

**COOK COUNTY, MINNESOTA**

# **COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR**

Salary: \$127,004 to \$173,804

COOK COUNTY



MINNESOTA

# WELCOME TO COOK COUNTY



Cook County, Minnesota, is a captivating region located in the northeastern corner of the state, along the rugged and scenic shores of Lake Superior. Spanning more than 3,300 square miles, it is one of Minnesota's largest counties by area but among the smallest by population, with approximately 5,500 residents. This low population density contributes to its reputation as a tranquil, unspoiled destination. Grand Marais, the county seat, serves as the cultural and administrative heart of the region, offering a blend of creative energy, local commerce, and access to nearby outdoor activities.

Renowned for its natural beauty, Cook County is home to some of the most iconic landscapes in Minnesota, including the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) and parts of the Superior National Forest. These areas attract outdoor enthusiasts from around the world who seek activities such as canoeing, hiking, fishing, and camping. The County's extensive trail systems, scenic byways, and pristine lakes make it a haven for nature lovers. Its vibrant arts and cultural scene complements the outdoor offerings, creating a community that thrives on creativity and natural inspiration.

Economically, Cook County is heavily reliant on tourism, with local businesses benefiting from a steady influx of visitors year-round. Efforts to diversify the economy include investments in broadband expansion, support for small businesses, and the promotion of sustainable practices in forestry and local crafts. The County also invests in public services, ensuring access to healthcare, education, and infrastructure for residents.

Cook County residents take pride in their strong community ties, environmental stewardship, and quality of life. Its balance of natural tranquility and cultural vibrancy makes it a unique place to live and visit. With ongoing efforts to preserve its environment and foster sustainable development, Cook County remains a cherished part of Minnesota's North Shore.

# ECONOMIC VITALITY

Cook County's economy thrives on its natural beauty, vibrant tourism sector, and entrepreneurial spirit. Tourism is the leading industry, attracting visitors year-round to explore iconic destinations like Lake Superior, the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW), and the Superior Hiking Trail. Resorts, restaurants, shops, and outdoor outfitters cater to these visitors, providing jobs and stimulating the local economy. Signature events, including the Grand Marais Arts Festival and Fisherman's Picnic, highlight the region's creative energy and attract additional visitors, boosting economic activity. Complementing this vibrant landscape, WTIP, Cook County's local radio station, has become an essential and highly valued community resource, fostering connection and information sharing across the region.

Small businesses play a vital role in the local economy, particularly those focused on art, handcrafted goods, and locally sourced products. These enterprises reflect the County's character and contribute to its unique cultural identity. Local farmers and producers provide fresh, high-quality food products, supporting the farm-to-table movement that is increasingly popular in the region. Sustainable forestry practices and agriculture further support economic activity while preserving the natural resources that are integral to the County's identity.

Cook County also emphasizes economic diversification and innovation. Investments in broadband infrastructure have expanded opportunities for remote work and technology-driven businesses, allowing the region to attract workers seeking a balanced lifestyle. Workforce development initiatives, including training programs and collaborations with educational institutions, ensure residents are well-equipped for emerging opportunities. Local organizations and government agencies actively support entrepreneurs by offering resources and guidance to grow small businesses.

Efforts to promote sustainability underpin the County's economic strategy. By balancing tourism with long-term development, Cook County supports a vibrant year-round community while protecting the natural assets that make the region so appealing. This forward-thinking approach fosters a resilient and adaptable economy, ensuring Cook County remains a cherished destination and a rewarding place to live and work.



# HEALTHCARE



## North Shore Health

**Location:** Grand Marais

**Services:**

- Inpatient Care: 16-bed hospital offering medical, surgical, and swing bed services.
- Emergency Services: 24/7 emergency care equipped to handle urgent medical needs.
- Skilled Nursing Facility: A 37-bed unit providing long-term care and rehabilitation services.
- Diagnostic Services: Radiology, lab testing, and imaging services, including X-rays and ultrasounds.
- Therapy Services: Physical, occupational, and speech therapy for inpatient and outpatient needs.
- Home Health Services: Assists patients with at-home care for recovery and chronic conditions.

**Special Features:**

- Ambulance Services: Provides emergency medical transport throughout Cook County.
- Telehealth Options: Offers remote access to specialized care, addressing the challenges of the County's remote geography.
- Community Health Initiatives: Hosts wellness programs and preventative care events.

