

2015-2019

Western Upper Peninsula Regional Prosperity Plan



Prepared By:
Western Upper Peninsula Regional Prosperity Collaborative

With Assistance From:
Western Upper Peninsula Planning & Development Region

Overview

Michigan Governor Rick Snyder has made “Regional Reinvention” a priority since his entrance into office in 2010. After years of planning, the concept finally came to fruition as the Regional Prosperity Initiative (RPI) in 2013. In creating the initiative, the Governor’s administration recognized and focused on the problem of haphazard and sometimes conflicting regional districts of state agencies. Most of these districts were developed with no overarching plan for coordination and alignment on a statewide or even regional level. The state accepted some responsibility for this state of affairs and called for a need to reexamine services areas and offerings to improve efficiencies through collaboration and consolidation.

State-Designated Planning Regions and Metropolitan Planning Organizations, with their broad, regional, and economic development-focused operations, were selected as the most appropriate leaders in the initiative. These entities, of which there are 15 in the state, became eligible for a total of \$2.5 million in funding to facilitate the initiative regionally. Each entity could choose to apply for one of three funding tiers: Regional Prosperity Collaborative, with a maximum request of \$250,000; Regional Prosperity Council, with a maximum request of \$375,000; and Regional Prosperity Board, with a maximum request of \$500,000. Beyond certain minimum requirements, applicants were granted considerable flexibility in how to accomplish the goals of the initiative in their respective regions.

For purposes of the initiative, the Western Upper Peninsula Planning & Development Region Commission (WUPPDR) was designated as the Western U.P. Prosperity Region, Region 1a of the Upper Peninsula Prosperity Alliance. WUPPDR applied for and was awarded its full request of \$250,000 to form a collaborative. A requirement of the collaborative level was to produce a five-year “regional prosperity plan” including an “economic development blueprint.” This plan is the culmination of nearly a year of stakeholder events, committee meetings, organizational profiling, and staff discussions and analysis.

In order to avoid duplication, the plan takes into account other existing plans focused on the economies of the Western and overall Upper Peninsula. Much work toward economic prosperity has already taken place. This Western Upper Peninsula Regional Prosperity Plan is a functional document with a clear, implementable path toward structural changes in regional organization and service delivery.

Acknowledgements

WUPPDR and the Western U.P. Regional Prosperity Collaborative would like to thank the dozens of participants who took valuable time out of their days to participate in the planning process – particularly those from the advisory committee who attended multiple meetings. All stakeholders and committee and subcommittee members are listed in the Appendix.

A special thank you is extended to Governor Snyder’s office; the Department of Technology, Management and Budget; Upper Peninsula legislators; Central Upper Peninsula Planning and Development Regional Commission; Eastern Upper Peninsula Regional Planning and Development Commission; and others too numerous to list.



Table of Contents

Chapter	Page
Regional Profile	1
Previous Plans	8
Planning Process	17
Committee Composition	19
Vision	23
Current Organizations: Economic Development	24
Current Organizations: Education and Workforce Development	31
Current Organizations: Transportation	36
Opportunities for Collaboration in Agency Roles and Functions	41
Opportunities for Collaboration in Administrative and Supporting Services	55
Economic Development Blueprint	58
Appendix	61



Regional Profile

The Western Upper Peninsula Prosperity Region, comprised of Baraga, Gogebic, Houghton, Iron, Keweenaw, and Ontonagon Counties, holds a number of unique geographic titles. The region has the lowest population density of any state designated planning region, at under 14 persons per square mile, and the second-lowest total population, at 82,668. Keweenaw County has the lowest total population in the state, and Ontonagon County has both the lowest population density and the third-largest land area.

At the same time, the Western U.P. is a region of contrasts. The region's micropolitan population center of the Cities of Houghton and Hancock is located on the Keweenaw Peninsula near the northernmost tip of the state and straddles a canal that effectively makes the northern part of the peninsula an island. Much of the rest of the region, especially the broad expanses to the south, is isolated and rural. Yet Houghton is the home of nationally renowned Michigan Technological University, which produces engineering, technical, and business professionals for employment at home, in the greater United States, and abroad. The area economy has thus transformed from a one-time copper mining mecca to a hotbed of high-technology startup businesses and satellites of Fortune 500 companies.

The region's second-largest population cluster, anchored by the City of Ironwood at the westernmost tip of the state and Upper Peninsula, is the gateway to the million-acre Ottawa National Forest, which is a major tourist draw and continues to host forestry operations that have been an integral component of the economy for generations. Iron County, at the southeast corner of the region, is closely connected with adjacent areas of Michigan and Wisconsin that provide great opportunities in manufacturing industries. This area, too, is rich in natural resources.

The Western Upper Peninsula offers something for everyone, but its challenges are many. Much of the region's economy is stagnant, dependent on tourism and extractive industries. The population is dispersed, distances are long, and infrastructure, both physical and for communications, is lacking. Luckily, the resilient people of the region are not afraid to contend with these obstacles and are always in search of new ways to work together and accomplish more with existing resources. As the Governor's Office itself has noted, regional prosperity is already occurring and can only be improved.



The Regional Planning Agency

Since WUPPDR's formation in 1968, its mission has been to foster stable and diversified economies in the Western Upper Peninsula. The organization is governed by the WUPPDR Commission, which includes more than two dozen representatives of eleven member governments that meet eight times annually. (All told, the region includes 73 local units of government and two Indian reservations.) For 46 years WUPPDR has addressed collaborative regional planning among both member and non-member units, functioned as an information services agency, provided community technical and planning assistance, and identified economic development opportunities.

As an Economic Development District of the United States Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA), WUPPDR prepares a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The CEDS examines economics of the region from the point of view of WUPPDR and its membership, examining the region's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats and identifying planned projects to expand and improve the regional economy. Whereas this Regional Profile of the Regional Prosperity Plan provides a basic overview of all aspects of the Western Upper Peninsula, the CEDS can be referred to for a much greater breadth of information and statistics.

WUPPDR is involved in almost all sectors of the economy and has administered and implemented millions of dollars worth of projects to further the organization's mission. WUPPDR has had a leading role in developing or providing four high tech incubators; industrial parks; renaissance zones; water and sewer infrastructure; historic, housing, and business plans; trails and byways; road asset management for roads; forest improvement districts; geographic information systems services; housing rehabilitation; and many other projects and services. WUPPDR continues to identify funding opportunities for projects that benefit the whole region.

Social Indicators

The Western Upper Peninsula has seen tumultuous population shifts throughout its history. Before industrialization, the region was populated primarily by Native Americans, whose cultural impact is apparent today and continues through the prosperity of two tribes. Population grew slowly until after the Civil War in 1865, when the region's natural resources of copper, timber, and iron ore helped support the nation's rapid industrialization.

Exploitation of natural resources required large labor inputs, which in turn offered an opportunity to earn a livelihood. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the population was infused by a great number of immigrants from many European ethnic groups recruited to fill the manpower shortage. Finnish heritage remains an important part of regional culture. The region's population peaked in 1920 and then continuously declined until 1970. Population increased by two percent from 1970 to 1980, decreased by seven percent from 1980 to 1990, and then leveled off.



In 2010, the county with the greatest population share in the region was Houghton, with 44 percent. Gogebic County followed with 20 percent, Iron with 14 percent, Baraga with 11 percent, Ontonagon with 8 percent, and Keweenaw with 3 percent. Houghton and Baraga Counties experienced population increases from 2000 to 2010, whereas the other counties and the region overall lost population. Today, as has long been the case, the western six counties represent less than 1 percent of Michigan's population.

The median age of the region's residents is much higher than the state. Only Houghton County, due to a large student population, has a median age lower than the state's median of 38.9. Ontonagon County has the highest median age, at 52.7, with Keweenaw and Iron nearly equal. Persons over the age of 64 comprise 19.2 percent in the region, compared to 13 percent in the state. In Keweenaw and Iron Counties, approximately 25 percent of residents are over the age of 64.

Racially, the Western U.P. is overwhelmingly White. The largest minority representation is in Baraga County, at 25 percent, made up mainly of American Indians associated with the L'Anse Indian Reservation. Houghton County has a notable Asian component, at 3.4 percent, mainly attributable to Michigan Technological University students and faculty.

The percentage of Western U.P. residents who have a high school degree or equivalent, but no higher, is greater than that of the state, at 40.9 percent versus 31.8 percent. However, there is little difference between the state and the region in the number of residents with less than a high school education. In the region, 27.6 percent of residents have acquired a college degree, versus 32.5 percent in the state.

The Western U.P. has a unique housing stock compared to the state and United States. Housing in the region is much older than in the state, with 64.9 percent of units in the region having been built before 1970 versus 52.9 percent in the state. Only 66.4 percent of all housing units in the region are occupied, compared to 85.4 percent in the state. This is partly due to the region's desirability for second homes, as 24 percent of units in the region are seasonal. The percentage of renter-occupied units is lower in the region than in the state, at 15.9 percent versus 25.4 percent.

Physical Geography

WUPPDR's land area is 6,026 square miles. The region is closely identified with its geographic assets, which include 354 miles of Lake Superior shoreline; 7,500 inland water bodies; 3,552,952 acres of forestland, which account for 87.5 percent of the region's land; and a location at the northwestern-most edge of the state, nearer to Canada than the Southern Lower Peninsula. These physical characteristics, along with a decidedly rural, culturally unique, and politically independent personality, are causes of a perception that the region is far away from everything, both physically and in public awareness.



The region is part of the fragile Great Lakes ecosystem and drainage basin. Three major watersheds drain to Lake Superior, Lake Michigan, and the Mississippi River. Lake Superior, to which most land drains, is the world's largest freshwater lake and one of the deepest, having a maximum depth of 1,333 feet. The Ontonagon River watershed is the largest in the region, one of the largest in the Upper Peninsula, and the largest on the south shore of Lake Superior.

Lake Superior and the region's many inland waters host significant recreational and some commercial fisheries, especially for trout, salmon, whitefish, walleye, and northern pike. Wildlife is abundant in the region's forestland and includes game species such as waterfowl (ducks and geese), upland birds (woodcock, ruffed grouse, and turkey), deer, bear, moose, small game (rabbit and squirrel), and fur bearers (muskrat, beaver, fox, coyote, mink, bobcat, and raccoon). These are the target of hunters and trappers, and deer hunting, in particular, is an important part of the regional identity.

Fishing, hunting, and trapping, as well as countless other recreational activities such as camping, hiking, and skiing, are supported by vast amounts of publicly accessible land. Although nearly two-thirds of the forestland is privately owned, 57 percent of this is enrolled in the Commercial Forest Act (CFA) program. CFA promotes public accessibility of private lands by granting tax benefits to landowners in return for sustainable forest management and maintenance of access for hunting, trapping, and fishing. Many of the landowners permit public use of the land for other recreational activities as well.

Geology is another defining characteristic of the region that crosses over between human and environmental activity. Copper is key, as the Keweenaw Peninsula originally had some of the purest reserves in existence, making copper the economic driver of the northern part of the region for much of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. Most of the copper lay along the spine of the Keweenaw Peninsula. Ores were discovered farther southwest toward Ontonagon over the years, and technology upgrades made these less-pure ores feasible to mine until roughly the Second World War. The copper industry's final breath was the closure of the White Pine Mine in Ontonagon County in 1995. However, in recent years renewed exploration and rising copper prices have suggested a future resurgence of the industry.

In the southern and western parts of the region, iron mining became important in the late 19th Century. The Gogebic Range in the west and Menominee Range in the southeast were two of the nation's six principal iron ranges. Many dozens of mines existed in and around the communities of western Iron and Gogebic Counties. The final mines closed in 1966 in Gogebic and 1978 in Iron Counties. During the 50-year period of active mining, over 300 million tons of iron ore were shipped from the Gogebic Range. Both the iron and copper ranges are riddled with underground mines that were the focus of today's communities and today pose safety and subsidence threats to overlying areas.

Agricultural lands are much less significant than the forestlands of the region. Lands are generally poor in fertility and thus led to many failed farmsteads during the transition out of mining. Agricultural land comprises 104,555 acres of the region, the largest percentage of which, 29.5 percent, is located in Ontonagon County.



Infrastructure

In areas subject to economic decline, adequate public infrastructure is critical to help close the gap between private investment and profit. Healthcare is an example of an industry that is prerequisite to any other type of economic prosperity. The Western Upper Peninsula is graced by six acute care hospitals dispersed along the region's perimeter. The largest regional medical center is Portage Health in Hancock, which includes a confirmed Level 3 Trauma Center. In every county in the region with a hospital (Keweenaw lacks one), a hospital is either the largest or second-largest employer. All of the hospitals except for Portage Health are nonprofit, and all are part of regional networks of providers.

