



# Visit Cook County MN

*Community Assessment*



# About Visit Cook County MN

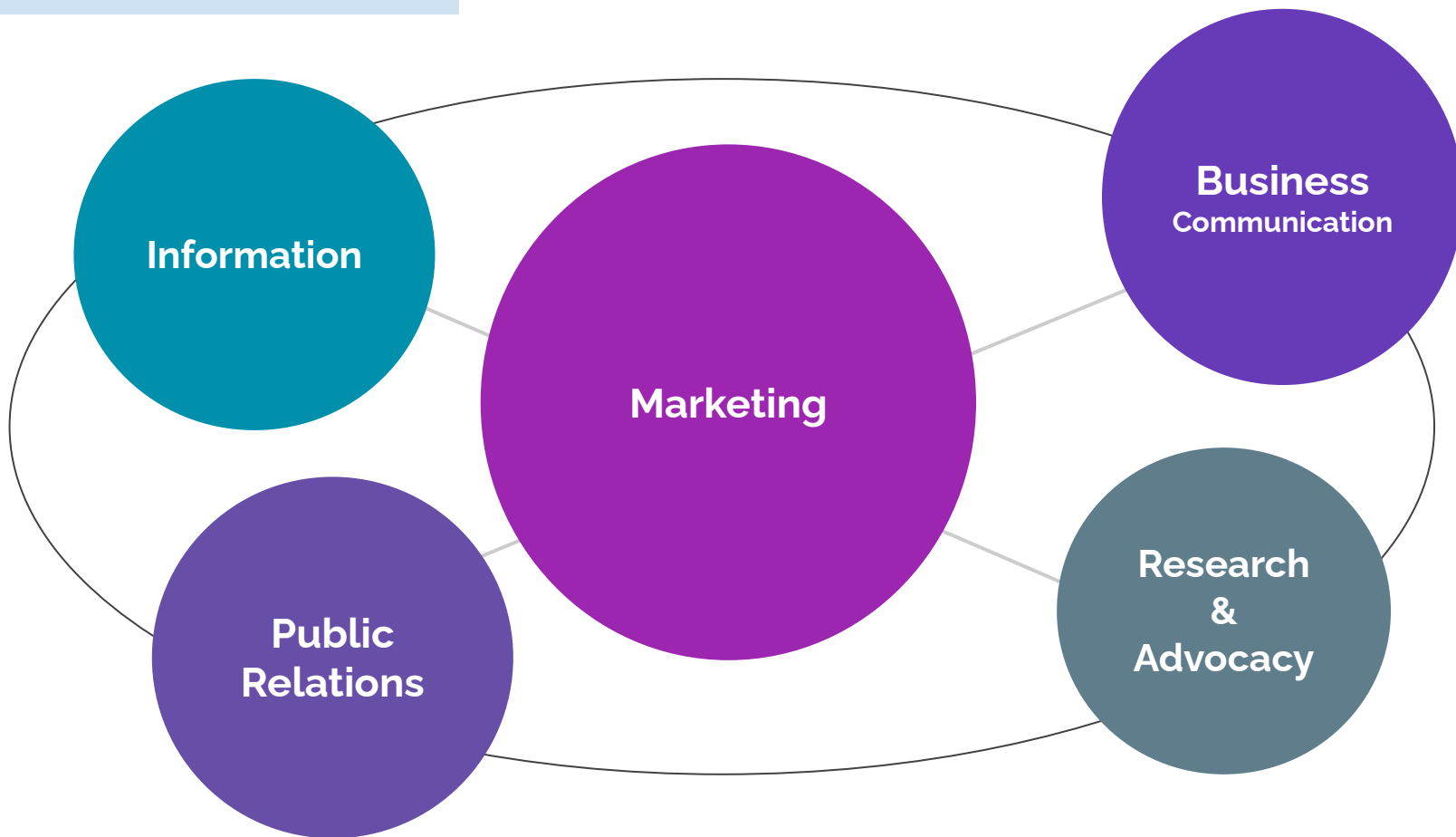
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Founded in 2010, Visit Cook County is the Destination Marketing Organization for the communities of Lutsen, Tofte, Schroeder, Grand Marais, the Gunflint Trail and Grand Portage.

In its brief 11 year history, Visit Cook County has elevated the awareness of the North Shore and Gunflint Trail communities statewide and nationally through strategic marketing, public relations and partnerships.

