

Northeast Michigan Regional Prosperity Initiative

10-YEAR PLAN: 2015 – 2025



COMMUNITY
SUPPORT

ECONOMIC
EXPANSION

TALENT
ADVANCEMENT

DISCOVER
Northeast Michigan
EAST OF EXPECTED

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**The 11-county
region of Northeastern
lower Michigan is
home to more than
200,000 people.**

Covering more than 6,000 square miles with numerous bodies of water and small urban centers, the region is both remote and communal. Its culture celebrates the seclusion that comes with its wide-open spaces and pristine forests, yet residents have a shared association and great pride in their communities.

In this environment, prosperity equates to high quality of life. What makes for a high quality of life in Northeast Michigan? A slow pace, outdoor recreation, small town character, and a sense of community. However, these idyllic conditions cannot be achieved or sustained without hard work and careful planning. The region must strive for economic prosperity in order to thrive.

Achieving economic prosperity is a challenge for many reasons. The vast, wide-open spaces make for low population density. Transportation and other infrastructure can be costly, increasing the burden on residents, businesses, and communities. The region can't compete with larger urban areas when it comes to social and cultural diversity, income opportunities, and amenities.

Despite the challenges, many dedicated residents show great passion for the region every day. That passion and perseverance reflects a shared pride in the many assets of the region. Collectively, the region leverages those assets in order to support a vision of thriving, connected communities. Communities in all corners of the region are working diligently to improve quality of life and showcase Northeast Michigan as an ideal place to live, work, and play.

10-Year Plan

This 10-year plan highlights the vision, goals, and strategies that have been identified as shared priorities for the entire region. Many stakeholders participated in its development, and it is based on data from various reputable sources as well as sound planning practices.

The Northeast Michigan Regional Prosperity Initiative plan was first developed in 2014 with a five-year scope (2015 – 2019). This plan expands that scope to a ten-year timeframe, from 2015 through 2025. Further, it reports on trends in data, progress made toward goals, and new objectives for the coming five years.

Of particular interest to the RPI collaborative is attraction, retention, and development of skilled talent. This issue is a priority because it correlates to every other aspect of the collaborative's work, including Transportation, Infrastructure, Business Development, and Regional Collaboration. As such, a 10-year Talent Plan was created under separate cover to address the varied aspects of the talent challenges in the region. The goals and strategies for talent are incorporated here where relevant; the full Talent Plan is referenced as appropriate.

Executive Summary

REGIONAL PROFILE

Data & Demographics

The **population** of the region is low and has low density, at **202,669** people spread across **6,430** square miles. This is a decrease of 1,368 people since 2014.

The area is **aging**, with more than **36.6%** of the population aged 60 or older. The age group 25-59 comprises **44.1%**, a decrease of 2.4% since 2014.

The **education** of the region is improving, with **16.3%** of population holding a Bachelor's Degree or higher and **34.6%** with Some College or an Associate's Degree. This is an increase from 14% and 32% respectively in 2014.

The region ranks **higher** than the state average in population with Some College or an Associates Degree (32.3%), but **lower** than the state average for Bachelor's Degree or higher (28%).

The **unemployment rate** for the region is **5.6%**, a decrease of 12.2%. *2013 to November 2018*

The total **labor force** is **85,154**, a decrease from 88,500 in 2013. *2013 to November 2018*

The **Long-term Unemployed** rate is **23.3%** of the total unemployed, 2nd highest in the state. *2016*

Average **per capita income** is **\$34,630**. *2016*

The **poverty rate** is high at **17.1%**. The rate of children living in poverty (under the age of 18) is **26.6%**. Families whose household income is lower than the cost of living is **42.0%**. *2016*

The region has **10,202** businesses, **82%** of which are small businesses. *2017*

Larger companies (10 or more employees) provide a majority of jobs, at **63.3%** of total jobs in the region. *2017*

ASSETS

Numerous **recreation** opportunities and plentiful **fresh water, forests, and farmland**

High quality **programs and services** for the workforce, businesses, and communities

Collaboration across the region

High **quality of life** combined with **low cost of living** and small-town **character**

Infrastructure that provides a foundation for growth

Challenges & Opportunities

Decreasing **working age** population, increasing **retirement age** population

Higher than state average **poverty** rates, high school **drop-out** rates, and **long-term unemployed**

Lack of available, quality **childcare**

Minimal **entrepreneurship** culture

High rates of opioid and other **substance abuse**

Inconsistent **broadband** availability

Transportation difficulties

Community Support

Placemaking

Goal: Strengthen the quality of place throughout Northeast Michigan.

- Target investment in small **towns**
- Coordinate placemaking efforts to establish **linkages** across communities and the region

Results: Diversified, more resilient economy; Unified, stable communities

Regional Branding

Goal: Improve awareness and recognition of the region in state, national, and global markets.

- Solidify and implement a **regional identity** that leverages placemaking and tourism, and incorporates **individual community branding**

Results: Unified identity and coordinated promotion; Targeted economic development

Transportation & Transit

Goal: Develop or enhance transportation options across the region for efficiency and accessibility.

- Increase **awareness** of existing transportation options and **resources** for the workforce
- **Collaborate and coordinate across sectors** to reduce costs for logistics and workforce transportation

Results: Reduced costs and more successful businesses; Increased, more reliable workforce

Infrastructure

Goal: Ensure adequate infrastructure to meet the needs of businesses, residents, and visitors.

- Continue increasing **availability** of and **access** to high-speed internet
- Continue providing **resources** to improve infrastructure, including assessments, plans, and technical assistance

Results: Increased use of broadband; Improved awareness of infrastructure capacity and conditions; Plans and support for improving infrastructure

Shared Vision

- Innovation
- Interconnected Network
- Excellent and Efficient Education
- Transforming and Responsive Workforce
- Sustainable Natural Resources
- Collaboration and Leadership

Regional Collaboration

Goal: Enable consistent and coordinated services in the region.

- Facilitate a collaborative approach for all RPI-funded projects
- Achieve efficiencies by sharing services where appropriate
- Build on existing regional groups for collaborative ventures

Results: Efficient systems and effective use of limited resources; Leading collaborative approaches in the region and state

Economic Expansion

Business Development

Goal: Foster an entrepreneurial culture in the region and grow existing businesses.

- Encourage entrepreneurship through intentional, facilitated activities
- Increase volume of and access to business support resources
- Diversify and globally connect businesses

Results: Improved climate for small business; Thriving economy

Targeted Industry Clusters

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Aerospace
- Energy, Efficiency, and Renewables
- Healthcare
- Local Foods
- Tourism
- Wood Products

Goal: Support targeted industry clusters.

- Provide enhanced business development support
- Develop and attract a skilled workforce
- Promote the industry **inside and outside** the region
- Coordinate **logistics and transportation** for goods and talent

Results: Increased capacity and market expansion; Skilled workforce; Successful, growing businesses

Talent Advancement

Goal: Attract, develop, and retain a talented workforce that meets the needs of local employers.

- Diversify funding for the workforce system
- Increase collaboration among stakeholders in the workforce system
- Engage employers
- Talent attraction, development, and retention

Results: Stronger workforce system; Well-prepared labor pool; Successful businesses

MEASUREMENT

↑ Increased labor force participation

↑ Increased working age population

↓ Decreased unemployment

↗ Improved educational attainment

↑ Increased household income

↑ Increased number of small businesses

Regional Prosperity Initiative

What is the Regional Prosperity Initiative?

The Regional Prosperity Initiative (RPI) is a mechanism for increasing collaboration among numerous partners across a geographic region. It is based on the premise that working together toward shared goals will increase prosperity for everyone. The RPI prompts partners to identify strategies that work best for the region. Participation is voluntary and locally-driven.

RPI was created as part of the FY 2014 State of Michigan budget (59 PA 2013), and was further strengthened through a Governor's Executive Directive in 2018. Funding is made available to regions that show collaboration among public, private, and nonprofit sectors, and create a plan for working together in the best interests of the region.

Why is collaboration important?

Collaboration is an often-cited goal for many organizations. However, true collaboration requires a framework that supports efficient use of resources, increased communication, and a common vision. This framework is provided by RPI – it gives structure to something that is not well-defined.

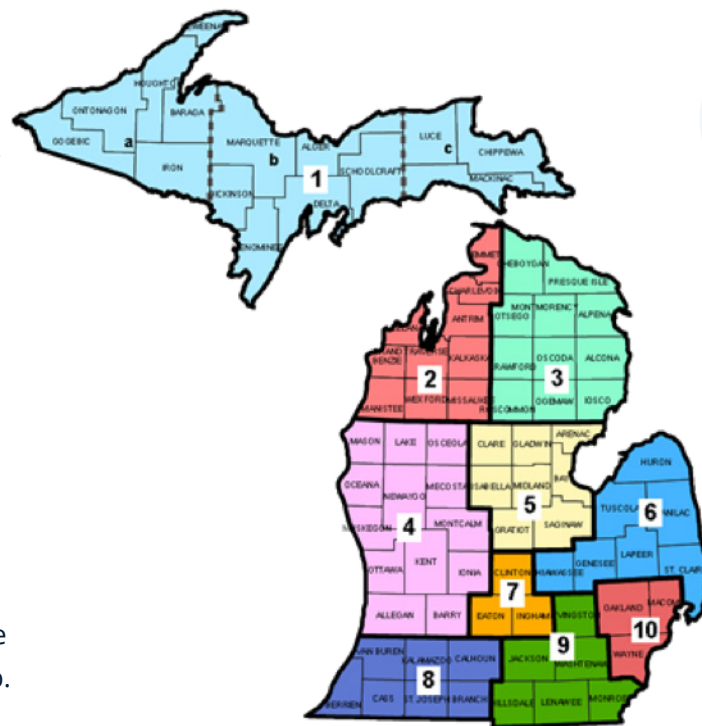
Without collaboration, duplication occurs. Duplication is not only wasteful, it can be confusing to communities. Residents, businesses, and agencies don't know who to call in order to access services. Collaboration is also important because it brings multiple stakeholders together to work toward the same goals, share diverse ideas, and create something that can't be created by any individual agency. If every stakeholder were working toward different (or opposing) goals, their impact would be minimal or even detrimental. Collaboration draws on each partner's strengths, making the collective impact exponential.

What are the Regions?

There are ten Prosperity Regions in the state of Michigan. They were defined based on comprehensive research and data that indicated aligned economies, infrastructure, and services. Departments within the State of Michigan are also working to align their service delivery to these same regional boundaries.

How does the funding work?

The State of Michigan awards grants to each RPI region based on specific criteria, including effectiveness of strategies and level of collaboration. The funding is to be used for locally-identified projects that support economic prosperity. In addition, all partners bring their organization's resources to the table, aligning their work with the vision and goals of the group.



REGION 3

The Northeast Michigan Prosperity Region (Region 3) is made up of 11 counties: Cheboygan, Presque Isle, Otsego, Montmorency, Alpena, Crawford, Oscoda, Alcona, Roscommon, and Ogemaw. These 11 counties consist of 6,610 square miles of land and water. The many small communities of Region 3 are served by numerous agencies who are committed to working in collaboration.

RPI Membership consists of the following dedicated agency partners:

- Northeast Michigan Council of Governments
- Michigan Works! Northeast Consortium
- Michigan Works! Region 7B
- Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources
- Michigan Department of Environmental Quality
- Michigan Department of Transportation
- Michigan Economic Development Corporation
- Northern Lakes Economic Alliance
- Crawford County Economic Development
- Otsego County Economic Alliance
- Ogemaw County EDC
- Roscommon County EDO
- Oscoda County EDC
- Briley Township
- City of Grayling
- Northern Initiatives
- Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency
- Kirtland Community College / Kirtland M-TEC
- Alpena Community College
- North Central Michigan College
- Iosco RESA
- Alpena Public Schools
- COOR ISD
- COPS ISD
- Connect MI
- Carmeuse
- Weyerhaeuser

In 2018, the RPI Collaborative began meeting jointly with the Workforce Development Board that covers eight of the eleven counties. This vastly increased engagement with the private sector, and provided more opportunity for cross-pollination of ideas, streamlined discussions, and potential for collaborative ventures. Membership of that Workforce Development Board not already listed above includes the following:

- MEC Inc.
- Arauco
- Fairfield Inn
- Moran Iron Works
- Springs Window Fashions
- Blarney Stone Broadcasting
- Employment Services
- Amos Mfg, Inc.
- Michigan Education Association
- International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers
- Statewide Carpenters & Millwrights JATF
- Michigan Rehabilitation Services
- Veterans Services Division, Workforce Development Agency (State of Michigan)
- Department of Health & Human Services

Regional Profile

The Northeast Michigan region has seen ongoing trends that indicate both strengths and weaknesses in the area's population, workforce, and economy.¹ The goal of this plan is to acknowledge the areas where improvement is needed, and enact strategies that leverage strengths for maximum impact.

Population

As of 2018, the Northeast region had an estimated total population of 202,669. This is a decrease of 0.7% from 204,037 in 2014. At the same time, the state of Michigan's population remained relatively flat, increasing by 47,636 people to 9,962,311.

