

**Tourism Improvement for the  
City of Galesburg  
Fall 2016**

**A study by Monmouth College INTG 416 Students and Professor Robin Johnson in conjunction with the Knox County Area Partnership for Economic Development, the City of Galesburg and the Galesburg Area Chamber of Commerce.**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

This semester we researched tourism structures, best practices/performance measures and visibility from similarly sized Midwestern cities, aspirational cities (such as Springfield and Bloomington-Normal) and from Midwestern cities that are tourist meccas (such as Door County, WI, Mackinac Island, MI, Galena, IL.). We sent out surveys to measure the structure, accountability, and performance measures of each tourism department. We also explored the websites and evaluated them based on attraction, ease of navigation, and quality/amount of information provided.

We sent out 63 surveys and received 45 responses. These surveys provided us with information about each agency's structure, performance measures and number of employees. Out of the 63 websites we evaluated, we narrowed the list to the top five we thought were the most "eye catching," easy to navigate and contained the right amount of information.

## II. WEBSITE ANALYSIS

### Top Five City Tourism Websites

Small cities, like Galesburg, need a tourism website that draws people into the area and gives them a reason to visit. As a result, these websites need to be designed to attract tourists to that city. Since technology is crucial in today's society, tourism websites play an important role in attracting tourists. An individual, especially younger people, will likely visit a city's website before traveling to that location. The top five websites were ranked based on three key items to attract tourists: color schemes, content, and ease of navigation.

1. Dubuque, Iowa (<http://www.traveldubuque.com>)
  - Phenomenal layout of the home page, which provides information with ease
  - Shows seasonal activities, along with drop down tabs that offer various options for each category
  - There are blog and industry tabs that entice the writer or business people to visit the city

- The food is noticeably advertised on the home page and looks appetizing. The food portion of the website is a key factor in attracting tourists to visit the city
2. Canton, Ohio (<http://www.visitcanton.com/>)
    - Very inviting and easily accessible
    - Shows their main attraction to be the NFL hall of fame
      - This venue attracts sports enthusiasts
    - Website contains a search engine, which allows ability to search for events, attractions, restaurants, etc.
    - Shows a variety of activities to do, including going to the vineyard
  3. Lima, Ohio (<http://www.lima-allencvb.com>)
    - Great color scheme and layout
    - Plenty of hyperlinks to easily redirect tourists to related topics
    - Simple design choice, yet still inviting
    - Gives tourists directions on the home page
    - Tabs allow easy access to different attractions
  4. Waterloo, Iowa (<http://www.travelwaterloo.com/>)
    - Contains a visually appealing slideshow of different seasonal activities
    - Indicates good places to eat and activities to engage in while visiting, including sports
      - They endorse a semi-pro hockey team
    - Offers tab options containing choices of wine and dine and nightlife, which will attract the younger generation
  5. Rockford, Illinois ([www.gorockford.com](http://www.gorockford.com))
    - Great homepage, appealing color scheme and inviting presence
    - Expresses many activities to partake in Rockford
    - Restaurant tab displays different cuisine in addition to bars and taverns
    - Offers places to stay such as hotels, campsite, and bed and breakfasts, while providing pet friendly options