Emergency services are another prerequisite – and one that is extremely difficult to satisfy in a large rural region. There are 58 fire departments, 23 police departments or posts, and 8 ambulance services in the region. Some of the ambulance services and almost all of the fire departments are volunteer-operated.

Perhaps most difficult of all in the Western U.P. is transportation infrastructure. The road network is dominated by 620 miles of Michigan Department of Transportation state trunkline, of which four are in the Primary Commercial Network: U.S. 2, U.S. 41/141, M-28, and M-38. Other major highways are U.S. 45 and M-26. Municipal, county, and state and national forest roads fill the gaps. Most commercial shipping is via truck. Most rail lines have been abandoned and/or dismantled, with most corridors reverting to recreational trail use. Three active lines remain.

Water transportation is mostly recreational, with 11 recreational harbors in the region. Only one commercial port, in Ontonagon, remains on Lake Superior. The Portage Waterway is also maintained for potential commercial use, with port access at Hancock/Houghton. Intercity bus service is available along U.S. 41 south from Hancock and along U.S. 2 east from Ironwood. These services provide scheduled access to a total of 14 communities. Public transit service is available in the Cities of Hancock and Houghton and in Gogebic and Ontonagon Counties. Two airports in the region offer commercial passenger service: Houghton County and Gogebic-Iron (Wisconsin) County. Just beyond the region's southeast corner, Ford Airport also offers passenger service. Five other airports are available for general aviation.

A great number of recreational trails traverse the region. Many of these are local closed-loop systems, but larger networks are in the Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park in northern Ontonagon and Gogebic Counties and in Isle Royale National Park on a 132,018-acre island in Lake Superior northwest of the Keweenaw Peninsula landmass. A 120-mile segment of the North Country National Scenic Trail crosses the region from west to east, mainly on public forestland. The entire trail runs 3,200 miles from North Dakota to New York. Hundreds of miles of off-road vehicle and snowmobile trails also network the region and are an important economic driver.

Education is a strong point in the Western Upper Peninsula. There are two community colleges: Gogebic Community College in Ironwood and Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College in L'Anse/Baraga. Two universities are located in the Houghton and Hancock: Michigan Technological University and Finlandia University, respectively. The aforementioned Michigan Tech, which offers degrees from Associate to Doctoral, has a student body of near 7,000.



Michigan Tech employs 400 faculty and hundreds of support staff, making it the largest single employer in the region. Finlandia is a smaller liberal arts school with a Finnish heritage, making it an important part of the local culture. Public secondary schools throughout the region frequently receive high marks on a statewide level.

Perhaps the most direct and tangible economic infrastructure exists in industrial parks throughout the region, which are at high demand. The region currently has 19 industrial parks, whose characteristics and available space vary widely from 20 to over 400 acres.

In today's information age, communications infrastructure is vital. The Western U.P. has access to mobile phone and data service in most areas, as well as broadband internet in many areas. But mobile reception and broadband internet are both deficient outside of major communities.

Economy

Many aspects of the economy have already been touched upon, so a comparison of the Western U.P. with similar and larger geographic units is in order. Based on numbers, the Western U.P. is at a disadvantage in many respects. In 2012, the average per-capita income of the region's six counties was \$20,918 compared with Michigan's \$25,547 and the United States' \$28,051. Median family income tells a similar story, with the Western U.P. counties' average at \$36,695 compared with Michigan's \$48,471 and the United States' \$53,046.

Labor force trends have been similar to those of the state. From 2006 to 2011, the number of persons in the labor force decreased by 7.4 percent in the Western U.P. Michigan Works Area compared with 7.2 percent in Michigan overall. The number of persons employed decreased by 11.6 percent in the Western U.P. versus 11.2 percent in the state over the same period. Houghton County generally has the lowest unemployment rate in the region and Baraga County the highest. In fact, Baraga County often has the highest unemployment rate in the state and at one period in 2009 had the second-highest in the nation. At that time a significant part of the county's economy was based on small-scale manufacturing, which took a significant and locally irreversible blow during the recession.

WUPPDR's unemployment rate is almost always higher than the state and nation. In September 2014, the region's unemployment rate was 7.0 percent (fallen from 9.3 percent a year prior). The Michigan state unemployment rate in September 2014 was 6.7 percent, and the United States, 5.7 percent (fallen from 8.2 and 7.0 percent, respectively).

By far the largest single industry in the Western U.P. by earnings is Government, accounting for 43 percent of dollars (\$485 million of \$1.244 billion) in 2009. This compares to Retail Trade, the second highest at \$89 million, closely followed by Manufacturing at \$84 million. This disparity is not all negative, as the public sector has historically provided stability to an economy that has been strongly linked with natural resource commodities which react sharply to business cycle changes. However, extreme budget reductions in state and local government over the past decade have strained public-sector employment.



The region's two Indian tribes, the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community (KBIC) and the Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa (LVD), play an important role in the economy. The tribes have reservations in L'Anse and Watersmeet, respectively. The KBIC is the largest employer in Baraga County, and LVD is the primary economic force in its local area. As drivers of the service industry and tourism, each tribe operates a casino on its reservation.

In the private sector, Food Services and Drinking Places is the dominant industry, with 10.9 percent of total jobs in the Western U.P. Michigan Works Area in 2009. This is followed by ambulatory healthcare at 8.3 percent and hospitals at 6.7 percent. Further analysis reveals that 19 percent of private industry employment is in the service industry and 15 percent in healthcare.

All industries in the region declined from 2006 to 2009, with an overall percentage drop of 8.1 percent, but some categories declined far more than others. Manufacturing saw the sharpest drop at 29.4 percent, followed by professional and business services at 21.3 percent and construction at 17.1 percent. Meanwhile, Trade, Transportation, & Utilities and Natural Resources & Mining saw little change, at drops of only 0.7 and 1.9 percent, respectively. Meanwhile, the Educational & Health Services industry category rose by 1.5 percent – reassuring considering the dominance of those industries in the regional economy. Of single industries, Telecommunications employment rose by far the most, at 59 jobs or 72.8 percent.

In alignment with past trends, the occupational category of Healthcare & Support has by far the greatest employment growth forecast in the region by both number and percentage, at 1,640 jobs or 14.4 percent from 2008 to 2018. Network Systems and Data Communication Analysts is the single occupation with the greatest percentage growth forecast, at 45.2 percent or 40 jobs; Home Health Aides has the greatest numerical growth forecast, at 195 jobs or 30.7 percent.

The Western U.P. was home to 2,237 “small businesses,” based on the Census definition, in 2009. The only “large business,” though it is actually a public entity, was Michigan Technological University. Small business has become a more important part of the economy in many areas of the region with the demise of mining (though a resurgence may be on the horizon thanks to technology and rising ore prices, especially for copper) and reduced labor requirements for forestry. There has also been a shift away from manufacturing, which has traditionally been associated with highly desirable jobs. These regional changes in industry will contribute to progress and exciting new development opportunities.



Previous Plans

One reason it was possible to provide a regional profile in only six pages is that other existing plans have already served the same purpose. Plans such as the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the Western Upper Peninsula are effective as inventories and detailed profiles of the social and physical landscape. Furthermore, many plans are valuable indicators of public opinion since public input is within the direct scope of a planner's job. These components provide a foundation for development of action items and an implementation plan, which often seem entirely reasonable and feasible.

Reason and feasibility, however, are not enough to produce actual change. However well-intentioned and carefully orchestrated planning processes are, they tend to fail at implementation. Reasons for this may include lack of resources, overzealousness, and failure to task necessary actions to motivated individuals or groups. Thus, strategies end up being "left on the shelf." They may even be repeated several years down the road with no explanation as to why their strategies were not accomplished the first time. In some cases, the new planners may not even realize that the earlier plan exists.

In order to escape these occurrences, following is an overview of major previous and existing plans that are related to RPI, with a focus on those in which the entire and/or Western Upper Peninsula is a part.

Earlier State-Level Initiatives

On the statewide level, the Regional Prosperity Initiative does not exist in a vacuum. It is the highest-profile product of a string of regionalization studies and initiatives produced by various state-level agencies and organizations. The November 2013 issue of *Planning & Zoning News*, a monthly magazine of the Planning & Zoning Center at Michigan State University (MSU), Land Policy Institute at MSU, and MSU Extension Service, provides a detailed overview of these efforts, which are described below:

- *State Land Use Leadership Council Recommendations, 2003*: These recommendations were made by a 32-member stakeholder council under Governor Jennifer Granholm. Though they pertain mainly to improvement of land use decision-making, many recommendations were made for regional planning. The general themes were to increase the levels of authority and funding of regional planning agencies, to encourage realignment of regional boundaries, and to promote regional cooperation through state funding incentives in infrastructure and other areas. More generally, the report found that the focus of regional planning agencies needs to move beyond government into "natural" regions defined by other than political factors.
- *New Directions Report, 2003-04*: The report was developed by the Michigan Society of Planning. It, too, was focused mainly on consolidation of enabling acts for local planning and zoning. However, the report also recommended that the regional planning act require and include a mechanism to ensure that local plans are consistent with a regional plan.



- *Business Leaders for Michigan Study, 2009*: This study, developed by Public Sector Consultants and Citizens Research Council staff, focused on policy issues that were impediments to economic development. The study proposed that state government be restructured and incentives offered to further regional government and development and that consistency in the development process be improved. The study was focused on improving the business climate but covered much of the same ground as other regional planning improvement recommendations in this section. The importance of planning based on “natural” economic regions, rather than artificially created ones that may be obsolete, was again stressed.
- *New Directions Report, 2003-04*: The report was developed by the Michigan Society of Planning. It, too, was focused mainly on consolidation of enabling acts for local planning and zoning. However, the report also recommended that the regional planning act require and include a mechanism to ensure that local plans are consistent with a regional plan.
- *Business Leaders for Michigan Study, 2009*: This study, developed by Public Sector Consultants and Citizens Research Council staff, focused on policy issues that were impediments to economic development. The study proposed that state government be restructured and incentives offered to further regional government and development and that consistency in the development process be improved. The study was focused on improving the business climate but covered much of the same ground as other regional planning improvement recommendations in this section. The importance of planning based on “natural” economic regions, rather than artificially created ones that may be obsolete, was again stressed.
- *Michigan Prosperity Initiative, 2010*: This project, not to be confused with RPI, was undertaken by Governor Granholm’s office and Michigan State University. The initiative included a three-stage series of training sessions, with the first stage focused on the “Old” versus “New” Economy; the second focused on asset identification, regional economic development planning, and place making; and the third on drafting regional growth strategies. Three studies to aid in prosperity planning were developed and remain accessible online. All of the planning regions were involved in this effort.
- *Economic Development Practitioners’ Perspective: An Initiative to Remake Michigan, 2010*: This white paper, developed by the non-governmental Michigan Economic Developers Association, called for a regional structure for economic development service delivery.
- *MAP Draft Regional Councils Act, 2011*: Following the consolidation of the state planning and zoning enabling acts, the Regional Councils Act was proposed by the Michigan Association of Planning in order to consolidate the three enabling acts for regional planning. Regional planners saw no reason to change the current system, the business community was dissatisfied with the act’s failure to integrate regional planning agencies with other types of service providers (such as those targeted in the Regional Prosperity Initiative), and local governments were indifferent. Thus, the proposed act has not yet been passed and is now dormant.



Economic Opportunity Study for the Michigan Upper Peninsula/Wisconsin Border Region (a.k.a. “UPWARD Initiative”), 2009

Leaders in a 17-county region (all Upper Peninsula counties plus two in Wisconsin) received funding from a Regional Innovation Grant from the United States Department of Labor to complete this economic impact study with implementable strategies for development. The plan, which has since been branded the “UPWARD Initiative,” was prepared by NorthStar Economics, Inc., with assistance from MSA Technical Services, and led by an 80-member steering committee. Approximately 200 people took part in focus groups, and 1,600 responded to a survey.