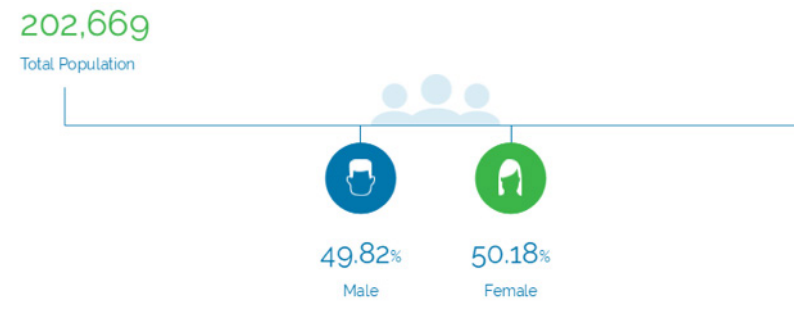


Figure 1: Population, 2018, Northeast Prosperity Alliance

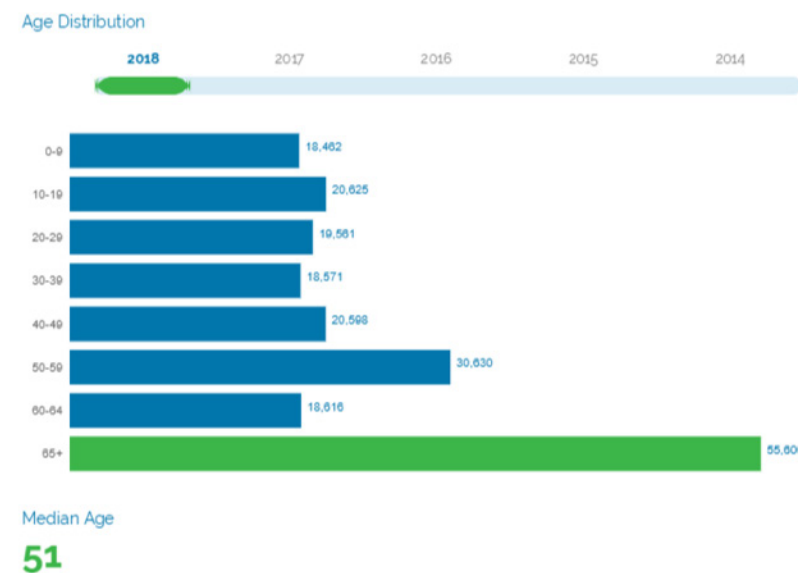


Figure 2: Population by Age Cohort, 2018, Northeast Prosperity Alliance

The age distribution of the region's residents is concentrated in older age groups. In 2014, 34% of the population was aged 60 and older. This increased to 36.6% as of 2018. This trend reflects the area's draw as a desirable retirement destination.

As the region ages, there is a decrease in the working age population. In 2014, 46.5% of the population was age 25 – 59. As of 2018, that had decreased to 44.1%. This has workforce and economic implications, from possible talent shortages to increased demand for health services.

Education

In 2014, just 14% of the region held a Bachelor's degree or higher, significantly lower than the 25% statewide average. Approximately 32% of residents had Some College or an Associate's Degree. Fortunately, these statistics have improved as of 2018: 16.3% of the region has a Bachelor's degree or higher, and 34.6% has Some College or an Associate's Degree. The region ranks lower than the statewide average for Bachelor's degree attainment, with 28% of residents holding a Bachelor's degree or higher, and higher than the statewide average for Some College or an Associate's Degree, at 32.3%.

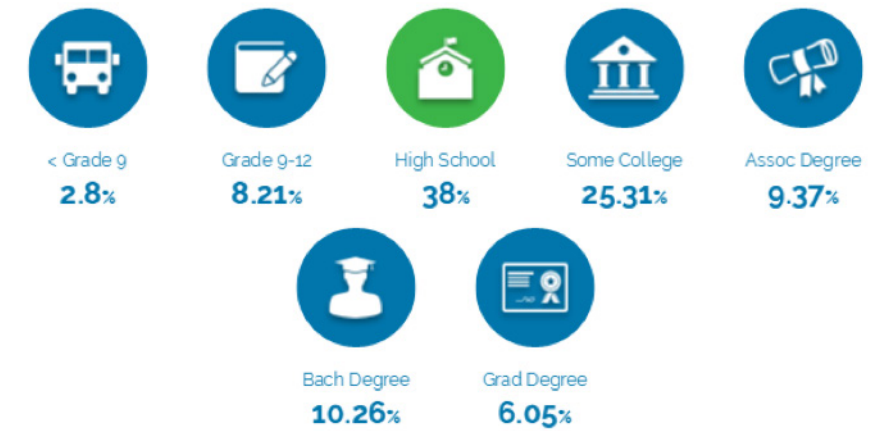


Figure 3: Educational Attainment, 2018, Northeast Prosperity Alliance

Labor Force and Unemployment

The labor force consists of 85,154 people as of 2018, a decrease of 3.7% from 88,500 in 2013. This directly correlates to the decrease in numbers for the working-age population. Although this trend has been consistent for many years, the decrease is lessening: the region's labor force fell by 7.6% between 2009 and 2013.

Unemployment has declined substantially since the great recession. As of 2018, the region's unemployment rate is 5.6%. This is a reduction from 12.2% in 2013, but is still higher than the statewide rate of 4.27%.

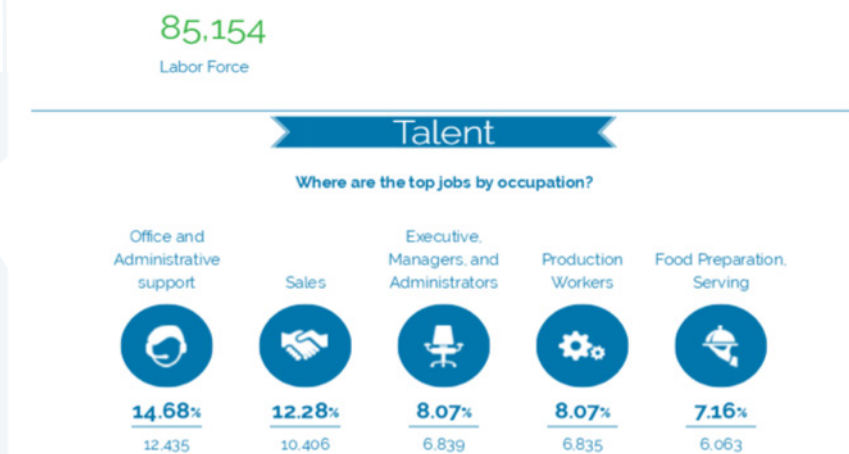


Figure 4: Labor Force and Jobs by Occupation, 2018, Northeast Prosperity Alliance

¹Data in this section is reported for 2014 and 2018, with changes during that timeframe. Unless otherwise noted, data for 2014 is sourced from the RPI 5-year plan (Bureau of Labor Market and Strategic Initiatives); data for 2018 comes from the region's demographic website: <http://www.discovernortheastmichigan.org/demographics.asp>

Businesses and Jobs

Region 3 has 10,202 businesses. A vast majority of these are small businesses, with approximately 82% at nine employees or fewer. However, more than half of total jobs (63.3%) are provided by companies with ten employees or more. This increased slightly since 2014, when 58.3% of jobs were provided by larger companies.²

In 2017, the leading industries by volume of jobs were Health Care and Social Services, Retail, Accommodation and Food Services, and Manufacturing.



Figure 5: Top Industries by Job, 2018, Northeast Prosperity Alliance

The public workforce development system is charged with identifying growth industries and occupations that are in-demand. The two Michigan Works! agencies in Region 3 – [Michigan Works! Northeast Consortium](#) and [Michigan Works! Region 7B](#) – have identified industries with potential for providing high quality jobs. These industries were identified based on a combination of labor market information, job openings and long-term vacancies, as well as local employer input.

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Healthcare
- Wood Products
- Construction
- Professional and Business Services
- Transportation and Warehousing

Assets

High quality of life is a primary goal for any community. Northeast Michigan's quality of life is based on numerous factors, including natural resources, small town character, recreation, and much more.

Assets represent existing strengths that can be leveraged to further support economic activity and other successful ventures within the region.

Water

The region's many waterways and access points are critical for the area's tourism industry. They enhance business opportunities and draw national, state, and local investment. These assets include, among many:

- 160,000 acres of inland lakes
- 4,000 miles of rivers – including AuSable River and other Blue-Ribbon Trout Streams such as Sturgeon River, Pigeon River, Upper Black River
- Fishing
- Lake Huron
- Lake Huron Blueways System
- Michigan Inland Waterway
- Numerous locations for swimming and recreation including canoeing, kayaking, sailing, motorboating, ice skating and ice fishing in the winter, and much more
- Ocqueoc Falls
- Over 200 public water access points
- Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary – the world's only freshwater shipwreck sanctuary

Land

Open spaces are plentiful in Region 3, giving access and opportunity for recreation, agriculture, tourism, and more.

- Farmland
- Mackinac Island
- Minerals and quarries: largest open quarry in the world
- Scenic beauty
- Unique glacial and limestone geology
- Wetlands
- Wide-open spaces with aesthetically pleasing vistas

²YourEconomy.org; due to the suppression of data for confidentiality purposes, averages were calculated based on percentage from each county rather than number of companies

Forests & Wildlife

A vast proportion of the region's geography is dedicated to forests and wildlife. Preservation and sustainable use of these natural resources is of critical importance to the prosperity of the many communities across the region.

- 1.6 million acres of National and State forestland
- Dark sky parks
- Elk viewing at Thunder Bay Resort and Gaylord Elk Park
- Hartwick Pines
- Hundreds of parks and campgrounds
- Hunting and fishing
- Huron National Forest
- Kirtland warbler
- Old growth forests
- Pigeon River State Forest; Largest elk herd east of the Mississippi
- River Road National Scenic Byway
- Snowmobiling, snow-shoeing, and cross-country skiing through snow-covered forests
- Wood products industry

Culture

Cultural amenities are based on the natural resources of the area, and serve as a foundation for the region's high quality of life.

- 16 Lighthouses
- ARTrail
- Cheboygan Carnegie Building
- Cheboygan Opera House
- Community theaters
- Historic Mill Creek
- Moran Iron Works Sculpture Garden
- Museums
- Quilt Trails
- Sunrise Side Wine & Hops Trail
- UpNorth Trails



Infrastructure

Despite the small, widespread population base in the large rural area, Region 3's infrastructure provides a solid foundation for economic growth.

- Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center
- Camp Grayling National Guard Training Center
- Dams and electric powerplants and other alternative energy facilities
- Deepwater ports at Rogers City, Alpena, Cheboygan
- Extensive cellular telephone network
- General aviation airports and commercial airport in Alpena
- High Wire Corridor (Rogers city)
- Industrial parks
- Kirtland M-TEC
- Marinas
- Oil and gas facilities
- Public sewer and water in urban centers
- Rail connections
- Regional / local hospitals
- Steady increase in high speed internet access
- Trail systems to hike, bike, cross-country ski, ride horseback, ORV, motorcycle, snowmobile
- University Center representing eight colleges and universities
- US 23, US 127, I-75, and state highways

Community

A strong sense of community is one of the strongest aspects of Northeast Michigan; every corner of the region values its uniqueness and takes pride in living there.

- Close to Canada
- Community festivals
- Distinct four seasons
- Golf courses
- Growing population of retirees
- Low cost of living
- Outdoor recreation – live, work, and play out your backdoor
- Room for expansion and growth
- Safe communities – low crime rates
- Slower pace of life and low traffic congestion
- US-23 Heritage Route
- Young Professionals organizations

Challenges

While the assets of the region are many, there remain some obstacles to economic vitality and community prosperity. These challenges represent opportunities that, when overcome through collaboration and investment, can become new strengths for Region 3. Addressing these challenges will support talent attraction, business growth, community development, and overall regional success.

Of the challenges identified five years ago, many have seen significant improvement due to the hard work of the RPI's membership. Many challenges remain, but at varying levels of need.

- Aging infrastructure
- Decreasing population in the 25-54 age bracket; increasing population in retirement age
- Difficulty attracting talented workers
- Finding a drug-free, skilled workforce
- Fragmented industry
- Freight costs – long distances to larger markets
- Geography: large land area with sparse population and low density
- High levels of poverty and working poor
- High percentage of long-term unemployed compared to the rest of the state
- Lack of public transit in most of the region
- Lack of strong regional voice for advocacy at state and national levels
- Limited broadband access
- Low level of educational attainment
- Steady and long-term decline in the number of K-12 students

It is worth noting that the region is not alone in struggling with these issues. Many communities throughout the state of Michigan, and across the country, are experiencing declines in the working age population. This has ripple effects, impacting other aspects of community prosperity: fewer families enrolling students in local schools, less revenue for public investment in infrastructure, and fewer small businesses to offer job opportunities.

The RPI's work in the coming five years will be to continue collaboration, enhance partnerships, build upon existing efforts, and leverage the strengths of the region to continue making strides towards overcoming these challenges.



Shared Vision

Our vision is to provide current and future generations with a vibrant, sustainable, and prosperous Northeast Michigan region that:

- Promotes innovation across the economy and supports entrepreneurs with connections and resources.
- Tells the world that we are an interconnected network of great places.
- Enhance excellence and efficiency in education from early childhood through all stages of life.
- Provides entrepreneurial and employability skills through education and training that results in a continuously transforming and responsive workforce.
- Utilizes our natural resources in a sustainable way for economic and community development.
- Fulfills the current and future needs of the region through strong collaboration and leadership.

In order to enact this vision, the RPI has developed goals and strategies for three key areas of focus: **Community Support**, **Economic Expansion**, and **Talent Advancement**. The strategies represent a call to action for everyone who has a stake in the success of the Northeast Michigan region: organizations, citizens, businesses, elected officials, and entire communities.

Every year, the RPI Collaborative has and will continue to develop a Work Plan that details the action steps for implementing these strategies and for achieving the corresponding goals. In each section below, several “Key Activities” are identified; the collaborative will use these as a starting place to determine specific tactics for each year’s work plan. The activities chosen each year may vary depending upon resources and capacity. The strategies and tactics with the most urgency and/or impact have been identified in a prioritized list (see Priority Projects section at the end of this plan).

