

Request for Proposals

Agritourism Economic and Land Use Study for Queen Anne's County, Maryland

Proposal Submission Deadline: February 21st, 2024 at 3:00 p.m.

Mail or Hand Deliver to Proposal Primary Contact:

Heather Tinelli, Director of Economic & Tourism Development
Queen Anne's County Economic & Tourism Development
425 Piney Narrows Road, Chester, MD 21619
410-604-2100
htinelli@qac.org

Advertisement

Queen Anne's County is soliciting proposals from qualified consulting firms to conduct an Agritourism Study aimed at analyzing and exploring agritourism activities within its boundaries to understand their economic impact, evaluate its land use policies around agricultural activities, and provide policy recommendations to bolster the agricultural sector's sustainability. Knowledge of Maryland Department of Agriculture agritourism guidance and policies must inform this study and its recommendations. Likewise, this study and affiliated recommendations must be consistent with the 2022 QAC Comprehensive Plan.

Interested applicants should submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) on or before January 26th 2024 via email to Heather Tinelli at htinelli@qac.org

An electronic copy of the information package may be downloaded <https://emma.maryland.gov> or www.choosequeenannes.com

Each proposal received in response to this RFP will be evaluated on the approach, methodology, experience, track record and cost further outlined in this RFP.

All proposals must be sealed, clearly marked "Agritourism Economic and Land Use Study for Queen Anne's County" and must include all elements described in the information package.

One electronic copy (via email, preferably pdf), one original and two hard copies must be delivered in a sealed envelope to Queen Anne's County Economic & Tourism Development, Attn: Heather Tinelli, 425 Piney Narrows Road, Chester, MD 21619 on or before February 21st, 2024 at 3:00 p.m. Information and questions should be directed to Heather Tinelli at htinelli@qac.org

Bid Opening will occur at 3:15 p.m. on February 21st, 2024 at Piney Narrows Road, Chester, MD 21619.

I. Project Overview & Background

A. Introduction

Queen Anne's County Department of Economic & Tourism Development, in partnership with QAC Department of Planning & Zoning and the QAC Office of University of Maryland Extension have determined the need for an Agritourism Study to explore and analyze Agritourism activities in Queen Anne's County to develop a report on the economics of Agritourism, a current assessment of County land use policies specific to the industry, and relevant case studies.

The study, which will utilize knowledge, guidance, and policies from the Maryland Department of Agriculture, is anticipated to assess the status of value-added activities, agricultural recreation, and propose potential opportunities to support Agritourism. The primary objective is to comprehensively understand the dynamics of these activities, interpret their impact on the county's economy, and chart a compelling course to amplify their role in tourism development—one of the county's major industries. The study will culminate in the creation of a report on the economics of agritourism in QAC and how they can be interwoven with land use policies that will shape the future of agricultural activities.

Based on the outcomes of the study and feedback from research and policy proposals from County staff, a legislative proposal will be developed for consideration by the Queen Anne's County Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners. This study and affiliated recommendations must be consistent with the 2022 QAC Comprehensive Plan. This process will allow the County to propose amendments to the land use, zoning and development regulations which address Agritourism, with input from the public and stakeholders.

B. Background

Queen Anne's County, Maryland, nestled in the heart of the Eastern Shore, boasts a rich tapestry of agricultural heritage, scenic landscapes, and vibrant rural communities. As the county continues to evolve, recognizing the intersection of agriculture and tourism will be key in shaping its economic sustainability and preserving its cultural heritage.

Rural Maryland Economic Development Funding (RMEDF) from Maryland Department of Commerce and Upper Shore Regional Council, was awarded to Queen Anne's County to study the county's Agritourism economy and land use policies as they related to agricultural uses, provide policy recommendations to support the future of agriculture,

and the creation of an Agritourism Study & Policy Report document that pulls these together in a standalone document.