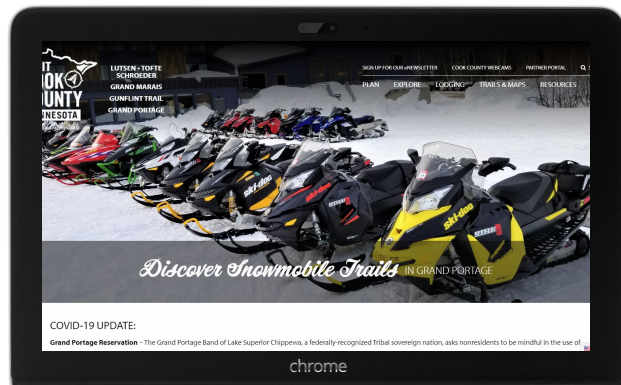
## About Visit Cook County

What we do



# About Visit Cook County

## Who we service



## Local Community



## Press & Media

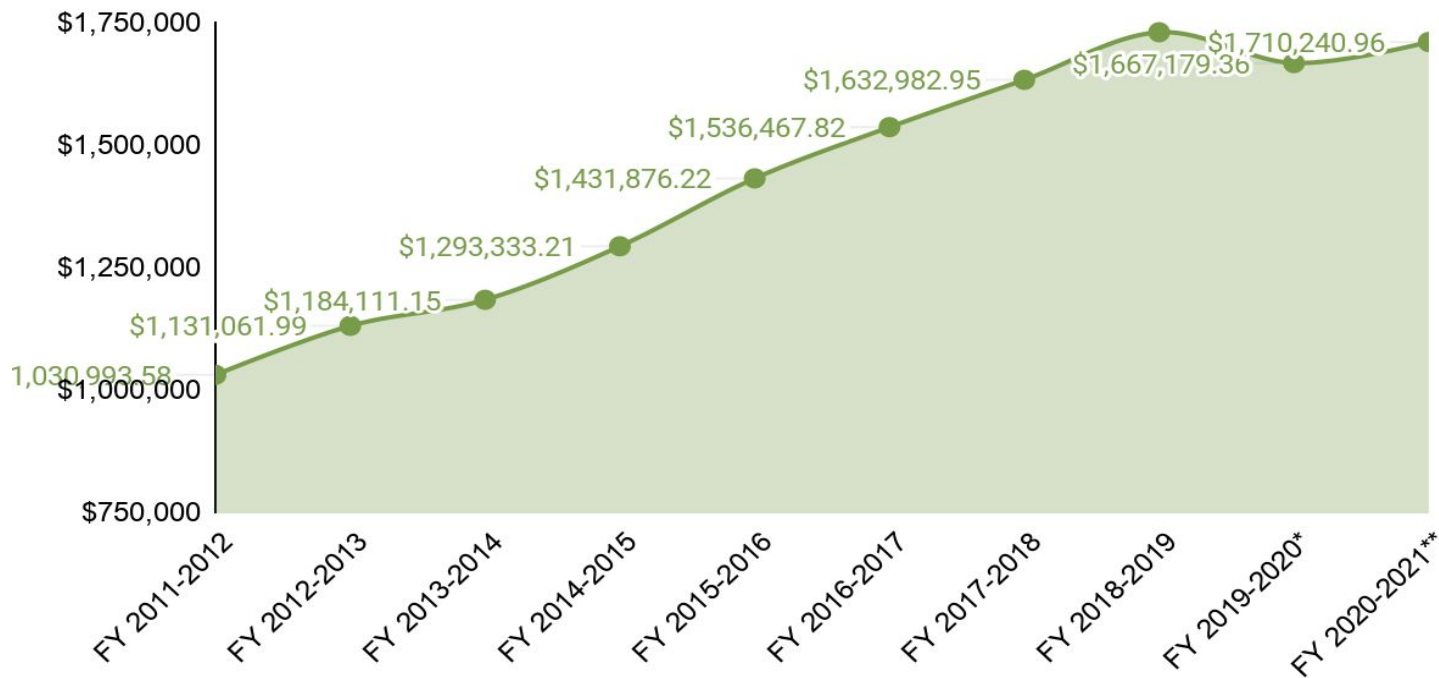
## Visitors



## Stakeholders & Local Businesses



## Lodging Tax Collections 2011-2021





Marketing



LUTSEN • TOFTE  
SCHROEDER

GRAND MARAIS

GUNFLINT TRAIL

GRAND PORTAGE

# Marketing

## Visit Cook County Community partners receive:

- Regional, national and international branding
- Inclusion in Visit Cook County advertisements: print, digital, social, videos, billboards, bus wraps, radio, TV, emailers, signage, promotional products, trade shows, etc.
- Community Section in annual Visit Cook County Visitor Guide
- Community Page on VisitCookCounty.com
- Event Calendar Listings
- Inclusion in Visit Cook County event marketing materials
- Event marketing support
- Public relations support
- Bonus VCC exposure on Lutsen Mountains marketing materials



# Marketing

## Annual Marketing Reach



### Marketing

48,153,415 Paid Impressions



### Social Media

1,616,381 Impressions

5.39% Average Engagement Rate



### Public Relations

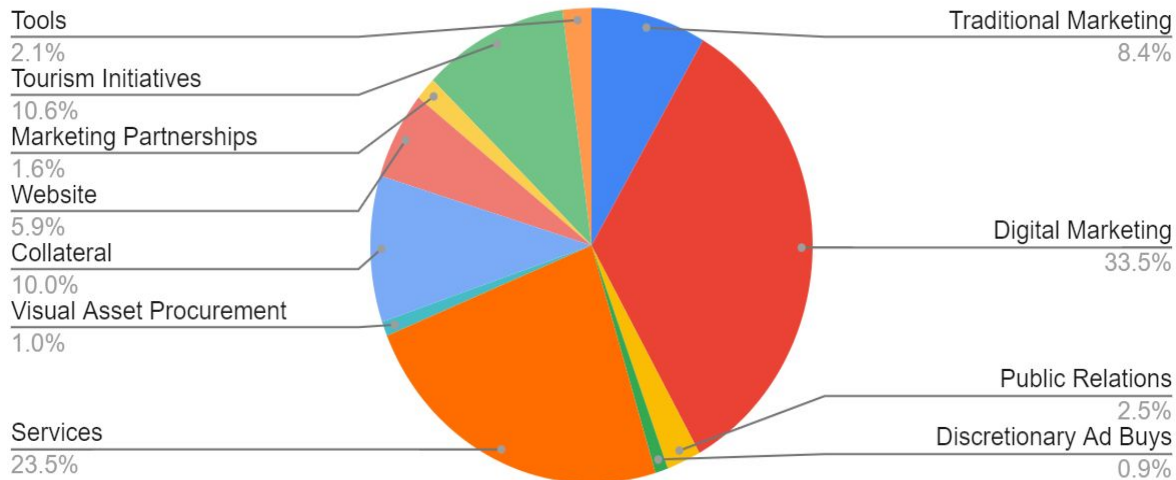
104,620,775 Impressions

65 Direct Media Engagements

## Reaching beyond our borders

*Our marketing outreach is strategic and broad reaching.*

## Budget % Breakdown of Total Marketing







Events

# Events



## History of Events

In 2008 an additional 1% lodging tax was approved for local collection by state legislature to fund the Cook County Events and Visitors Bureau. Since that time, this funding has helped to support thousands (that's not a typo) of events across our communities.

## Events by the Numbers:

**60-80** events directly sponsored annually

**23** Marquee Events

Marquee Events bring an estimated **37,500** visitors annually

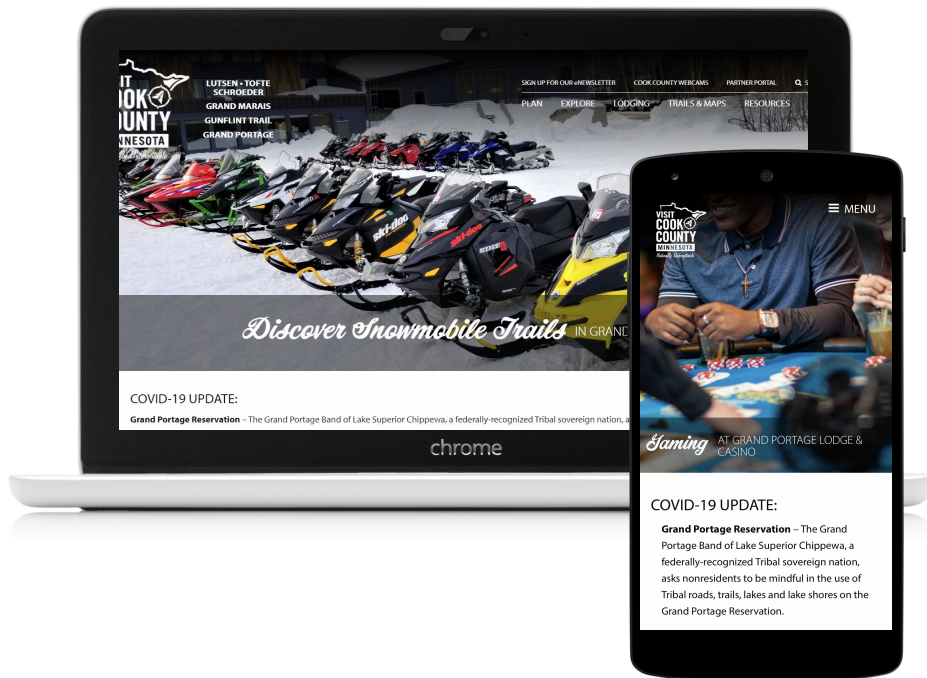
Over **\$10 Million** invested in events since 2013

On average, events account for **20%** of the annual expense budget

## Events

### Monthly Events Newsletter.

Printed monthly and distributed to local resorts and along the shore.



### Online Events Calendar

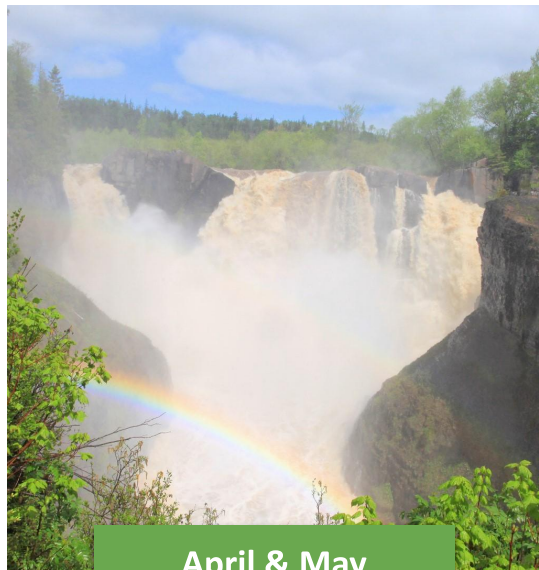
- *General Event Calendar Stats for FY May 2019 - Apr 2020:*
  - *85,000+ users in the 19-20 FY*
  - *4,000-7,000 users/month (highest in summer)*
  - *80% new visitors using online calendar*

Pre-covid calendar stats.