Community Support

Placemaking

Goal: Strengthen the quality of place throughout Northeast Michigan

It is clear that the new economy provides flexibility for a knowledge-based workforce. Virtual networks make it easy to work anywhere, whether as an entrepreneur or at a home office. The significant need for employees across the country also enables mobility for skilled workers. In other words, workers can choose where they want to live, knowing that job opportunities are available in a variety of forms. Therefore, a region's advantage is determined by its quality of place – the features and benefits that attract people to live and work there.

Northeast Michigan holds many assets for this type of attraction. These same assets may also improve retention – a high quality placemaking approach can reduce the “brain drain” that occurs when young people move elsewhere.

Despite the strength of these assets, there are many improvements that can be made in order to enhance their appeal for a targeted audience. Ongoing efforts to achieve this goal will result in a diversified, more resilient economy, more good jobs, and stable communities.

Following are specific strategies that will enhance quality of place in Northeast Michigan:

Strategy: Target investment in small towns

This strategy involves providing support to the cities and villages that have existing capacity and infrastructure, place-based appeal, and interest in placemaking activities. The RPI Collaborative identified these targeted communities in 2014; they will continue to be areas of focus for the coming five years.

- *Strategic Placemaking Centers (SPCs):* Alpena, Cheboygan, Gaylord, Grayling, Houghton Lake, Oscoda/AuSable, Rogers City, Tawas City/East Tawas, West Branch. These communities are urban centers that have a critical mass of population and supportive infrastructure.
- *Strategic Placemaking Nodes³ (SPNs):* Atlanta, Harrisville, Hillman, Indian River, Lewiston, Lincoln, Mackinaw City, Mio, Onaway, Posen, Roscommon. These communities are smaller in population size, but have significant placemaking appeal, such as high tourism activity.

Strategy: Coordinate placemaking efforts to establish linkages across communities and the region

This strategy involves regional coordination and connection. It will unite placemaking activities through a regional approach, while recognizing the unique value of each community.

³Strategic Placemaking Nodes were identified in the RPI 5-year plan; they are designated as “nodes” rather than centers because of their smaller size.

Key Activities

- Obtain Redevelopment-Ready Community certification from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation for targeted placemaking centers
- Conduct Target Market Analyses to determine need and suitability for targeted investment
- Attain Michigan Main Street community designation from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation for targeted placemaking centers
- Create community plans that strategically target investment such as Trail Plans, Place Plans, and Recreation Plans

Indicators of success:

- Increased number of families living in the region to increase the volume of workers, small business start-ups, and school enrollments
- Increased total number of business establishments

Regional Branding

Goal: Improve awareness and recognition of the region in state, national, and global markets.

Northeast Michigan has long struggled with recognition for its economic and community development potential. It is often seen as a vacation destination and/or retirement locale, but rarely selected as a hot spot for business activity. The strategies below seek to use the assets that attract tourists as a means of attracting talent and business. In order to do so, a regional identity must be solidified and promoted widely. This should be done in a way that allows each individual community to emphasize its strengths and assets, while still participating in a larger regional marketing effort.

Ongoing efforts to achieve this goal will result in a unified identity and coordinated promotion, support for targeted economic development, and an influx of talent, new businesses, and tourists.

Strategy: Solidify and implement a regional identity that leverages placemaking and tourism, and incorporates individual community branding

Many communities across the region have developed brands that showcase their unique assets. When developing this RPI plan five years ago, a study was conducted that inventoried community identities and branding, and also identified common themes. As a result, two regional identities were established: “Discover Northeast Michigan” and “Our Trails Take You Farther.”

This strategy will build upon those efforts to better promote the regional identity and make it widely available for implementation across numerous markets. It will also provide tools for use in attracting and retaining talent, businesses, and tourists. All efforts will highlight both the *unity and uniqueness* of the region.

Strategy: Create a strategic tourism partnership that coordinates connections across branding, tourism, talent attraction, and community identity

This strategy will ensure alignment across multiple activities by convening tourism stakeholders to provide leadership and coordination. This group will connect placemaking efforts and regional identity with tourism marketing in order to strengthen overall promotion of the region. Tourism is a primary driver of the economy, and provides a connection to the region for many people. It should therefore be leveraged and coordinated in various forms and methods for promoting the region.

Key Activities:

- Develop a consistent marketing and outreach strategy with buy-in and support from strategic placemaking centers
- Create a tourism partnership that incorporates community development and placemaking
- Coordinate a strategic partnership with Pure Michigan
- Improve the region's online presence across multiple websites that represent various communities, natural resources, and other assets
- Develop place-based branding packages for companies to use when attracting talent

Indicators of success:

- Recognition of the region from national and state entities
- Increased tourism activity
- Increased number of families living in the region to increase the volume of workers, small business start-ups, and school enrollments
- Increased number of small businesses to diversify the economy and create more good jobs

Transportation and Transit

Goal: Develop or enhance transportation options across the region for efficiency and accessibility.

In most local and/or regional plans, transportation issues are addressed along with other infrastructure, such as water and sewer. However, this issue is of such high importance in the region that this plan has elevated it to its own category.

There are two primary needs related to transportation: *logistics for businesses* and *mobility of the workforce*. Both of these needs rely on roads that are safe, stable, and well-maintained. In addition, businesses rely on the availability of service for every facet of supply and distribution chains, and workers rely on access to working vehicles or public transit. Alternative and expanded options are of great interest to all stakeholders.

Ongoing efforts to achieve this goal will **result** in reduced costs for supply chain delivery and goods distribution; a larger and more reliable workforce due to stable transportation to and from work; and increased overall business success due to sustainable, stable transportation solutions.

Strategy: Increase awareness of existing transportation options and resources for the workforce

In communities where public transit exists, local businesses and their employees must be well-informed about their options. In addition, resources that provide support to those in need of transportation should be inventoried and shared widely.

Strategy: Collaborate and coordinate across sectors to reduce costs for logistics and workforce transportation

All stakeholders should come together to brainstorm and devise solutions for increased availability of transportation options. This may include sharing delivery systems and supply chain management, and/or supporting carpool options for workers.

Key Activities:

- Coordinate meetings and/or roundtables among transit agencies and transportation providers
- Connect transportation stakeholders with the workforce system, educational entities, and local employers
- Create partnerships that formalize commitments to collaboration and enable efficiency
- Explore opportunities for non-motorized transportation options in more densely populated areas
- Map and analyze transportation support services, and share resource information widely

Indicators of success:

- Increased public transit routes and hours of service across the region
- Increased regional partnerships for enhanced transportation options
- More businesses locating here because the transportation barrier is reduced

Infrastructure

Goal: Ensure adequate infrastructure that meets the needs of business, residents, and visitors

Adequate infrastructure is essential to job creation, economic growth, and community stability. It provides a foundation for business vitality and gives residents the structure for success. In this plan, infrastructure consists not only of municipal systems, but also broadband internet access as an essential component of supporting the needs of communities.

Ongoing efforts to achieve this goal will result in increased access to broadband, especially in placemaking centers, and across the region; improved awareness of infrastructure capacity and conditions; and plans to fill gaps where infrastructure is lacking.

Strategy: Continue increasing availability of and access to high speed internet

Stakeholders in the RPI Collaborative have been working diligently and have succeeded in increasing access throughout the region. Some challenges remain, especially the cost of providing broadband infrastructure to rural areas that lack a critical mass of consumers.

Strategy: Continue providing resources to improve infrastructure, including assessments, plans, and technical assistance

Communities throughout the region have committed to improving infrastructure, and require an infusion of support and various resources in order to do so. Support and resources may consist of technical assistance, assessment of current capacity and needs, planning, funding, and more.

Key Activities:

- Take an inventory of municipal needs and analyze local policies and ordinances
- Use this inventory to select specific, high-impact projects for investment
- Assist with water and sewer needs in local communities (SAW grants)
- Identify and pursue funding from federal and state as well as private sources
- Asset Management Inventory and PASER Road Ratings (annual assessment of road conditions)

Indicators of success:

- Business growth within placemaking centers
- Increased funding from multiple sources for infrastructure improvements
- Increased broadband availability

Regional Collaboration and Leadership

Goal: Enable consistent and coordinated services across the region

Collaboration is the primary tenet of the Regional Prosperity Initiative; it is the key to leveraging resources and building capacity. Working together towards a common goal helps to leverage resources from each agency, fill gaps, eliminate redundancies, and improve programs and services.

Regional leaders have committed to collaborative ventures, joint planning, and sharing information. In addition, some have begun consolidating and sharing services across compatible agencies. For instance, Northeast Michigan Council of Governments and Michigan Works! Northeast Consortium are now sharing accounting and human resources services. They intend to build on this foundation with more sharing of services where efficiency may be achieved. Stakeholders in the RPI will continue to explore opportunities for joining together for maximum impact.

Ongoing efforts to achieve this goal will result in more efficient systems and effective use of limited resources.

Strategy: Facilitate a collaborative approach for all RPI-funded projects

Funding provided to projects throughout the region should have a collaborative component in order to receive support. This will emphasize the importance of collaboration and promote its practices throughout the region.

Strategy: Achieve efficiencies by sharing services among compatible agencies

One significant effort towards implementing this strategy comes in the form of achieving Tier II status for the RPI Collaborative. Several steps have already been taken in this effort, including this plan, shared services, and the designation of representatives for shared governance.

Additional efficiencies among agencies in the region will be encouraged and facilitated where appropriate.

Strategy: Build on existing regional groups for collaborative ventures

Several groups exist throughout the region for various purposes; taken collectively, they have broad representation of the region's interests and stakeholders. These groups should be utilized instead of creating new, additional groups whenever a collaborative effort is pursued. Some of the groups in existence include the Collaborative Development Council, Workforce Development Board, Career & Educational Advisory Council, and many more. This strategy seeks to streamline projects and information sharing and encourage additional collaboration where possible.

Key Activities:

- Develop models for shared services across multiple agencies
- Combined meetings among compatible groups to encourage cross-pollination of diverse ideas and efficient use of time for group members
- Develop and offer regional services, such as GIS and medical examiners

Indicators of success:

- Increased collaborative projects
- Decreased duplication of services
- Increased information sharing

Economic Expansion

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT

Goal: Foster an entrepreneurial culture in the region and grow existing businesses.

Small businesses provide a significant number of jobs in the region, and self-employment is a viable career option that is often overlooked. The systems that support business start-up and growth are available but not well-known. The strategies below seek to enhance and promote these systems.

Ongoing efforts to achieve this goal will result in improved overall climate for small business and thereby a thriving economy.

Strategy: Encourage entrepreneurship through intentional, facilitated activities

In order to increase small business start-ups, an entrepreneurial culture must be developed and nurtured. It is critical to improve awareness that starting a small business is a promising career pathway. This will, in turn, improve awareness that Northeast Michigan is a good place to do business, attracting more and better businesses and jobs.

Strategy: Increase volume of and access to business support resources

Systems are currently in place that support and foster business development. These include the Michigan Small Business Development Center, Procurement Technical Assistance Center, a new SCORE chapter, chambers of commerce, economic development entities, and more. In addition, access to capital has improved with more commercial lending activity from banks and non-traditional lenders (Community Development Financial Institutions and revolving loan funds). However, there remains more need than capacity to meet it, and general awareness of these many resources is limited. This strategy will work to increase the resources available, and improve access to them through better coordination and promotion.

Strategy: Diversify and globally connect businesses

The regional economy is concentrated in the tourism sector, including food and beverage, accommodations, and service industries. In order to ensure stability through economic ups and downs, the region should support a variety of businesses in multiple sectors that show growth potential. Often, opportunities lie outside the region, through exporting goods, providing services virtually, and accessing customers in other parts of the world. Connecting local companies to diverse markets across the globe is essential to expanding beyond the small population within the region's limits.

Strategy: Provide market and economic impact information to support business expansion

Businesses that are poised to grow and/or relocate to the area need to base this important decision on reliable, local, and recent data. This may include economic inputs and outputs, target market profiles, household expenditures, and more. This information can also reveal the extent to which local dollars are spent elsewhere, presenting an opportunity to capture new markets.

Key Activities:

- Create an entrepreneurial network
- Support, connect, and increase pitch events
- Facilitate youth-based entrepreneurial education
- Provide small business development resources in an easy to use and readily accessible manner, such as a web-based portal
- Partner with Sault Ste. Marie SmartZone for product development
- Support existing incubators and create more
- Share success stories regarding entrepreneurial endeavors in the region

Indicators of success:

- A diversified, thriving, and stable economy
- Increase in small business start-ups and survivals
- Increase in number of businesses

Industry Clusters

Goal: Support targeted industry clusters

While many industries are growing in the region, some are better suited for targeted support, given their impact on the economy and potential for supplying good jobs. The following clusters are either currently significant contributors to the economy, or poised to emerge as industries of impact. All have growth potential and have been identified for targeted support:

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Aerospace
- Energy, Efficiency, and Renewables
- Healthcare
- Local Foods
- Tourism
- Wood Products

Ongoing efforts to achieve this goal will **result** in increased capacity and market expansion for each of these clusters, a skilled workforce that meets employer needs, and successful, growing businesses.

The strategies listed below are intended to provide support to the common issues and needs of all targeted industry clusters.

Strategy: Provide enhanced business development support

Each of these industries is comprised of many small businesses that are positioned to grow, add jobs, and stabilize their communities. Using the resources mentioned in the previous Goal, business development assistance should be provided to these clusters.

