

Indiana County Economic Impact Research Program FAQs

What is the Indiana county economic impact research program?

The research program began back in 2016 to give county-level destination marketing organizations access to best-in-class economic impact research through a shared cost syndication model. Since 2023, the Indiana Destination Development Corporation (IDDC) has sponsored this research for all 92 counties in the state.

Who is Rockport Analytics?

Rockport Analytics (www.rockportanalytics.com) is a research and analytical consulting firm providing high quality qualitative research solutions to business, government, and non-profit organization clients across the globe. Rockport has conducted countless high-profile economic analyses for leading tourism offices, destination marketing organizations, and industry trade associations.

What is the study's methodology?

The results are based on traveler spending reported in the 2023 Indiana Tourism Study, combined with additional data from sources like Longwoods International, Reach Market Planning, and international tourism data. This information is cross-checked with employment and earnings data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), as well as local tax collections, to ensure accurate county-level results. An economic model of Indiana is essential for understanding how traveler spending impacts the state and county economies. Rockport Analytics uses the IMPLAN model (www.implan.com), a widely used tool for economic impact assessments in the U.S. This model measures the direct, indirect, and induced effects of visitor spending.

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I have other data that speaks to tourism activity in my county.

Can this be incorporated into the analysis?

Yes, with a few caveats. Rockport will consider any data that you can share. To incorporate any data into our analysis, we must have a sufficient understanding of its source and the research methodology used to derive any estimates. If we determine that the provided data can provide incremental accuracy to the visitor spending and economic impact results, we will balance and weight it against our other sources in deriving final visitor spending and economic impact results for your county. Any data to be included in the analysis must be delivered to Rockport by November 15th and include results for the prior calendar year.

Why are these numbers different than what I have from other research studies/vendors?

There are numerous factors that could lead to different results. Not all data or research is suitable for apples-to-apples comparison. Many differences are the result of methodological or definitional differences between sources. Our study utilizes both bottom-up and top-down analysis. We are leveraging a multitude of data sources to triangulate visitor activity, rather than relying on a single source of data. Our study also conforms to the UNWTO definition of a visitor as someone who travels at least 50 miles one way to the destination or completes an overnight stay in the destinations. Other studies may look at all “visitors” from outside the county of interest no matter what distance they traveled.

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Why does it take so long to receive my report?

Reports are delivered as soon as possible after collecting all the necessary input data. Our methodology requires us to first set parameters at the state level before beginning our county-level visitor spending analysis. Many of the inputs for the prior year are not available until late summer. We also utilize county-level earnings by sector as reported by the US Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) in our estimation process. The data from the previous year is not released until mid-November of the following year (e.g., results for 2023 were just released on November 16th, 2024).

Why doesn't the report include measures of visitor volume?

We do not feel there is a reliable source of visitor volume at the county level. Deriving accurate measures from survey data would require tremendous expense. There are sources of location-based data that estimate visitor volume at this level, but there is still too much inconsistency in these estimates. We have completed extensive analysis of various geolocation results and the margins of error are too great for us to incorporate them into our analysis. Research in this area is ever evolving and we will continue to seek out the best resources and partners to provide you with credible measures of visitor activity in your destination.

What if I have further questions about my county's results?

The team at Rockport is happy to answer any questions about the study. Please reach out to Jon Gray with any questions: jon.gray@rockportanalytics.com