As with many plans, a major part of the UPWARD Initiative was a SWOT analysis. The analysis was based on compilation of secondary research and input from focus groups and the survey. Following is a brief synopsis of the identified characteristics and issues:

- *Strengths:* Hard-working, well-trained, educated workforce; natural resources as a competitive advantage; number and quality of educational and healthcare institutions; recreation and tourism; low cost of living
- *Weaknesses:* Geographic isolation, infrastructure deficiencies (transportation and communications), lack of industrial diversification, lack of entrepreneurship, limited employment opportunities (especially corresponding to career fields of outgoing college graduates), government, climate, public perception
- *Opportunities:* Consistent with the strengths of the region, areas of opportunity include tourism and recreation, alternative energies, education, mining, forestry, water (development, tourism and industry), and manufacturing
- *Threats:* Again, mostly consistent with the weaknesses, highlighted threats include lack of employment opportunities and aging of the population

Following the SWOT analysis, the study identifies gaps in the overall economy, which again include infrastructure problems and well-paying jobs for graduates. Others were lack of high-end options and high-paying jobs in the retail and services industries, lack of cultural entertainment opportunities, and deficiencies in marketing of the region.

UPWARD Initiative also included sub-region-specific summaries of the SWOT and survey results. Some highlights of input from the West Region (same six counties as the planning and prosperity region) as opposed to other sub-regions (North-Central, South-Central, and East) were as follows:

- Higher education and rail as strengths
- Remoteness, lack of economic diversification, climate, taxes, utility costs, environmentalism, and lack of basic services as weaknesses and/or threats
- Green energy as an opportunity



At the time the grant was applied for, the 17-county region was suffering from acute effects of plant closings, layoffs, investment delays, and a lack of business startups. Seven strategies were developed to promote regional economic survival, pertaining to:

- I. *Higher Education* – Build on the higher education cluster in the region; expand enrollment, research, and entrepreneurial activity; raise educational attainment of the region’s workforce
- I. *Education and Workforce Training* – Increase the skill and education of the regional workforce to increase competitiveness
- II. *Business Growth & Development* – Work to grow existing businesses and the number of new businesses; establish a region-wide culture of collaboration and innovation to attract entrepreneurs and existing business investment
- III. *Natural Resources* – Continue to promote use of the region’s natural resources in an environmentally sound, safe, and sustainable manner and focus on proactive strategies that promote value-added economic activity within the region
- IV. *Tourism & Seasonal Residents* – Have the region become a major tourism destination and second place of residence
- V. *Infrastructure* - Develop a 21st-Century vision for broadband/cellular service, highways, rail service, and air service
- VI. *Healthcare* – Provide citizens of the region with the highest-quality, affordable, convenient healthcare services available

In order to make the workload realistic and manageable, consultants identified four initiatives to undertake within one to two years:

- Higher education focused on growing the research base, higher education enrollments, tech transfer, and spinoff opportunities from research and other activities
- Biofuels/biomass consortium
- Workforce training in paper and forest products, shipbuilding, digital technology, and entrepreneurship
- New Economy infrastructure – broadband, cell services, region-wide communication network (including UPLink, a proposed digital telecommunications network spanning the region, as well as WiMax, a broadband wireless technology)



The following were identified as longer-term implementation goals (for years three to four):

- Tourism and seasonal residents
- Infrastructure – highways and airports
- Forest products cluster
- International economic development with a focus on shipbuilding, mining, and manufacturing

The study pointed out that although economic development efforts are being undertaken by a variety of entities, including workforce boards, universities, economic development corporations, and state agencies, the initiatives are not interconnected and may not be complementary. In the same vein as the Regional Prosperity Initiative, these problems are seen as requiring a focused regional plan. However, little of the UPWARD Initiative has been implemented.

U.P. Link Video Conferencing Network, 2011

The U.P. Link feasibility study, funded by a Department of Labor and Economic Growth via an Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant, examined potential development of a U.P.-wide video conferencing system. The study focused on U.P. Link as a way to alleviate the difficulty of distance in conducting business in the Upper Peninsula. Research identified 18 feasible locations for video access sites, which would be operated and maintained using common standards.

Deliverables of the study were as follows:

1. A comprehensive inventory and searchable online database of current facilities
2. Recommendations for site locations for videoconferencing access within a 30-45 mile drive in all regions of the U.P.
3. An implementable plan including cost estimates to bridge technical and institutional barriers
4. Recommendations for management of the network

Although U.P. Link is a fairly narrow plan focused on a single project, the plan's recommendations remain consistent with many subsequent and current initiatives. The project itself continues to be promoted through appropriate channels and is being incrementally implemented.



Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), 2011

WUPPDR's CEDS includes a broad overview of the region's current conditions followed by future goals and strategies. WUPPDR develops the CEDS in the region's capacity as an Economic Development District of the United States Economic Development Administration. A new or revised CEDS must be developed every five years. Annual updates are also required.

The backbone of the CEDS is the Regional Profile. The profile covers the political geography, history, demographics, housing, and physical features of the region. The profile is the basis of the Infrastructure, Facilities, and Services section, which begins to examine the machinery of the regional economy's support systems. The Economy section discusses the characteristics, interactions, trends, structure, and forecasts of the regional economy.

Rising out of the background information and analysis is the Issue Identification section, which explores Positives/Assets and Negatives/Limitations of the region in the context of two issue sets: 1) Culture, Environment, and Lifestyle, and 2) Institutions and Economy.

Assets in the first set include a unique heritage and culture, low violent crime, affordable housing and real estate, an attractive and serene environment, unique seasons and recreational activities, and low risk of natural disasters. Negatives include a population that is aging, resistant to change, and perceived as somewhat eccentric. This perception is both the cause and result of resistance to outsiders. Nepotism and negative institutional inertia are economic impediments. A harsh climate, isolation, and a contentious balance of industry with natural resources are also detrimental.

In the second set of issues, assets include progressive and high-quality educational systems; a strong base of innovative entrepreneurs; natural resource commodities; a low-cost, locally focused workforce; and opportunities through improved remote communication technologies. Negatives are general economic stagnation, aging and limited infrastructure (both physical and technological), poor customer service, conservatism in lending, outward migration, seasonal workforce mentality, retail leakage, commodity volatility, and reduced government spending.

The Goals and Objectives section identifies five forces that are economic challenges to the region: volatile global economic conditions, reduction of labor through technological advances, reliance on entrepreneurship for new job creation, lack of people in the labor force, and lack of opportunities for people not sufficiently skilled and educated.

In order to address these problematic forces, seven goals are identified and supplemented with objectives (three to nine for each goal):

- I. Help support the business environment within the region so that enterprise development activity can create and expand opportunities for local entrepreneurs and business establishments.
- II. Build upon the uniqueness of the region's existing rural resources to uncover new enterprise opportunities with a focus that supports sustainability and diversity.



- III. Improve the region's transportation systems to ensure the safety and mobility of people and commerce while protecting the environment and improving the quality of life.
- IV. Promote a framework for community development to improve community design and infrastructure which makes communities, small towns, and cities within the region quality places to live, work, and conduct business.
- V. Build and enhance the community social infrastructure of the region in order to provide an opportunity for individuals to improve their capability to help themselves and increase their communities' long-term capacity to surmount social problems.
- VI. Pursue inter-regional collaboration with other parts of the Upper Peninsula and bordering regions of Wisconsin.
- VII. Continue furtherance of cultural preservation and heritage-based tourism in order to maintain and capitalize on the region's unique identity and capture associated economic benefits.

Finally, the CEDS identifies planning and development tools and resources available to help implement actions within a number of categories, from transportation planning to workforce development to affordable housing development – and much more.

Following the body of the CEDS is a project inventory for 2011 that identifies capital improvements projects planned in each of WUPPDR's counties. One or more potential funding sources are designated for each project, though projects proposed to be funded by EDA are the focus of the CEDS. Any EDA-funded project must be included in the CEDS, whether in its current version or by amendment. The inventory, along with WUPPDR's accomplishments and ongoing activities, are updated every year.

Most of the objectives are not connected with concrete action items, and the project inventory is something of a wish list submitted by both local governments and consultants/contractors. Thus, the CEDS serves as more of a guidance document than an action plan.

Michigan's Upper Peninsula: Opportunities, Challenges, and Action Items, 2012

In 2012, Governor Snyder requested the Upper Peninsula's three state university presidents (of Lake Superior State, Michigan Technological, and Northern Michigan Universities) provide information on key opportunities, important challenges, and action items that would support growth, development, and prosperity in the Upper Peninsula. Guided by the three presidents, private sector leaders discussed the issues in a general meeting and three break-out sessions. A participating economist then used the outcomes to develop a U.P.-wide survey. The resulting white paper can be seen as an offshoot of the UPWARD Initiative, having many of the same participants and including the same areas of opportunity and challenge.



The opportunities and challenges identified are organized into four general categories: Education and Workforce Development, Infrastructure, Natural Resources, and Business Growth & Development. Each of these includes narrower categories (such as Technology, Power, and Transportation under Infrastructure), and each of those includes several action items.

The role of the white paper in plans for the U.P.'s development has yet to become clear, but it is notable that, like the UPWARD Initiative study, it includes many of the same themes that are the focus of the Regional Prosperity Initiative. Especially relevant is the repeated use, in both the Governor's request and the white paper itself, of the word "prosperity."

County and Local Plans

A number of strategic economic development plans have been developed for counties and municipalities in the region since the 1980s. The only such plan of current relevance is the Go! Baraga County strategic plan, which was developed with EDA funding from fall 2012 to spring 2014. The intention of the plan was to develop a small, workable number of realistic strategies and projects for job creation. The strategies that emerged were to expand and capitalize on local healthcare services, extend infrastructure to a mostly undeveloped industrial park, and facilitate production and regional distribution of local foods. Two supporting strategies were also included: employing county economic development staff and developing an entrepreneurial center at a community college. Most of the strategies were already in progress to some degree but would benefit from further guidance.

Many local master/comprehensive plans have been created or updated, or are in progress, since the adoption of new state enabling acts for zoning in 2006 and planning in 2008. Local governments with recent plans include: Gogebic, Houghton, and Keweenaw Counties; Cities of Bessemer, Houghton, Iron River (in progress), and Ironwood; Villages of Baraga, L'Anse, and Ontonagon; and Townships of Bergland, Bessemer, Eagle Harbor, Interior, L'Anse, Ironwood, Marenisco (in progress), Portage, and Watersmeet.

Conclusions

Considering the similar and recurring themes in previous plans, the time is ripe for a final plan to bring all the others together and lead to actual change. Rather than developing tentative strategies and actions as an endpoint, the initiative is set up in three stages such that each leads into the next. The functional objective of RPI is formation of an improved organizational leadership structure.

The collaborative formed in stage one is a starting point: a committee composed of key organizations' representatives. The council formed in stage two provides shared administrative services and a governing entity with former inter-organizational agreements. The role of the board formed in stage three remains to be determined but is likely to involve consolidation of regional governing bodies for planning, workforce development, and federal economic development districts.



These formalized structures – ultimately the Regional Prosperity Board – will have an integral role in governing and administering key organizations. Rather than ad-hoc committees that dissolve and a laundry list of projects that lose direction as stakeholders are consumed by their other responsibilities, the results of the Regional Prosperity Initiative will become ingrained in the Western Upper Peninsula.



Planning Process

Proposal and Timeline

The proposal for the Western Upper Peninsula Regional Prosperity Initiative (RPI) was set out in WUPPDR's application to the Michigan Department of Technology, Management & Budget in October 2013. The flagship component was to be a phased alignment with the Keweenaw Economic Development Alliance (KEDA), an organization providing direct business assistance which would complement WUPPDR's role as a broader service provider and driver of diverse regional economies. WUPPDR would in turn complement KEDA with its regional knowledge and network as well as its eligibility for and skills in routing public funding for planning and infrastructure.

WUPPDR proposed to work together with the other Upper Peninsula Prosperity Regions and overarching organizations such as the Upper Peninsula Economic Development Alliance (UPEDA). The efforts would help to further the strategies of the U.P.-wide "UPWARD Initiative," which set out regional goals and strategies similar to those of Regional Prosperity. Numerous goals of WUPPDR's CEDS were also set to be pursued under RPI.

The proposal relied on identification of unmet needs and overlaps in services in order to improve how organizations function. To accomplish this, WUPPDR inventoried and researched, through interviews and existing materials, a broad array of organizations. These were focused on the five categories of required RPI participants and generally on recipients of public funding, but numerous other nonprofit and governmental organizations, particularly in human services, were included. The resulting set of "organizational profiles" became an important input to strategy development and will be valuable in the future as an information resource.

The project was to span January through September 2014. (The project was later extended to the end of 2014.) Most activities were scheduled in the timeline to span the entire nine months. Writing of the Prosperity Plan itself was to begin in the second of three phases due to the need to form a groundwork beforehand.

