
Wickhams Cay I
Road Town Tortola VG1110

GVI shall not be responsible for the loss or non-receipt or delay in the receipt of any Expression of Interest application sent by post or courier.

5. Queries

Any queries in respect to this matter should be directed to the Chairman, Central Tenders Board, Procurement Unit, Ministry of Finance.

Contact Details:

Chairman, Central Tender Board
Ministry of Finance
Procurement Unit
Third Floor, East Atrium
33 Administration Drive
Wickhams Cay I
Road Town Tortola VG1110

6. Submissions

Expressions of interest that provide the information prescribed in the former part of this document should be submitted by Tuesday, 18th September, 2018 to the following address:

Chairman, Central Tender Board
Ministry of Finance
Procurement Unit
Third Floor, East Atrium
33 Administration Drive
Wickhams Cay I
Road Town Tortola VG1110
British Virgin Islands, VG 1110