Strategy: Develop and attract a skilled workforce

Talent needs are paramount for every growth industry at this time. Therefore, development, attraction, and retention of a skilled workforce is an essential component of supporting these targeted industry clusters.

Strategy: Promote growth industries inside and outside the region

Leveraging the unified branding efforts of Goal #1, these specific industry clusters should be promoted as thriving and growing. Promotion should occur within the region for improved awareness of career options and economic impact. Concurrently, these clusters should be promoted outside the region as well, as efforts to market the overall region are conducted.

Strategy: Coordinate logistics and transportation for goods and talent

Transportation is one of the biggest barriers to success for the region; the rural, widespread geography and seasonal environment create significant difficulties in moving goods and people. Both supply chain and product delivery can be costly for companies located in Northeast Michigan. In addition, the cost of driving long distances from home to work every day can be prohibitive for skilled talent to obtain and retain employment. Therefore, it is imperative that solutions be developed to address the entire spectrum of transportation needs.

Key Activities:

- Increase the use work-based training programs to develop a skilled workforce for each cluster
- Convene transportation agencies and businesses to facilitate collaboration and development of solutions that will address transportation and logistics challenges
- Advocate for local and state-wide policy that encourages business growth for these clusters
- Incorporate industry promotion into regional marketing activities in order to expand business markets for targeted clusters
- Establish and/or support sector-based approaches to economic and workforce development, such as industry associations or collaboratives
- Ensure that all stakeholders understand the specific needs of the target clusters and support activities that enhance their success

Indicators of success:

- Increased number of jobs that pay family-sustaining wages and offer growth opportunities
- Business activity that attracts more business and skilled talent
- Entrepreneurial mindset and culture that rewards small-business start-up

Talent Advancement

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

Goal: Enhance and expand the multi-faceted system that supports employers and workers.

The local workforce holds great potential for meeting the needs of local companies. The systems in place for supporting the workforce are strong, well-connected, and readily accessible. These include career assessment and planning, basic academic skills and GED completion, occupational training, postsecondary programming, on-the-job training and apprenticeships, job search assistance, and much more. The current workforce can improve their skillsets, the future workforce can plan for success, and new workers can come to the region expecting ongoing educational support. The strategies listed below will leverage existing systems and improve their impact, ensuring that services are aligned, effective, and efficient.

Stakeholders in the workforce development system include:

- Michigan Works
- Talent Investment Agency
- Department of Health & Human Services, including Michigan Rehabilitation Services
- Adult Education
- K-12 Schools
- Career & Technical Education
- Postsecondary Institutions
- Trade schools

Ongoing efforts to achieve this goal will **result** in a strong workforce development system that helps to prepare a skilled workforce and thereby meets the talent needs of local businesses.

Strategy: Diversify funding for the workforce system

The Michigan Works! agencies present a significant resource for improving the skills of the workforce and meeting employer needs. However, their funding streams can be restrictive and their base is primarily from federal sources. It is important, therefore, that this vital system diversify their funding sources in order to maintain stability.

Strategy: Increase collaboration among stakeholders in the workforce system

While the collaborative nature of the region and its many stakeholders is a strength, there is always opportunity to increase collaborative partnerships. Collaboration among the Michigan Works! agencies, employers and associations, as well as educational entities will strengthen the approaches used to improve the skillset of the workforce and support industry needs.

Strategy: Increase awareness and use of training programs

Region 3 offers numerous opportunities for workers to upgrade their skills, whether academic or occupational, from GED preparation to specialized certifications to advanced degrees. Despite the opportunity and the great need for improved skills, these programs are underutilized. Both employers and job seekers must be well informed about their educational options, so they can access and build a pathway that leads to successful employment and ongoing advancement.

Key Activities:

- Pursue grant opportunities as a region
- Collaborate on events and activities that impact the entire region, such as apprenticeship programming, MiCareer Quest, and more
- Increase targeted marketing to improve awareness of educational opportunities

Indicators of success:

- Increased funding from multiple sources
- Increased enrollments in educational programs
- Increased educational program completions

Talent Attraction, Talent Development, and Entrepreneurship

Goal: Attract, develop, and retain a talented workforce and small business sector that supports a thriving local economy

In 2016, the RPI Collaborative created a 10-year plan for Talent Development. This plan provides recommended strategies, tactics, and measurement specifically for talent. These strategies are provided in the Talent Recommendations Addendum to this plan. In addition, several Best Practices are highlighted.

Dashboard

When large-scale collaboration is effective, the region will see large-scale impacts. These impacts can be identified by monitoring certain benchmarks – positive changes will indicate successful implementation.

- Increased labor force participation
- Decreased unemployment
- Increased household income
- Increased working age population
- Improved educational attainment
- Increased number of small businesses

All of these elements should be tracked using consistent data sources and monitored over the course of the 10-year plan timeframe. This can be achieved by utilizing the region's demographics reporting website, www.discovernortheastmichigan.org/demographics.asp

Priorities

Community Support	
INFRASTRUCTURE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue increasing availability of and access to high speed internet 2. Continue providing resources to improve infrastructure
TRANSPORTATION & TRANSIT	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collaborate and coordinate across sectors to reduce costs for logistics and workforce transportation 2. Increase awareness of existing transportation options and resources for the workforce
PLACEMAKING & REGIONAL BRANDING	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Target investment in small towns 2. Coordinate placemaking efforts 3. Solidify and implement a regional identity 4. Create a strategic tourism partnership
REGIONAL COLLABORATION	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Achieve efficiencies by sharing services 2. Facilitate collaborative approaches
Economic Expansion	
TARGET INDUSTRIES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide enhanced business development support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better identify growth opportunities in targeted sectors 2. Promote growth industries inside and outside the region <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate across prosperity regions • Develop and prepare shovel-ready sites • Improve connections between industries and economic development 3. Coordinate logistics and transportation for goods and talent 4. Develop and attract a skilled workforce
ENTREPRENEURSHIP	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage entrepreneurship through intentional, facilitated activities 2. Youth entrepreneurship and mentorship 3. Succession planning
SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase access to small business support resources 2. Provide market and economic impact information to support business expansion (retention) 3. Diversify and globally connect businesses (growth)
Talent Advancement	
TALENT ATTRACTION	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Better understand young professionals who live in Northeast Michigan 2. Develop more Young Professionals groups and cultivate them as regional ambassadors 3. Create promotional tools for businesses and communities to use in talent attraction
TALENT DEVELOPMENT	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase awareness of career options and training programs 2. Conduct talent development activities using a sector strategy 3. Promote USDOL Registered Apprenticeship and other work-based learning
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase and diversify funding 2. Increase collaboration

Talent Recommendations

TALENT ATTRACTION

During many discussions regarding this ten-year plan, community members lamented the difficulties with attracting and retaining talent. Companies state that when they recruit a high-level professional from another area with a great job, the person leaves within a year because they are not satisfied with the community. Several of the issues listed in the Challenges section of this report were cited as the reasons for this dilemma; low wages, decreasing population, and lack of amenities were mentioned most frequently.

Talent Attraction efforts are occurring not only in other regions of Michigan, but in similar rural regions across the country and globe. The same discussions are taking place at tables everywhere. The skilled worker shortage is of increasing concern in all corners of the world. Therefore, any talent attraction activities pursued by Region 3 must recognize the high level of competition with other areas. It is for this reason that we recommend a streamlined, targeted approach: decide on your audience, identify their positive experiences with Northeast Michigan, and reach them through established channels. We believe that the limited resources of the region would be utilized most effectively through this targeted strategy.

In order to ensure ongoing governance and coordination, **we recommend creating a subcommittee of the RPI Collaborative to lead all of the talent attraction strategies** listed here. Make sure to include representatives from economic development, recruiting firms, Michigan Works, and tourism bureaus.

Recommendation: Target an audience of skilled workers who desire the lifestyle offered by Northeast Michigan

When brainstorming ideas for attracting a skilled workforce, conversations across the region continually turned toward ways in which communities could become more attractive to skilled talent. Ideas included offering more entertainment for young people, becoming “cool cities” that millennials especially would be drawn to, improving downtowns, and increasing cultural activities. While these are appealing options, they are rather ambitious given the resources of the region. Rather than trying to change entire communities to become what millennials want, we recommend a targeted focus on attracting a skilled workforce that appreciates the quality of life inherent in the region.

Strategy: Better understand millennials who live in Northeast Michigan

Timeline: Year one

It is very important to understand your target audience before launching into talent attraction activities. Some ideas generated during planning discussions included educating local businesses about the millennial generation by bringing in speakers and offering workshops. This can be an effective component of this strategy and will give employers the information they need to attract and retain a younger workforce. However, it is vitally important to learn more specifically about the millennials who currently live in Northeast Michigan. Most generalized assessments of the generation emphasize their desire for big cities; but that’s obviously not true of those who live in Region 3. **Find out what drew them here and why they’re happy living in Region 3.** Hold focus groups with millennials to learn more, work with established or new (see below) Young Professionals groups, and connect with young entrepreneurs. The information learned through this exercise can be used to guide several of the strategies below.

Strategy: Develop local ambassadors

Timeline: Years one and two

Recruit ambassadors to represent the region for various purposes. Choose locals who are passionate about the area, and who are members of the same target audiences you want to reach. Utilize these ambassadors in the following ways:

- **Feature them in the talent attraction tools (brochures, web sites, videos) created via the strategy below.**
- **Connect them with potential candidates who are scoping out the area. They can meet with the candidates at a coffee shop, brewery, or park to talk about what it’s like to live in Northeast Michigan.**
- **Promote the region on social media, blogs, and websites.**

Most descriptions of the millennial generation will include how relationship-oriented they are. The same is true for all other generations when looking to relocate to another area. **Making a personal connection with someone who has similar values can make all the difference in successful recruitment.** Local ambassadors can be called upon in many situations, and can come to personify the cultural aspects of the region.

Comparable Best Practices:

- [Stormy Kromer Ambassadors](#)
- [View the video on the homepage for the Traverse City Young Professionals](#)

Strategy: Create promotional tools for businesses and communities

Timeline: Years one through three

Local businesses are struggling to find local and non-local talent. Their Human Resources staff (typically either managers, owners, or office staff) are often not trained as recruiters; they lack the knowledge and resources to effectively compete with recruitment efforts in other regions. Providing these companies and their communities with tools specifically designed to recruit skilled talent will go a long way to supporting their efforts.

Tools should include information on schools, recreation, festivals/entertainment, cost of living - all of the information that a person looking to relocate to the region would be seeking. The more appealing the information, the better. Consider the role of economic development as a model: they consistently work on attracting new businesses to an area by presenting a “package” of information and incentives.

Make the tools customizable to various communities. **Create a template that businesses, industry sectors, and communities can use to promote their areas along with the region as a whole.**

Implementation Guidelines:

Hold focus groups of target audiences: millennials (see strategy above), young families, skilled workers regardless of age, especially if they have recently moved to the area. What appeals to them? What convinced them to come and/or stay?

Develop messaging for each target audience. For instance, if millennials say they are drawn to the region because of the recreational opportunities, that should be emphasized as the message and in the design of the tools. If families are drawn here because of the low cost of living, that should be the primary message for this target audience. Other messages could include safety (low crime rate), small town values, etc. Identify the negatives and be prepared to counter them. What did the audiences say were drawbacks? What resources are available to overcome those drawbacks?

Develop a methodology for creating the tools: what will be included, how will the region and/or local communities be represented, what is the format(s)? Include social media, websites, and video. Don't recreate something that already exists or develop something that requires a lot of ongoing maintenance. For instance, a website where Region 3's employers can post jobs sounds like a great idea on the surface, but there are already many web sites that do this -- find a way to partner and use what is already established in new and better ways.

Make sure the format is aesthetically pleasing by working with a high-quality design firm. Perhaps this firm could be the same one that developed the "Discover Northeast Michigan – East of Expected" brand.

Consider emphasizing the patriotic culture of the region as the recurring design motif.

Find the best venues for using the tools. Identify the means for reaching the target audience - mailing lists of local high school alumni; retirees with children who live elsewhere; etc.

Strategy: Promote innovative and successful companies headquartered in the region

Timeline: Year three

Whether as part of the talent attraction tools above, or as a coordinated marketing campaign among partners, everyone can play a part in promoting the great companies of Region 3. Why promote specific companies? Because great companies attract people. Great companies are the "employers of choice" - the places where everyone wants to work. These companies aren't struggling as much as others to find and keep skilled talent right now. They offer good wages and benefits, great culture, promotion from within, internal training, and more.

It is often lamented that Region 3 doesn't have a university, which acts as a magnet for young talent in other areas. The great companies you feature can provide similar benefit, albeit on a smaller scale. This is especially important because highly skilled professionals are interested in "job depth" - their ability to grow and progress in a career. This "depth" can be available at a specific company, but numerous opportunities within a local area indicates more depth as well. **Knowing that an area is rich with great companies to work for will be more appealing to potential job candidates.**

Ask the business services teams at both Michigan Works agencies, as well as the economic development representatives, to identify companies that fit this definition.

Most of the partners in the RPI Collaborative have communication functionality at their agencies. They can all promote these companies through their existing communication channels: web sites, email newsletters, social media, etc. Perhaps someone with a strong connection to a local television outlet can arrange for a "Made in Northeast Michigan" segment, where these great and often hidden companies are featured.

Comparable Best Practice: See the "Cool Companies" features on MyNorth.com

Strategy: Develop more Young Professionals groups

Timeline: Years two through five

Young people want to know their communities aren't dying. One of the Best Practices cited in this report is that of Greater Minnesota Rising. Through targeted interviews, they learned that millennials who left the area did so partially because they were worried their communities would "transform into ghost towns." **Connecting millennials with each other, with opportunities to get engaged in their community, and with local businesses is a great way to attract and retain workers in this generation.** Young Professionals groups can be instrumental in the strategies identified below, as well as several of the talent development strategies presented later in this report.