Monthly meetings of partners and stakeholders were to occur through the nine months in order to guide the project and provide input from the various subject areas, including those required by the state (economic development [including private industry], adult and higher education, workforce development, and transportation). The first meeting was to be held in February and the last at the month of conclusion of the grant project.



Inception

Major monthly meetings were held and divided into two sets. All interested parties were invited to three quarterly “stakeholder” meetings, with the first held in February. A smaller “advisory committee” representing required categories, as well as some others, like human services, met during most other months. The stakeholder meetings approached the region’s vision, issues, and potential solutions from a broad perspective, whereas the advisory committee meetings were more detailed, providing guidance

and lead-ins to the stakeholder meetings. Stakeholder meetings were held in two separate geographic areas of the region, and all meetings were available via interactive videoconference at locations throughout the region.

The first stakeholder meeting was an introduction to the Initiative and an explanation of the project goals and objectives, stages, and timeline, with an opportunity for questions and answers. The first advisory committee meeting proposed an outline of the Prosperity Plan and explained the role of the organizational profiles. Subsequent meetings developed, validated, and refined the plan’s strategies.

In general, the stakeholder meetings were informational, and the advisory committee meetings were more interactive. However, input was solicited at all meetings. Feedback was incorporated into the more detailed strategy development done by WUPPDR working with subcommittees for economic development, transportation, and education (including workforce development). These subcommittees were originally formed in response to a suggestion at an advisory committee meeting, and ultimately they took on the primary planning role.

Adoption

This plan was adopted by a unanimous vote of 23 participating advisory committee members. Seventeen votes were given at the December 10 final advisory committee meeting, and six others were submitted by e-mail prior to the meeting.



Committee Composition

Stakeholders

Letters and/or resolutions of support for WUPPDR's application for the Regional Prosperity Initiative were requested from a broad spectrum of contacts in October 2013. Over 70 agencies, organizations, businesses, and local governments responded favorably. These were considered potential partners. WUPPDR's confirmed partners, all of whom gave meaningful input to the application, were the other two U.P. Prosperity Regions (Central and Eastern) and the Upper Peninsula Economic Development Alliance, which served to unite the three regions and would facilitate long-distance collaboration.

All potential partners and many other entities within and outside the region were invited to the first stakeholder meeting in February. This was a kickoff meeting for the entire region, with no particular individuals or entities individually invited, and future meetings were to capture a similar audience.

Advisory Committee

The advisory committee, which functions as the Western U.P. Regional Prosperity Collaborative (WUPRPC), was comprised of 30 individuals representing each subject area – meeting or exceeding those required by the state – and geographic area in the region. Representatives of the following entities attended one or more meetings and were kept up to date on all activities:

- Baraga County Chamber of Commerce
- Baraga and Houghton County Road Commissions
- BHK Child Development
- City of Ironwood Community Development Department
- Collaborative Development Council (CDC), Region 1, Western U.P.
- Copper Country Intermediate School District (CCISD)
- Finlandia University
- Gogebic Community College
- Gogebic County Transit Authority
- Gogebic-Ontonagon Intermediate School District (GOISD)
- Keweenaw Chamber of Commerce
- Keweenaw Economic Development Alliance (KEDA)
- Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS)
- Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT)
- Michigan Technological University
- Michigan Works!
- Northern Initiatives
- Portage Health Foundation
- Superior Alliance for Independent Living (SAIL)
- Upper Peninsula Commission for Area Progress (UPCAP)
- Western Upper Peninsula Health Department (WUPHD)
- WUPPDR



Advisory committee attendance was expected to change from meeting to meeting, partially as a result of holding physical meetings at rotating locations.

In meetings of both the stakeholders and the advisory committee, regional participation was facilitated by videoconferencing, with at least one site available for use in each county. This eliminated the need for participants to drive up to three hours to the physical meeting location. Several individuals participated in each meeting in this manner.

Subcommittees

At the first meeting of the advisory committee, several members requested formation of subcommittees to examine specific subject areas. At that time, the only subcommittee planned was to address the issue of road transportation, particularly regarding relationships of the county road commissions with MDOT. Next, an economic development subcommittee was organized to address expansion of structured economic development assistance throughout the region. Lastly, an education subcommittee was organized for collaborative discussion amongst the adult and higher education providers in the region. This committee also represented workforce development. All three subcommittees included multi-county representation. The subcommittees will meet on an ongoing basis to further the strategies in this plan.

Transportation

The following agencies besides WUPPDR were represented on the transportation subcommittee:

- KEDA
- MDOT
- City of Hancock
- Charter Township of Calumet
- Michigan Townships Association
- Baraga County Road Commission
- Houghton County Road Commission
- Gogebic County Transit Authority

The committee's first meeting opened with a discussion of freight rail as a means for economic development. After that, discussion shifted to the topic of road maintenance, which was the impetus for the subcommittee's formation. Participants discussed the differing positions of MDOT, the county road commissions, and local governments about funding distribution, bidding procedures, and state trunkline winter maintenance responsibilities. The road commissions and MDOT came to agreement on recommendation of an independent audit of maintenance expenditures and potential cost savings.



Potential shortcomings of state bidding procedures for used state winter maintenance vehicles were also recognized and at the time were the topic of proposed legislation.

For the second meeting, Gogebic County Transit Authority was added as a representative. The original topics of road maintenance and bidding policy were reviewed and refined for inclusion in the plan. Following the first meeting, other topics had been added to the transportation section of the plan: freight rail, regional transit, and long-distance trail routes. Each of these interests were represented by different individuals at the meeting. Certain clarifications were made to each topic. Most attention was given to the original road maintenance and bidding topics, with a balance sought between the road commission requests and MDOT's responses. Subsequent e-mail exchanges and a conference call led to a new compromise calling for a regional feasibility study to examine alternatives for winter road maintenance more broadly as opposed to a localized audit and cost-benefit analysis. In meetings of both the stakeholders and the advisory committee, regional participation was facilitated by videoconferencing, with at least one site available for use in each county. This eliminated the need for participants to drive up to three hours to the physical meeting location. Several individuals participated in each meeting in this manner.

Economic Development

The purpose of this subcommittee meeting was to discuss possible mechanisms for expansion of regional economic development and business assistance services. The goal was to provide for localized staffing with access to broader regional resources. Subcommittee participants represented KEDA, WUPPDR, Region 1 CDC, Village of Ontonagon, Baraga County Chamber of Commerce, and City of Ironwood.

The first meeting of this subcommittee was held in preparation for the May Stakeholder RPI meeting, which would communicate the proposed regional system to a larger, more diverse group of people. All subcommittee participants were originally supportive of a system employing satellite staff from a central organization, most likely KEDA, based in Houghton/Hancock. However, satellite staff would provide services and person-to-person interaction based in other local areas, and would preferably reside in those areas, rather than simply traveling from Houghton/Hancock and supporting Houghton/Hancock interests.

Later, for logistical reasons and in accordance with state-level workforce development planning, the proposed system of economic development service delivery shifted to a system of one-stop centers providing access to several different organizations utilizing existing Michigan Works! centers and staffing throughout the region. This would provide a greater variety of satellite services and be more attainable in the short term. The subcommittee bought on to this idea as well.



Education

The education subcommittee was formed to encourage communication between the major adult and higher educators in the region, as well as workforce development. There is much diversity among colleges, universities, and intermediate school districts in services provided, resources available, and education focus areas. The intermediate school districts (ISDs) provide community adult education as well as vocational education and career and technical education (CTE). The two community colleges also focus on career-oriented programs, which mainly span two years. Michigan Technological University, the region's sole graduate institution of higher learning, does not offer community college-level education. Finlandia University is a private liberal arts college that offers both two- and four-year programs. All ISDs and institutions of higher education were included in the subcommittee.

It was discovered over the course of the subcommittee's first meeting that lines of communication between the different types of educators needed improvement. The participating ISDs were aware of what each other were doing at a high level and most of what resources were available, but information about CTE resources, particularly in local school districts, was lacking. In some cases, communication connections between the ISDs and higher education, and knowledge about the offerings of each, were deficient. Participants recommended asset mapping of CTE resources at the ISD and local levels to resolve some of this lack of information, and the project became one of the strategies included in this plan.

The education subcommittee was informative and held the most meetings of the three due to the complexity, connectivity, and lack of knowledge about the parties' issues. The subcommittee held three meetings and two field trips to new and innovative educational facilities, and substantial discussion occurred between participants via phone and e-mail.



Vision

The vision of the Western Upper Peninsula Regional Prosperity Collaborative (WUPRPC) is consistent with WUPPDR's mission:

A stable, diversified economy fostered through...

- *Localized attention to the diverse needs of businesses*
- *Elimination of duplication among organizations with similar objectives and methods*
- *Alignment of overlapping organizational service areas, to the extent possible*
- *Consolidation of administrative support services based on individual organizations' areas of expertise*
- *The most efficient possible use of limited funds*

A laundry list of priorities and industry needs could be targeted by WUPRPC. However, most of those have been identified in previous plans, so the goal of this plan is process improvement: to refine the way organizations function structurally. In order for large-scale economic changes to be effective and workable, we must start from the ground up and work toward a solid, efficient implementation mechanism. That prerequisite has seldom been the focus in the past, but it is what this plan will endeavor to create.

Since organizational changes and pilot projects are the focus of this plan, we begin with overviews of the key organizations in each of the five RPI required participant categories: Economic and Workforce Development, Adult and Higher Education, and Transportation.



Current Organizations:

Economic Development

Economic development organizations are the most diverse group of required RPI participants. They include chambers of commerce representing local business interests, economic development corporations and convention & visitors bureaus authorized by state legislation, and other private and nonprofit member-supported organizations.

Chambers of Commerce

There are ten chambers of commerce and similar organizations in the Western U.P. Chambers of commerce are the voice of the business community, focused on building strong and vibrant communities through business development, networking, support, and advocacy. Chambers are a clearinghouse of community information, area resources, and referrals to businesses, residents, and visitors. Chambers assist businesses and communities in business training workshops, community development, and economic development, and are partners in education and workforce development through collaboration with other organizations.

Baraga County Chamber of Commerce

Annual Budget: \$11,650 (2014), 100% from member dues, increasing
 Leadership: Volunteer board of directors Membership: 87, increasing
 Activities/initiatives: Community events & communications, business training workshops, inter-organizational county website, founding and expansion of Thirsty Thursday collaboration

Bessemer Chamber of Commerce

Annual Budget: \$6,000, 90% from member dues, decreasing
 Leadership: Volunteer president Membership: 50, declining
 Activities/initiatives: Community events & evening networking, two annual scholarships

Copper Harbor Improvement Association (CHIA) (has many functions similar to chambers of commerce)

Annual Budget: Unknown
 Leadership: Volunteer board of directors
 Membership: Unknown
 Activities/initiatives: Community events, tourism promotion

Iron County Chamber of Commerce

Annual Budget: \$102,629
 Leadership: Volunteer board of directors
 Membership: 252
 Activities/initiatives: Community events, tourism promotion



Ironwood Area Chamber of Commerce

Annual Budget: \$17,185

Leadership: Board of directors w/city staff support

Membership: Approximately 129

Activities/initiatives: Community & business networking events, new resident/business information, newsletter

Keweenaw Chamber of Commerce

Annual Budget: \$100,000

Leadership: Board of directors w/paid administrator

Membership: 414

Activities/initiatives: Community & business networking events, new resident/business information, legislative advocacy, newsletter

Lake Gogebic Area Chamber of Commerce

Annual Budget: \$41,000

Leadership: Volunteer board of directors (8)

Membership: 65, declining

Activities/initiatives: Community & business networking events, business training workshops, community/tourism promotion, legislative advocacy, newsletter, visitors guide

Ontonagon County Chamber of Commerce

Annual Budget: \$11,000, recently increasing

Leadership: Volunteer board of directors

Membership: 70 Activities/initiatives: EDC support, countywide map, early participation in Thirsty Thursday collaboration

Wakefield Chamber of Commerce

Annual Budget: \$33,500

Leadership: Volunteer board of directors

Membership: 77

Activities/initiatives: Community & business networking events

Watersmeet Chamber of Commerce

Annual Budget: \$13,000

Leadership: Volunteer board of directors

Membership: 82

Activities/initiatives: Community events, business information, tourism promotion



Convention and Visitors Bureaus (CVBs)

Convention and Visitors Bureaus are associations of lodging establishments that are geared toward promotion of tourism and site selection for conventions and meetings. Methods of promotion utilized in the Western Region include attendance at trade shows and participation in the Pure Michigan campaign for advertising at the statewide and targeted out-of-state level. Also, in the Western U.P., some CVBs have taken on the responsibility of snowmobile trail grooming, which is often done primarily by volunteers and supported in part by state funds.