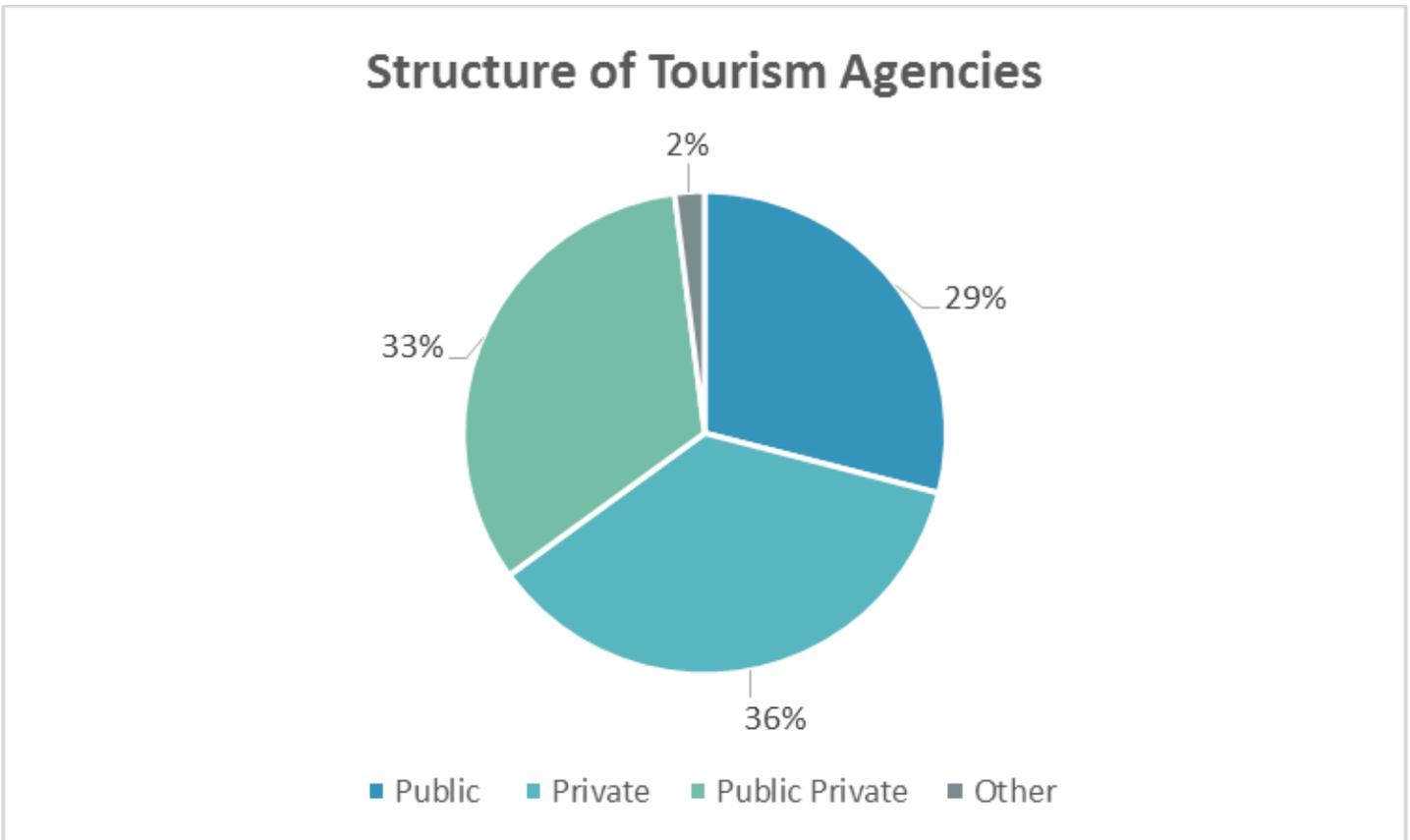
Other websites the class found exceptional based on our three most important criteria:

- Color
  - Sheboygan, WI <http://visitsheboygan.com>
  - Beloit, WI <http://visitbeloit.com>
  - Muscatine, IA [www.http://visitmuscatine.com](http://www.visitmuscatine.com)
- Content
  - Sheboygan, WI <http://visitsheboygan.com>
  - Kokomo, IN [www.http://visitkokomo.org](http://www.visitkokomo.org)
  - Marion, IN [www.http://showmegrantcounty.com](http://www.showmegrantcounty.com)
- Ease of navigation
  - Battle Creek, MI <http://battlecreekvisitors.org>
  - Kokomo, IN [www.http://visitkokomo.org](http://www.visitkokomo.org)
  - Marion, IN [www.http://showmegrantcounty.com](http://www.showmegrantcounty.com)