This RFP seeks an experienced agriculture and land use economic consultant, or consultant team (the "consultant") for this project. The RMEDF Grant has a deadline of November 2024, and it is anticipated that work on this project would be completed by August, 2024, to allow for final processing.

The 2022 Queen Anne's County Comprehensive Plan identifies agriculture as a significant economic driver in Queen Anne's County and addresses the growth of Agritourism and impacts on the agricultural and tourism industry. Not only does agriculture provide support for the economy, it also runs deep in the heritage and history of the County. Agritourism is a means of merging agriculture and tourism creating economic opportunity for the County. A universal understanding of agritourism is needed for clear communication, reliable and consistent measurement, informed policies, and programs that support farms and their communities. In addition, a planning study could fully assist the County in understanding potential that has not yet been included in infrastructure, code, and policy decisions.

The details from the Comprehensive Plan below outline the importance of a study that could allow for the potential growth and better understanding of Agritourism opportunities along with economic benefits that could be obtained:

- *The Comprehensive Plan identifies Agritourism as an accessory farm-based business which is secondary to the primary agricultural use of the properties where activities such as on-farm processing of agricultural products and Agritourism occur. Agritourism is a series of activities conducted on a farm and offered to the public or to invited groups for the purpose of education, recreation, or active involvement in the farm operation.*
- *Chapter 4, Land Use identifies priority preservation and an overarching goal to support and sustain a strong, diversified agricultural community through implementation of preservation and development mechanisms that are equitable to all stakeholders (Page 4-6). The Agritourism market encompasses specialty farming industries and can provide alternative revenues to help sustain the preservation of agricultural land and the rural environment, which supports the County's Vision as a good place to work and great place to live.*
- *Chapter 8, Economic Development & Tourism outlines Agritourism as an emerging market for the County in both the agricultural and tourism industry. As of today, regulatory challenges for new Agritourism businesses needs to be reconciled and consistencies across the sector need to be addressed. This can be accomplished through a guided update to the*

zoning code and infrastructure decisions. This, in the end, will make for a more viable industry. The opportunity is present, but there is a need for it to be captured in the correct manner. The following goals and strategies are outlined in the Comprehensive Plan.

- *Goal 8-2: Preserve and promote a resource-based economy. This includes quantifying and classifying specific commercial recreational activities in an area; ensuring adequacy of water, sewerage, and other facilities for sanitation; identifying use appropriate attractions, farm-to-table food service, or other similar uses; and regulating the location and size of structures (Page 8-19). The Comprehensive Plan states that the County could benefit through potential expansion of tourism related agribusiness.*
 - *Strategy 1: Support agricultural, maritime, natural resource-based, and eco-businesses through existing markets and exploration of new and innovative agricultural markets and promote them within the County.*
 - *Recommendation 1: Create new ways of offering incentives to agricultural, Agritourism, and eco-businesses, with an emphasis on regenerative initiatives and ecofriendly businesses.*
- *Goal 8-3: Explore opportunities for niche hospitality and tourism industries.*
 - *Strategy 1: Develop, support, and promote County cultural activities and heritage tourism opportunities.*
 - *Recommendation 2: Develop and promote ecotourism, Agritourism, and recreational tourism utilizing the existing natural resources in the County and working with industry partners and stakeholders.*

C. Department of Economic & Tourism Development Overview

The Department of Economic & Tourism Development elevates [Queen Anne's County](#) as an economically vibrant, welcoming and diverse place for business and recreation by:

- Delivering exceptional customer service and timely, relevant resources;
- Proactively cultivating business attraction, retention and expansion;
- Developing and strengthening destination amenities;
- Promoting visitor opportunities and experiences;
- Forging intern and apprentice partnerships; and
- Skillfully managing County resources to fuel economic growth.

A valued resource, connector and catalyst, the Department strengthens Queen Anne’s County’s economic and community vitality, showcases the county’s culture and character, and supports sustainable growth opportunities for residents, businesses, and visitors.

