



# Industry Clusters

## Tourism

**Background:** Tourism in Northeast Michigan is and has been largely based on natural resources. The area is known among current visitors as an outdoor recreation destination for water and forest-based activities. Golfing is also a popular recreational activity in the central portion of the region. Unlike other areas of Michigan, most visitors to Northeast Michigan are in-state travelers. Overall, Northeast Michigan is not a well-known tourism destination. Recent regional and sub-regional projects have sought to bring attention to the region including the US 23 Heritage Route, Up North Trails, and the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary. Slowly, the region is becoming more widely known for the wide range of outdoor, cultural, and historic destinations. In the past, tourism marketing has been implemented at the community level, but these projects have brought communities together to present themselves as a regional destination worthy of a longer visit. For the creation of the following strategies, a group of representatives from across the region met and discussed needs and priorities. The group ultimately based their strategies on the Pure Michigan 2012-2017 Tourism Strategic Plan. This plan serves as a guideline for action items specific to Northeast Michigan.

Tourism  
Report

**Strategy: Present Northeast Michigan to the global community as a high quality regional destination.**

1. Establish a strategic tourism partnership for Region 3.

- a. Organize and hold regional tourism partnership meeting to determine organizational structure. Tourism stakeholders will include tourism-based businesses from each of the 11 counties led by the Convention and Visitor's Bureaus.
- b. Annually, select and attend at least two Tourism Trade shows outside the Region.

## **2. Create a positive visitor first impression with service excellence.**

- a. Create a mystery shopper program for the region to observe and report the level of service being experienced by the guest to a community or business.
- b. Visit 20% of retail and tourism related businesses in region each year.
- c. Offer hospitality worker and dockhand annual training in Michigan Works! offices throughout the region and provide 5,000 reference placards to trainees.

## **3. Access the national and global tourism Market Place through Web-based presence.**

- a. Implement the Up North Trails program.
  - (1) Maintain accurate trail and point of interest data on [www.upnorthtrail.org](http://www.upnorthtrail.org).
  - (2) Implement Phase II of website development to include trail ratings, water trails, tours, private businesses, trip planner, tourism resources, ORV roads, video, trail event calendar, and content management system updates.
  - (3) Work with communities to create a trail town environment including organization, promotion, design, and economic restructuring including the development of trail town plans.
  - (4) Implement action strategies contained within trail town plans.
  - (5) Develop a comprehensive signage program using the Up North Trails brand.
  - (6) Provide web-based resources for trail towns to capitalize on trail systems including best practices, trail user needs, business opportunities, and trail user statistics.
  - (7) Create a trail town academy to provide training to local trail town managers and to facilitate the exchange of ideas.

## **4. Excel in quality product development by collaboration with agencies involved with tourism.**

- a. Develop and distribute interpretive information for the region.

- b. Establish 5 self-guided regional themed tours annually.
- c. Provide regional visitor information in a variety of formats.
- d. Maintain a regional and cohesive web presence utilizing existing regional websites (i.e. Up North Trails, US 23) and expand as needed.
- e. Work with communities and agencies to preserve, maintain, and expand attractions in the region.
- f. Implement the US 23 Heritage Route Corridor Management Plan.
- g. Support tourism business development and expansion. Provide resources online and integrate Discover NE Michigan coastal tourism business assistance website into [www.northeastmichigan.biz](http://www.northeastmichigan.biz).

## 5. Encourage regional promotion, marketing, and communications.

- a. Increase state and national awareness of Northeast Michigan tourism opportunities using brand recognition, existing outlets in the region, and Pure Michigan. Use marketing strategies contained within the US 23 Corridor Management Plan.
- b. Attend trade and consumer shows in Canada and the Midwest utilizing the regional marketing booth.
- c. Cooperatively advertise to target markets in print publications, online, on the ground, and on TV/radio.
- d. Engage in direct marketing (mail and email) and effectively utilize social media.
- e. Develop a regional PR Kit.

## 6. Protect natural resources and the environment

- a. Support and expand efforts to inventory and assess the natural, cultural, and heritage resources critical to growing Northeast Michigan's tourism industry.
- b. Encourage tourism businesses to adopt and implement stewardship principles to protect natural resources.