CVBs are unique in being funded primarily by hotel room taxes authorized by law. CVBs may impose a room tax of two to five percent (based on member election) to further a marketing program. (All taxing properties must comply with the elected amount.) In some areas, chambers of commerce are hybrids that also serve as CVBs, but more often, there is a disconnect between chambers and CVBs due to the taxing authority of the latter. However, the two types of organizations occasionally share opportunities to better communicate and combine resources for greater impact and to prevent duplication. For example, the Western U.P. CVB and area chambers cooperate in attending Midwestern trade shows using CVB funds.

Baraga County Convention & Visitors Bureau

Annual Budget: \$61,000; 2% tax # Taxing Establishments: 6

Iron County Lodging Association

Annual Budget: \$37,637 # Taxing Establishments: 8

Keweenaw Convention & Visitors Bureau (Houghton and Keweenaw Counties)

Annual Budget: Unknown*; 2% tax # Taxing Establishments: 39

Porcupine Mountains Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (Ontonagon County)

Annual Budget: \$62,000; 4% tax # Taxing Establishments: Unknown

Western Upper Peninsula Convention & Visitors Bureau (Gogebic County, including City of Ironwood Tourism & Lodging Council)

Annual Budget: \$320,000**; 5% tax # Taxing Establishments: Unknown

**2012 IRS Form 990 shows revenues of \$268,557*

***Includes City of Ironwood Tourism & Lodging Council @ \$56,800*

Economic Development Corporations (EDCs)

EDCs are county or municipal public economic development organizations with powers to issue bonds, condemn property, and receive public funds from associated municipalities. EDCs are authorized by Michigan Public Act 338 of 1974. The Legislature enacted this authorization in recognition of a need for



programs to alleviate and prevent unemployment through assistance in retaining, maintaining, improving, and expanding existing commercial and industrial enterprises as well as attracting new ones. Special priority was given to reducing the costs of forestry and agricultural production and promoting energy production from renewable resources.

EDCs are created at a time of clear purpose and need for such an organization, often to accommodate a particular prospective major employer. Most EDCs in the Western Region have lost relevance and become dormant over time, with funding from the associated municipality lost as a result. This has particularly been the case following regionalization of Revolving Loan Funds that were previously administered and allocated locally by EDCs. Public Act 338 also provides for dissolving an inactive EDC, but this may not be advisable due to the extensive time and effort required to reform the EDC.

Currently, the only fully functioning EDCs in the region are in Iron County, which manages a tax-free Renaissance Zone in the City of Crystal Falls, offers tax abatements in other areas within the county, and offers contracted business assistance services; and the City of Ironwood, which focuses on business attraction, retention, and assistance in the city and is assisted by city community development staff. EDCs covering Baraga and Ontonagon Counties and McMillan Township are unfunded but continue to hold occasional meetings; the latter two were created in conjunction with the now-defunct North Country Tax-Free Renaissance Zone (which included two speculative buildings that are now vacant). The Gogebic County EDC is entirely inactive but is still authorized by law.

Other Economic Development Organizations & Offices

City of Ironwood Community Development Department

The City of Ironwood is the only local unit of government in the Western U.P. with a dedicated community development or planning department. The department is staffed by full-time professional planning staff that, besides fulfilling internal city responsibilities, represents the city at meetings of other planning and economic development organizations, including the Ironwood Economic Development Corporation, Industrial Development Corporation (which administers the city's industrial park), and Downtown Development Authority.

Ironwood Industrial Development Corporation (IIDC)

The main responsibility of this entity is to manage the City of Ironwood Industrial Park. IIDC is governed by a board of directors and supported by City of Ironwood community development staff.

Keweenaw Bay Indian Community Economic Development Division & Aanikoosing

The Keweenaw Bay Indian Community's Economic Development Division, which employs full-time professional staff, works to diversify and expand the local tribal business community by developing comprehensive economic development plans and by facilitating business-related activities that help to improve the business climate. The division also works with KBIC-owned businesses to help increase profits and business related services.



Along with working directly with local businesses, the division also acts as the principal liaison to government and other agencies involved with economic development. The division brings together these agencies with tribal members when appropriate. The division works in conjunction with the tribe's non-gaming economic development arm, Aanikoosing, Inc., which functions as the tribe's EDC.

Keweenaw Economic Development Alliance (KEDA)

KEDA is a 501(c)(4) nonprofit corporation with a membership of 350 businesses and other entities and a budget of approximately \$130,000. The organization is supported primarily by membership fees. KEDA is managed by a board of directors with a paid executive director. KEDA was created in 1969 as the Keweenaw Industrial Alliance to diversify the area economy following the closure of copper mines. Today, KEDA offers the following types of direct assistance to its members:

- Business planning assistance
- Arrangement of financial packaging
- Financial and management advice
- Structuring of business expansion and startup projects
- Arrangement of public infrastructure in support of business expansions
- Partnering with other agencies for workforce training
- Developing incentive packages for business attraction

KEDA has undertaken job creation projects such as industrial parks, tax abatement zones, wage and benefits surveys, and training workshops. It also assists with commercialization of technologies developed at Michigan Technological University. KEDA has always officially served Houghton, Keweenaw, and Baraga Counties, but the vast majority of activity takes place in Houghton County.

KEDA is undergoing a phased merger with WUPPDR as part of RPI. This will ultimately increase KEDA's reach to all six Western U.P. counties. Administration and a large membership base will remain in the Houghton area, but staff support will be provided by Michigan Works! in conjunction with other participating business development organizations in Baraga, Gogebic, Iron, and Ontonagon Counties.

MTEC SmartZone

Michigan Tech Enterprise Corporation (MTEC), one of 15 SmartZones in the state, is a technology cluster business accelerator located in Houghton/Hancock. MTEC's purpose is to commercialize product ideas that rise from Michigan Technological University programs and associated technology-based business in the Keweenaw Peninsula. MTEC provides supportive services such as business planning, product development, grant writing, financing setup, marketing, and business incubation facilities. These services are available only to SmartZone program participants, but many similar services are offered to general entrepreneurs by the Small Business Development Center, which is located nearby.



MTEC SmartZone is funded primarily by a local development financing authority (LDFA) within the City of Houghton. Under this arrangement, the City of Houghton is state-authorized to capture a tax increment accrued from increasing property values within a defined geographic area surrounding the SmartZone. These additional tax revenues are returned directly to the SmartZone to fund its operational costs. The organization is administered by a paid director and has revenues totaling over \$1,000,000.

Northern Initiatives (NI)

Northern Initiatives, based in Marquette, is a non-profit Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI). The role of a CDFI is to provide financial services to businesses in underserved markets, working toward a broader goal of community development. Thus, NI operates across the full spectrum of economic development, from direct business support services to major planning and promotional initiatives. NI's service area covers the entire Upper Peninsula, five bordering counties in Wisconsin, and roughly the northern half of Michigan's Lower Peninsula.

Operation Action U.P.

Operation Action U.P. is an entirely privately funded 501(c)(3) nonprofit economic development organization drawing from all industries and geographic areas in the U.P. Members represent the full spectrum of business development and activity, including higher education, financing, and utilities. Thus the organization helps to bridge the communications and collaboration gap from startup businesses and educated individuals to successful companies. Operation Action U.P. does not actively publicize its efforts or provide direct services, but it supports and influences business development initiatives that focus on direct assistance (such as management and marketing), asset inventorying, infrastructure improvement, and general improvement of the business climate. Operation Action U.P. is governed by a board of directors.

Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC)

PTACs are nonprofit organizations that assist businesses in obtaining and performing on government contracts in the interests of national defense and economic development. Most of the United States has access to PTAC services. There are 11 independent offices in Michigan, with the Western Upper Peninsula served by Northwest Michigan PTAC, known as Networks Northwest. Networks Northwest is based in Traverse City and serves 10 counties in the Lower Peninsula as well as the entire Upper Peninsula. The Western and Central Upper Peninsula office is in Escanaba. PTAC is funded by the Defense Logistics Agency, MEDC, and local funding partners.

Small Business Development Center (SBDC)

America's Small Business Development Center is an institution of statewide organizations operating in partnership with the U.S. Small Business Administration to offer various types of assistance to new entrepreneurs and existing businesses. Services include consulting (at no cost), planning, training, sales strategizing, marketing, financial analysis, and loan packages. SBDC has service centers as well as consultants who travel to meet with business owners. The Upper Peninsula regional center of SBDC in Michigan is hosted by Michigan Works! In the Western U.P., business resource centers are located in Caspian, Hancock, Ironwood, L'Anse, and Ontonagon.



Upper Peninsula Economic Development Alliance (UPEDA)

UPEDA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that was incorporated in 1999 and is composed of businesses, utilities, and other economic development organization. UPEDA's main purpose is promotion of the U.P. as a business location. Members engage in information sharing, professional development, and networking at substantive quarterly meetings. The organization is supported by member fees and a matching grant from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. UPEDA is governed by a board of directors and has a budget of \$12,000.

Upper Peninsula Travel & Recreation Association (UPTRA)

This organization is a U.P.-wide tourism marketing organization that promotes the Upper Peninsula as a whole, while promoting the unique traits of its various regions. UPTRA is funded mainly by membership dues, has a paid director, and has revenues of approximately \$900,000.

Western Upper Peninsula Planning & Development Region (WUPPDR)

WUPPDR's mission is to foster stable and diversified economies in the region. This is approached from a number of angles: capitalization on outside funding opportunities for diverse projects in areas such as transportation, housing, and economic strategic planning; active pursuit of public infrastructure funding to facilitate new and expanding businesses; and technical assistance to member local governments to allow for more efficient use of their own resources. WUPPDR also locates and provides a variety of information about the region upon request and functions as the region's federal funding clearinghouse.



Current Organizations: Education and Workforce Development

Education and workforce development work hand-in-hand to address the human component of economic prosperity. Although it seems obvious that education is the foundation of the workforce and should thus provide the necessary skills demanded by employers, education has lost some direction in this regard in recent decades. High school graduates, regardless of their career interests or academic motivation, have been encouraged to get a college education at all costs. But in the modern knowledge- and information-based economy, skilled trades remain an important provider of well-paying and rewarding jobs. This was realized and embraced in the 2009 UPWARD Initiative study and is being followed through in today's workforce development and adult education programs.

Although adult and higher education are the highest priorities for this plan, these follow on to the region's many high-quality K-12 establishments. There are 23 public and 4 private local school districts in the region. These are supported by the 3 intermediate school districts that are the main providers of non-collegiate adult technical/vocational education. The pool of K-12 students has been rapidly decreasing in many parts of the region, leading to closures and consolidations of school districts and ultimately resulting in "brain drain" to outside of the region. The local school districts are not profiled below, but their success is a prerequisite for lifelong education in the region. These districts have a vital role in career exposure and setting of career paths for students, and the upper grades of high school supplement, and sometimes overlap, adult and higher education programs. The Western Region is home to two community colleges, one public university, and one private university, all of which offer "dual enrollment" opportunities for high school students to enroll in college courses.

In examining the full spectrum of educators in the region, it is important to note that some of the institutions have access to unique resources. Each local school district and ISD provides different programs, instructors, facilities, and equipment tailored towards particular career fields. In order to better understand what skills and learning tools each education institution has to offer and to work with collaboratively, detailed asset mapping is proposed to be done during the next phase of RPI.



Intermediate School Districts (ISDs; Adult Education)

Intermediate school districts in Michigan are special district governments that coordinate and provide niche and administrative services to local school districts. There are 56 ISDs in the state that cover one or more counties. Most ISDs are overseen by boards of education composed of elected board members from the included local school districts. Four ISDs, including GOISD, have boards that are directly elected independent of local school boards. Among the functions of ISDs are enrollment recordkeeping, professional development for local school districts, coordination and delivery of special education, and provision of adult and upper-high school education (Career and Technical Education [CTE] programs). However, individual ISDs have broad discretion as to what services they provide and what levels of funding they acquire.

Copper Country Intermediate School District (CCISD)

Covering Baraga, Houghton, and Keweenaw Counties, CCISD provides centralized special education courses and three CTE programs: Automotive, Welding, and Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA). CCISD is supported only by basic state funding and does not currently assess a millage.

