



# ANNUAL REPORT

Alaska Travel Industry Association

2020-2021



**The Alaska Travel Industry Association (ATIA) will be the leading industry organization promoting Alaska as a top visitor destination, communicating and promoting the Alaskan tourism industry as one of the state's major economic forces, and will be the respected voice of the industry for the growth of the industry, while remaining stewards of the state's natural resources, cultures and Alaska's unique quality of life.**

## Letter from the Chair

Greetings Alaska Travel Industry Association Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your 2020/2021 ATIA Board of Directors Chair. It has been an honor to serve this industry as the head of our association. But like I learned in sports, it is not who the captain is, but the team around them. There are times, particularly in these past two years, where we in the industry forget the commitment of time and effort from your Board of Directors and the ATIA staff. Without the support of these two groups, no chair could accomplish anything. To them on your behalf, a hearty thank you.



2021 has been about survival. In a year where so much was uncertain, your board set an aggressive agenda. We sought and were granted marketing money to communicate that our state was open for business and a safe destination. This marketing continues through this fall. The Marketing Committee, staff and our vendors have done a great job getting maximum benefit from these monies. We are in the process of securing another grant that will carry our marketing through the spring of 2022. Your ATIA staff has worked tirelessly to secure this funding.

The board strongly supported and provided information to our Congressional delegation as they secured a temporary waiver to the Passenger Vessel Services Act. This allowed our cruise members to bring visitors to our members in Southeast Alaska. As I write this, there is legislation being proposed to make this change permanent. Your board is watching this closely.

Between Federal and State programs to support businesses, ATIA ran many a seminar to guide our members through the various requirements. Every step of the way, our staff was a resource you could count on for information.

However, just as we were starting to get our feet under us, the industry endured a setback. In August the Denali Park Road was declared impassable at mile 43. Your board is on top this situation with a special committee of NPS members, in-holders, the Joint Venture operator, and key board members. As usual, your board and staff will keep you updated.

There is a famous wish, "may you live in interesting times." These times have truly been just that. But the industry, the association, the board, our staff and most all, our members, have survived and grown stronger. It has been heartening to see the famous Alaskan resolve. On to 2021/2022 and brighter days for our industry.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Pedlar". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Bill Pedlar  
2020 - 2021 ATIA Board Chair  
Owner, Knightly Tours

# Letter from the President

Once again, the COVID19 pandemic dominated the news and affected every corner of our industry in Alaska. ATIA staff and board members faced many challenges throughout the year as we worked to serve you, our membership, community partners, and the state.

As it became apparent our annual Convention and Trade Show could not happen in person, the ATIA team made the switch to host an all virtual event, right from the lobby of ATIA's building in downtown Anchorage. With engaging sessions, active breaks with yoga, and industry leaders joining from several time zones away, we made the most of the situation and had over 360 registered members participate.

Vaccine rollouts were imminent as we entered the holiday season in 2020, and optimism for travel industry recovery was on the minds of our members. Federal CARES Act funding allowed us to continue to market the state to domestic and in-state travelers through Travel Alaska: Alaska's statewide destination marketing program. We also saw our travel community come together like never before with marketing partnerships with Alaska Airlines, including customized advertisements that individual tourism businesses could use, and by joining forces through our instate marketing efforts to residents: Show Up for Alaska!

ATIA continued to advocate for the return of cruise ships to Alaska and constantly monitored the Canadian border closures. Alaska's congressional delegation brought a victory through the House and Senate to pass the Alaska Tourism Restoration Act in May, allowing passenger cruise ships to travel northbound without the required stop in a foreign country. We saw the late return of cruise ships in Southeast Alaska for the first time in 20 months, bringing much needed economic activity to the hard-hit towns of Ketchikan, Sitka, Hoonah, Juneau, and others.

This past year really showcased how Alaska's tourism community supports each other and included new partners. The ATIA Foundation supported a Local Alaska Grant program with Royal Caribbean Group to administer over \$800,000 in pandemic relief funds to 76 Alaska businesses and non-profits throughout the state. ATIA deepened our partnerships with cultural tourism organizations through our cultural enrichment committee to amplify Alaska Native and cultural tourism voices in tourism marketing. Alaska's tourism businesses and their teams showed up, even with workforce challenges, to welcome independent travelers who made the journey north to safely explore our state. ATIA continued to coordinate with the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, providing the most current vaccine and testing information to travelers.