For more information on Queen Anne’s County Economic & Tourism Development, visit www.choosequeenannes.com

D. RFP Timeline

RFP Released	January 5, 2024
Letters of Intent Due	January 26, 2024
Questions about the RFP Due	February 2, 2024
Q&A Posted to websites	February 7, 2024
RFP Due	February 21, 2024
Committee Review Complete	March 1, 2024
Recommendation to County Commissioners	March 12, 2024

E. Letter of Intent

Interested applicants should submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) on or before [January 26, 2024](#) via email to Heather Tinelli at htinelli@qac.org

F. Request for Proposals

The contract will be awarded to the service provider that offers the most beneficial proposal encompassing all possible criteria established within this Request for Proposals, as well as the cost for the proposed services and ability to complete the project within the given timeframe. Proposals will be reviewed privately and evaluated by a panel to make the final award decision. Decisions cannot be appealed.

II. Scope of Work & Deliverables

The following outlines specific components to be included in the scope of work. Queen Anne’s County will consider additions to those requirements listed below which facilitate the completion of the study or improve project outcomes. It is anticipated that the final scope of work will not be approved until the final contract is executed with the selected consultant and the scope has been further refined as determined by County staff and the consultant.

The staff of Queen Anne's County will provide the consultant with background information and copies of relevant and available reports, plans and data; design guidelines, maps, etc; and staff will participate in the review and comment of project draft documents. Other departments will be involved as well in the review and comment of draft documents. The project manager will coordinate the internal review process upon delivery of draft documents by the Consultant.

Work products must be provided electronically in Word and pdf formats with changes provided in track changes unless otherwise notified. Consultant is to provide any new maps in ArcGIS or a compatible format, and any digital illustrations and figures in an editable format, so that all work produced by the consultant can also be manipulated and reproduced by County staff without any technical or conversion problems.

A. Project Kick-off Meeting with Key Stakeholders

County staff and the successful Proposer ("Consultant") will co-develop and co-lead the meeting agenda for stakeholders assembled by the County. The Consultant will prepare and share presentation and interactive meeting materials. A work plan and project schedule will be finalized after the meeting.

1. The purpose of the meeting will be to introduce the feasibility study project to key stakeholders, define expectations, project parameters and desired outcomes culminating with the creation of a work plan and project schedule.
2. Total in-person meeting time for the kick-off event will not exceed 2 hours.

The consultant shall be responsible for project management and logistics of the project. The consultant will be expected to:

- a) Attend a kick-off meeting, coordinated by County staff between the project team in advance of this meeting, the Consultant is to prepare a detailed work program for review by the project team at the meeting, including a detailed schedule/timeline for the completion of each task.
- b) Coordinate bi-weekly video meetings with the project team to ensure the project remains on-task and budget. Provide follow-up meeting notes with actionable items if requested.

- c) Subcontract as needed with other consultants in specific disciplines and manage any subcontracts including, but not limited to, editing, and integration of sub-consultant work to ensure consistency, management of time schedules and billing, insurances, etc.
- d) Provide monthly invoices and progress reports consistent with RMEDF grant requirements.

Task 1 Deliverables:

- **Detailed work program (schedule and timeline).**
- **Meeting action item summaries.**
- **Monthly invoices and progress reports.**
- **Management of subcontract agreements (if applicable).**

B. Economic and Land Use studies

The consultant shall be responsible for preparing economic and land use/zoning analysis related to the agriculture industry in Queen Anne’s County, including:

1. Up to three (3) focus group meetings with key agriculture and tourism industry stakeholders, identified in coordination with County staff.
2. Economic analysis of the Queen Anne’s County specific agriculture sector, including, but not limited to:
 - a. Review of related documents, studies and Tourism Data
 - b. Review of processors/shippers located in QA and their renovation/expansion needs, including, but not limited to:
 - i. Facility ages and modernization needs
 - ii. Logistics, consolidation possibilities, and transportation infrastructure
 - c. Ag-Tech and other emerging industries/trends consistent with the 2022 Comprehensive Plan.
 - i. Increasing high-wage jobs in the industry and supporting local training/education initiatives to prepare QA County residents for those opportunities
 - ii. Attracting/growing Ag-Tech companies
 - d. Wine, craft beer, and other synergy opportunities with new crop growth in the area.
- i. Suppliers/supporting industries (equipment sales/service, barrels, glass, fulfillment etc.)