## Events

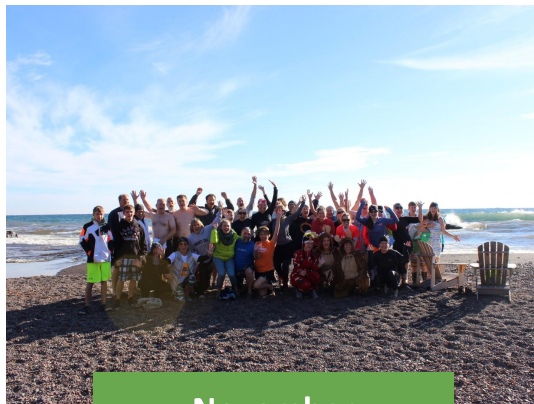
### Shoulder Season/Event Growth

A sample events and seasonal campaigns utilizing the 1% Events Tax



April & May

Combined April & May countywide lodging tax collections have **grown by 93%** since 2011. This can be traced back to the hugely successful and widely embraced branding of Waterfall Season as well as many smaller events in this time period (Spring Gallery Tour and Le Grand du Nord.)



November

November countywide lodging tax collections have **grown by 39%** since 2011 corresponding to VCC's Storm Festival and Storm Season marketing campaigns.



June

June LTTA lodging tax collections have **grown by 156%** since 2011 largely attributed to the success and growth of the Lutsen 99er.

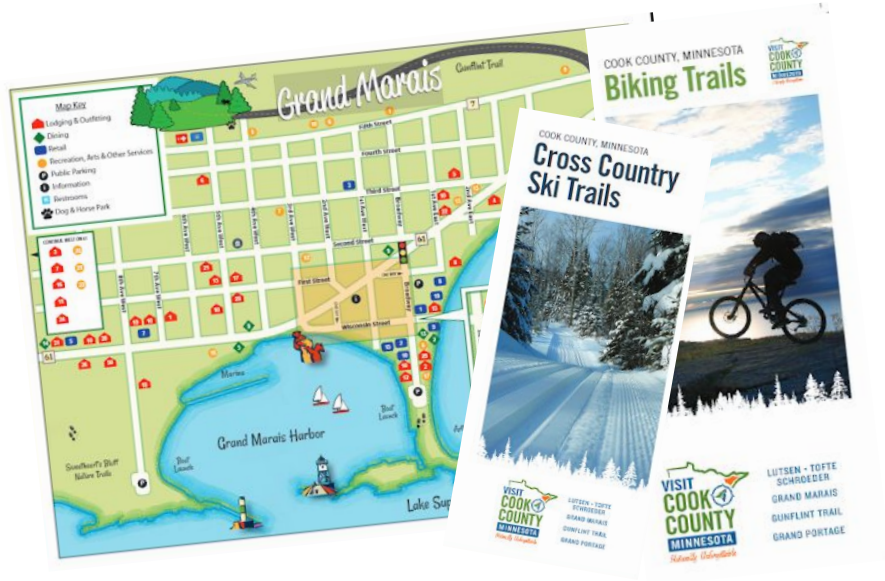




## Direct Connections

## Visitor Information

Direct Contact with visitors in person and web inquiries



**Average 16,000 visitors to our  
Information Center Annually**

## Average Annual Visitor Contact

- 15,000 Visitor Guides printed & distributed
- 16,000 visitors in to the information center
- 1,500 calls returned
- 500 emails responded to
- 450 packets direct mailed

In addition to distributing local business information, VCC invests in producing and distributing a variety of content.

### Asset investments:

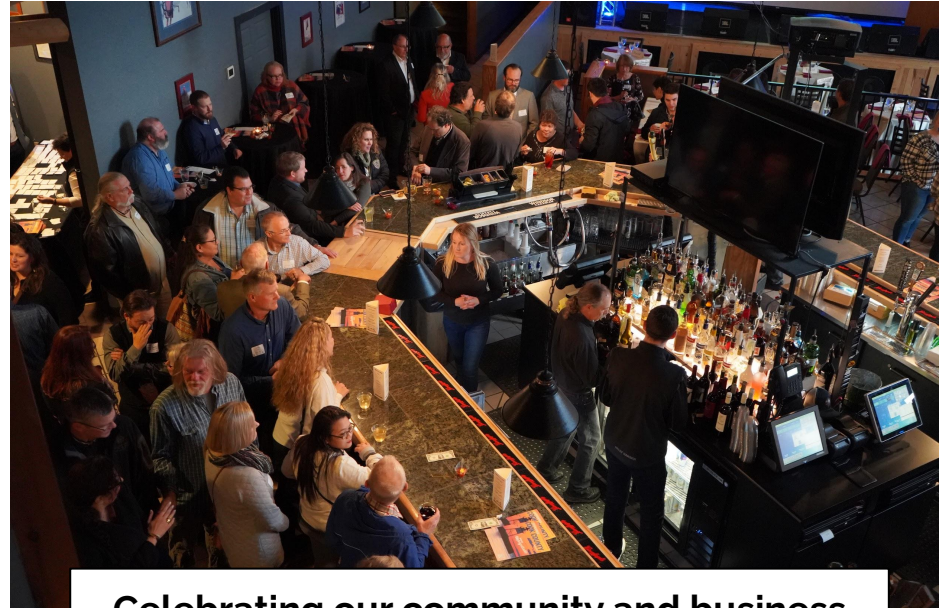
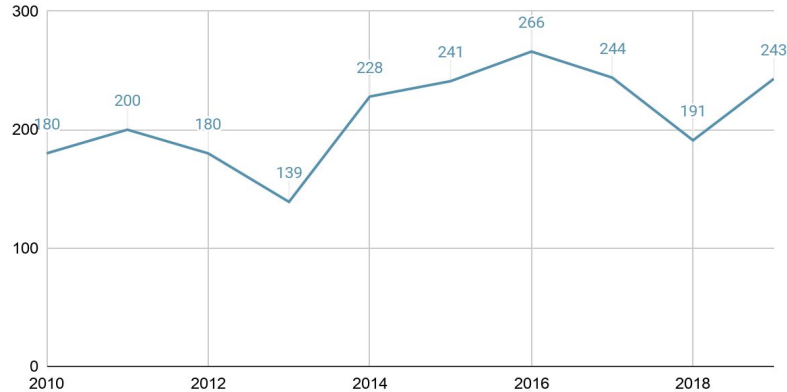
- Trail Maps: cross-country skiing, biking, snowmobile, ATV, hiking, waterfall, dark sky and fishing maps.
- Downtown Grand Marais maps
- Gallery guide
- Moose antler hats
- Swag bags
- Branded VCC face coverings

# Annual Fall Gala

Gathering of local business and political leaders

Annually, Visit Cook County and the Cook County Chamber organize the Fall Gala Celebration that brings over 200 business and political leaders together.