For an industry that was arguably one of the hardest hit throughout the COVID19 pandemic, Alaska's tourism community showed what it truly means to be resilient. On behalf of the ATIA team, thank you for your ongoing support and for all that each of you do for Alaska travel and tourism.



Sarah Leonard, President & CEO



## ATIA Sustaining Partners, 2020 - 2021

Thanks to all our [Sustaining Partners](#), which play a key role in the growth of ATIA programs, resources, education, advocacy, and more.

### DENALI LEVEL

Holland America Line  
Princess Cruises  
HAP

### GOLD LEVEL

Northern Alaska Tour Company  
Alaska Business  
Ketchikan Visitors Bureau  
Travel Juneau

### ALYESKA LEVEL

Alaska Airlines

### JADE LEVEL

Alaska Coach Tours  
Seward Chamber

### ORCA LEVEL

Mat-Su CVB  
Pursuit - Alaska Collection  
Explore Fairbanks  
Visit Anchorage  
Alaska Railroad

### FIREWEED LEVEL

Explore Skagway  
CLIA - Alaska

## Membership

ATIA is the leading statewide industry organization for travel-related businesses and supporters. ATIA's members enjoy exclusive benefits such as the ATIA Annual Convention and Trade Show, online courses offered through the ATIA E-Learning Center, and participation in local chapters.

In FY 2020, ATIA added a health benefit for ATIA members through the [Small Association Leadership Alliance \(SALA\) healthcare program](#) and we began the process of managing the Alaska Host, Cultural Host, and Alaska Tour Guide training programs from the State of Alaska.

As a result of the coronavirus pandemic, ATIA's goal became strengthening Alaska's tourism industry as a whole. ATIA opened up programs to members and non-members alike, hosting webinars and sharing information broadly through e-newsletters and a special COVID-19 section on [Alaskatia.org](#).

# 636

Members  
(June 30, 2021)

# 5

## Chapters

- Anchorage
- Fairbanks
- Juneau
- Ketchikan
- Arts, Culture & Heritage

# 49

Alaska communities  
represented  
(from all Alaska regions)  
Plus 10 Outside  
communities

## 2020 Virtual Convention

\$49 in the 49 | October 5 - 8, 2020



# \$49 in the 49

Attendees ● → **362**

As the COVID pandemic affected in-person gatherings, ATIA shifted to a virtual Annual Convention platform the week of October 5, 2020. The platform allowed for a key leaders to participate in presentations and panels remotely, including the President & CEO of Alaska Airlines, Brad Tilden, Holland America Group's CEO, Stein Kruse, and Brad Dean of Discover Puerto Rico.

With "Zoom fatigue" being top of mind, especially 7 months into the pandemic, sessions were shorter and punctuated by yoga sessions and the game-show fun of the Virtual Alaska Tourism Shark Tank, in which participants pitched tourism-related business ideas to earn funding and prizes.

## Thank you to our 2020 Annual Convention Sponsors!

Alaska Business  
Visit Anchorage  
Valdez CVB  
First National Bank of Alaska  
Mat-Su CVB  
GCI  
Ketchikan Visitors Bureau  
Alaska Helicopter Tours

Wells Fargo  
Alaska Airlines  
Alaska Railroad Corporation  
The Chuck West Family  
Holland America Line  
Princess Cruises  
Northrim Bank  
Cruise Line Industry Association- Alaska





[Adventure Green Alaska](#) (AGA) is ATIA’s voluntary certification program for sustainable tourism businesses operating in Alaska.

Since 2009, AGA has recognized and promoted Alaska tourism businesses who practice economic, environmental, social and cultural sustainability.

Applications for certification or re-certification are reviewed bi-annually by the AGA Review Committee.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, AGA extended the May application period until November for businesses seeking to re-certify their AGA status. 81 members were certified by the end of fiscal year 2021.