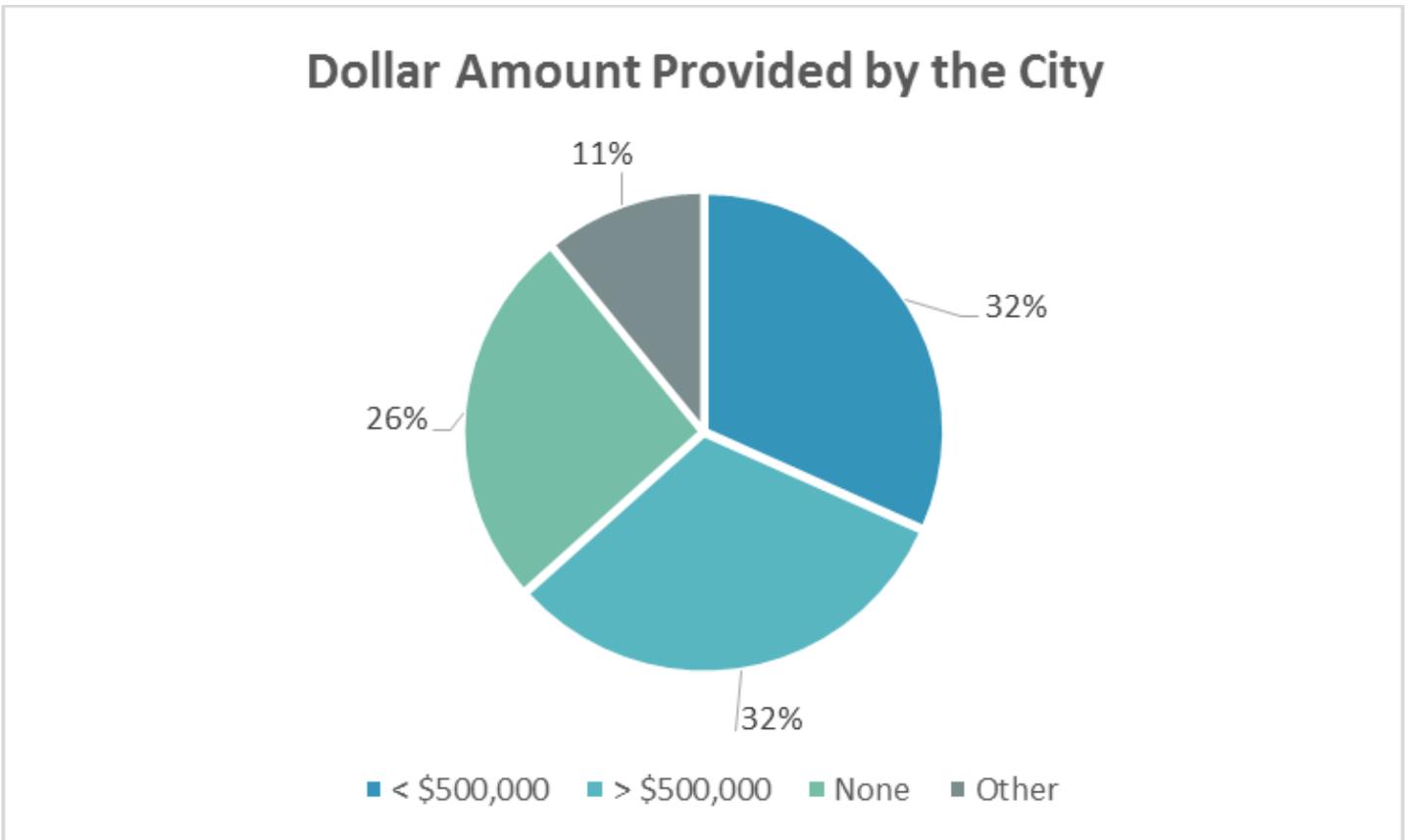
### III. SURVEY EVALUATION

Our class sent out 63 surveys to tourism departments in different cities across the Midwest. From the 45 responses we received, the data expresses the following:

- We asked if the tourism bureau is ran publicly as part of the government, privately, or as a public-private partnership.
  - Public = 13
  - Private = 16
  - Public-Private = 15
  - Other = 1
- **Key Finding: Tourism agencies are nearly evenly split among private (36%), public-private (33%) and public (29%) structures. Private structures, like Galesburg currently has, are most prevalent.**