- ii. New retail opportunities
 - e. Identification of economic co-benefit opportunities with sustainability initiatives
- 3. Analysis of key land use/zoning issues related to the agriculture industry, including, but not limited to:
 - a. Land use/zoning for future facilities (location, size, proximity etc.) and industry needs
 - b. Balancing competing growth needs (housing, open space, etc.)
 - c. Reducing industry emissions in line with state requirements
 - d. Limiting urban sprawl
 - e. Addressing land use conflicts at the urban/agricultural interface
- 4. Develop three case studies of Agritourism operations in the region to include:
 - a. A description of the type of operation, including the location and dates and times of operation
 - b. A summary of the economic impact to include employees and total sales
 - c. A summary of local, state and federal policy considerations for the operation
 - d. A summary of the feasibility of a similar operation located in Queen Anne's County.
- 5. Compilation of analysis into a report that also includes:
 - a. Specific actions/recommendations that will help move existing plans/policies forward
 - b. Drafting of agriculture-related policies and code revisions.

Task 2 deliverables:

- **Draft Economic and Land Use Analysis Report**
- **Final Economic and Land Use Analysis Report**

C. Agritourism Study & Policy Report

The consultant shall aggregate key data, analyses, and recommendations into an Agritourism Study and Policy Report. This will also include recommendations from the public, generated through review of the consultant recommendations. This report will serve as a standalone document for ease of reference and should be visually compelling and easy to navigate physically as well as digitally. The consultant shall also participate in at least two stakeholder meetings reviewing the draft report.

Task 3 Deliverables:

- **Draft Agritourism Study and Policy Report (in Word)**
- **Stakeholder meeting comments and summary of changes**
- **Final Agritourism Study and Policy Report (in Word/and PDF)**

III. Proposal Format, Content, and Submission Requirements

A. Submission of Proposals and Deadline

Email a PDF with all documentation to Heather Tinelli at htinelli@gac.org. Applicants must also provide one original and two hard copies in one sealed, company-marked envelope and clearly labeled "Agritourism Economic and Land Use Study for Queen Anne's County" to Queen Anne's County Economic & Tourism Development no later than 3pm on February 21, 2024. The proposal should be addressed to:

Heather Tinelli, Director
Queen Anne's County Economic & Tourism Development
425 Piney Narrows Road
Chester, MD 21619

Proposals received after 3:00 p.m. on February 21, 2024 will not be considered.

There is no expressed or implied obligation for Queen Anne's County to reimburse organizations for any expenses incurred in preparing proposals in response to this request. Queen Anne's County reserves the right to retain all proposals submitted and to use any ideas in a proposal regardless of whether that proposal is selected.

Submission of a proposal indicates acceptance by the organization of the conditions contained in this Request for Proposals, unless clearly and specifically noted in the proposal submitted and confirmed in the contract.

B. Equal Opportunity

All qualified persons, firms and proposers will receive consideration without regard to age, color, disability, gender, national origin, race, religion, or sexual orientation. Minority Business Enterprises (MBE), Women-Owned Enterprises (WBE), and Veteran-Owned Enterprises are encouraged to apply.

Queen Anne's County is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

C. Queen Anne's County Standard Operating Policies: Procurement Policy #400-010

It is the responsibility of the proposer to review and adhere to all of Queen Anne's County Procurement Policies, #400-010. The policies can be located at <https://www.qac.org/593/Procurement>

D. Questions about the Request for Proposals

Questions about the scope of work, requests for additional information, and/or concerns about the submission of the proposal should be directed to Heather Tinelli @ htinelli@qac.org by February 2, 2024. Questions via telephone or other methods will not receive responses, as email provides the best opportunity for tracking and accountability. Questions and answers will be posted in the form of an Addendum to the original post on <https://emma.maryland.gov> and www.choosequeenannes.org on February 7, 2024.