Dickinson-Iron Intermediate School District (DIISD)

Expanding on the basic functions of all ISDs, Dickinson-Iron ISD offers a major CTE/vocational training facility with a large number of programs supported in part by a dedicated millage assessment. DIISD offers American Welding Society (AWS) certification in Welding, among others.

Gogebic-Ontonagon Intermediate School District (GOISD)

Gogebic-Ontonagon ISD offers services and has a funding stream similar to DIISD. Like DIISD, GOISD offers AWS certification. Under the purview of GOISD, Gogebic Community College uses high school faculty at Ontonagon Area Public School and Ironwood Area Schools to teach college-level Welding. GOISD also shares facilities and staff with the college in the following programs: Automotive, Certified Nursing Assistant, Computer-Aided Design, Computer Programming, and Building Trades, along with Graphic Arts and Computer Repair in the past. GOISD makes CAD courses available to CCISD students for a fee.



Institutions of Higher Education

Gogebic Community College

Type: 2-Year Public Community College Enrollment: 1,400

Gogebic Community College serves the far west end of the U.P. The main campus in Ironwood offers a variety of programs including computer-aided design, automotive technology, building trades & construction, electric line mechanic, and welding; several levels of nursing; several business degrees; and many other career-oriented and liberal arts programs. The school is unique in the Midwest in having a Ski Area Management program. The college's Copper Country Extension Center in Houghton offers a growing number of courses to meet community needs. Numerous associate degree programs, including the General Associate of Science and Associate of Arts degrees, as well as portions of technical/vocational programs, are transferrable to other two- and four-year institutions. Gogebic Community College is active in high school dual enrollment and in the Early College program with four high schools in the region. The college also has articulated programs and long-standing CTE programmatic partnerships with GOISD, utilizing shared facilities and staff.

Finlandia University

Type: 4-Year Private Liberal Arts University Enrollment: 540

Finlandia University in Hancock is the only private (nonprofit) college in the Upper Peninsula. Associate and/or baccalaureate programs are offered in Art and Design, Business Administration, Liberal Arts, and Health Sciences. The university is affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America but is open to enrollment of the general public. Credits are transferrable to other regional institutions.

Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College

Type: 2-Year Nonprofit Community College Enrollment: 105

Ojibwa Community College in the Baraga County area was chartered by the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community. The school operates independently as a nonprofit corporation educating both tribal and non-tribal students. The college was accredited by the North-Central Association in 2013, putting it on a level playing field with the three other institutions in the region for purposes such as credit transfers. The larger of the school's two campuses opened in the Village of L'Anse in 2014. Currently Associate Degrees are offered in Liberal Studies, Environmental Science, and Early Childhood Education. Several other degrees and certificates are planned for the near future: Business, Culinary Arts, Federal Certified Nursing Assistant, Fine Arts, and Native American Studies. Welding is currently offered as vocational education, and Automotive Technology, Building Trades, and Corrections programs are planned.



Michigan Technological University

Type: Doctoral Public Research University Enrollment: 6,979

Michigan Tech is a nationally renowned research university in Houghton that focuses on engineering and other technical programs. However, many liberal arts programs and an accredited business school offer a diversity of opportunities. Tech is currently rated 57th among national public universities by U.S. News and World Report. The student placement rate is 92.3 percent. The student population is also diverse, with over 1,000 international students. With 1,572 nonstudent employees, Tech is the largest employer in the Western Region and has a substantial impact in all respects on the region's micropolitan hub of Houghton/Hancock.

Workforce Development

Michigan Works! Association

Of all agencies dealing with workforce needs and resources, the Michigan Works! Association has by far the greatest impact. Michigan Works! connects workforce education and skills training with industry demands, assisting both the employee and employer sides of the equation. The association is funded by the State of Michigan with federal funds. Each Michigan Works! agency, including the Western U.P., is governed by two components: the Workforce Board, comprised of business, education, and other industry leaders, and Local Elected Officials (LEO) representatives from each county. Simply put, the LEOs have the authority to receive disburse funds, and the Workforce Board helps to set policy in expending funds.

The Upper Peninsula Prosperity Alliance includes three Michigan Works! agencies that are aligned with the three prosperity (sub-)regions. The Six County Employment Alliance was formed as the administrative entity of the Central U.P. agency and in 2014 took on administration of the Western U.P. agency, but the two maintain separate boards. The Eastern U.P. agency maintains its own administrative and fiscal responsibilities. The structure of the three agencies and their administrative functions remains in flux and may change further in accordance with the Region 1 Pure Michigan Talent District, through which a Talent Council was formed to guide operations and implementation across the U.P.

With its increasing prominence in all manners related to the workforce, as well as an established system of staffing and facilities, Michigan Works! is an integral part of the Regional Prosperity Initiative. It is coming closely into alignment with WUPPDR and other economic development organizations and is positioned to be the coordinating and service-delivery structure for these organizations.

Goodwill Industries, Inc. of Northern Wisconsin and U.P.

Goodwill provides workforce training of individuals with special needs – primarily those with mental disabilities. The organization reduces unemployment among these individuals while providing skilled employees to serve in supportive roles for employers.



Michigan Technological University Office of Innovation and Industry Engagement

This branch of Michigan Tech is involved in commercializing technologies and providing industrial contracting resources. The office gauges industry needs for technologies and specialized staff based on direct contacts from employers. By working with companies, the office is able to provide special opportunities for student work experience.



WESTERN U.P. REGIONAL PROSPERITY INITIATIVE

Current Organizations: Transportation

Transportation services and infrastructure are a vital prerequisite for business activity and economic prosperity. Transportation categories include roads, rail, air, transit, and non-motorized, with providers ranging from the Michigan Department of Transportation to local transit agencies, railroads, and human services agencies serving special consumer groups.

Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT)

MDOT is charged with developing and maintaining much of the transportation infrastructure throughout the state as well as distributing state and federal transportation funding to the proper recipient agencies. MDOT has jurisdiction over the state trunkline of state and federal highways (those routes beginning with “M,” “US,” and “I”), comprising nearly 10,000 route miles; close to 4,000 miles of bike lanes and non-motorized trails; 4,700 bridges; 665 miles of state-owned railroad; and four airports. MDOT also provides state funds and routes federal funds to 78 public transit agencies.

MDOT funding is derived approximately equally from vehicle registration fees and a variety of fuel taxes. Funding is distributed according to Michigan Public Act 51 of 1951. Under this system, 39 percent of state funds are allocated to the state and the remainder to cities, villages, and county road commissions. Federal funds for roads and transit are allocated at a proportion of 75 percent for MDOT and 25 percent for local jurisdictions.

For counties under 400,000 persons and municipalities under 5,000 persons, federal funds are distributed through Rural Task Forces, of which there are two in the Western Region. Region 13A includes Baraga, Houghton, and Keweenaw Counties, and Region 13B includes Gogebic, Iron, and Ontonagon Counties. Task force members representing the municipalities and counties work together to select projects based on funding allocations to each jurisdiction. Federal funds for road and transit capital projects in urban areas from 5,000 to 49,999 are allocated through the Small Urban Program.

Both state and federal funding has been inadequate in recent years for all of these agencies to maintain roads in their current state of repair. This is due in part to fewer people driving and in part to vehicles becoming increasingly more fuel efficient. Since funding mechanisms have not yet been adjusted to respond to these changes, cost savings are vital wherever possible.



County Road Commissions

County road commissions are largely autonomous special district governments that are responsible for maintaining county primary roads and local roads outside of municipalities. Like MDOT, road commissions have been adversely affected by the state of transportation funding in Michigan. In most counties, road commissions provide winter maintenance of the state trunkline under contract with MDOT. In the Western Region, 2 counties, Houghton and Baraga (out of 19 such counties in the state), decline to provide these services under contract, so MDOT plows those counties' roads using locally based MDOT "direct forces."

In 2012, state legislation was passed to allow counties to abolish their road commissions and transfer road commission responsibilities into general county government. Few counties have yet made this move, but the intention was to promote efficiencies through consolidation of services and governing bodies. As they currently stand, road commission members are either appointed by county boards of commissioners or elected by popular vote.

Municipalities

In most villages and cities, a Department of Public Works is responsible for maintenance of a state-approved network of "major streets" in addition to other local streets that are not part of the county road network or state trunkline. Similarly to county road commissions, 169 cities and villages in the state, including 12 in the Western Upper Peninsula, provide contracted winter trunkline maintenance for MDOT within municipal boundaries.

Transit Agencies

Michigan has 78 local public transit agencies and transit authorities, which transport people primarily by bus. Some funding is state-allocated, whereas other funding is federal pass-through. In the Western Region, two city bus transit systems, one county government system, and one county transit authority operate with the support of state and federal funding. In addition, two highway corridors, four counties, and nine communities in the region are served by state-subsidized Indian Trails intercity bus service that ultimately extends to Duluth, Milwaukee, and Detroit. Indian Trails fulfills a special role for affordable medium-distance passenger trips. Finally, some additional federal funding is granted to human services providers that transport senior citizens and persons with disabilities.

The Gogebic County Transit Authority (GCTA), also known as the "Little Blue Bus," provides general public transit services – both on-demand and two long-distance fixed routes – in addition to contracted services for Gogebic-Ontonagon Community Mental Health Services, Gogebic-Ontonagon Intermediate School District, local school districts (special needs students), emergency government (evacuations, etc.), Michigan Works!, and other groups. The transit authority is a ticket agent and provides bus stops for Indian Trails. Ontonagon County also provides countywide on-demand transit (On-Tran) as a component of general government supported by a dedicated tax millage assessment. GCTA is an autonomous special district government also supported by a millage.

The Cities of Houghton and Hancock both operate separate bus transit systems. *Each* city provides transportation to and within *both* cities. The City of Houghton also offers two fixed routes within its boundaries



There is no fixed route connecting the two cities and no established location for transfers between the two bus systems (though as the systems currently operate, there is little need for transfers). The cities have slightly different fare structures, with costs for a non-discounted member of the general public running approximately the same as a private taxi service.

In addition to dedicated public transit agencies, dozens of human services agencies in the Western U.P. provide and/or fund transit services for their particular user groups. These organizations include, for examples, community action agencies, community mental health agencies, intermediate school districts, and state social services departments. Oftentimes these organizations contract or partner with higher-level transit providers for service. In Baraga, Houghton (outside of the cities), and Iron Counties, organizations mainly serving senior citizens and persons with disabilities are MDOT- and federally subsidized as the only transit providers.

Railroads

Limited rail service is available in five counties in the region from two rail companies, Canadian National (CN) and Escanaba & Lake Superior (E&LS). Several original rail segments in the region have been dismantled and, in many cases, converted to long- distance multi-use trails under MDOT and Michigan Department of Natural Resources purview. However, by law, these corridors can generally be reverted to rail use if industrial demand returns.

CN's western segment runs south from White Pine in Ontonagon County then west to Ironwood in Gogebic County, continuing west to Duluth. This segment is utilized by existing manufacturers in White Pine and is available for future industries in the White Pine Industrial Park and the White Pine Mine, which was recently purchased for reestablishment. A separate short-line CN spur runs northwest from the eastern Baraga County border to the Village of Baraga. This spur is in use by manufacturer CertainTeed, but volumes are logistically limited by terrain elevation and land cover. The spur joins CN track to the south that ultimately terminates at Chicago.

E&LS operates two lines which connect the communities of Mass City, Nestoria, and Amasa, continuing out of the region east to Marquette and Dickinson Counties and ultimately south to Green Bay, Wisconsin, where the line joins CN routes that extend in other directions. In Nestoria, E&LS connects with the Baraga CN spur.

Airports

The Western Region contains seven airports. Baraga County and southern Houghton County each have an unpaved general aviation airstrip. Ontonagon County has one and Iron County has two general aviation paved runways. The Gogebic-Iron (Wisconsin) County and Houghton County Airports have paved runways and scheduled passenger service in addition to general aviation. Both airports' passenger service is subsidized by funding from the federal Essential Air Service (EAS) program, which supports a minimum of two arrivals and two departures daily. Both airports have service to Chicago O'Hare – via Air Choice One (an independent commuter airline) in Gogebic-Iron and via SkyWest Airlines (a United Airlines partner) in Houghton County. A third passenger airport, Ford Airport in Kingsford, is located just outside the region's southeast corner and offers flights to Minneapolis operated by Great Lakes Airlines for Delta.