Thank you to lead sponsor, Alaska Airlines, and supporting sponsors Alaska Railroad Corporation, Alaska Wildland Adventures, Explore Fairbanks, and Northern Alaska Tour Company for your support of Adventure Green Alaska.

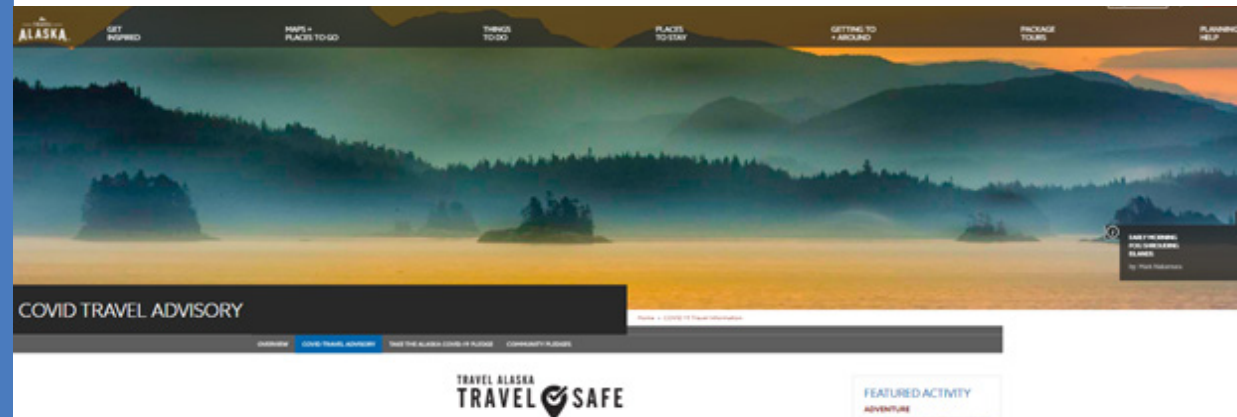


## 2020-2021 CERTIFIED AGA BUSINESSES



In FY20, ATIA received a grant from the US Economic Development Administration (EDA) to educate communities and businesses statewide to become more resilient. By disseminating public safety messaging, sharing safe travel tips and local guidelines, ATIA’s efforts promoted the public health of our visitors and residents. ATIA also partnered with Alaska’s Department of Health and Human Services (DHSS) in developing tourism industry protocols and providing current COVID-safe content for businesses on ATIA’s traveler websites.

The Travel Alaska website featured a banner linking to these resources and provided up-to-date content regarding testing, quarantining and vaccinations as new information became available. Alaskatia.org added a Traveler Resources page filled with funding resources, local guidelines, and traveler information. COVID resources were shared with ATIA members and the general public through a variety of channels including websites, E-newsletters, and social media. Through ATIA’s efforts, the pandemic-related travel guidance was viewed by thousands of Alaskans and travelers with about 500,000 pageviews for COVID19 resources and traveler information on TravelAlaska.com and Alaskatia.org combined since June 2020. Additionally, ATIA supported a COVID19 hotline with four team members responding to traveler and resident emails and telephone calls related to vaccine and travel information through ATIA’s partnership with the DHSS.



# Statewide Tourism Marketing

With a CARES Act grant from the State of Alaska, ATIA scaled up efforts to show that Alaska was safe and open, with room to roam. In order to encourage more independent travelers to fly to Alaska, ATIA partnered with Alaska Airlines to enhance our promotional marketing and fill planes to the state.

The resulting campaign's strategic idea was "Go Big, Go Alaska." Since 2020 was a year of being conditioned for "no's"—what you couldn't do or see, and where you couldn't go, we reached out to people who were able, willing, and ready to travel. We reminded them they deserved to go big on their next trip, and that Alaska—a highly desirable, wide-open-spaces destination—was only a flight away.

The "Live from Alaska" virtual event in April was attended by more than 40 national travel media and more than 100 travel advisors. The Show Up for Alaska in-state marketing campaign provided social media toolkits to partners, eventually garnering over 2.1 million impressions on Instagram and YouTube.

In June, ATIA got a big media hit with a live broadcast on Good Morning America. GMA spent the preceding six days in Southcentral Alaska immersed in on-the-ground logistics and filming at the Alaska Native Heritage Center, Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center, Seward and other locations. Stories about Alaska's travel rebound and cultural tourism reached an audience of 91 million.