E. Proposal Requirements

1. Contents
 - a. An Executive Summary of not more than one page
 - b. Organizational Background:
 - i. The name and full contact information for your company and lead project manager, if applicable, any other entity comprising your team for this project.
 - ii. Description of Project Team members and their respective roles including a brief biography or resume of each member.

- iii. Identification of specific sub-contractors and their roles and responsibilities.
- iv. List and describe similar projects your company has completed or any entities comprising your team within the previous five years that are relevant to this project
- v. Familiarity with Queen Anne's County
- c. Scope of Work Outline including Tasks, Deliverables & Timeline
 - i. Narrative describing approach, methodology and work plan.
 - ii. A detailed timeline outlining how and when the project will be completed.
 - iii. Description of how the project will be managed.
 - iv. Any additional suggestions of work needed within the scope.
 - v. The most important components for the success of the project.
- d. Budget
 - i. Detailed budget outlining project costs
 - ii. Description of hourly rates
 - iii. Description of additional costs outside of the proposed scope of work i.e. travel, printing, etc.
- e. Capacity
 - i. If your company is selected, please explain how many other projects your company will be working on at the same time.
 - ii. If your company is selected, please indicate how quickly you will be able to start
 - iii. Provide evidence of resources (human and financial) to show your company is capable of completing the project. This includes basic information and history about the business entity, financial information, technical capability, training and academic experience, and any other information you feel is important for us to know.
- f. Signed Acknowledgement of RFP Terms and Conditions

F. Debarred, Suspended and Ineligible Contractors

The consultant certifies by submission of a proposal that it is not a debarred, suspended, or ineligible contractor by any Agency of Federal or State government. No proposal received from a debarred, suspended, or ineligible contractor will qualify for an award.

G. Acceptance of Consultant Proposals

The Queen Anne's County Commissioners reserve the right to reject any or all proposals, to waive any nonmaterial irregularities in the proposal, to accept or reject any item or combination of items and accept any proposal which benefits the people of Queen Anne's County.

Queen Anne's County reserves the right to negotiate with any, none, or all the proposing vendors.

H. Rating of Proposals

Each proposal will be rated and ranked in accordance with by following criteria:

- Firm Qualifications and demonstrated past experience and performance.
- Demonstrated project understanding and proposed methodology
- Ability to meet the proposed timeline and budget
- Knowledge of Agriculture, Agritourism and Queen Anne's County
- Quality of submittal i.e. completeness of response and adherence to the requested format.

Queen Anne's County reserves the right to award a contract based solely on the proposals or to negotiate with one or more consultants. During the evaluation process, Queen Anne's County may request additional information or clarification from applicants. The selected consulting firm will be chosen on the basis that it is the best fit for the County and may not necessarily be based on the lowest price. The chosen consultant must agree to execute a contract within 30 days after the Notice of Award. No contract may be assigned, in whole or in part, without the prior approval of Queen Anne's County.

I. Contract Price and Payment

Queen Anne's County has secured \$75,000 in funding to support the cost of this study. The price quoted in the proposal must be firm and not subject to change. The price shall represent the total cost to Queen Anne's County, including direct, indirect, and out-of-pocket expenses.

Payment of 50% will be made the midway point of the project. The final 50% will be paid upon project completion.

Acknowledgement of RFP Terms and Conditions

The proposer, as part of its response, must submit this signed document by an authorized representative that obligates the proposer to perform the commitments contained in its response.

Acknowledged and Agreed:

Signature

Signature

Printed Name

Printed Name

Title

Title

Company Name

Company Name

City, State

City, State

Phone Number

Phone Number

Date

Date