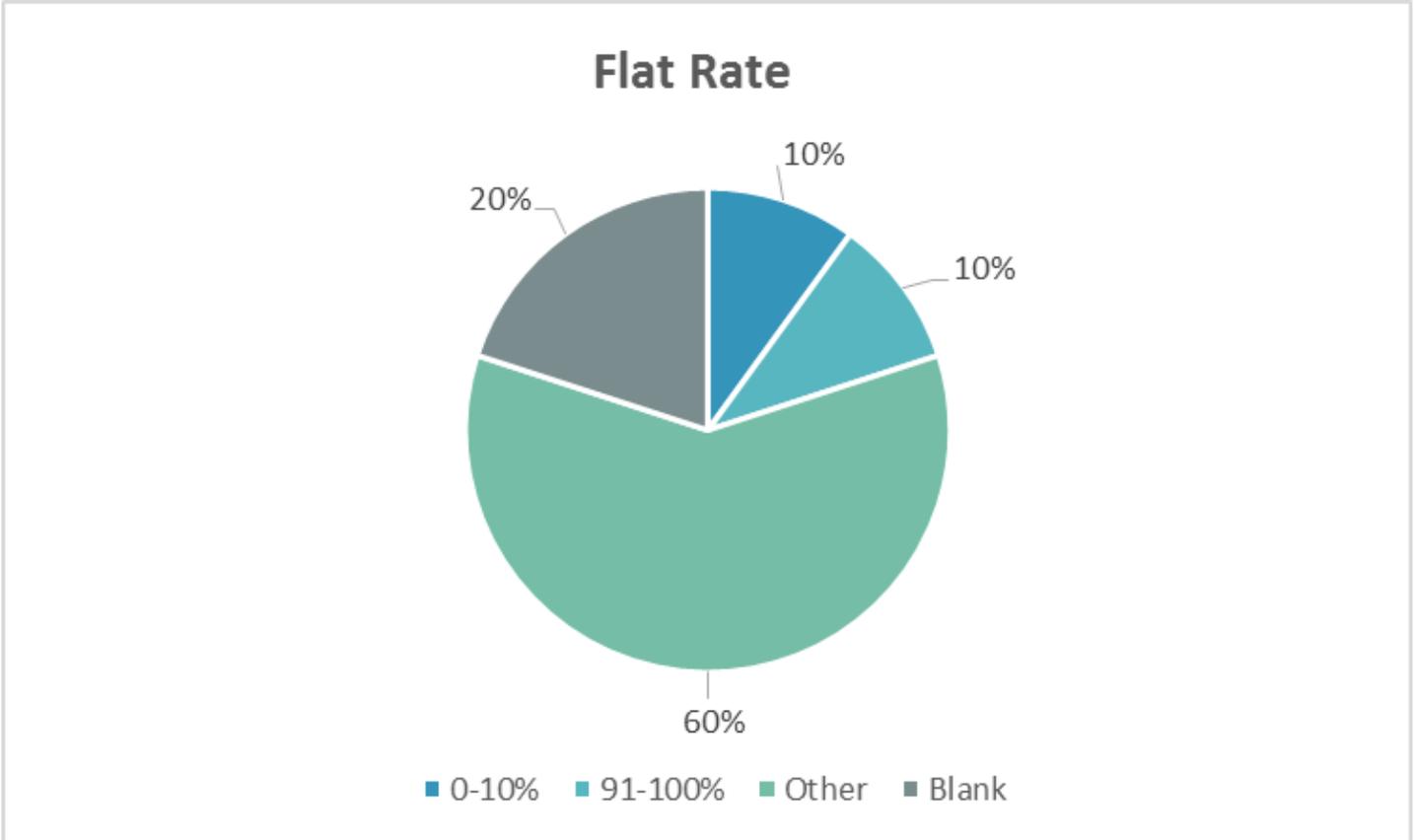


- We asked how much each tourism department receives from the city. Since there was such a variety of numbers, we decided to categorize the results.
  - Less than \$500,000 = 15
  - \$500,000 or greater = 15
  - None = 12
  - Other = 5
- **Key finding: There are an equal number of tourism agencies that receive less than \$500,000 (32%) (similar to Galesburg) and more than \$500,000 (32%) from the cities we surveyed. Slightly more than one-fourth of the agencies (26%) don't receive funding from the cities.**



- We asked if the agencies receive a flat rate or percentage of hotel/motel taxes from the city. We decided to categorize the numbers since there was a variety of percentages.
  - Flat Rate
    - 0% - 10% = 1
    - 91% - 100% = 1
    - Other = 6
    - Blank = 2

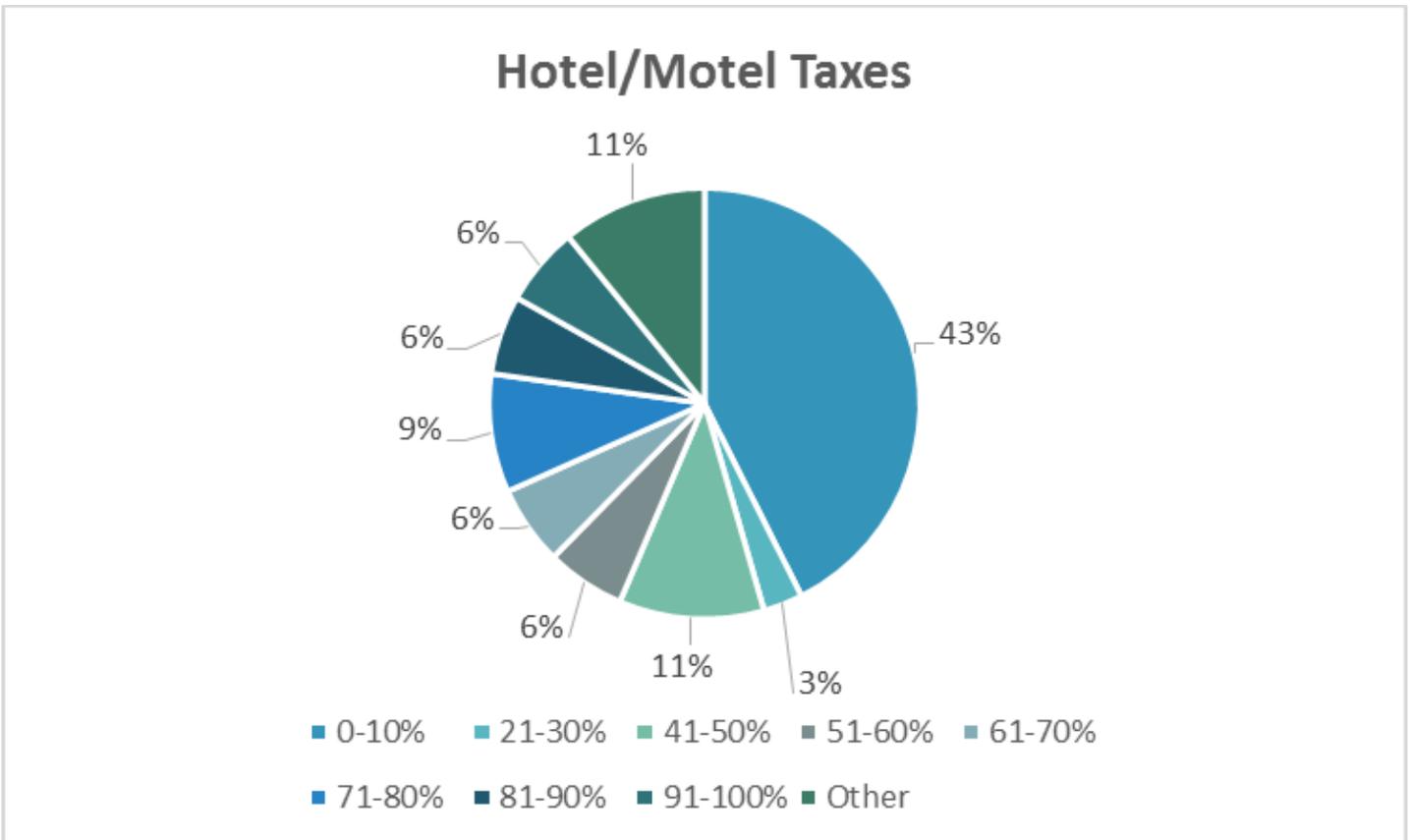
**\*\* ONLY 10 OF THE 45 CITIES RECEIVED A FLAT RATE \*\***