Fall Gala Attendance



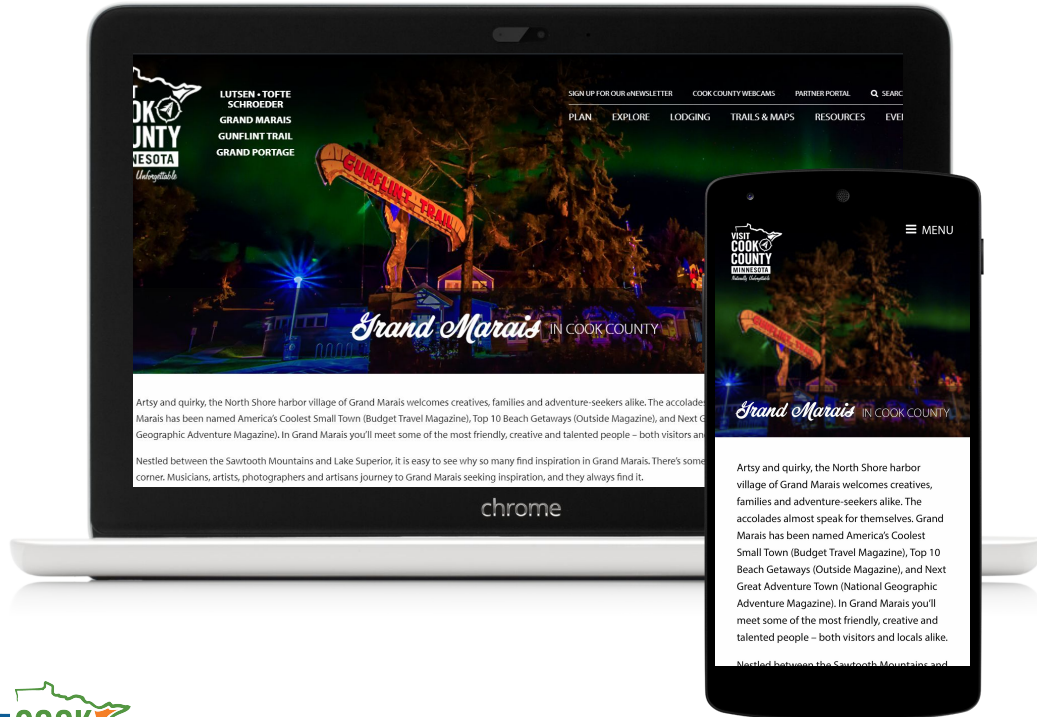
**Celebrating our community and business partners efforts.**



**Website Stats | Driving Traffic to our Partners**

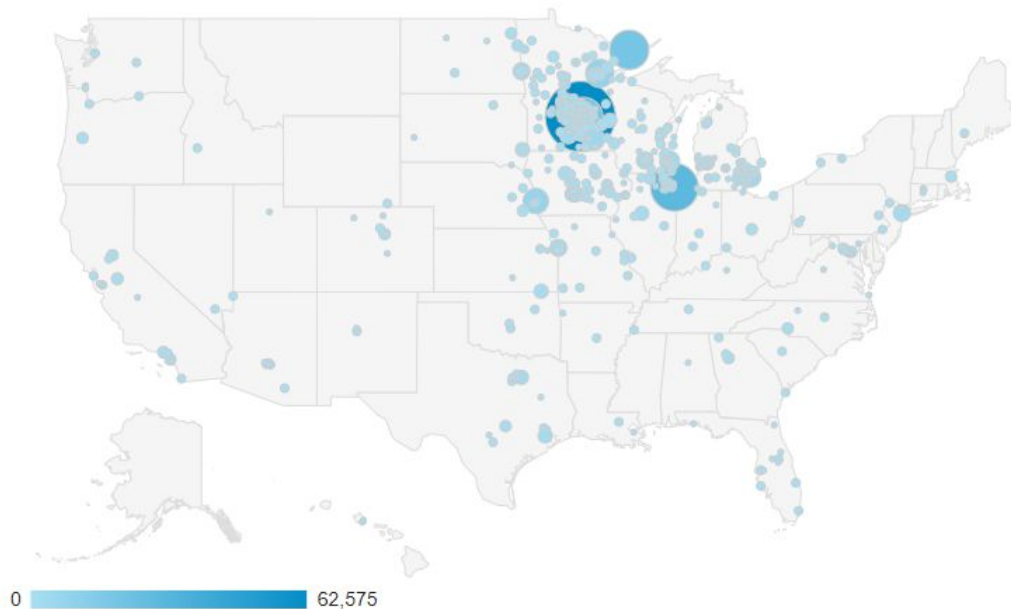


Goals of the VCC website - Inspire, Communicate, Educate, Distribute



## Purpose of the VCC website

- Inspire visitors to plan a trip to Cook County MN
- Educate and inform visitors on what there is to see, do and discover in northeastern Minnesota
- County-wide events calendar
- Comprehensive database of all lodging tax businesses from large resorts to independent operators
- Drive traffic to community partners through website listings



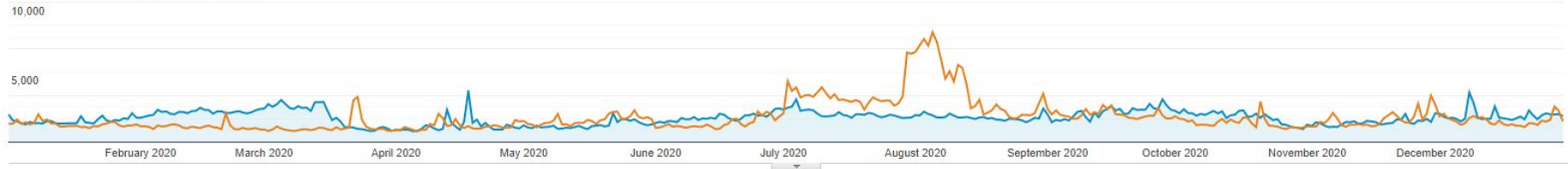
Visitors from across the country

### Top Metro Areas

- 1) MSP / St Paul / Suburbs
- 2) Chicago, IL
- 3) Grand Marais
- 4) Duluth
- 5) Minnesota
- 6) Omaha, NE
- 7) Rochester
- 8) Thunder Bay, ONT
- 9) St. Cloud
- 10) Milwaukee
- 11) Des Moines
- 12) Madison
- 13) Fargo
- 14) Mankato
- 15) Kansas City