## Sawtooth Mountain Clinic

**Location:** Grand Marais

**Services:** Primary care, behavioral health services, preventive care, chronic disease management, women's health, and pediatric services.

**Special Features:**

- Operates as a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), ensuring affordable care for all patients.
- Offers pharmacy services in collaboration with local pharmacies.
- Focuses on community health initiatives such as wellness programs and health education.



# EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES



## Cook County ISD 166

As the only public school district in Cook County, Cook County ISD 166 (Cook County Schools) enjoys strong community support. Parents, local businesses, and community organizations work collaboratively with the district to enhance educational opportunities.

Headquartered in Grand Marais, Cook County Schools is a small, community-centered district committed to providing high-quality education in a rural, supportive environment. The district is composed of Cook County Elementary and Cook County Middle/High School, which are located on a shared campus.

### Schools and Enrollment

- **Cook County Elementary:** Serves students in grades Pre-K through 5th.
- **Cook County Middle/High School:** Educates students in grades 6-12.

The district serves approximately 400 students, fostering small class sizes that enable personalized instruction and strong relationships between students, teachers, and families.

### Programs and Opportunities

ISD 166 emphasizes well-rounded education by offering diverse academic and extracurricular programs. Students benefit from:

- **Rigorous Academics:** Advanced placement courses, career and technical education (CTE), and a focus on college and career readiness.
- **Arts and Athletics:** Opportunities in music, drama, visual arts, and a variety of sports teams.
- **Cultural Education:** Partnerships with local organizations to incorporate Ojibwe language and culture into the curriculum, reflecting the area's rich Indigenous heritage.
- **Outdoor Learning:** Leveraging Cook County's natural environment to provide hands-on educational experiences.

### Charter Schools

These tuition-free schools offer diverse educational opportunities within Cook County.

- **Great Expectations School:** Serves students in grades Pre-K through 8th.
- **Oshki Ogimaag Community School:** K-6 charter school rooted in Anishinaabe culture and language.
- **Birch Grove Community School:** Serves students in grades Pre-K through 5th.

# RECREATION & EVENTS



Cook County, Minnesota, is an outdoor enthusiast's paradise, offering a wide range of recreational opportunities and vibrant cultural events throughout the year. Surrounded by the natural beauty of Lake Superior, the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW), and the Superior National Forest, the region provides unparalleled access to adventure and relaxation.

Outdoor activities take center stage in Cook County. In the warmer months, visitors and residents enjoy canoeing, kayaking, and fishing on the County's countless lakes and rivers. The BWCAW is particularly renowned for its pristine waters and remote camping experiences. Hiking is another popular pastime, with trails like the Superior Hiking Trail offering breathtaking views of Lake Superior and lush forests. Biking enthusiasts can explore the Gitchi-Gami State Trail and other scenic routes.

Winter transforms Cook County into a snowy wonderland. Lutsen Mountains, the Midwest's largest ski resort, offers downhill skiing and snowboarding, while the region's extensive network of trails is perfect for cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, and snowshoeing. Unique winter experiences like dog sledding and ice fishing attract adventurers from near and far.

Cook County also boasts a vibrant cultural scene, with events and venues that celebrate the area's artistic spirit and community ties. The Grand Marais Arts Festival and Fisherman's Picnic draw locals and visitors for art displays, live music, and local cuisine. North House Folk School hosts workshops and the popular Unplugged music series, blending creativity with a welcoming, small-town atmosphere. The Arrowhead Center for the Arts in Grand Marais enriches the community with diverse performances, from live theater to concerts and film screenings. Additionally, partnerships with organizations like the Duluth Area Family YMCA bring wellness and recreation opportunities to residents and visitors, fostering a sense of community and belonging.

For those seeking relaxation, the County offers cozy lodging, charming small-town shops, and exceptional dining featuring fresh, locally sourced ingredients. Scenic drives along Highway 61 reveal stunning lake views, waterfalls, and wildlife, making every journey an adventure.

Whether exploring its wilderness, enjoying winter sports, or immersing in its culture, Cook County offers a rich variety of experiences, ensuring something for everyone to enjoy year-round.



# THE ORGANIZATION



The Cook County government operates as a county-level public administration in Minnesota, focusing on providing essential services and governance to its residents. It is organized under a commissioner-based system, with a five-member Board of Commissioners serving as the primary governing body. Each Commissioner is elected by district and works collaboratively to oversee the County's budget, policies, and strategic direction. The Board addresses a wide range of issues including infrastructure, public health, environmental conservation, and economic development.