Sawyer International Airport near Marquette (within the Central U.P. Prosperity Region) is the regional and largest air carrier airport of six in the Upper Peninsula, with 84,264 enplanements in 2013. Houghton County had the second-highest number, with 51,741, and Gogebic-Iron the lowest, with 4,948. Sawyer is the only passenger airport in the Upper Peninsula that is not EAS-subsidized.

Trails

The Western U.P. is traversed by hundreds of snowmobile, Off-Road Vehicle (ORV), non-motorized, and multi-use trails. Characteristics of the trails vary based on local demand, ownership, and level of maintenance. Snowmobile tourism is a vital part of the winter economy, and ORV tourism is becoming a predominant spring, fall, and summer activity, especially as the climate slowly shifts to warmer temperatures. Non-motorized (primarily hiking, biking, skiing, snowshoeing, and jogging) trail use and availability are also increasing, are currently a state priority, and have an economic impact that is increasingly being realized.

Though snowmobile trails intersect almost all major communities in the region, critical gaps remain along the Gogebic County U.S. 2 corridor and the U.S. 41 corridor in Baraga and Houghton Counties. These are access routes for the highest-population parts of the Western U.P., so acquiring land ownership and trail easements are priorities. Other motorized and equestrian trails are in a better state, since the MI-TRALE advocacy organization, based in Ontonagon County, has focused on expanding and maintaining the network of these trail types. MI-TRALE has high volunteer involvement and fundraising capabilities. Most ORV, snowmobile, and equestrian trails are multi-use trails that allow non-motorized uses as well, though their character for these uses may be less than ideal.

The longest non-motorized trail in the Western Region is the North Country Trail, which is intended to continuously connect North Dakota to New York. The trail runs over a variety of land ownerships and through numerous public forestlands, stretching from Ironwood on the west through Baraga County on the east. A long section passes through the Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park – the largest wilderness area east of the Mississippi River – which also contains a large network of non-motorized trails.

Besides the many physical trails, the Western U.P. contains two state heritage routes, or byways, which are travel routes denoted by special historic, scenic, or recreational features. Michigan's Byways created under the Michigan Heritage Route Program (Act 69 of 1993) are each designated in one of those three categories. The Iron County Heritage Trail is a State Historic Heritage Route. This route is a loop connecting the Cities of Crystal Falls and Iron River in Iron County, along with many points of interest to the south, running partially concurrent with Highway U.S. 2. The Copper Country Trail National Scenic Byway on the Keweenaw Peninsula is a State Scenic Heritage Route and one of "America's Byways." Copper Country Trail identifies with the area's copper mining history and is an important element of the Keweenaw's tourism economy, complementing the Keweenaw National Historical Park and its many participating sites. Copper Country Trail benefits from the Houghton-Keweenaw Recreational Trails Authority, which is working to acquire easements for physical multi-use trails in the area.

Gogebic County is home to yet another designated route, the Black River National Forest Scenic Byway. This 11-mile byway in the Ottawa National Forest north of Bessemer is mostly paralleled by the river, which includes several waterfalls that are accessible from the road by hiking trails.



The byway terminates at Black River Harbor, a developed recreation area that includes boat launch facilities, a campground, and a picnic area. The byway passes by Copper Peak, a ski resort including the Western Hemisphere's only ski flying hill. Proposed improvements to this 40-story-high hill would accommodate ski flying 40 days a year. Copper Peak has also been capitalizing on off-season tourism, offering events such as biking, hiking, and scenic viewing from chairlifts, as well as a possible "Olympic village" to recruit international athletes for summer sports training. Summer tourism is becoming increasingly important to a recreational economy that has traditionally focused on snow.

In 2012, Michigan Governor Snyder announced an initiative to make Michigan the "Trail State," owing largely to a proposed 924-mile multi-use recreational trail from the Wisconsin Border at Ironwood to Belle Isle in southeastern Michigan. The trail will pass west-east through Gogebic and Iron Counties in the Western Region. In Gogebic County, the Western Michigan Gateway Trail Authority was recently formed to guide development and maintenance of the trail, and improvements are planned between Bessemer and Wakefield. It is possible that a separate continuous west-east non-motorized route will be developed farther north, largely concurrent with the North Country Trail. Just as important as the trails are bicycle rides and other events that utilize the trails and bring together diverse user groups.



Opportunities for Collaboration in Agency Roles and Functions

The planning process has involved extensive discussion both through subcommittees and larger advisory and stakeholder groups of the most important large issues to address and the best ways to address them on a smaller functional level. The idea is to target specific, well-known issues as a groundwork for broader prosperity. Some of what follow might be considered pilot projects, whereas others are broader issues set to be addressed through a small number of targeted strategies. Such an approach is needed to make big problems manageable and to accomplish real organizational change using realistic resources. The projects and topics selected and described below have been validated and expanded upon by discussions and/or interviews with the most appropriate subject area representatives. The organizational profiles created through this process – the first-ever such effort in the Western Upper Peninsula – are included in the **Appendix**.

The most promising opportunities for short-term change are described below.

Economic Development

Chambers of Commerce and Convention & Visitors Bureaus (CVBs)

As with any organization, it is valuable for a chamber of commerce or CVB to have a community focus so that members can work toward common goals and strong personal relationships. Unfortunately, resources, both human and financial, are in short supply for small chambers. All operate with business member volunteers and boards of directors. Very few small chambers have any paid staff, and many have declining memberships. Some of the chambers promote small areas that have little or no name recognition by visitors. CVBs promote larger areas (generally countywide), but these boundaries are not necessarily meaningful to visitors. Most visitors are more familiar with the Western U.P. or U.P. overall as a singular entity. By joining forces, these organizations can promote the Western U.P.'s largest industries, from tourism to manufacturing, more effectively.

Some recent progress has already been made in collaboration of chambers and CVBs:

In 2010, Northern Initiatives undertook The Wilds of Michigan program to promote tourism in Gogebic and Ontonagon Counties. The two counties, at the far western end of the Western Region and U.P., have great recreational natural resource value but at the time were little known by potential visitors. The Wilds initiative successfully raised the two-county region's profile through market research targeting local businesses and tourists to the south and west, along with advertising based on this research. Through a Pure Michigan partnership, The Wilds website was linked from www.puremichigan.org and was between the top 5th and top 20th most-clicked sites in six months from 2011 through 2012.



Perhaps most importantly for the purpose of this plan, The Wilds of Michigan was locally empowered, bringing together several chambers of commerce, CVBs, and other economic development organizations; as well as the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Forest Service, and City of Ironwood. In addition to promotion of the area, local communities were enabled to conduct shared learning and business development opportunities on topics such as financial literacy, leveraging of market research, and elevation of online presence. Collaboration made these services easier to deliver.

The Wilds of Michigan recently came to conclusion, but the seeds have been planted for continuing collaboration, and big things are on the horizon. Copper Peak, for example, a growing year-round recreation area near Bessemer that was discussed earlier in this plan, has tremendous potential to develop the economy of the Western Upper Peninsula and Northern Wisconsin. A mechanism for continued collaboration and leadership is needed to ensure that opportunities like this are not lost.

In 2012, the Baraga County Chamber of Commerce began hosting a quarterly “Thirsty Thursday” event for area chambers of commerce, with most participants emanating from Baraga and Ontonagon Counties. This was fitting, since stakeholders from those two counties had in the past considered sharing economic development staff. At the April 2014 Thirsty Thursday, a consensus decision was made to try to recruit chambers from all counties and to rotate the event through locations around the region. The following two meetings were held in Houghton and Silver City, with additional future locations to include Ironwood and Lake Gogebic. This variety in location is important to garner interest among a broader spectrum of people and to establish a regional mindset.

At the October Thirsty Thursday, the concept of a Regional Chamber Alliance was floated by the Keweenaw Chamber of Commerce. A regional alliance would allow all local chambers of commerce in all six counties of the region to retain their identities but work together to create a larger impact with their limited funds. Initiatives supported by an alliance might include business expositions and awards, referrals to economic development organizations, an ambassador program, partnerships with educators and young professionals groups, and business mentorships. The concept has been presented to various business and stakeholder groups, and response has been positive.

A regional alliance of convention and visitors bureaus could also be considered, either separately or in concert with a chamber alliance, though this would be more difficult for CVBs due to legal issues of room tax financing.

The proposed Regional Chamber Alliance should be pursued and supported by staffing and resources. The alliance should hold regular meetings that produce defined action items with deadlines and attributed to specific individuals.

Economic Development Service Delivery

The single largest component of the Western U.P. Regional Prosperity Initiative is expansion and coordination of multi-agency economic development services throughout the Western U.P. This began even before RPI, as WUPPDR and KEDA were having discussions about “aligning” to create a partnership of agencies to deliver business assistance services, promote the regional economy, and identify and obtain infrastructure grant funding. The alignment began gradually by taking the following steps within the first six months following the RPI award:



- WUPPDR staff began to provide KEDA’s bookkeeping services pending a memorandum of understanding.
- KEDA support staff moved into and operated out of WUPPDR’s office and utilized WUPPDR’s utilities.
- KEDA’s newly hired director began to collaborate directly with WUPPDR on relevant projects.
- WUPPDR’s Executive Director was seated on KEDA’s governing board, and vice-versa.
- Discussions begun regarding the potential of the KEDA Executive Director to assume the position of the retiring WUPPDR Executive Director, thereby combining economic development and regional planning services out of one office and extending economic development services into all six counties of the Western Region.

As originally proposed in the Western U.P. RPI, expanded regional economic development services would have been offered through KEDA “satellite staff” in each county. Later in RPI, the proposed mechanism for service delivery broadened far beyond these two organizations. In conjunction with the Michigan Works! Talent Districts described below, a mechanism was established to provide and market the services of WUPPDR, KEDA, Michigan Works!, MTEC SmartZone, Northern Initiatives, Procurement Technical Assistance Center, and Small Business Development Center throughout the region as one entity. Chambers of commerce (including a potential regional alliance), CVBs, educational institutions, and local governments (which are sometimes the first point of contact for a prospective business) would also be involved in supporting roles.

Using a model developed by the Six County Employment Alliance, which coincides with the Central U.P. Michigan Works! agency, Michigan Works! staff, based out of the five existing Michigan Works! service centers in the Western U.P., will be educated about the services and resources offered by the five other organizations. Staff will also be familiar with the characteristics and needs of their local service areas. When a business comes to a service center looking for information, or when a Michigan Works! Business Service Team staffer in the field learns of a business need other than workforce training, staff will connect the business with the appropriate resources and contacts to meet its particular needs.

This arrangement will utilize existing staff and support systems to provide localized satellite access to regional services that are currently based primarily in Houghton. The new system will be marketed to raise awareness of the multi-agency partnership. Existing Michigan Works! offices will be rebranded as one-stop service centers offering services from all five entities under the same umbrella. In fine-tuning and marketing this structure, it will be important to consider the input and needs of outlying areas of the region. Though the main agency offices are centralized in one city, the purpose of the new arrangement is to ensure their services are delivered on a level playing field throughout the region. Local stakeholders should have a leading role in guiding the operations of their area offices.

The leading role of Michigan Works! in this system can be attributed largely to the designation of the Upper Peninsula as Michigan Works!’ Region 1 Pure Michigan Talent District. The statewide designation of talent districts runs parallel to RPI but is directed specifically toward workforce development. As a step toward implementing the talent district, the U.P.’s three Michigan Works! agencies (western,



central, and eastern) have been brought together under a single administrative entity operated by the Central U.P. agency, the Six County Employment Alliance.

The focus here has been on regional and private/nonprofit economic development organizations. But much of the day-to-day economic development work on a local level is performed by local government components whose structures are dictated by state law. State-authorized units include economic development corporations, downtown development authorities, local development financing authorities such as tax-increment financing districts, brownfield redevelopment authorities, and others. Each of these is either created by or operates as a semi-autonomous committee of the local government. Even a small city or village of a few thousand residents may include more than one of these bodies.

Often these units' functions, boundaries, and even members overlap significantly, and each unit has legal requirements such as meetings that are usually held by different bodies on different days. There is an opportunity for the state to enact new enabling legislation to align or consolidate these bodies' structures to eliminate overlaps. In this manner, service delivery would become more efficient along the full spectrum from local government to regional development.

The plan for mutual provision of services by six regional economic development agencies and others that may be identified will move forward guided by input from all stakeholders in the region. Additional state resources may be required to incorporate the new economic service delivery system into Michigan Works! traditional operations. State legislative changes should be considered to eliminate conflicting and duplicative enabling legislation.