Jan 1, 2020 - Dec 31, 2020: Sessions

Dec 31, 2018 - Dec 31, 2019: Sessions



Users  
**374,045**

Pageviews  
**1,045,840**

Sessions  
**632,836**

Pages / Session  
**1.7**

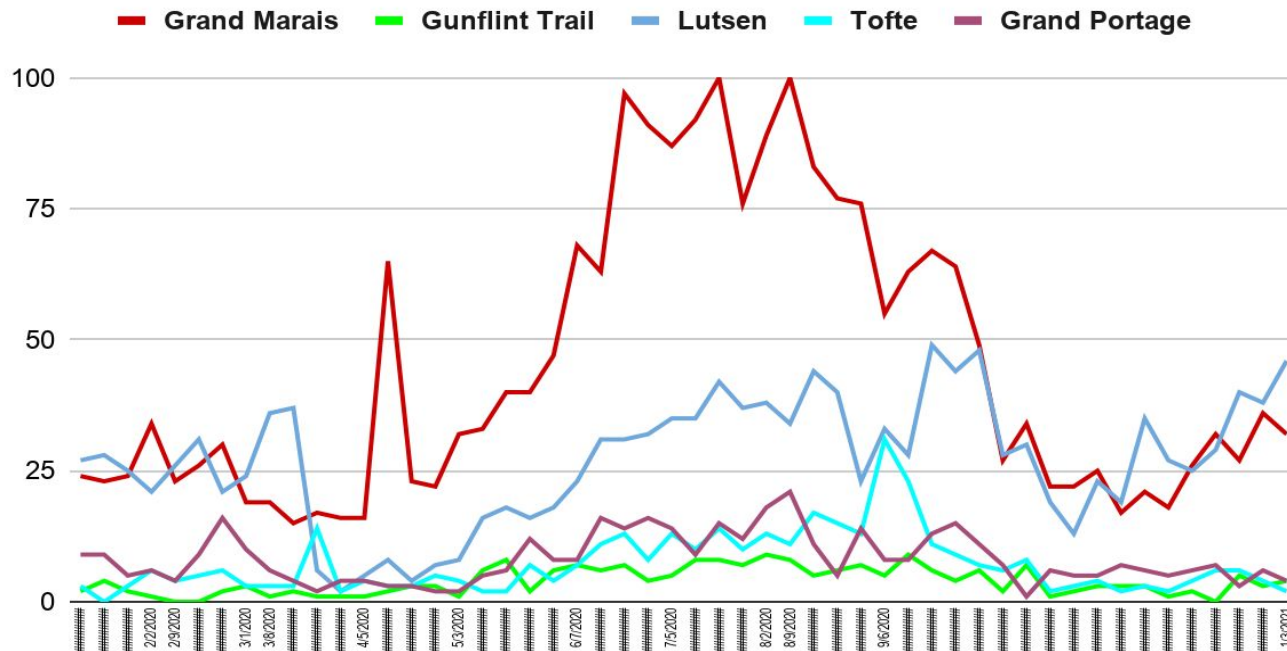
Bounce Rate  
**53.5%**

Avg. Time on Site  
**2:34**

### Most Sought After Content on VCC.com

1. Northern Lights
2. Webcams
3. Winter Season Page
4. Grand Marais Community
5. Fall Season Page
6. Events
7. Lodging
8. Adventures
9. Agate Hunting
10. Gunflint Trail Community

## Google Trends - Search Interest by Community



### VCC's Average organic search position by communities:

- Grand Marais: 1
- Gunflint Trail: 2
- Grand Portage: 3
- Lutsen: 7
- Schroeder: 8
- Tofte: 10

Search competition varies by community, in large resort areas (especially with name of resort relating to community) - VCC see increased competition.

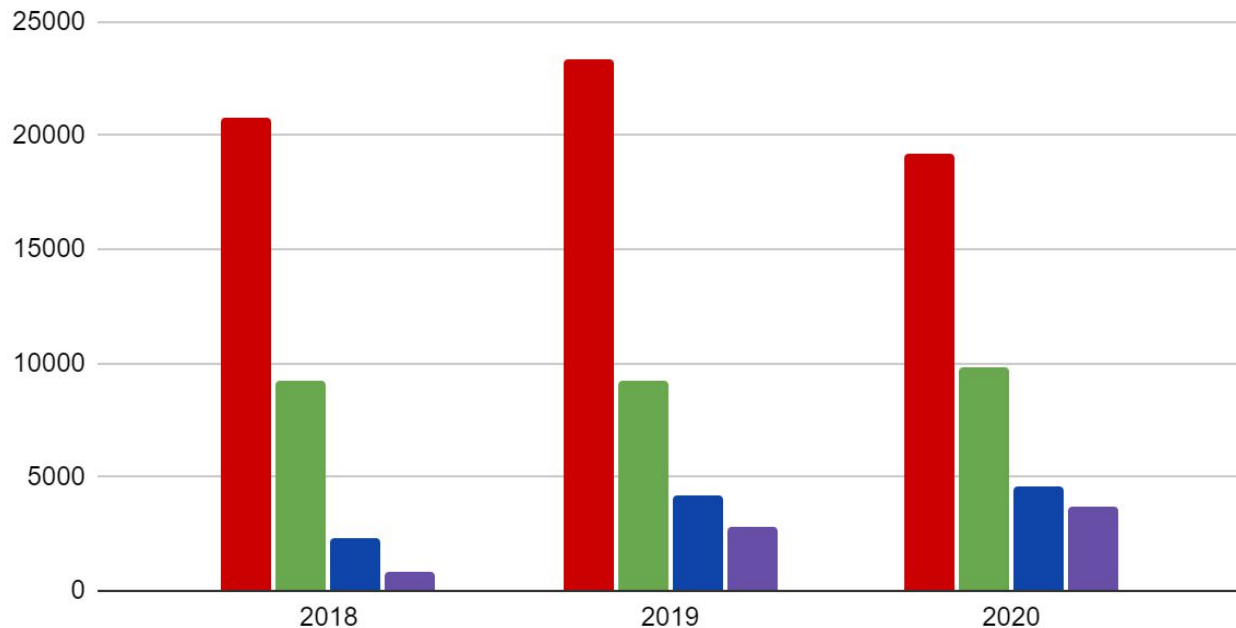
Top overall website competition: Forest Service, Explore MN, MN DNR, BWCA.com, North Shore Visitor.

Google Trends demonstrates search interest about a topic or location over time based on search inquiries. .



## Community Page Views

■ GMATA ■ GTA ■ LTТА ■ GP



Visitors specific to community pages.

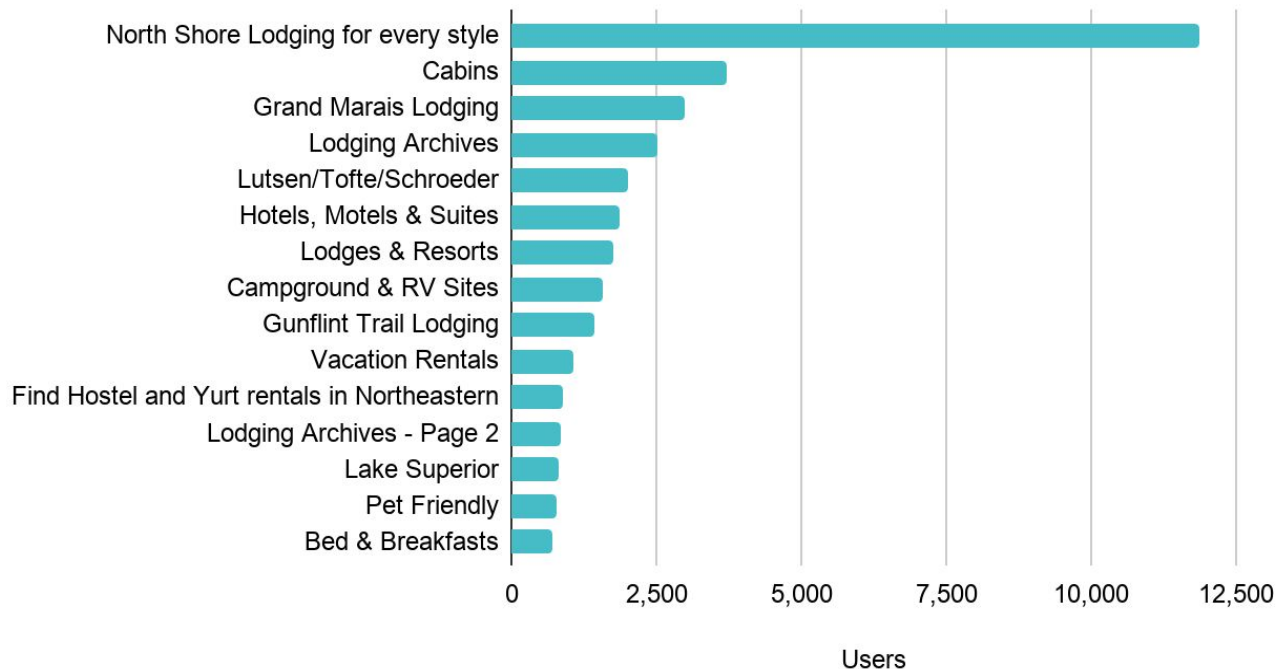
*(Does not include blog posts, events or other content)*

Grand Marais community page tends to perform the strongest of the four communities.

In 2020, while most community pages saw an increase in traffic, Grand Marais saw a slight dip. Possibly due to stories during early months of COVID-19 regarding no visitation.