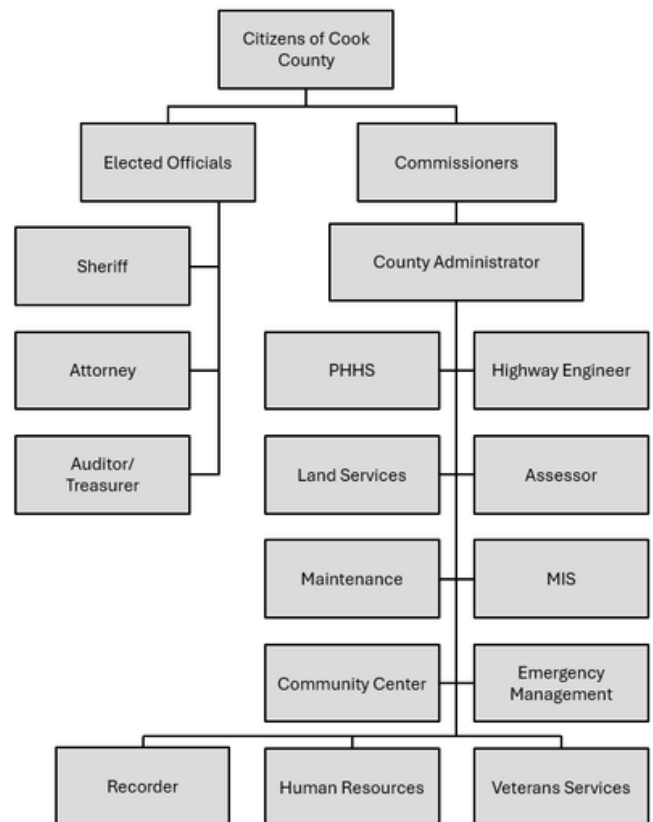
The county government is headquartered in Grand Marais, the county seat, where most administrative offices are located. Key departments within the Cook County government include:

- **Public Health and Human Services:** Responsible for health initiatives, family support programs, and social services.
- **Highway Department:** Maintains and improves roads, bridges, and other critical infrastructure in this geographically large and often remote area.
- **Land Services:** Manages zoning, planning, environmental protection, and property tax assessments.
- **Sheriff's Office:** Provides law enforcement, emergency response, and public safety services.
- **Emergency Management:** Ensures preparedness and response to natural disasters and other emergencies, particularly critical given the County's wilderness and weather-related risks.

Cook County also places significant emphasis on partnerships with state and federal agencies, particularly for managing public lands such as the Superior National Forest and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW). This coordination ensures that local priorities align with broader conservation and recreational goals.

Additionally, Cook County actively engages with its residents through public meetings, advisory committees, and transparency initiatives, maintaining a strong connection between government operations and community needs.

Expenditures	2023	2024
General	11,813,018	12,498,724
Highway	14,264,571	20,808,123
PHHS	5,199,895	5,273,000
Airport	181,665	189,365
Building	251,800	100,000
2018 CIP Bonds	150,058	148,000
2018 Capital Notes	69,773	63,750
Sales Tax Bonds	937,178	991,124
HRA	225,011	290,414
2023 CIP Bonds	-	110,460
Capital Reserves	210,000	127,157
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$33,302,969</b>	<b>\$40,600,117</b>



Full Time - 125 employees  
Part Time - 6 employees

# CORE DUTIES OF THE POSITION



## **Policy Implementation**

- Implements County Board plans and policies by delegating work and ensuring completion.
- Enforces Board decisions, sets goals with department heads, and recommends policies and procedures.
- Coordinates and ensures compliance with Board policies across all County departments.

## **Staff Management**

- Manages appointed department heads and coordinates with elected officials.
- Supervises administrative staff and exercises personnel authority including hiring, promotion, and discipline, with Board approval.
- Ensures compliance with County policies and laws.

## **Board Meeting Organization and Preparation**

- Organizes regular and special Board meetings, schedules speakers, and prepares agendas and materials.
- Ensures timely delivery of information to the County Board.
- Attends Board meetings, serves as a resource, recommends actions, and ensures legal posting of minutes.

## **Legislative and Communication Support**

- Prepares correspondence, resolutions, and legislative proposals.
- Communicates with area legislators and monitors legislative activities.