## TRAVEL ALASKA

472,576 (+0.4%)  
Facebook followers

139,394 (+44.9%)  
Instagram followers

46,418 (+4%)  
Twitter followers

1,305  
LinkedIn followers

439  
Journalists Assisted

\$527,994  
Cooperative marketing sales generated



105,885,668  
Paid advertising impressions

141,982  
Consumer leads generated



# ATIA Foundation

The [ATIA Foundation](#) reinvests in the future of the Alaska tourism industry. Alaskans pursuing a degree related to tourism or seeking continuing education opportunities can qualify for scholarships. Scholarship funds are raised through memberships and at the ATIA Annual Convention.

In FY 2020, the ATIA Foundation also launched a Professional Development Program for individuals seeking to build upon their expertise in a visitor industry-related position.



**\$52,915**

Total ATIA Foundation  
funds raised in  
FY 2021

**\$20,000**

Awarded in FY 2021

## 2021 ATIA Foundation Scholarship Recipients



**Meg Smedley,  
Eagle River**  
\$1,000 - Chuck West Memorial Scholarship



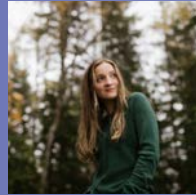
**Tia Kelliher,  
Eagle River**  
\$1,000 - Alaska Airlines  
Scholarship



**Laura Geissinger,  
Wasilla**  
\$1,250 - Alaska Collection by Pursuit Scholarship  
\$2,500 - Chris Keldaker Memorial Scholarship



**Chloe Manderson,  
Anchorage**  
\$1,250 - Alaska Collection by Pursuit Scholarship  
\$1,500 - All Alaska Tours Scholarship



**Lucy Hankins,  
Seward**  
\$1,000 - Alaska Railroad Corporation  
Scholarship



**Rafael Bitanga,  
Kodiak**  
\$1,000 - Alaska Society of Outdoor Nature  
Photographers Scholarship  
\$1,000 - CLIA Alaska Scholarship



**Christi Cruickshank,  
Fairbanks**  
\$2,000 - Tiana Hancock Memorial Scholarship



**Dylan Bender,  
Eagle River**  
\$1,000 - A Taste of Alaska Lodge Scholarship  
\$2,000 - ATIA Anchorage Chapter Scholarship



**Janessa Lorenz,  
Whittier**  
\$1,500 - Holland America Line  
Scholarship



**Linnaea Gossard,  
Cooper Landing**  
\$1,000 - Holland America Line  
Scholarship



**Oceana Howes,  
Anchorage**  
\$1,000 - Tim McDonnell Memorial  
Scholarship

# Royal Caribbean Local Alaska Grant Program

The ATIA Foundation partnered with the Royal Caribbean Group in the spring of 2021 to administer over \$800,000 in grants to Alaska communities. The grants were distributed to 76 businesses and non-profits operating in several regions of the state and were used to cover basic expenses, replacing lost income during the COVID19 pandemic.



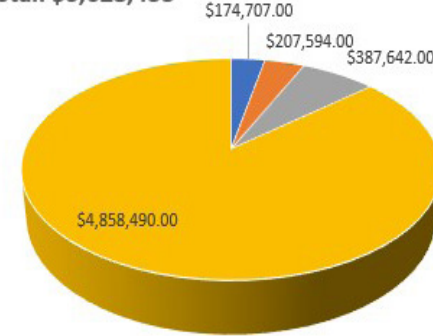
## Government Relations

The ATIA team continued advocacy efforts at the state and federal level on behalf of Alaska’s travel industry, specifically related to tourism marketing and COVID relief for tourism businesses and nonprofit partners. Amidst quarantines, a prolonged and virtual state legislative season, and complicated federal aid bills, ATIA government relations highlights included:

- Candidate forums with Dr. Al Gross and Senator Dan Sullivan for U.S. Senate and Alyse Galvin and Congressman Don Young for the U.S. House.
- A webinar on Proposition 2: Election reform.
- Letters to Alaska’s Congressional Delegation supporting legislation temporarily waiving the Passenger Vessel Services Act and allowing cruise ships to return to Alaska waters in 2021.
- Advocating at the federal level for a focus on the travel and tourism sector and language in passage of the American Rescue Plan Act funding.
- Testimony by ATIA President & CEO Sarah Leonard to the Alaska State Legislature and committees on support for statewide tourism marketing funding and effects of a government shutdown on tourism businesses.
- Securing grant funding from the federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) to educate communities and businesses statewide to become more COVID-resilient. By disseminating public safety messaging, sharing safe travel tips and local guidelines, ATIA’s efforts promoted the public health of our visitors and residents.

## Financials

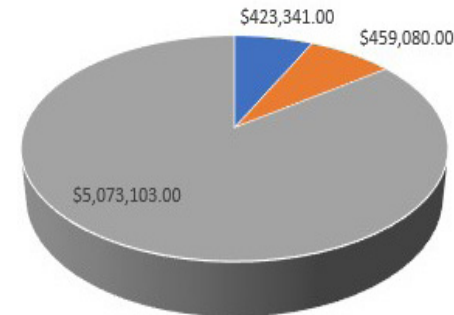
**Income Total: \$5,628,433**



■ Convention ■ Membership ■ Misc & Chapter ■ SOA Grant & Program Sales

State of Alaska Grants and Program Sales	\$4,858,490
Convention	\$174,707
Membership	\$207,594
Misc. Income/Chapters	\$387,642
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$5,628,433</b>

**Expenses Total: \$5,955,524**



■ O & M ■ Membership & Programs ■ Marketing Program

Travel Alaska Cooperative Marketing Program	\$5,073,103
Membership and Association Programs	\$459,080
Management and Operations	\$423,341
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$5,955,524</b>





## ATIA Staff

**President & Chief Executive Officer**  
Sarah Leonard

**Vice President of Marketing**  
Jillian Simpson

**Director of Partnerships & Travel Trade**  
Tanya Carlson

**Director of Finance and Administration**  
Andrea Rayt

**Director of Policy & Communications**  
Jeff Samuels

**Member Services Manager**  
Tay Clayton

**Sales Manager**  
Skye Hostetler

**Digital Content Manager**  
Lindsey Middendorf

**Programs Manager**  
Dontae McFalls

# 2020 - 2021 ATIA Board of Directors

## Executive Committee

**BOARD CHAIR**  
Bill Pedlar, Knightly Tours

**VICE CHAIR**  
Scott Habberstad, Alaska Airlines

**SECRETARY/MEMBERSHIP CHAIR**  
Craig Jennison, TEMSCO Helicopters

**TREASURER/FINANCE CHAIR**  
Dave McGlothlin, Holland America Group

**PAST CHAIR**  
Dan Oberlatz, Alaska Alpine Adventures

**TOURISM POLICY & PLANNING CHAIR**  
Josh Howes, Premier Alaska Tours

**GOVERNMENT RELATIONS CO-CHAIRS**  
Holly Johnson, Wings Airways & Taku Glacier Lodge  
Julie Saupe, Visit Anchorage

**MARKETING CHAIR**  
Colleen Stephens, Stan Stephens Glacier & Wildlife Cruises

**ATIA PRESIDENT & CEO**  
Sarah Leonard, Alaska Travel Industry Association

## Board Members

Matt Atkinson, Northern Alaska Tour Company  
John Binkley, Riverboat Discovery  
Adriel Butler, Borealis Base Camp  
Lalanya Downs, Cruise Line Industry Association  
Kory Eberhardt, A Taste of Alaska Lodge  
Emily Edenshaw, Alaska Native Heritage Center  
Camille Ferguson, Sitka Tribe of Alaska  
Elizabeth Hall, John Hall's Alaska Cruises & Tours

Scott McCrea, Explore Fairbanks  
Dennis McDonnell, Alaska Coach Tours  
Patti Mackey, Ketchikan Visitors Bureau  
Dan Rough, Holland America Line  
Thomas Stark, Wells Fargo  
Tennelle Peterson Wise, Grande Denali LLC  
Lt Governor Kevin Meyer, *Ex Officio*