[visitcookcounty.com/grandmarais](https://visitcookcounty.com/grandmarais)  
[visitcookcounty.com/gunflinttrail](https://visitcookcounty.com/gunflinttrail)  
[visitcookcounty.com/lutsen-tofte-schroeder](https://visitcookcounty.com/lutsen-tofte-schroeder)  
[visitcookcounty.com/grandportage](https://visitcookcounty.com/grandportage)

## Top Lodging Page Type Visits



Users who visit lodging pages on our website are very engaged.

Spending an average of 2:52 minutes on page and visiting multiple pages/session.

Users are also clicking to multiple properties during this discovery/shopping phase of their journey.

In the year 2020

**374,045 users**

generated

**42,199 clicks**

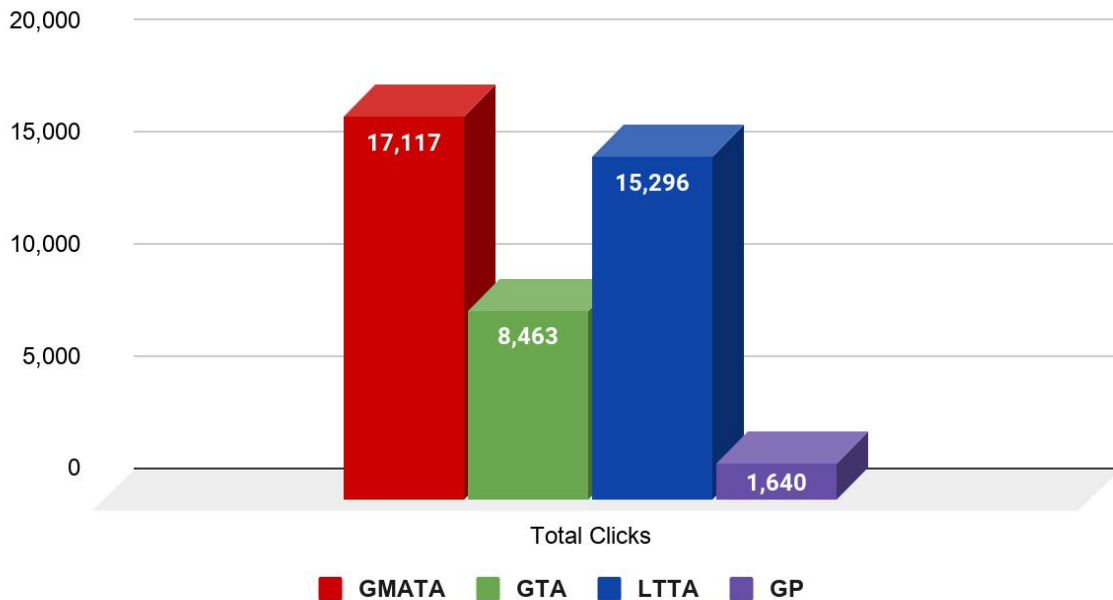
Approximately

**11.25%**

of users clicked on to a business.

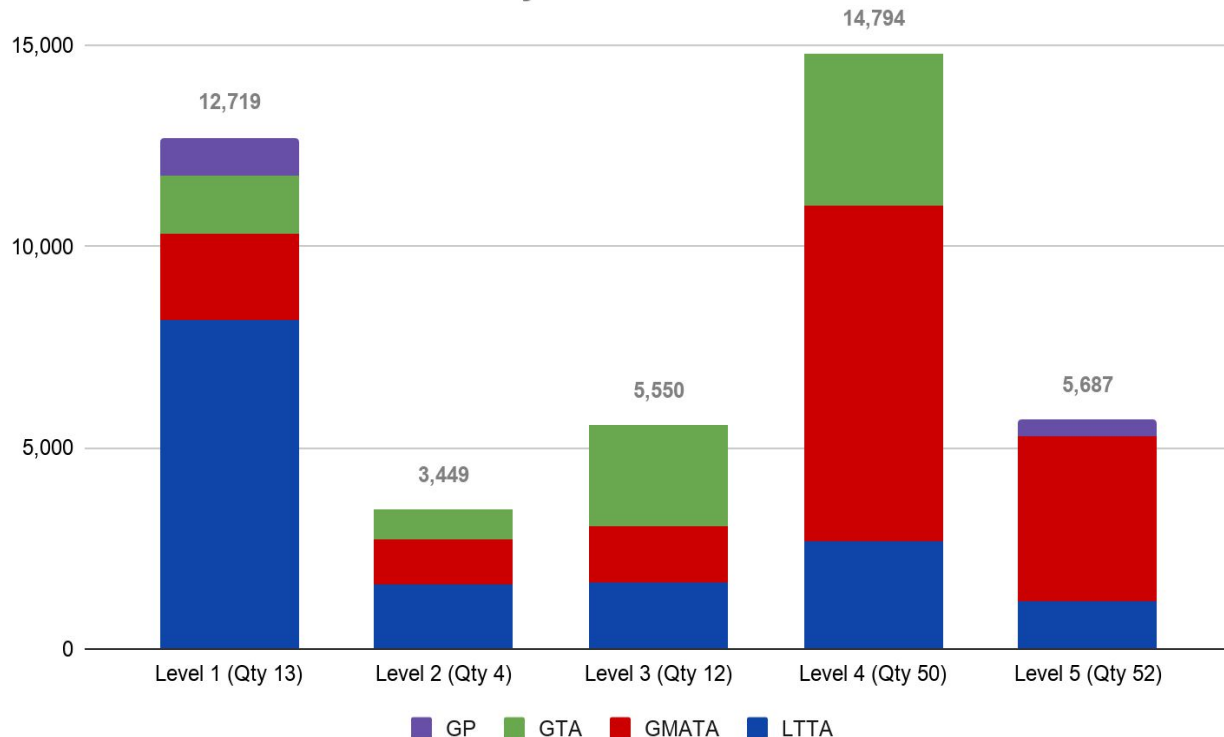
Industry standard rate: 9.85%

### Total Clicks from VCC to Lodging Partners by Association



- LTТА properties average 403 clicks per partner (Level 1 ~ 1,169 clicks, Level 5 ~ 92)
- GMATA properties average 267 clicks per partner (Level 1 ~ 1076, Level 5 ~ 11)
- GTA properties average 353 clicks per partner (Level 1 ~ 1450, Level 5 ~ 237)

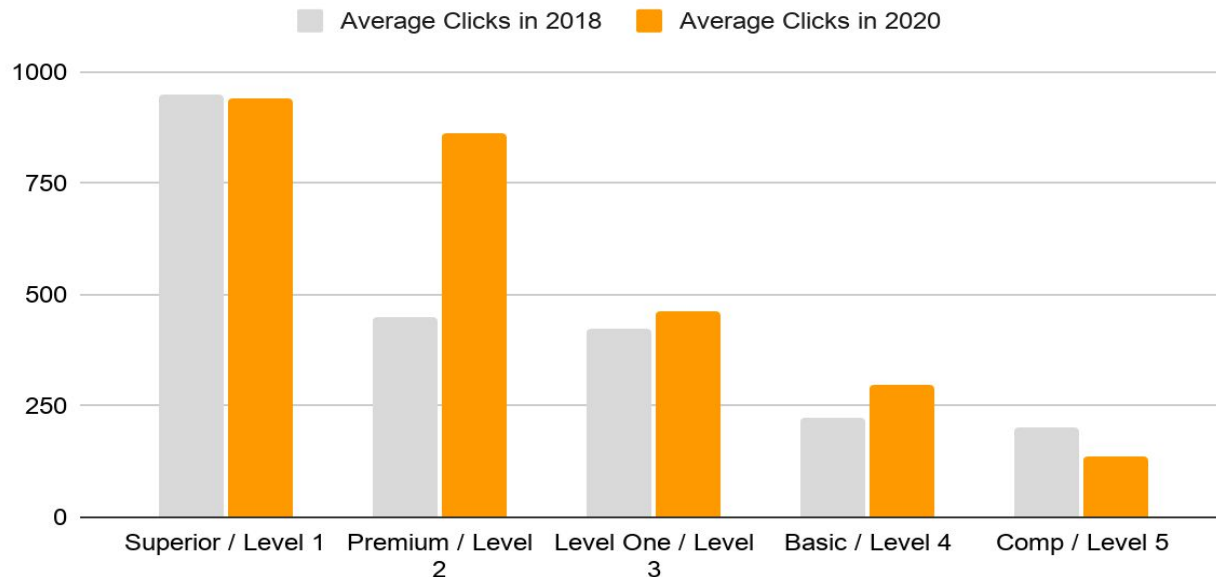
Clicks by Pillow Count Level



Lodging Page Visits:  
**27,521 users**

Pillow Count			
Level	# of Pillows	QTY	CTR
1	250+	13	46.2%
2	150-249	4	12.5%
3	75-149	12	20.2%
4	25-74	50	53.7%
5	24-less	52	20.7%