Potential activities for Young Professionals groups:

- Connect young workers with mentors at local businesses (mentorship is very important to this generation);
- Volunteer for non-profits or a community such as cleaning up a park;
- Getting involved in local politics;
- Acting as the "welcome wagon" for new young professionals - again very important to this population;
- Hunting, fishing, or other recreational activities that emphasize the Northeast Michigan lifestyle;
- Serve as regional ambassadors (see strategy below).

Strategy: Take it on the road

Timeline: Years four and five

After developing the tools needed to effectively recruit skilled talent, including developing local ambassadors, take them on the road to showcase the region. Use the local ambassadors, economic development representatives, and/or chamber of commerce professionals to do a roadshow. **Attend events in larger markets to target people who don't want to live in bigger cities anymore.** Potential events include hunting and fishing expos, snowmobiling events, gun shows, and more. Career fairs and business expos could be effective events as well, but primary focus should be given to recreation-oriented, large-scale events. This will best align with the focus of targeting an audience that desires the cultural qualities of life provided by Northeast Michigan.

In addition to distributing the promotion tools and packages, the "roadshow" should promote specific job opportunities. This will require partnership with local employers, who may be able to contribute to the cost of travel.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES

Strategy: Better understand millennials who live in Northeast Michigan	
GOAL	Conduct at least three focus groups with target audiences, including local millennials and young families, within one year.
OUTCOME	All stakeholders will better understand the desires and appeal of Northeast Michigan from the perspective of these target groups, and will use this information to enhance their talent attraction efforts.
Strategy: Develop local ambassadors	
GOAL	Develop a team of ten local ambassadors within two years.
OUTCOME	A following of Northeast Michigan enthusiasts will begin to develop.
Strategy: Create promotional tools for businesses and communities	
GOAL	Develop an initial package of talent attraction tools within one year; refine and add to it within three years.
OUTCOME	Businesses and communities will have a customizable package that promotes the region to use when recruiting.
Strategy: Develop more Young Professionals groups	
GOAL	Every significant population center in the region should have an active Young Professionals group within five years.
OUTCOME	These groups will act as a means for connecting with new and existing workers, serving as local ambassadors, and engaging with the community.
Strategy: Feature innovative and successful companies headquartered in the region	
GOAL	Create features for ten companies by year three. Share these features widely through all partners.
OUTCOME	Residents of the region as well as potential job candidates will see that the area provides a depth of opportunities through a multitude of great companies.
Strategy: Take it on the road	
GOAL	Visit three events per year during years four and five. Determine effectiveness and plan for continued attendance at appropriate events in the future.
OUTCOME	Region 3 will be presented to new audiences with potential interest in relocating.

Talent Development

Developing the workforce that already resides in the region can be much more effective on a large scale than attracting talent, but it requires more energy and resources. To be most efficient and effective, the recommendations and strategies below utilize the sector-based approach. They are intended to support Region 3's goals for increasing employment opportunities, developing skilled talent with the existing workforce, and working collaboratively to improve economic conditions. Sector partnerships are a proven strategy for improving outcomes of talent development activities, due to heightened awareness within the industry sector, along with enhanced communication and coordination. The sector-based approach connects employers, education, economic development, and workforce systems in a coordinated way. Partners within a sector work together to undertake specific activities that advance opportunities for entry into the sector. Together, they achieve tangible results and support the long-term growth and success of the region.

In order to ensure ongoing governance and coordination, **we recommend creating a subcommittee of the Talent District Career Council (or engage the full TDCC) to lead all of the talent development strategies listed below.** Make sure to include representatives from postsecondary institutions, adult education, Michigan Works, and the private sector.

Recommendation: Conduct talent development activities using a sector-based approach

In our global economy, Region 3 is competing with the farthest corners of the world, in addition to other areas of Michigan and the Midwest. Sector partnerships will strengthen the region, despite limited resources, and show improvements in talent development. In the long-term, Region 3 will be positioned to bring in new business from around the globe, due to a robust pipeline of skilled workers.

Sector partnerships thrive in urban areas where there is a critical mass of similar companies. They join together to their mutual benefit. In rural areas, a smaller density of firms within a given sector makes it less likely that they will work cooperatively. However, this challenge makes sector partnerships all the more important in a rural area. A coordinated effort is necessary to lift the sector to the next level and assist them in addressing skill shortages and other talent development issues.

Sector partnerships take various forms in rural regions. They do not and need not follow the typical large-scale models found in urban areas. Some are short-term, ad-hoc in nature; others are full-fledged councils with membership and governance structure. Regardless, they always fit the character of the region and are designed to fill gaps and meet the needs of employers in the target industry. In addition, they typically form based on a specific need, and through the success of a particular initiative or activity, the partnerships begin to coalesce and evolve.

Fortunately, the success of a sector initiative is not dependent upon numbers, but rather the strength of relationships across the partner organizations. This is especially fortunate for rural areas; quality over quantity makes sector initiatives a viable and impactful strategy.

Strategy: Add Healthcare to the Region’s list of priority industries.

Timeline: Year one

The Regional Prosperity Initiative 5-year plan, developed in 2013, identifies several industries of focus, including Tourism, Local Food, and Wood Products. While all of these industries are key to the success of the region, Healthcare is noticeably absent. This industry boasts the second highest projected increase in jobs in the region for the 2012 to 2022 timeframe. It also provides the most variety of jobs, with several career pathway options. Minimal training is needed to enter the field, and the growth potential for increased earnings and longevity is difficult to find in other industries. There are also opportunities for business start-ups in home health, adult foster care, medical billing, and more.

It is recommended that the region establish talent development and sector initiative efforts in Healthcare. Existing connections with healthcare employers should be leveraged to begin convening a partnership. If healthcare sector groups are already meeting, join them as a resource for talent development. Work with the group to implement focused activities. **Start small, by engaging all partners in a low-risk, high-reward activity, such as development of a resource guide or an asset map.** This will establish relationships and show early successes, which can then expand to additional activities and long-term strategies. Longer-term strategies should include development of Career Pathways and/or USDOL Registered Apprenticeships, as suggested in the Recommendations below.

Strategy: Develop a sector partnership in the wood products industry.

Timeline: Year two

There is already synergy in the wood products industry in Region 3; it is a significant asset to the area. This momentum can be leveraged to meet the needs of local employers within the sector. Education, workforce development, economic development, and employer partners should convene and discuss the benefits of the sector approach, and begin planning talent development activities. The Wood Industry Report created for the RPI 5-year plan is a good place to start, sharing data from this report and discussing some of the goals identified. Also, the group can learn from some of the best practices described in this report.

It is recommended that the Wood Products sector focus on developing Career Pathways for in-demand occupations in the industry. A visual roadmap that clearly delineates the jobs and educational milestones will be especially useful for attracting students to pursue careers in this field; this will make the long-term opportunities both appealing and attainable.

Strategy: Ensure strong connections between sector-based partnerships and workforce development boards.

Timeline: Year three

Workforce development boards, both across the country and locally, exist to guide and direct workforce programming across a local area. Regionally, the boards work together to support employers with their in-demand talent needs. **For sector-based approaches to be successful, workforce boards must be engaged and supportive.** They must believe in the potential of sector partnerships enough to dedicate resources and provide leadership on the approach.

Workforce boards can be well-connected to sector partnerships in a variety of ways. They can ensure that the board has representation from each industry of focus. They can initiate partnerships, and provide resources for staffing the partnerships, if viable. They can work collaboratively to ensure that sector-based approaches are aligned with the board’s strategic plans. Sector partnerships can regularly report to the board, ensuring accountability for achieving the outcomes that both have prioritized. Regardless of the means of connection, it is imperative that the workforce boards in Region 3 are well-connected and supportive of sector-based programming.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES

Recommendation: Conduct talent development activities using a sector-based approach

GOAL	Select three industries of focus to begin developing sector partnerships within one year. It is recommended that these industries of focus include the wood products industry and healthcare.
OUTCOME	Collaboratively establishing industries of focus will begin to develop partnerships and will reduce the overwhelming nature of getting started in sector partnerships, making them more attainable. information to enhance their talent attraction efforts.

Strategies: Add Healthcare to the Region’s list of priority industries; Develop a sector partnership in the wood products industry.

GOAL	Create well-established sector partnerships in the healthcare and wood products sectors within two years; establish a partnership in a third priority industry within four years.
OUTCOME	Partnerships will have structure, goals, and dedicated resources, the nature of which will be locally designed and dependent upon the needs of the industry.

Strategy: Ensure strong connections between sector-based partnerships and workforce development boards.

GOAL	Both workforce boards in Region 3 will have representation from the established sector partnerships within three years, and will actively endorse the partnerships.
OUTCOME	Workforce programming will align with activities of the sector partnerships.

Recommendation: Increase utilization of USDOL Registered Apprenticeships

Apprenticeship is an effective means of training a skilled workforce, offering benefits to both the worker and the employer. The worker receives instructor-led training and on-the-job training with a skilled mentor. He/she also earns a wage while progressing through training milestones. The employer gains an employee with increasing levels of productivity, and can train each apprentice to the company’s specifications. This recommendation leverages the blue-collar culture of the region, emphasizing that work-based, hands-on learning is the most effective means of developing new skills.

The United States Department of Labor now allows a multitude of apprenticeship programs, which are customizable to each employer's needs. These can include time-based or competency-based apprenticeships, or a hybrid of the two. Also, the apprentice's on-the-job mentor does not need to be a registered journeyman; the company designates the best mentor for the skill being taught.

Apprenticeships are available for thousands of occupations, and are no longer solely the realm of the skilled trades. Apprenticeable occupations can include Home Health Care aide, Software Developer, Farmer, and many more. Almost all of the in-demand occupations in Region 3 are apprenticeable. In addition, unions do not need to be involved unless they are already established at the company; creating an apprenticeship at a non-union shop does not in any way predict union activity.

We recommend utilizing the infrastructure developed by sector partnerships in healthcare, wood products, and other industries to establish apprentices. If the sector partnership is new, developing apprenticeships can be one of its first activities. This approach was demonstrated by West Michigan's Medical Assistance Apprenticeship program, cited as one of the Best Practices in this report.

Strategy: Promote USDOL Registered Apprenticeships to local employers

Timeline: Years one and two

Due to the current low utilization and availability of apprenticeship programs, the region should focus on educating local employers, thereby promoting the benefits of this workforce development strategy. It is recommended that a robust regional promotional plan be developed to properly educate employers about apprenticeships. It is anticipated that the promotional plan will include relationship building with local companies through the sector partnerships, apprenticeship representatives on the region's workforce development boards, industry sector coordinators at the State of Michigan's Workforce Development Agency, the USDOL Office of Registered Apprenticeship, and more.

Strategy: Create a centralized coordination function for USDOL Registered Apprenticeships

Timeline: Year two

A coordination function within the Region can offer the kind of support to local employers that is needed to truly implement effective programming. It is recommended that this function be filled by a dedicated staff position.

A staff position that is focused on apprenticeship programming for the region will ensure that local employers have access to the information and resources they need. A coordinator would not only be the local "go to" expert on how to set-up and manage an apprenticeship, but would also heavily promote apprenticeship. He or she would:

- **Get involved in the business community through active participation in sector partnerships;**
- **Turn current apprenticeship-supporting employers into advocates and champions;**
- **Assist employers in creating customized programs, including connecting to appropriate postsecondary programs;**
- **Assist employers in calculating return on investment;**
- **Work with existing educational programs to develop pre-apprenticeship programming, which will provide employers with a productive employee upon hire;**
- **Promote apprenticeship in an ongoing fashion, using local information.**

Strategy: Ensure long-term, ongoing support of employers and apprentices

Timeline: Year four

The region must be committed to continued support of apprenticeship programming for the long-term. This will require dedicated resources to fund the apprenticeship coordinator position, wrap-around support for apprentices to ensure completion, and ongoing promotion to the community. The sector partnerships should make this issue a regular agenda item at meetings or designate a task force.

A viable funding model for this position should be developed early in the timeline. Because the coordinator will support the region and his/her work will benefit many stakeholders, the funding model should leverage multiple sources. This could include federal and state workforce funding, educational institutions, employer support, and discretionary grants.

Wrap-around supportive services for apprentices will ensure retention and completion of the program. This can be provided by a combination of federal workforce funding and employer support.

Follow-through on documentation of training and communication with USDOL is critical to success for each individual apprenticeship program as well as for the strategy overall.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES

Strategy: Promote USDOL Registered Apprenticeships to local employers	
GOAL	Develop promotional plan early and focus heavily on promotion for the first two years.
OUTCOME	Local employers will accurately understand the benefits of apprenticeship and the ways in which it could impact their company.
Strategy: Create a centralized coordination function for USDOL Registered Apprenticeships	
GOAL	Work within the sector partnerships to increase the number of USDOL Registered Apprenticeships by 25 programs in ten years, resulting in 150 trained apprentices.
OUTCOME	These additional work-based training opportunities will be available to workers in the community, and companies will be growing their own skilled workforce.
Strategy: Ensure long-term, ongoing support of employers and apprentices	
GOAL	Procure resources to support apprenticeship coordinator and cost of apprenticeship training.
OUTCOME	Additional funding sufficient to provide effective and high quality services for all aspects of apprenticeship will be available to the region.