## **Efficiency and Innovation**

- Evaluates County operations to improve efficiency, eliminate redundancies, and drive innovation.
- Leads change strategies and develops new systems and processes.

## **Special Projects and Budgeting**

- Oversees special projects at the Board's request and works with the Auditor-Treasurer on budgets and financial updates.
- Advises on the County's financial condition and enforces budget provisions.

## **Capital Improvement**

- Recommends, develops, and coordinates capital improvement projects.

## **Labor Relations**

- Administers labor contracts, hears grievances, and develops negotiation strategies.

## **Public Representation**

- Acts as Board spokesperson and represents the Board at events, meetings, and committees.
- Serves as a voting delegate to the Association of Minnesota Counties.

## **Internal Coordination**

- Organizes department head meetings and prepares agendas and information.

## **Data Practices Oversight**

- Ensures compliance with the Minnesota Data Practices Act and serves as Data Practices Compliance Official.



# DESIRED ATTRIBUTES



## **Leadership and Management Qualities**

- A calm and approachable leader who fosters stability within the organization.
- A strategic thinker who supports capital improvements, advances strategic goals, and shares a clear vision for the organization's future.
- A leader who builds cohesive teams, boosts morale, and cultivates a workplace that retains and attracts top talent.
- A proactive leader who takes initiative, follows through, and consistently acts in the County's best interests.
- A manager skilled at navigating conflict, capable of engaging in difficult discussions and taking decisive, sometimes unpopular actions.
- A leader who prioritizes community involvement and understands the importance of work-life balance.

## **Communication and Collaboration Skills**

- A professional with strong written and verbal communication skills to keep stakeholders informed.
- A leader who emphasizes collaboration and fosters relationships with staff, local business leaders, State and Federal authorities, and Tribal representatives.
- A facilitator who effectively manages diverse opinions, guides discussions toward resolution, and provides comprehensive issue backgrounds.
- A leader who listens, values staff input, and utilizes data-driven analysis to inform decision-making.
- A collaborative partner with the cultural competence necessary to maintain and strengthen positive, consistent relationships with the Grand Portage Band and Minnesota Chippewa Tribes.

## **Organizational Awareness and Team Development**

- A manager with strong organizational awareness, capable of understanding departmental needs, workloads, and policies to ensure consistency across the organization.
- A manager who supports leadership and employees by encouraging training and development while maintaining accountability through performance evaluations.
- A leader who enhances trust and collaboration between the Board, leadership team, and staff.

## **Ethical Leadership and Professional Integrity**

- A professional who demonstrates integrity, honesty, and ethical leadership in all aspects of their role.
- A leader who effectively implements Board directives, even in the face of criticism and public scrutiny.

## **Operational and Functional Expertise**

- A leader with a strong understanding of County operations and applicable Minnesota statutes and laws; County government experience preferred.
- A professional with proven financial management skills including budgeting expertise and a commitment to transparency.
- An individual with a solid grasp of Human Resources functions and policies, particularly within a union environment.
- A leader with project management experience including maintaining and constructing facilities.

# POSITION ANNOUNCEMENT



**County:** Cook County, Minnesota

**Position:** County Administrator

**Salary:** \$127,004 to \$173,804

**Application Deadline:** January 15, 2025

**Job Summary:** The County Administrator serves as the chief administrative officer, overseeing operations, departments, and personnel in compliance with Minnesota Statute 375A.06. Reporting to the County Board, the Administrator ensures adherence to Board directives, policies, and procedures, coordinates County activities, and unifies its management. This role provides strategic leadership, assisting the Board in shaping vision and goals while fostering a workplace culture aligned with the County's mission. The Administrator exercises significant independent judgment in directing programs and functions under the Board's jurisdiction. Responsibilities include supervising staff, evaluating performance, managing training and discipline, and promoting professional development through coaching and mentorship.

**Minimum Qualifications:** Bachelor's degree in Public or Business Administration or related field and five (5) years of management experience in administration, human resources, and public finance, or an equivalent combination of education and experience.

**Apply:** Visit <https://daviddrown.hiringplatform.com/281759-cook-county-administrator/1078127-application-form/en> and complete the application process by January 15, 2025. Finalists will be selected on February 11, 2025, and final interviews will be held on March 5, 2025.

Please direct any questions to Pat Melvin at [pat@daviddrown.com](mailto:pat@daviddrown.com) or 612-920-3320 x116.