## Average Clicks in 2018 and Average Clicks in 2020

Based on average clicks by level

Changes in Levels		
Level	QTY in level 2018	QTY in level 2020
1	6	13
2	6	4
3	5	12
4	7	50
5	75	52



**Visit Cook County continues to inspire and drive visitors to explore the region.**

VCC website users are highly engaged discovering what makes this a desirable area to visit.

VCC drives a significant number of clicks to lodging properties, exceeding the industry standard referral per user click rate.

The quantity of properties displayed exceeds regional competitors.

Smaller operators benefit from VCC's website strength which can outperform smaller entities own site search.



### Comparing to Competitors

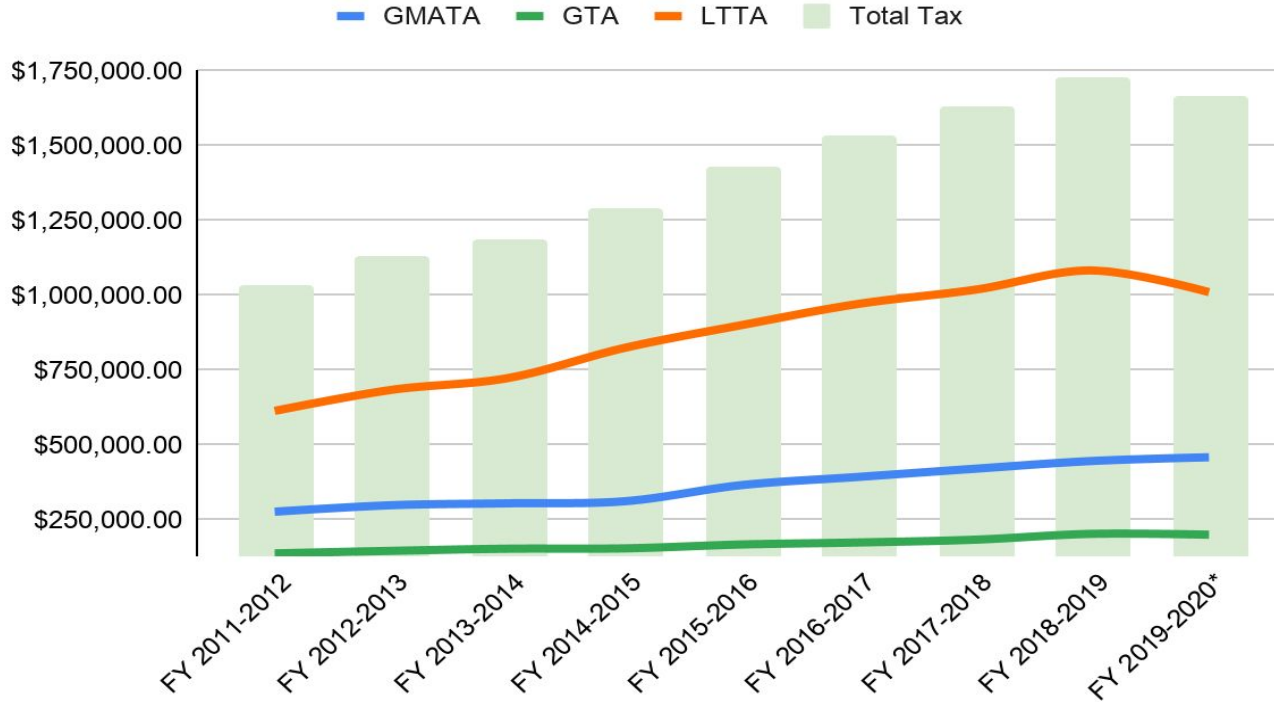
VCC drives a significant number of clicks to lodging properties. However, not all properties direct users to the same part of their website to maximize bookings.