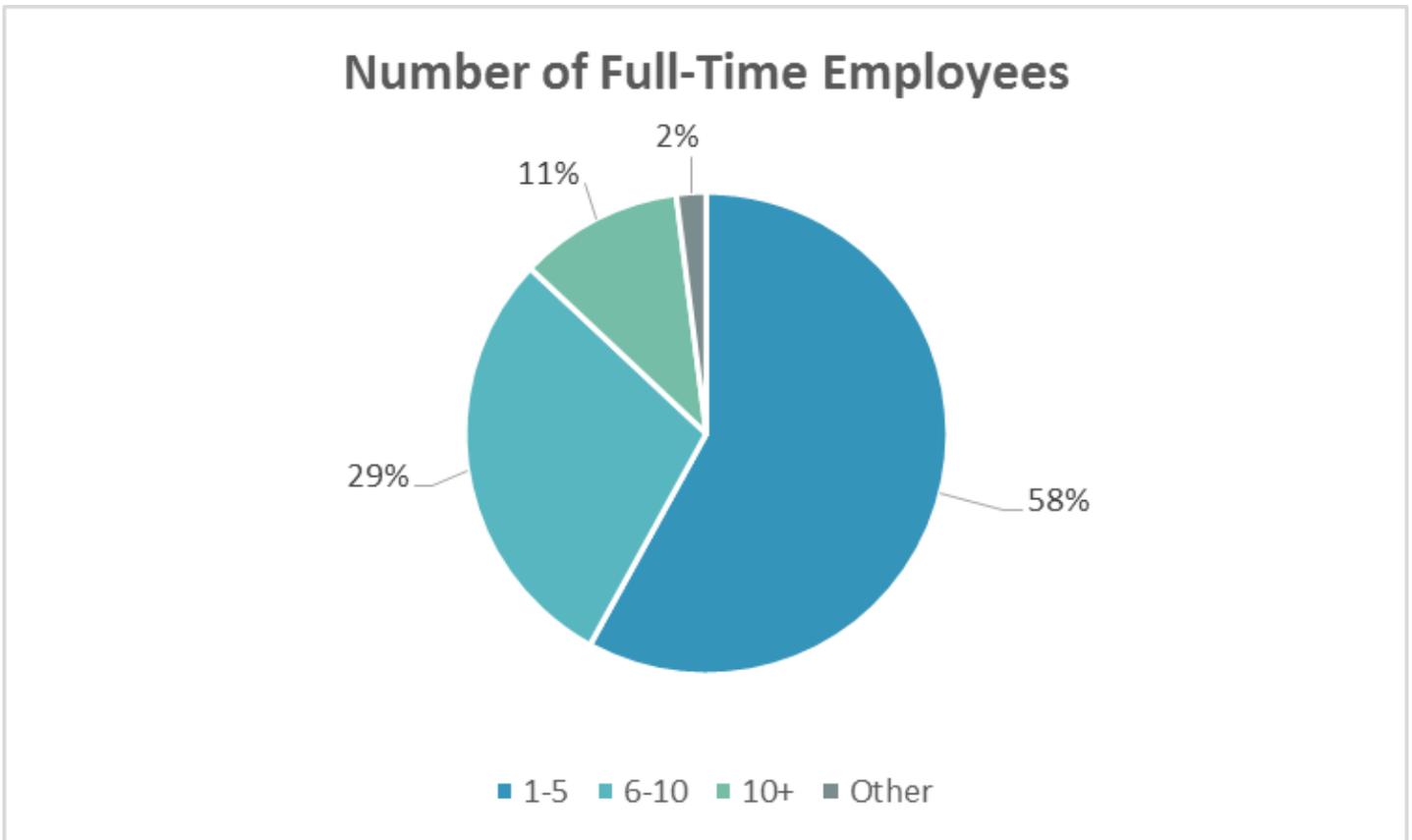
- Hotel/Motel Tax
  - 0% - 10% = 15
  - 21% - 30% = 1
  - 41% - 50% = 4
  - 51% - 60% = 2
  - 61% - 70% = 2
  - 71% - 80% = 3
  - 81% - 90% = 2
  - 91% - 100% = 2
  - Other = 4