Recommendation: Develop comprehensive Career Pathways systems within sector partnerships

Career Pathways have been defined for Career & Technical Education (CTE) in various ways for decades. In CTE, career pathways represent major occupational clusters, within which students can pursue a number of career options. However, for purposes of this strategy, the term Career Pathways will be defined as follows: “A Career Pathway is the education and training required along with the expected employment outcomes for each level of achievement in a certain industry or occupation” (Pierce College). In addition, the term used in the context of talent development programming implies that wrap-around services will be provided to ensure that the student/worker is able to overcome barriers that could get in the way of completion.

It can be easy to confuse apprenticeships with career pathways. However, they have distinct definitions. Apprenticeships are “automatic” career pathways because they integrate classroom and work-based learning, and offer a progression of milestones for the worker. Career pathways as described here can be much broader, and often require development at a systems level, involving businesses, education providers, Adult Education services, and workforce development.

Career pathways offer job seekers and students a venue for progressing through an industry. They can achieve (and celebrate) accomplishments throughout that progression, often increasing earnings. A well-designed career pathway program gives each individual a personalized roadmap for long-term career planning. **Employers within a sector benefit by ensuring that career pathways systems are designed to train new and potential workers with the skills they need, and to their standards.**

The structure provided by sector partnerships should be used to develop career pathways. The group may want to appoint a committee or focus the energy of the entire partnership on development of career pathways. Be sure that representation from Adult Education and postsecondary institutions are involved, as they will surely play a role in providing training. The group may decide to utilize just one employer who is willing to share information on the career progression options within that company. This will be an effective way to get started and quickly attain tangible outcomes. If multiple employers are interested and willing to participate, the committee will need to find commonalities among the employers in order to develop the career pathway.

Strategy: Create a Career Pathways Roadmap

Timeline: Year one or two (depending on establishment of sector partnership)

We recommend creating the first career pathways system in the wood products industry, but any sector partnership that is interested in this process should begin by creating a roadmap. The roadmap provides a visual representation of the occupations and credentials required to progress through the pathway. To get started, bring in a facilitator to lead the sector partnership group through a discussion that determines the key occupations within the sector. Identify the educational requirements and skills necessary for each occupation. **Lay out the information in a way that visually represents the career pathway.** This exercise is similar to creating an asset map, as it will quickly bring to light any missing training options that could be developed for the region. The roadmap will be very useful to counselors when advising high school students, workforce program staff when advising job seekers, postsecondary institutions when developing programs, and businesses when trying to recruit and show potential for progression. The roadmap can serve as a long-term career planning tool.

We recommend this activity as an initial project for a new sector partnership because it provides a tangible outcome and can be done relatively quickly. The process helps to solidify relationships and gives the group an early success.

Comparable Best Practice: [Get Into Energy Career Pathways Roadmaps](#), Center for Energy Workforce Development

Strategy: Develop training programs where gaps exist

Timeline: Year two

If development of the career pathways roadmap reveals gaps in available training, work with local training institutions to develop them. Several examples of this kind of development have occurred in Region 3, including the timber grading training. **Work collaboratively to brainstorm solutions to potential capacity issues**, and conduct comprehensive marketing to recruit students into the new program. Utilize Michigan Works! to recruit, screen and possibly fund potential trainees.

Strategy: Promote Adult Education programs as an entry into career pathways

Timeline: Year One

Adult Education programming is in a perfect position to jump-start career pathways for adults. Attainment of a GED is the first step in a career pathway. Educating the communities throughout the region about Adult Education services should go beyond advertising for GED completion. Promoting these services should emphasize that basic skills are necessary in order to enter postsecondary education, on-the-job training, and long-term employment.

The Adult Education program should be designed to assist participants with moving into the next phase of the career pathways. Therefore, sector partnerships should make intentional efforts to involve the Adult Education system in developing any new pathways, from providing input on adult learners to offering customized basic academic classes that complement an occupational training program. Their involvement will ensure that career pathways are available for adults as well as youth.

Comparable Best Practice: [Transitioning Adults to Postsecondary Education and Training \(TAPET\)](#)

Strategy: Develop an Employer Resource Network (ERN)

Timeline: Year four or five

Where there is synergy and support, engage the employers who participated in development of the career pathways within their sector to create an Employer Resource Network. An ERN will take the next step beyond credentials and jobs, and set up a collaborative method of providing wrap-around support to employees. There are several examples of successful ERNs that can be modeled. **The critical element is that workers have access to a neutral source of supportive services that will address potential barriers to employment before they interfere with job success.** The combination of upward mobility within a company, along with the supportive services resources, will improve retention and workplace culture.

The development of an ERN can be time and labor intensive. If this is a priority for the region, early planning will pave the way.

Comparable Best Practice: [Great Lakes Bay Employer Resource Network](#)

GOALS AND OUTCOMES

Strategy: Create a Career Pathways Roadmap	
GOAL	Create a Career Pathways Roadmap with an established sector partnership by the second year.
OUTCOME	All stakeholders will have access to a visual representation of the career pathways for long-term career planning purposes.
Strategy: Develop training programs where gaps exist	
GOAL	If a new training program is needed, develop and begin offering it within two years
OUTCOME	Programs will be available to train the workforce for every milestone within the career pathway.
Strategy: Promote Adult Education programs as an entry into career pathways	
GOAL	Create a marketing plan for Adult Education programs, emphasizing their connection to career pathways, within the first year.
OUTCOME	Enrollment in Adult Education services will increase as communities begin to understand that basic skills, including GED, are an essential first step in any career pathway.
Strategy: Develop an Employer Resource Network (ERN)	
GOAL	Develop an Employer Resource Network within five years.
OUTCOME	Multiple employers will provide access to supportive services so that their workforce will succeed in progressing through the career pathways.

Recommendation: Improve Soft Skills through Work-Based Training

During the input process for this plan, soft skills were clearly identified as a priority issue. Employers, educators, agency representatives, and private citizens all agree that the workforce must be better trained on the kinds of skills that are required for every job, regardless of industry.

There is a multitude of evidence that shows the importance of soft skills. Individuals who are proficient in these skills are more likely to stay persistent when searching for a job; they are also more likely to get hired, excel on the job, and earn more. They succeed in both educational and employment endeavors.⁴ Improving these skills among the current and future workforce in the region is paramount to meeting employer needs.

⁴Workforce Connections: Key Soft Skills that Foster Youth Workforce Success, Child Trends, Inc., 2015.

An independent review of multiple studies on soft skills concluded that the most commonly cited, highly desired skills are the following:⁵

- Social skills
- Communication skills
- Higher order thinking (problem solving, critical thinking skills)
- Self-control
- Positive self-concept

It is these skills that make the difference in whether a person is successful or more likely to fail at education, employment, and personal activities.

Soft skills are critical for employment success, so should be a priority when designing employment and training programs. However, teaching soft skills is a challenge. The common perception is that these types of skills are taught at home, and if a person did not learn them from parents then there is no hope. Learning soft skills in a classroom, with no real practical application, is not nearly as effective as learning them in real-life scenarios, whether at home or on a job.

Fortunately, there are effective and successful programs occurring all over the world that show marked improvement of soft skills. These programs are most often hands-on, work-based experiences. They include immediate feedback from a job coach, and leverage “teaching moments” throughout the workday. **The work-based model is successful because the job coach is positioned as both a supervisor and a trainer - someone who teaches, guides, and encourages soft skill development and success.** Unfortunately, these programs are labor-intensive and expensive; they are often funded through government grants and some private donations, and take an immense amount of administrative effort to develop and maintain.

This recommendation takes the effectiveness of these programs, and transfers the coaching role to the business community. Work-based learning is best conducted at work, so we ask businesses to step up and take part in the solution to this challenge. The following strategies ask businesses to take more work experience, co-op, and internship placements; intentionally train the student/worker on soft skills; and work collaboratively with the workforce agencies and educational systems to raise the standard for soft skill development and attainment. The strategies also provide the structure needed for businesses to succeed in this new role. We recommend utilizing the framework established through sector partnerships to begin implementation.

Strategy: Build soft skills training into the structure of work experience programs

Timeline: Year one

Several entities in the region utilize work experience programming for educational and workforce development purposes. A job seeker or student is “placed” in a business or non-profit agency to work on a temporary assignment. These programs include Work Experience Programs for youth and disadvantaged populations through Michigan Works; co-op programs at high schools and career and technical education; and college-level internships. The purpose of any of these programs is to give the student or job seeker an opportunity to spend time in a work environment, learning both the occupational skills as well as the cultural and often unspoken workplace skills that are so necessary for success. **This strategy takes those “unspoken” workplace skills and makes them spoken and intentional.**

Most of these programs already utilize a student/worker review form. The work experience supervisor (usually the point of contact at the company) completes the form on a regular basis. The review addresses items such as punctuality, attitude, appearance, and job skills. The completed form is used as a way to determine if a person is

⁵Ibid.

job ready. However, the form can also help the supervisor with specifically training the person where it's needed. Including other training-oriented structural elements in the work experience program will build the structure we recommend, such as:

- The supervisor should provide immediate feedback when the student/worker does well and when he/she is deficient.
- A curriculum should be developed to ensure that soft skills are taught during the work experience placement. The curriculum can be laid out in an easy-to-follow plan so the supervisor is given the tools needed to act as a job coach. There are many programs available that provide soft skills curriculum for classroom instruction; we recommend conducting research to determine which of these could best be adapted to a workplace environment.
- An assessment proving attainment of soft skills should be conducted at the end of the work experience placement. A certificate of achievement can be provided to the student as evidence of his/her learning.

Comparable Best Practice: [ROCA](#) Transitional Jobs program, Boston MA

Strategy: Train work experience supervisors

Timeline: Years two through ten

Once the training structure and appropriate curriculum is developed (above), conduct trainings with work experience supervisors. Gather several company representatives via an established sector partnership to conduct the training. Give them the skills they need to teach soft skills to others. This training will guide them through the process of recognizing the errors in judgement that so often occur among people who don't have soft skills. Rather than passing judgement and simply marking the person down on the review form, the supervisor will be equipped to show the worker an appropriate skill instead. The training will also teach the supervisor how to use "teachable moments," implement curriculum, and assess competence in each skill.

We do not know of any existing program for teaching work experience site supervisors how to train on soft skills. However, a skilled educator or strategist could utilize available soft skills curriculum and modify it for this purpose. We feel that this strategy is imperative to the successful implementation of the recommendation; **teaching soft skills in a work environment requires skilled, dedicated individuals at the worksite.**

Strategy: Increase the quantity of work experience placements

Timeline: Years three through ten

With the new training-oriented work experience model, and skilled work site supervisors, more companies and non-profits throughout the region should take work experience, co-op, and internship placements. This is a community-wide endeavor; businesses should see how much of a difference they can make in helping people improve their soft skills. The sector partnership groups can work together to increase the number of overall placements.

In order to recruit more companies to take placements, we suggest the following:

- Develop success stories of work experience placements who have graduated to full-time, permanent positions and share these stories widely.
- Maintain data on work experience successes to show potential businesses the impact it has on individuals as well as the workforce.
- Entice more business participation through local civic groups, such as rotary, Kiwanis, and optimists clubs. The businesspeople who participate in these groups are there because they are committed to giving back to the community; what better way to do that than to teach a young person or disadvantaged person how to be a better worker?

As with all programs, the entities coordinating work experience programs have costs associated with each placement. Michigan Works! agencies pay the wages for youth placements, educational institutions usually have an internship coordinator who works directly with companies to place individuals in program-related jobs. The costs for increasing numbers in these programs can be mitigated by partnering with companies and local foundations. For instance, Michigan Works! agencies can split the cost of wages with the companies who take placements, rather than paying the entire wage. The economy is ripe for such an arrangement, since so many businesses are desperately seeking entry level workers. Costs for coordination of programs can be supported through grants from government, local foundations, or civic groups.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES

Strategy: Build soft skills training into the structure of work experience programs	
GOAL	Develop the curriculum and training structure for work experience programs within one year.
OUTCOME	Work experience programming will provide intentional, systematic, and high-quality soft skills training.
Strategy: Conduct training with companies who take students and job seekers for work experience placements	
GOAL	Develop the training program and begin delivery during the second year. Conduct one training per year, ongoing.
OUTCOME	Work experience supervisors will have the skills needed to teach soft skills to students and workers during the program.
Strategy: Increase the quantity work experience placements	
GOAL	Recruit 50 additional companies for work experience, co-op, and internship placements within five years. Continue recruiting through the last five years.
OUTCOME	The companies will offer soft skills training through work-based learning through a variety of work experience programs.

Entrepreneurship

Our final set of recommended strategies involves developing stronger infrastructure to train and encourage entrepreneurs. Laying this foundation involves short-term goals and action-steps, but long-term results. Increasing entrepreneurial activity will not only increase opportunities in the region, it will begin to show the community the importance of entrepreneurship.

The culture of the region is and has historically been focused on blue-collar work; therefore, entrepreneurship is not front of mind for many people. There are many ways to change the culture in favor of entrepreneurship. Many of the strategies recommended here will do just that: entrepreneurs will begin to hold higher status, risk aversion will be mitigated, and young people will experience early successes that encourage future small business endeavors.

Region 3 has support systems in place for entrepreneurship and business growth. However, these systems should be connected, coordinated, and their capacity increased. We believe that the region is perfectly positioned for explosive growth in small business activity. With the proper infrastructure and support network, small businesses will be more likely to succeed and improve the economy of the whole region.