## Lodging Tax Growth | By Community

## Lodging Tax

## Lodging Tax Growth

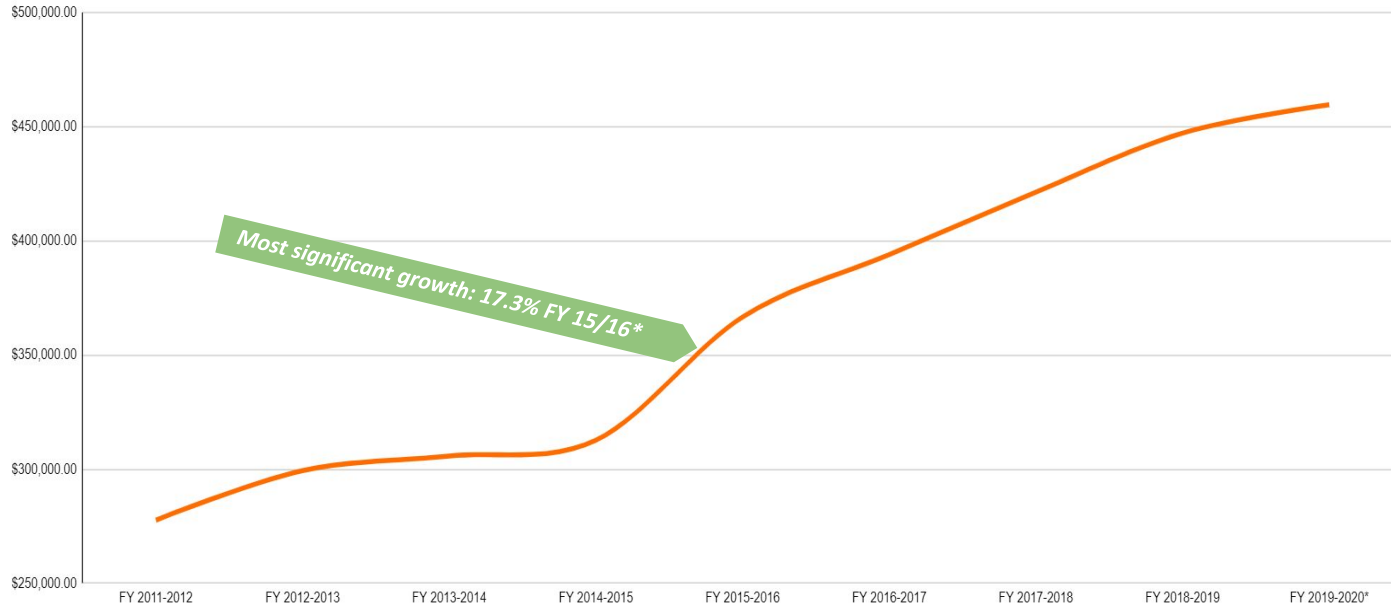


Average YoY growth  
5.87% county-wide

\*FY 2019/20 is projected amounts

## ROI: Grand Marais Area Tourism Association (GMATA)

Tax Collection by Association 2011-2020



**296.2% ROI\*\***

**50e'5% ROI\*\***

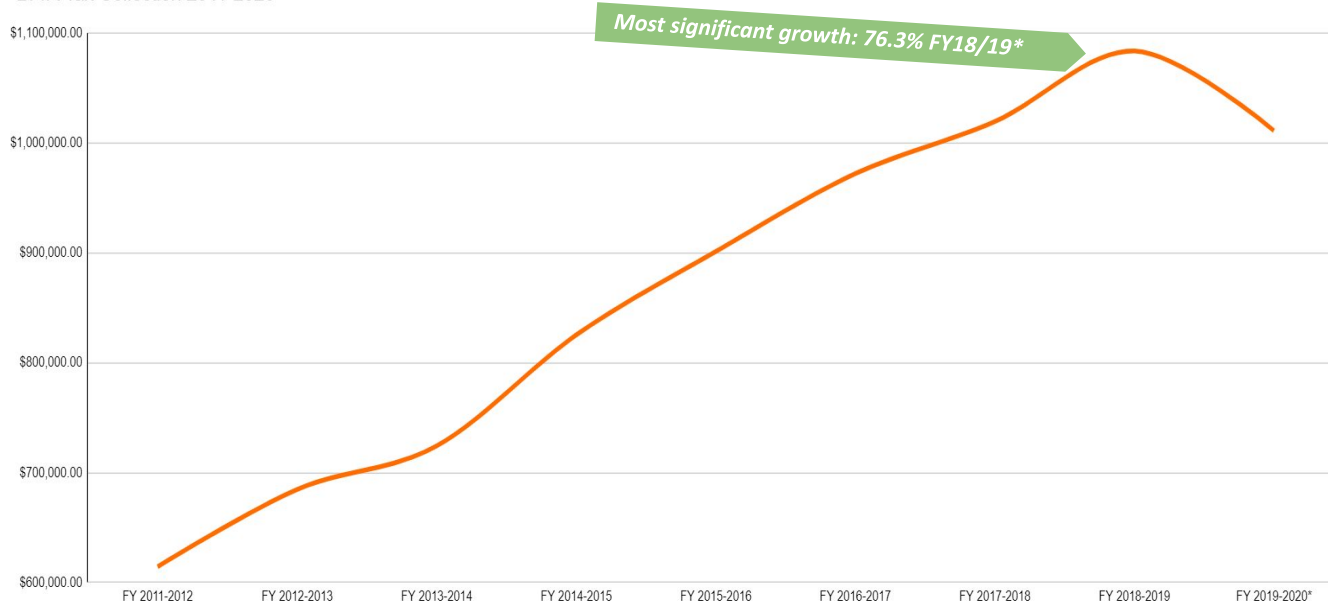
*For income collected in the Grand Marais lodging district divided over the average annual marketing spend of the combined 3% marketing, 1% marketing, and LMC Winter Alpine marketing.*

\*GMATA tax growth increased by 17.3% from the previous year in FY 2015-16 after winning the title of “Coolest Small Town”. This increase allows GMATA to gain an extra representative on the VCC Board of Directors.

\*\*Using the 2018-19 FY as the most accurate base numbers & Averages for expenses taken from the past 4 Fiscal Years

## ROI: Lutsen-Tofte-Schroeder Tourism Association (LTTA)

LTTA Tax Collection 2011-2020



**126.9% ROI\*\***

**149.9% ROI\*\***

*For income collected in the Lutsen/Tofte/Schroeder lodging district divided over the average annual marketing spend of combined 3% marketing, 1% marketing, LMC Winter Alpine, and Superior National Golf Marketing. This ROI is greatly reduced because of the SNG bond payments. IF dollars allocated to SNG were redirected back to pure marketing, LTTA's ROI would shift to 149.9%.*

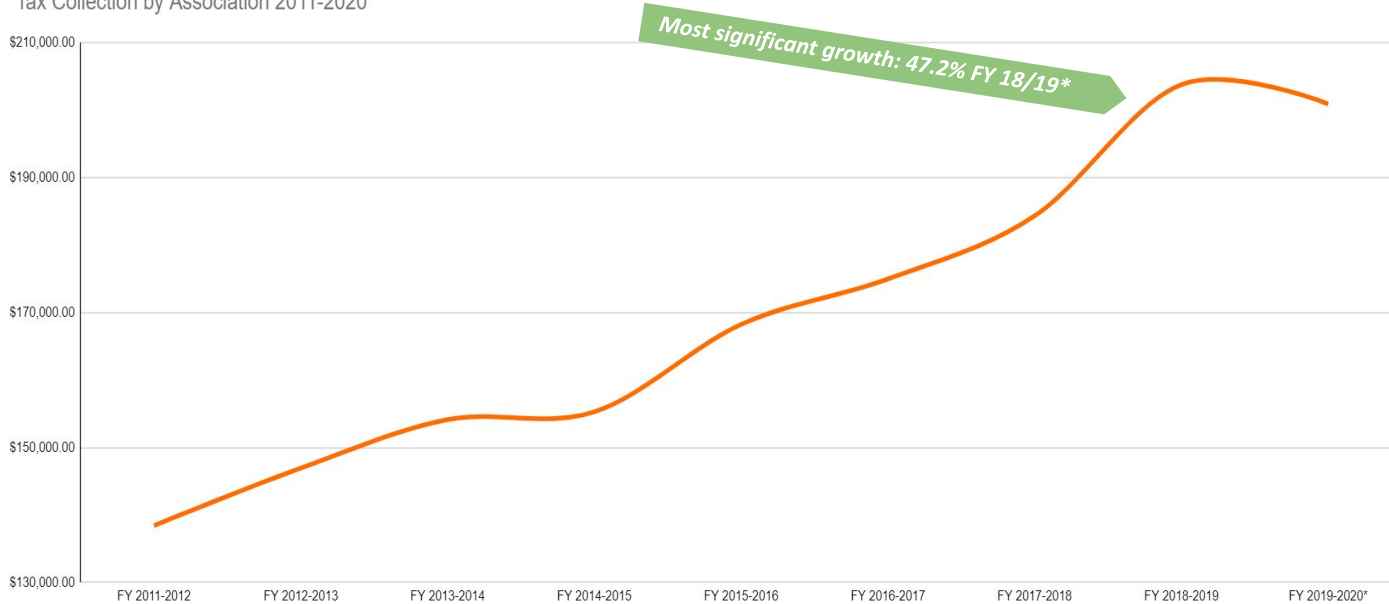
\*LTTA reached a benchmark growth of 76.3% from 2011 in FY 2018-19

\*\*Using the 2018-19 FY as the most accurate base numbers & Averages for expenses taken from the past 4 Fiscal Years



## ROI: Gunflint Trail Tourism Association (GTA)

Tax Collection by Association 2011-2020



**466.0% ROI\*\***

**466.0% ROI\*\***

*For income collected in the Gunflint Trail lodging district divided over the average annual marketing spend of combined 3% marketing and 1% marketing. (LMC omitted as GTA does not invest in this marketing)*

\*GTA reached a benchmark of growth in FY 18-19 of 47.2% from 2011, with growth over the previous year of 10.6%

\*\*Using the 2018-19 FY as the most accurate base numbers & Averages for expenses taken from the past 4 Fiscal Years

Joining together to work collaboratively vs competitively has been proven to elevate the region as a premiere destination with expansive adventure opportunities.

The reach that is achieved collectively far exceeds what was obtained independently. Across the destination marketing industry, Cook County is looked at as the model of the future.



LUTSEN • TOFTE  
SCHROEDER

GRAND MARAIS

GUNFLINT TRAIL

GRAND PORTAGE



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**Thank You!**



# Contact

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