\*\* THE REMAINING 35 CITIES RECEIVED HOTEL/MOTEL TAXES \*\*

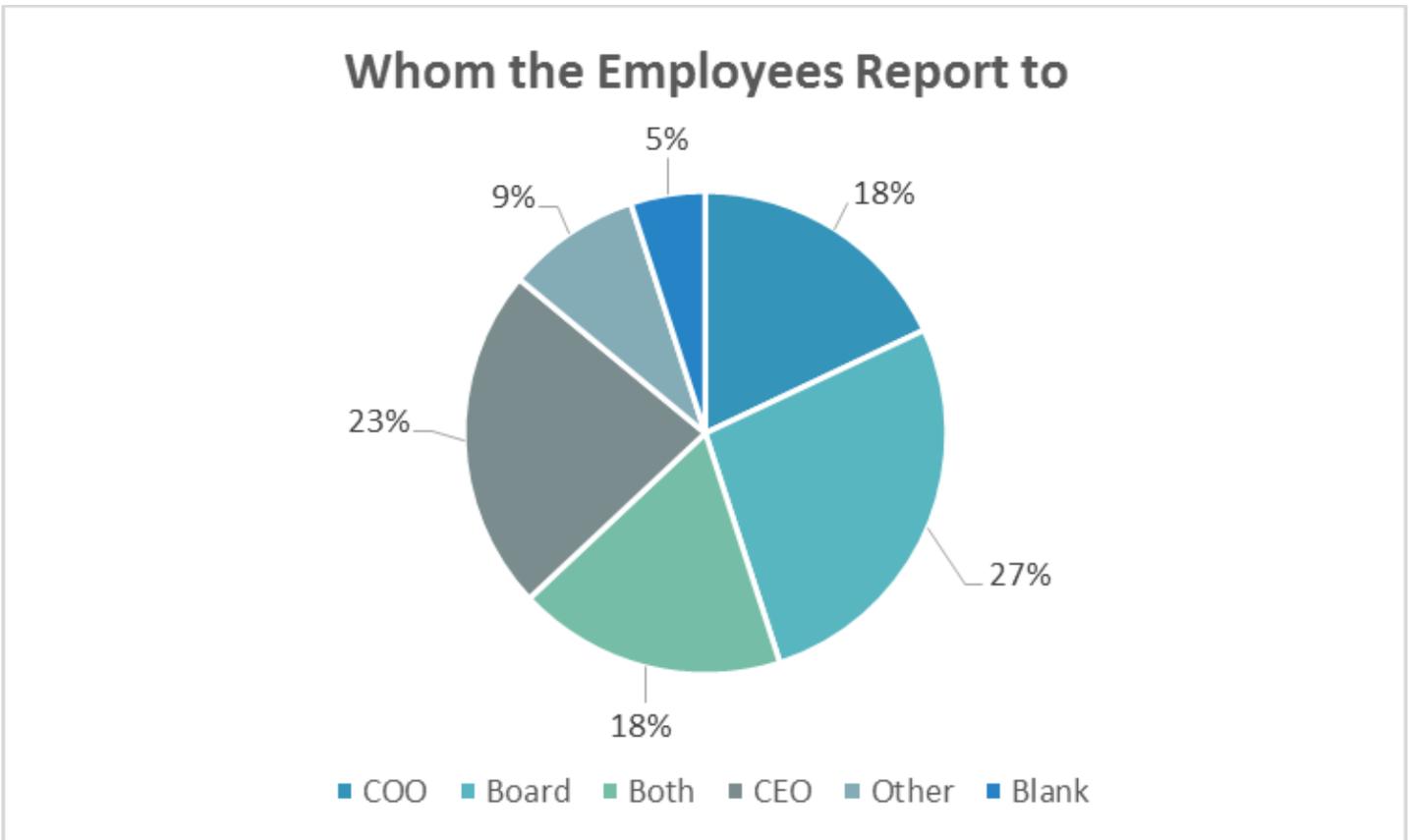
- **Key finding: Most agencies (60%) report their cities, like Galesburg, provide a share of hotel-motel taxes of less than five percent for funding tourism.**



- We asked how many full time employees there are in each tourism bureau. We categorized the data because of the wide range of responses.
  - 1 – 5 = 26
  - 6 – 10 = 13
  - 10 and greater = 5
  - Other = 1
- **Key finding: Most tourism agencies we examined (58%) are similar to Galesburg in which they have fewer than five full-time employees.**

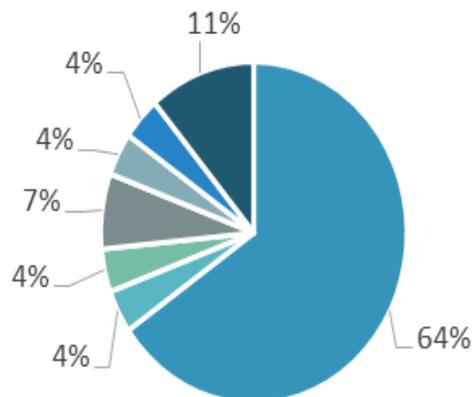


- We asked to whom the employees report to – a chief operating officer or the tourism agency, a board or commission, or a combination of both. Because of the responses, we created categories to best fit the data.
  - Chief Operating Officer (COO) = 8
  - Board = 13
  - Both (COO and Board) = 8
  - Chief Executive Officer (CEO) = 10
  - Other = 4
  - Blank = 2
- **Key finding: Reporting requirements and accountability vary among several different models. Galesburg’s model, where employees report to the COO, is reported by 18% of tourism agencies.**