In order to ensure focused activity and sustainability, **we recommend creating a Regional Entrepreneurial Collaborative to oversee the implementation of these strategies.** It can be a subcommittee of the RPI Collaborative or a stand-alone. The group should consist of representation from all entrepreneurship programs and business support entities in the region, such as entrepreneurial youth programs, Small Business Development Center, any CDFIs covering the region, and SCORE. The group will be charged with working collaboratively to implement the strategies recommended here, and achieving the appropriate goals and outcomes. In addition, this will ensure that the entrepreneurs who develop as a result of these strategies are well-connected to the resources available in the region.

Recommendation: Increase Awareness about Entrepreneurship

Why is entrepreneurship important? What kind of impact can it have on an individual, community, region? How do the benefits outweigh the initial risk and investment? The focus of this recommendation is to educate the communities in Region 3 about why entrepreneurship is important. This will begin to change people's perceptions about their ability to start a business. The region should leverage the patriotic, blue-collar culture by emphasizing the importance of small business to the economy. **Residents will begin to see starting a business as the ultimate patriotic activity: small business is the backbone of American vitality.**

Strategy: Hold an Entrepreneurship Summit

Timeline: Years one and two

After establishing the regional entrepreneurial collaborative tasked with overseeing this plan, their first activity should be to hold an Entrepreneurship Summit in the region. The summit will act as a catalyst for entrepreneurial activity. The event should include the following, at a minimum:

- **A patriotic theme: "Entrepreneurs Built America" or "Entrepreneurship in Small Town America."**
- **Breakout activities that are designed to kick-start the strategies included in this recommendation.**
- **Local media involvement before, during and after, to promote the event and begin to spread awareness about the benefits of entrepreneurship.**
- **A mini pitch session, which will give attendees a real experience in this sort of competition.**
- **A youth track: involve youth programs in designing breakout activities specifically designed for youth. Work with local schools to select youth attendees.**
- **A high-profile keynote speaker to attract attendance, i.e. the CEO of a major company, the governor of the state of Michigan, etc.**

We recommend dedicating resources to hire a facilitator who can develop the agenda, find speakers, and plan the activities. This will ensure that the proper time and commitment is given to planning the event, and increase the likelihood that it will be a great success.

Comparable Best Practice: the Diamond Challenge [Youth Entrepreneurship Summit](#)

Strategy: Develop an "Entrepreneurial Success" Campaign

Timeline: Years two through ten

Continuing with the patriotic theme, create a medium for spreading the word about entrepreneurship in Region 3. Feature local entrepreneurs who are successful. Share information and resources. Discuss great strategies for starting a business along with helpful tips and ideas. This can all be conducted via an email newsletter, a column in local papers, and/or additional events. A specific entity should be designated with implementing this activity, for sustainability and accountability purposes.

Strategy: Conduct Pitch Events Throughout the Region on a Regular Basis

Timeline: Years three through ten

Although this strategy will provide investment and other resources to small businesses, most pitch events do not provide significant financial support to start-ups. They offer a small prize that incentivizes participation in the event. Primarily, these competitions energize a community in support of start-ups. They usually get a lot of attention from local media, schools, agencies, and businesses. They build awareness about the resources available. **Pitch events offer a stage from which new or established entrepreneurs can serve as role models for aspiring entrepreneurs.**

Holding a pitch event is labor-intensive and time-consuming. The most successful ones also come with support to prepare in advance, such as classes or a bootcamp. Therefore, the Regional Entrepreneurial Collaborative should put substantial planning into this strategy. Implementation will require many partners and financial support from sponsors and donors. We recommend developing a detailed plan that includes specific action steps, targeted partners, dates, locations, and resources. The plan should include review of existing pitch models. It will be most effective to bring in a program that already exists, rather than trying to create something new. A successful model is that of the MSU Spartan Innovations Center "Green Light" competition. They will partner with communities across the state to conduct regional competitions; the winners advance to the state level.

Comparable Best Practice: [Green Light Port Huron](#)

Recommendation: Increase entrepreneurial programming for youth

This recommendation has the added benefit of teaching young people all of the soft skills referred to in the previous recommendation. Entrepreneurial skills are much the same as soft skills, and teaching them helps to prepare young people for success as a citizen and employee as well.

Entrepreneurship education leads to a number of positive outcomes. **Young people who participate in entrepreneurship programming improve their academic performance, attendance at school, and educational attainment.** They have better interpersonal relationships, money management skills, and problem-solving abilities. They are more job-ready than young people who do not take part in entrepreneurship education.⁶ We believe that more entrepreneurial experience at a young age will improve the region's overall perceptions about starting a small business.

Strategy: Partner with an established program to deliver entrepreneurial programming to youth

Timeline: Year One

Rather than attempt to create something new, we recommend finding a youth-focused entrepreneurial program with proven success. Many programs exist, from free online curriculum to full-fledged training programs.

One of the challenges involved in delivering this type of program is the participation of schools. With so many requirements and demands on classroom time, teachers and principals are reluctant to bring in additional programming. It can also be difficult to offer after-school activities, since there are so many already in place. Therefore, it is imperative that schools be involved in selecting a program, in order to ensure that it will meet their needs. In fact, it's important to start working with one school at a time, with a goal of establishing programming in various schools throughout the region over time.

Another challenge is that of funding. In order to be successful, resources must be dedicated to coordinate, build relationships, and recruit volunteers. We recommend beginning with one willing community by partnering with a donor and school. This success will then serve as a model for other communities.

One program that is finding great success working within classrooms is Junior Achievement. The national program has developed curriculum that meets common core requirements. Teachers don't have to find time for the program as an "add-on," it can actually fulfill some of the items that must be taught in their classroom. The Junior Achievement model uses well-written materials and kits that volunteers can easily pick up and lead in a classroom. Volunteers often come from the business community, and are readily found through community-based civic groups.

Comparable Best Practice: [Oscoda County Achieves](#)

⁶D.C. Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation, 2001.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES

Strategy: Hold an Entrepreneurship Summit

GOAL Hold a high-profile Entrepreneurship Summit during year two.

OUTCOME Region 3 will be exposed to a wealth of entrepreneurial activity, and the entrepreneurship strategies in this report will be launched.

Strategy: Develop an "Entrepreneurial Success" Campaign

GOAL Develop the template for the campaign as part of the Entrepreneurship Summit during year two. Maintain the campaign years three through ten.

OUTCOME Region 3 will be exposed to successful entrepreneurship endeavors, and learn the benefits of entrepreneurship for the individual, community, and region.

Strategy: Conduct Pitch Events Throughout the Region on a Regular Basis

GOAL Develop a plan for holding pitch events by year three. Hold one pitch event per year in each major population center for years four through ten.

OUTCOME Start-ups will gain the opportunity to receive investment, mentorship, and other support; communities will become more aware of entrepreneurial activity.

Strategy: Partner with an established program to deliver entrepreneurial programming to youth

GOAL Work with one willing school district and one donor to select a program and begin delivery of the program by the second year.

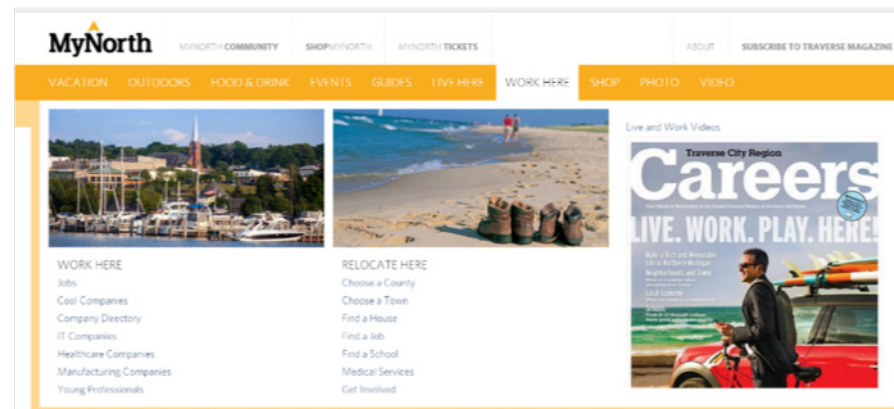
OUTCOME Build programming and funding to establish a program in the school districts of all major population centers within ten years.

Talent Best Practices

Before developing the recommended strategies and implementation activities, we searched the state and country for programs and initiatives that have been successful in leveraging a region's assets to overcome significant challenges in talent attraction and development. These programs and initiatives are primarily from rural areas similar to Region 3; some have been implemented in metropolitan areas but have potential for adaptation to a rural environment. Each of the best practices featured here connects to one or more of the challenges and assets identified in the sections above. Collectively, they serve as examples of successful implementation of one or more of the Recommendations provided in this report.

Best Practice, Talent Attraction: MyNorth - The official "Live-Work-Play" web site of Northwest Michigan

In 2015, the Northwest region set out to develop a comprehensive Live-Work-Play website and issued a Request for Proposals for its development. MyNorth Media responded with a proposal that drastically reduced duplication and unnecessary effort: They already had a strong following - a massive audience of 1.5 million people from around the country who love Northwestern lower Michigan. The project resulted in a public-private partnership, leveraging the extensive reach of MyNorth's multiple media channels (website, email newsletters, *Traverse the Magazine*, and *Careers* publications).



While the existing MyNorth online presence was strong in the "Live" and "Play" elements, the "Work" component needed to be added. In order to do so, the following functionality was programmed into the site:

- [Job postings feed in from Pure Michigan Talent Connect](#)
- [Company directories for Healthcare, IT, and Manufacturing](#)
- [Partnership with Michigan Works to feature hot jobs in email newsletters](#)
- [Featured businesses - "Cool Companies" - via online profile and videos](#)
- [County-based web sites that link to information on schools and housing; also feature a 3-minute video](#)

The site is now being used by businesses and communities when recruiting candidates from outside the region. There is also an intentional effort to lead visitors to the web site as well as email newsletter subscribers through the site to view job postings, cool company videos, and the online directories.

More information: [MyNorth](#) home page; ["Work Here"](#) landing page; [job postings](#) feed from PMTC; companies by industry - [Healthcare](#), [Manufacturing](#), [Information Technology](#); county and community pages - [Antrim](#) county, Village of [Empire](#), [Missaukee](#) county, [Petoskey](#).

Best Practice, Talent Attraction: Stormy Kromer Ambassadors

The outdoor apparel and accessories company Stormy Kromer is located in Ironwood, MI, but their customers cover the globe. They are a local employer of choice, and commit significant resources to workforce development. Their innovative strategy for promoting their brand has implications for the region as well: Stormy Kromer Ambassadors embody the lifestyle supported by the Upper Peninsula.



There is an application and selection process to become a Stormy Kromer Ambassador. Those selected represent the product's target market: outdoors enthusiasts; down-to-earth attitude; various ages; middle to upper income. Some are quasi-celebrities, such as well-known bloggers and photographers, and even a radio show host. They are able to leverage their current audience in promoting the brand. The ambassadors promote the brand through social media and the web, sharing pictures and experiences.

More information: <http://blog.stormykromer.com/blog/2016/03/09/our-2016-brand-ambassadors/>

Best Practice, Talent Attraction: Greater Minnesota Rising

This was a research project designed to determine what attracts and retains young talent in the rural regions of Northwestern Minnesota. They refer to their target audience (mostly millennials, but could include individuals of any age who are entering new fields) as "emerging leaders." Their research included review of existing studies, small focus groups, and a large event that utilized the world cafe model for facilitating productive conversations about talent attraction. Relevant findings indicate that most "emerging leaders" came to or stayed in the rural area because of family connections. Also, their primary desire was to engage with the community, developing relationships that connected them to others in their area, and participating in events and activities that are meaningful.

More information: <https://www.ere-media.com/ere/recruiting-talent-to-unglamorous-places-part-2-reverse-marketing/>

Best Practice, Talent Attraction: Traverse City Young Professionals - YP Connect and Wingman

The Traverse City Young Professionals group is headquartered at the Traverse City Area Chamber of Commerce. They offer volunteer and networking opportunities to local young professionals.

The *YP Connect* program was intended to support talent attraction efforts among area businesses, especially for trailing spouses. The group designated a chairperson from various industries - hospitality, manufacturing, healthcare, information technology, etc. This "chair" was selected not only because of his/her expertise in the field, but also connections within the industry as well as in the community. When a resume came into the Young Professionals group, it was sent to the appropriate chair. This person would then connect with the trailing spouse or job candidate and discuss job opportunities, places to live, recreation, networking events, and more.

The *Wingman* program was very simple: Connect new Young Professionals with people in the community. The program was conducted exclusively at the chamber's Business After Hours events. The YP group stationed their most social, highly networked members at the door of Business After Hours. They would welcome new members and introduce them to others at the event, kick-starting the person's networking efforts.

Both the *YP Connect* and *Wingman* programs are now defunct. Despite their simplicity and effectiveness, no specific entity or person was designated to manage them. This is a lesson learned: any program, no matter how well-intentioned, must be supported and coordinated in order to be sustainable.

More information about Traverse City Young Professionals: <http://tcchamber.org/events-and-programs/tcyp/>

Best Practice, Sector Partnerships: Healthcare Roundtable, UPward Talent Council



This sector partnership has been in existence for approximately 15 years. It formed when industry representatives from two local hospitals approached the workforce development board to discuss their shortage in Registered Nurses. The group was small at first, and came together to brainstorm strategies for addressing the shortage. Outreach was done to additional partners, including education, long-term care facilities, and the other Michigan Works! Agencies in the Upper Peninsula. Together, they have conducted several successful initiatives, including:

- A collaborative marketing campaign to recruit nurses, including television advertising;
- Targeted recruitment of former nurses who had left the field and nontraditional populations (males);
- Survey of healthcare companies;
- Development of a medical coding postsecondary program at Gogebic College;
- Career awareness publications.