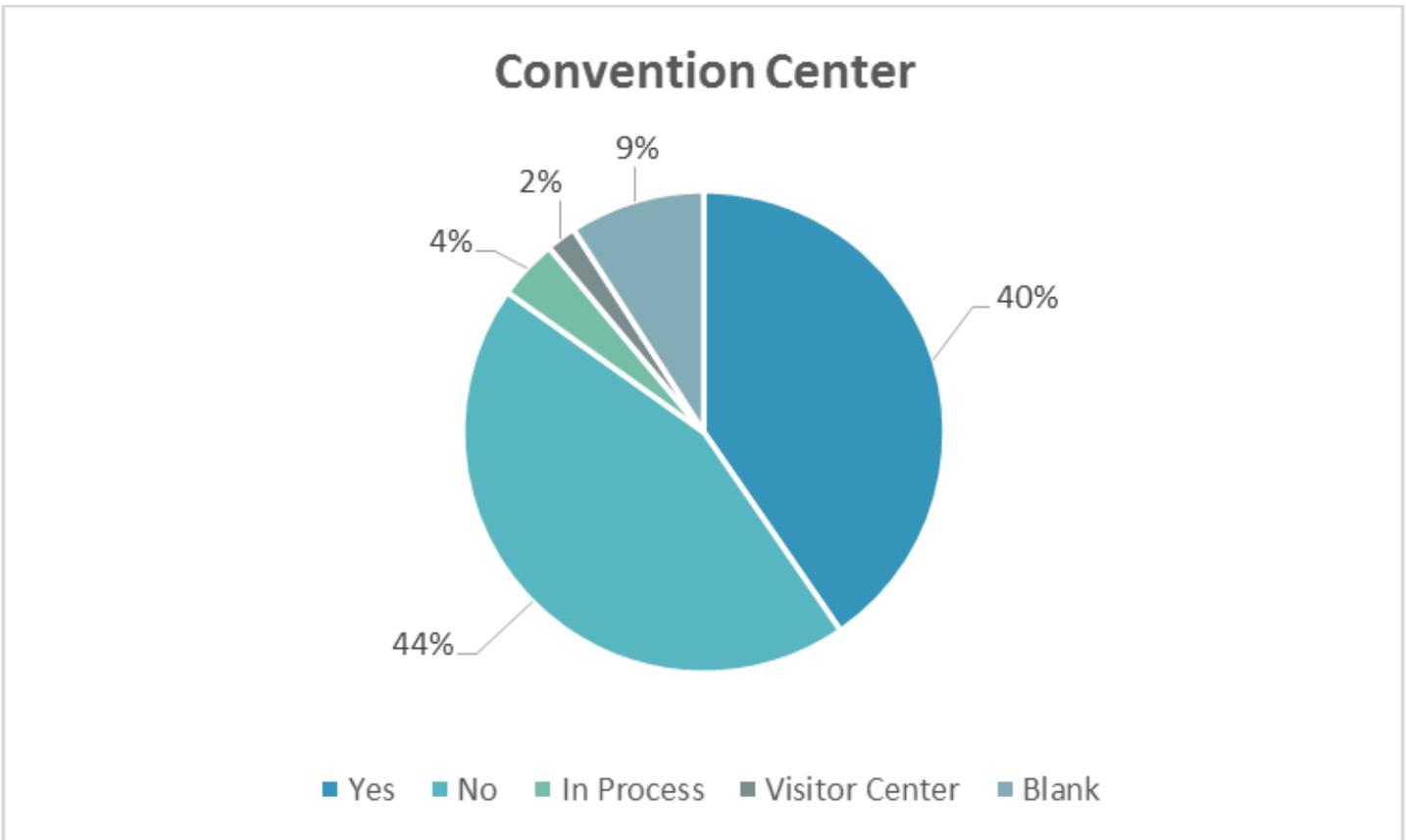
- We asked if the tourism agencies had any specific performance measures to gauge effectiveness of the tourism efforts. We received a variety of answers, so we categorized the data depending on the most common answers.
  - Overnight stays = 29
  - Visits = 2
  - Events = 2
  - Collections = 3
  - Other (Advertising, Website Visits, etc.) = 2
  - None = 2
  - Blank = 5
- **Key finding: Most cities (64%) use overnight stays as their main performance measure.**

**Specific Performance Measures**



- Overnight Stays
- Visits
- Events
- Collections
- Other (Advertising, Website visits, etc)
- None
- Blank

- We asked if there was a convention center available for use the city.
  - Yes = 18
  - No = 20
  - In process = 2
  - Visitor Center = 1
  - Blank = 4
- **Key finding: While 44% of responding tourism agencies are similar to Galesburg and report not having a convention center, 40% have one, and two are in the process of gaining one.**



#### IV. TOP 10 MIDWESTERN TOURIST DESTINATIONS

As the title indicates, the class chose to examine these 10 tourist sites because they are some of the top tourist destinations in the region, and there is something to be learned from their successes. There is at least one site from each of the eight Midwestern states we are studying in class. The class then looked at these cities' tourism bureau websites and chose their favorites based on a variety of factors, such as color scheme, ease of navigation, and content. Class members found several ideas that could make Galesburg's website more appealing, such as on Mackinac Island's website ([www.mackinacisland.org](http://www.mackinacisland.org)), which utilized colors effectively and contained a section titled, "What's Happening on the Island," listing events in the upcoming week or month. Since ease of access was one of our class's criteria for a good website, in the research we found a perfect example in Yellow Springs, Ohio ([www.yellowspringsohio.org](http://www.yellowspringsohio.org)). The tabs helped to quickly find anything from shopping at the top mall or a great meal with a picture included. The colors of the website were bright, with yellow and orange but they had, as their borders, a picture of an upcoming event. Door County, Wisconsin ([www.doorcounty.com](http://www.doorcounty.com)) has a very aesthetically appealing site by applying multiple aspects of the area's identity onto the page. It is also easily navigable and allows the viewers to access links from the homepage that lead to highlights of the area rather than making them dig through the website.

In general, the class rated these websites higher than city tourism agency websites. For example, students gave a mean rating of 8 for color on destination websites compared with 5.9 for city sites; 7.8 for content versus 5.9 for cities; 8.5 for ease of navigation compared with 6.3 for city sites; and an overall mean rating of 8 for these 10 sites versus 6.1 for the city tourism sites. Therefore, Galesburg officials should view these sites for ideas along with the recommended city sites above.

Other tourist location sites we recommend viewing are:

- Lake of the Ozarks, MO <http://www.funlake.com>
- Galena, IL [www.galena.org](http://www.galena.org)

## **V. COMPETITIVE CITIES**

Larger cities in Illinois that were suggested by KCAPED President Ken Springer for being competitors of Galesburg were also researched. These cities have larger populations than Galesburg, meaning that their budgets may not be comparable, but their practices can still be analyzed for adaptability. Attending trade shows and networking were the best strategies suggested for running an effective tourism agency. Their websites benefit from simple, modern color schemes (especially Rockford's <https://www.gorockford.com/>) that Galesburg should consider. Galesburg could also add a Google translate feature that <http://www.peoria.org> has implemented to appeal to non-English speakers.

Students rated these cities poorly compared with other cities and tourist destinations. The mean overall rating for these five cities was 6.1 with mean ratings for color (5.9), content (5.9) and ease of navigation (6.3) lower than others we researched. We believe this could provide an opening for Galesburg to gain a competitive edge by upgrading its site based on best practices we found in other Midwestern cities and destinations.

## **VI. RECOMMENDATIONS**

When looking at tourism websites, our class decided on three characteristics, which make a website successful: color scheme, content, and ease of navigation.

### Color Scheme

Younger generations judge websites primarily based on the colors and appearance of the site. Bright colors, like blue, or neutral colors are most appealing. The Galesburg website is brown and yellow. Replacing these dull colors with brighter ones would make the site more appealing and increase the time a person would spend on it. However, there is a difference between having too much color and having just enough. The best combinations we found were blue and white or lighter neutral colors.

## Content

Displaying a list of events throughout the year is an important feature of a web page. It makes it easy for tourists to plan a weekend trip full of events. It is also important to advertise key locations or convention centers. For Galesburg, a key location to advertise would be Knox College. Promoting accomplishments can also be an attraction on a website. Galesburg could promote the Lincoln-Douglas debate, which only took place in seven Illinois cities.

Making accessible videos, such as using YouTube, is also an essential part of having a successful website. Including a blog, like Peoria, is a great way to keep tourists up to date. Icon links can direct users to the city's social media sites. The social media links, which are vital to today's culture, make it easier for users to see what others have to say about the city.

## Ease of Navigation

Drop-down tabs simplify the site by making it easy to find a specific attraction. Upcoming or occurring events featured at the top of the web page are important because it is the first thing a tourist will read. Having a minimal amount of words, clicks, and scrolling is crucial. A tourist wants to quickly locate information. A "search" engine would also be helpful to the tourist. Finally, a slideshow of photos would be appealing; however, it needs to have arrows in order to "go back" or "skip forward" without having to wait for the photos to change on their own.

## **V. OVERALL SUMMARY**

Galesburg has the potential to be as successful as some of the cities we researched for this project. Producing a website, which has all the important components discussed above, is the first issue that needs to be addressed. This will attract more people to Galesburg and increase the amount of tourism activity. As for the surveys, some cities operate differently than Galesburg's tourism agency, so that decision will be up to Galesburg to implement any changes.