The group continues to work together to address workforce challenges across the Upper Peninsula. Plans for upcoming work include legislative advocacy, staff sharing, and more career awareness activities.

More information: [Upper Peninsula Healthcare Roundtable](#)

Best Practice, Sector Partnerships: Franklin-Hampshire Regional Employment Board (State of Massachusetts)

With support from the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund (WTCF), the Franklin-Hampshire Regional Employment Board has created a successful manufacturing sector partnership. Valley Steel Stamp, a local manufacturer, led an effort to organize local businesses to raise \$250,000 in private contributions to upgrade equipment at Franklin County Technical School. Students in the high school manufacturing program had been learning on old, outdated equipment and were therefore not prepared for the jobs local employers needed to fill. With a grant from the WTCF, the Board was also able to expand training to unemployed and underemployed adults in the evenings when the new equipment was not being used to instruct high school students.

To develop the partnership, the Board convened local employers, workforce development service providers, Franklin County Technical School (CTE), and Greenfield Community College. Each partner was engaged as appropriate on program design, recruiting and screening participants, instruction, placement and following up on post-program job retention. Skilled workers at participating businesses are serving as technical skills instructors for the newly developed training programs. Greenfield Community College has institutionalized successful training programs, helping to sustain the partnership's training activities in the region beyond the life of the grant. Since 2013, 49 adult participants have completed training and 41 (84 percent) have been successfully placed in employment.

More information: [Sector Partnership Policy Toolkit](#), National Skills Coalition

Best Practice, Career Pathways: Transitioning Adults to Postsecondary Education and Training (TAPET)

A program of the collaborative Northwest Michigan Works/TBAISD Adult Education system, TAPET was initially a demonstration project that is now integrated into program delivery. The purpose of the program is to ensure successful transition for adult learners. Participants in traditional adult education programs typically achieve their GED, are deemed completed, and move out of the system with little or no follow-up. The Adult Education programming in Northwest Michigan recognizes that most living wage jobs require additional training beyond a GED.

The TAPET program uses the diagnostic version of COMPAS, so an adult learning plan can be customized to the individual's need and placement goals. Learning is contextualized to the participant's career goal. Partnerships with local colleges were developed and enhanced, in order to ease transition to their programming. Prior to enrollment at a college, participants can go on specialized campus tours with former adult ed students who are currently enrolled, take workshops on financial aid and effective study skills, and connect with college admissions and support services. Upon and after enrollment, adult learners are paired with a mentor and incentivized to stay in college to completion.

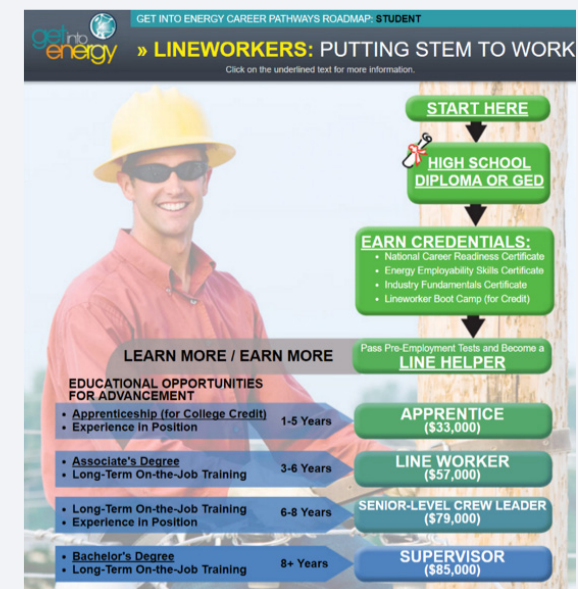
More information: [Northwest Michigan Works! Adult Education Learning Labs](#)

Best Practice, Career Pathways (Roadmaps): Center for Energy Workforce Development

Formed as an alliance of utility companies and their associations, the Center partners with educational institutions, unions, and workforce development to address workforce challenges. The group's strategic goals including building career awareness, developing short and long-term training solutions, and planning for the workforce of tomorrow.

One of their most impressive products is a comprehensive collection of roadmaps for various career pathways in the energy industry. These visual representations of career options are extremely useful to all parties, including the worker/student, business, workforce agency, and union. Titled "Get Into Energy," the roadmaps help everyone to gain a common understanding of the jobs available in the industry as well as the skills and credentials required for each.

More information: [Get Into Energy Career Pathways Roadmaps](#)



Best Practice, Career Pathways/Apprenticeship: Medical Assistant Apprenticeship Program

This initiative began with a convening of local healthcare providers by West Michigan Works! and educational partners. When data was shared indicating a need for more than 300 medical assistants per year in the coming five years, the group rallied to come up with a solution. Collaboratively, they developed the nation's first USDOL Registered Apprenticeship for the Medical Assistant occupation.

West Michigan Works! serves as the official holder of the standards of apprenticeship. This alleviates a significant amount of paperwork on the part of multiple employers, who would otherwise need to obtain this designation separately. The agency also assists with documentation, calculating return on investment, and supporting training costs with workforce funding.

More information: [Apprenticeships in West Michigan](#)

Best Practice, Employer Resource Network: Great Lakes Bay ERN



*Empowering employment by improving
employee retention and productivity*

The Saginaw, Midland, and Bay City areas are served by the Great Lakes Bay Employer Resource Network, in partnership with Community Ventures. This ERN provides confidential on-site success coaching for employees who are struggling with issues that could prevent them from succeeding on the job. Community Ventures, a program of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, supports the ERN with funding, business outreach, and leadership. The goal of all partners is to provide wrap-around support and ensure employee success and retention.

More information: <http://www.ern-mi.com/area-network.aspx?AreaID=13>

Best Practice, Soft Skills Training through Work Experience: GOOD Training Program

Goodwill Northern Michigan provides hands-on, real-world job training opportunities to individuals who need a hand up. Their programs prepare participants for the workforce by offering certifications and experience in hospitality, food service, commercial cleaning, and retail (all leading sectors in local job growth). Goodwill job coaches have found that hands-on experiences help participants see relevancy and application, thereby improving retention and mastery. Supervisors are trained to address poor behaviors immediately, and give participants a chance to try again. Trainees learn new skills, develop good work habits, and connect to real job opportunities through partnerships with local employers. Goodwill doesn't just teach the skills to do the job, though; they empower trainees to embrace their strengths and recognize their potential. Throughout the training program, Goodwill case managers work with participants to address barriers to employment, such as access to stable housing, reliable transportation, and quality daycare. The program utilizes their retail stores, recycling system, food truck, and other services to provide these workforce experiences.

More information: <http://www.goodwillnmi.org/jobs/workforce-development/>

Best Practice, Soft Skills Training through Work Experience: Roca, Boston MA

Roca is a transitional jobs program for at-risk young men ages 18 to 24, most of whom are juvenile offenders and high school drop-outs. The program's goal is to help participants develop practical skills, change self-defeating behaviors, and prevent future incarceration. Roca believes that the best way to achieve these goals is through successful participation in the workforce. When placed in a transitional job, these young men can get fired from the job and then earn their way back into the position by proving they have learned new employability skills. This can happen multiple times until true change has occurred. Program staff (many of whom graduated from the program themselves) work with participants to address poor behaviors, work through their failure, and eventually succeed.

More information: <http://rocainc.org/about/our-story/>

Best Practice, Entrepreneurial Collaborative: The Innovation Collaborative, Northwest Pennsylvania

Innovation Collaborative

This group recognized that the Northwest Pennsylvania region lagged behind other similar areas on innovation indicators, such as venture capital investment, patent activity, and high tech employment. Yet entrepreneurship is "key to job growth and wealth creation." The group exists to raise awareness about the importance of entrepreneurship, measure the elements of the region's entrepreneurial ecosystems, and empower local entrepreneurs. They are a repository for information about and connections to resources. They also coordinate a student entrepreneurship competition and host a high-energy awards party to celebrate local innovators.

More information: <https://innovationcollaborators.com/>

Best Practice, Entrepreneurship Summit: The Diamond Challenge Youth Entrepreneurship Summit (YES)

The Diamond Challenge is a program housed at the University of Delaware. Its purpose is to promote and encourage entrepreneurship among high school students. The "challenge" is a competition that awards \$100,000 in funding to potential startups. Preparing for the challenge is the focus of the curriculum; students are matched with mentors, learn best practices in entrepreneurship, and connect to postsecondary education. The final phase of the competition is held at the Youth Entrepreneurship Summit. YES focuses on innovation, and offers a full day of programming dedicated to engaging young people in entrepreneurship.

More information: <http://diamondchallenge.org/youth-entrepreneurship-summit/>

Best Practice, Entrepreneurial Training: Oscoda County Achieves

The 23rd Circuit Court Family Division has seen the vision of teaching entrepreneurial skills to youth as a means of preventing involvement with the justice system. Oscoda County Achieves began with a seed grant, and has expanded with support from the court and the Oscoda County Economic Development Alliance. The program uses Junior Achievement curriculum at the middle school and high school level. Students grow produce in a greenhouse and sell it as a way to experience running a business. There is also a competition that teaches the youth to grow a small investment of \$10. Stakeholders in the program give full credit for its success to the coordinator, who is a native of the area and former educator. She is therefore well-respected and trusted, allowing for swift entry into the schools and participation by multiple classrooms.

More information: <http://www.janortheastmi.org/oscodacountyachieves/>

Best Practice, Entrepreneurship Support: Maine Enterprise Option

Although a statewide example, this best practice is promising for assistance to long-term unemployed and other targets for entrepreneurship support. The program allows the unemployed to pursue entrepreneurship training instead of conducting traditional job search while collecting unemployment benefits. It utilizes Self Employment Assistance, a UI program, and pays for the training with workforce funds. The state of Michigan would have to enact new legislation to implement this program, but there is already interest on the part of several legislators and the Governor.

More information: <http://bangordailynews.com/2010/10/29/business/maine-entrepreneurs-get-fresh-starts-after-layoffs/>

RPI Collaborative Plan Updates, 2019

ADDENDUM: NORTHEAST MICHIGAN REGIONAL PROSPERITY INITIATIVE, 10-YEAR PLAN 2015-2025

Strategic Priority	Current/Recent Activities	New Activities
COMMUNITY SUPPORT		
INFRASTRUCTURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vertical Asset Inventory (in progress) Connect Michigan inventory of ordinances, permitting, barriers to fiber deployment Broadband Plans (in progress) Target Market Analysis (11 county) RRC Best practices - Alpena, Grayling, Roscommon, Harrisville, West Branch, and regional training Trail Town Plans (10) Trail Towns signage Grayling Trail Town Place Plan SAW Grants Rising Tide 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Finish vertical asset inventory Continue Broadband Plans Continue increasing availability of broadband in rural areas Complete additional RRC Community Certifications MSU FIT program Retail/Housing Market Studies
TRANSPORTATION & TRANSIT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased rural transit Context sensitive solutions (safe routes to school, complete streets) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Convene providers to brainstorm solutions Convene industries for collaboration Inventory of resources Asset Management Inventory
PLACEMAKING & REGIONAL BRANDING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional brand developed & implemented Shared website Websites: Up North Trails, US23, Dark Sky, Water Trails Tourism shows Discover Northeast Michigan Regional Marketing Mini-Grants Banners: Our Trails Take you Farther Heritage Route (Discovery Tour) Placemaking trainings 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Create a consistent, effective Marketing strategy/outreach program Create a strategic tourism partnership Trail Towns & Up North Trails - continue Place Plans for Trail Towns Expand trails websites, strategy, maintenance, additional park data Coordinated media effort for talent attraction (External reach) Tourism shows Chambers/CVB collaboration
REGIONAL COLLABORATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared accounting and HR services Consultant assistance CDC RPI and WDB joint meetings 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Achieve Tier-2 Status Build on existing collaborative groups to reduce volume of meetings and achieve efficiencies

Strategic Priority	Current/Recent Activities	New Activities
ECONOMIC EXPANSION		
TARGET INDUSTRIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taste the Local Difference • Access to local foods study • Grayling Market • Strengthened forest products sector • Lumber grading training • Business retention visits 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue regional food market development/collaboration 2. Logistics assistance/planning 3. Continue development of food hub
ENTREPRENEURSHIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrepreneurial Network • Youth Entrepreneurship 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue Entrepreneurial Network 2. Youth Entrepreneurship Training 3. Entrepreneurial Resource Mapping 4. Pitch events 5. Leaky Bucket Economic inputs/ outputs study
SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased CDFI activity • SCORE created in Otsego • Increased SBDC presence • Economic Development Grants • Social Media training grants • Database of exporters • Surveyed companies for export potential • Connected communities with MEDC Economic Gardening Program • Shared DDA Director 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase University/Sault Ste. Marie Smart Zone Product Development Support 2. Connect local businesses to appropriate service providers 3. Small business “toolkit” 4. Promote Pure Michigan Business Connect
TALENT ADVANCEMENT		
TALENT ATTRACTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Millennial roundtables • Hot Jobs profiles and videos 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Talent attraction tools for businesses 2. Talent videos 3. Coordination with placemaking and branding
TALENT DEVELOPMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce training • GoingPro Talent Fund • Additional Michigan Works! training programs • Apprenticeship programming • Talent Tours 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased promotion of training programs 2. Increased work-based learning 3. Career Exploration (MiCareer Quest, Talent Tours, Expos) 4. GED and Basic Skills 5. Focus on opioid crisis
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WIOA Regional Plan • MWA Business Services alignment • Adult Education co-located with Michigan Works • CEAC 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Business Resource Network 2. Talent Pipeline Management 3. Career Pathways 4. Regional grant opportunities