Education and Workforce Development

Adult and higher education are available from three intermediate school districts and four colleges and universities, respectively, in the region. These two categories are often used interchangeably when referring to career-oriented technical/vocational (vo-tech) education beyond high school. The difference is that higher education can be either career-oriented or more broadly academic. At Gogebic Community College, for example, there is an even split between students in vo-tech programs and those in liberal arts programs who may be preparing for a four-year degree. After years of a nearly across-the-board push for high school students to “go to college” for a four-year degree, workforce development organizations and educators are now recognizing the need for vo-tech education and are now promoting and expanding the availability of these programs.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) in Grade and High Schools

Although it is being widely recognized once again that CTE is an important and attractive alternative to a four-year college degree for many students, it takes time to change the educational career pathway to accommodate this. Changes in the broader education system must be made at each level and venue of education.



One impediment to a favorable perception of technical and skilled-trade careers is a continued focus on college-track academic education throughout school. Academic preparation for careers later in life starts well before high school. Many students receive first impressions of career options in grade school. Special curricula can contribute to these impressions. For example, MDOT's TRAC program involves students in hands-on transportation-related problem-solving activities and competitions. The program, which can be incorporated into science, math, and social science classes, includes teacher training and volunteer engineers to work with students. Exposures like this can give students new perspectives from which to consider high school and post-high school courses of study. Without exposure to vo-tech careers in parallel with four-year degree professions, students may not consider vo-tech fields as viable options.

Career fairs (one of which recently occurred under the purview of CCISD and Michigan Works!) and similar events can also introduce students to new fields and help guide their courses of study. Collaboration among school district administrators and support from guidance counselors, who should be trained in career options and opportunities such as internships, are essential. Finally, both students and parents can be informed about the full spectrum of career options through increased marketing and resources such as written materials. Marketing and state policy need to effectively communicate that CTE can lead to lucrative careers. A focus on career paths throughout school will be increased by Michigan Works! in accordance with the 2013 federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act.

In high school, state curriculum requirements begin to have a major impact on career direction. Although most schools have long offered industrial arts classes such as metals and drafting, these have often been offered as electives, sometimes more as a curiosity than for career preparation. Over time, these and other vo-tech programs have been re-envisioned and institutionalized as CTE, which enables students to obtain industry-standard certifications as welders, nursing assistants, and many other vocations.

The state curriculum, currently the Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC), long limited the applicability of vo-tech courses toward graduation requirements. Recent changes to MMC, which had a high degree of support from both employers and educators, have made it possible to apply certified CTE course content to more academic requirements for graduation than has traditionally been the case. Fourth-year math may be taught as a practical, hands-on component of a vo-tech course rather than a dedicated math course. One year of foreign language may be omitted, and one year of science (of three years required) may be taught in a vo-tech class rather than a traditional physical science course. Further changes may be warranted to increase the number of graduation credits that can be fulfilled by CTE coursework.

Besides MMC, an impediment to meeting graduation requirements is the definition of CTE itself. The term CTE is often used informally to refer to any type of coursework oriented toward vo-tech careers. But for federal, MMC, and employer purposes, CTE is a certification that ensures students meet uniform standards for the workforce. The federal and state requirements for CTE certification generally are aligned with industry standards to facilitate student certification in the latter. Some vo-tech programs, such as the welding program at the Public Schools of Calumet-Laurium-Keweenaw (CLK) district, can lead to an industry-standard welding credential even though the courses are not CTE-certified.



CTE programs can be offered in different venues, mainly either by an intermediate school district (ISDs) or independently by local school districts. Many ISDs take the lead on this because, through economies of scale, they can offer a level of services that exceeds the capacity of individual local school districts. Many local districts lack a critical mass of students needed to support a CTE course and/or are financially unable to train instructors for CTE certification. ISDs have the authority, with voter approval, to levy a separate millage that can support programs like CTE. In addition, special state and federal funding is available for CTE courses in some cases. Local school districts should work with their ISDs to ensure that CTE is offered as efficiently as possible and made accessible to the entire area student population, coordinated by ISDs and offered either at local school district sites or at central ISD facilities.

Some school districts take approaches other than CTE certification to accomplish similar goals. Several local school districts in the Western Region offer “early college” programs that enable high school students to study at the college level for much of their time in high school. After taking many college-level courses concurrently with high school coursework, mainly during their junior and senior years, these students remain for a fifth year in order to graduate with a vo-tech college degree or two years’ worth of liberal arts preparation for a four-year degree. (A liberal arts course of study is more flexible and thus easier to work into an early college program.) Almost all fifth-year coursework occurs on a college campus. College-level coursework earlier in high school can be taken either on a college campus or online.

In all local school districts, including those without an early college program, students have the opportunity to enroll in individual college courses that do not duplicate high school courses. The high school dedicates a student’s standard state foundation allowance for the dual-enrollment class period to the college, and any additional tuition is paid by other means. Students must meet a college’s admission requirements in order to be eligible for dual enrollment.

Despite the focus on career paths early in life, it is important to also consider the needs of unemployed adults whose training and skills no longer match the jobs that are available. Opportunities to enroll in CTE courses for retraining should be afforded and tailored to these adults as necessary (by offering night classes, for example, and coursework that is completely detached from the high school curriculum).

In order to streamline and expand CTE opportunities, 1) the Michigan Merit Curriculum should be examined on an ongoing basis by both educators and employers for modifications to increase flexibility, 2) efforts should be made to improve communication between superintendents in the Western U.P. and U.P. overall, building on existing Superintendents Roundtables, 3) local and state funding should support the ISDs’ role as primary CTE providers, and 4) a planning process should be undertaken for marketing to students the opportunities for and benefits of careers in skilled trades.

Employer Roles in Career Preparation

A disconnect exists between the needs of local employers and placement of area college graduates. A recent study showed that engineering jobs are among the positions in highest demand in the Western U.P. – even though Michigan Tech, in Houghton, is a world-class engineering school. A regional rural wage disparity study is in progress to validate and explore the problem of unmet employer demand for



these skilled employees in relation to brain drain of graduates. Pay levels may be one reason for brain drain, especially in highly educated fields, but this factor has no easy fix. In the skilled trades, employee shortages can be more easily addressed by better preparing employees for work.

In all types of CTE, employers need to regularly and directly interact with educators. In order to prepare students for careers that are or will be (at time of graduation) most in demand, educators must be cognizant of the status of career fields in the region. Input from employers regarding their reasons for employee shortages must be considered both regionally and on a case-by-case basis. Such input is collected and dispersed by Michigan Works!, with which local and intermediate school districts should establish and maintain a close relationship. Direct employer input also comes through advisory groups mandated to guide each CTE program. Each group is made up of, at minimum, one student, one teacher of the vocation, and one employer in the vocation. The groups must meet at least annually.

Today's employers have high expectations for skills training as a prerequisite for employment, with on-the-job training less prevalent than in the past. Traditional educators are not always well equipped to provide this type of training, so employers need to play an active role. In certain cases, training can be provided to students in the classroom or on the job site by employees of companies in the skilled trades. The first step for Michigan Works! and educators in meeting this need is to identify willing employers.

Another type of employer involvement in conjunction with educators, both at high school and higher levels, is participation in internship programs. Students in these programs are directly exposed to work environments and hands-on skilled activities. Internships involve less commitment than full time jobs for both students, who may be unsure of their career paths, and employers, that are not risking employing someone who is not the right fit for a position. In some cases, internships can lead to full-time permanent jobs, as much skills training is provided over the course of the internship.

Most small employers lack knowledge of how to start an internship program or participate in an existing one. Larger organizations are more likely to have internship programs, and these are not exclusively in the private sector. MDOT's Civil Engineer/Technician Co-op Program, for example, employs undergraduates full-time for much of the year performing work such as inspections, testing, surveying, and design plans, and project management for infrastructure projects. Colleges in the Western Region have an opportunity to work with Michigan Works! to improve and expand their internship programs to meet student needs and employer demand.

Employers and educators must actively work together to convert education into jobs. Recommended steps include: 1) employers of skilled tradespersons should be surveyed and approached as possible training providers for students, and 2) best practices should be outlined for development of internship programs by both educators and employers.

Intermediate School District (ISD) Resources and Disparities

In Michigan, ISDs might be considered the most appropriate regional coordinators of public education. ISDs all serve certain roles by law but also provide differing supplementary services based on their historical evolution and local resources. Supplementary educational services usually include special



education and career & technical education. Other services might include fee-based administrative support for school districts and nonprofit organizations.

Since ISDs have little legal authority to coordinate the program offerings of local school districts, ISDs do their best to fill gaps and reduce overlaps in services. As a prerequisite for that, of course, ISDs need to know what the local school districts offer in courses, programs, and other resources like equipment and teachers with specialized training. By fully surveying the offerings of each school district, ISDs can reduce duplication and potentially capitalize on the unique assets of individual districts to benefit the entire student population within the ISD. For example, a CTE program may be offered by an ISD to all of its students but located at an existing local school facility dedicated to a specific type of vo-tech training. Regionally, different ISDs can cooperate to fill each others' gaps in services with either their own courses or those offered by individual local school districts within.

Comparison of what is already known about the three ISDs in the Western Region indicates significant disparities. One of the most striking of these is in CTE offerings. Gogebic-Ontonagon ISD (GOISD) and Dickinson-Iron ISD (DIISD) each offer a much larger array of CTE programs than Copper Country ISD (for example, 10 in GOISD versus 3 in CCISD). This can largely be attributed to funding stream. As mentioned previously, an ISD may levy a tax millage within its district, with voter approval, to offer discretionary services (and 33 of Michigan's ISDs have a millage specifically dedicated to CTE). (Local school districts do not have authority to levy a millage for operations.) GOISD and DIISD levy a millage and have for many years, but CCISD does not. Thus, few CTE programs are available in CCISD. Though well-regarded vo-tech programs are offered by several of its local districts, these are not CTE-certified and are less accessible to students of other districts than would be the case for programs offered by the ISD.

In lieu of changes to the state education structure or local revenues, asset mapping of school districts is a way to collaboratively make the best of suboptimal funding for CTE and other services. Asset mapping will help ISDs to fulfill their roles as primary CTE providers as effectively as possible.

Research and mapping of all schools' CTE assets will improve knowledge of what is available and create more efficient and collaborative learning and administrative environments. As a result, small accomplishments in process improvement will lead to macro benefits for students' transitions from grade and high school to adult and higher education.

Transportation

State Trunkline Maintenance and other State, County, and Municipal Concerns

Four of the Western U.P. Prosperity Region's six county road commissions contract with MDOT to provide winter road maintenance on the state trunkline (highway numbers beginning with "M" or "U.S.") outside of municipalities, as do sixty other road commissions in Michigan. In Baraga and Houghton Counties, instead, MDOT provides trunkline maintenance using direct state forces. One MDOT garage is located in each county. County road commissions are responsible for maintenance of all designated county roads.



The Houghton and Baraga County Road Commissions (HCRC and BCRC, respectively) do not provide contracted winter maintenance under current allowable MDOT financing, asserting that the funding is not sufficient to support operations and requesting an audit to confirm this. In Baraga County, MDOT has performed maintenance using direct forces since the 1930s. In Houghton County, HCRC services to MDOT were withdrawn in 2003 when MDOT terminated the contract over a reimbursement dispute, after which a new MDOT facility was constructed in the Houghton County Airpark. The road commissions have suggested that cost savings may be attainable through changes to maintenance contract arrangements or changes to the maintenance providers, possibly through regionalization of services.

Another issue raised by a larger set of county road commissions, cities, and villages is the bidding process for state-owned road maintenance equipment. The current bidding mechanism, which is based on state law, is internet-based and gives all bidders equal opportunity. Thus, Michigan municipalities and road commissions must compete with multiple buyers nationwide to purchase state-owned equipment. Often redistributors in other states are awarded the sales based on market value, requiring Michigan's municipalities and road commissions to repurchase the equipment at a marked-up cost. Many municipalities and road commissions request to have the right of first refusal to purchase this equipment or, ideally, to receive the equipment at no cost once the State of Michigan has fully met its own replacement goals using budgeted funds. The latter is currently not possible under Michigan Public Act 51 of 1951, which allocates specific percentages of state transportation funds to MDOT, counties, and municipalities and prevents direct horizontal transfers between those entities.

Finally, road commissions in the Western Region, supported by the County Road Association of Michigan (CRAM), oppose MDOT administrative changes made to the Rural Task Forces in 2013, saying those changes limit flexibility in local road and transit projects. CRAM advocates for a Federal Fund Exchange option. This would allow a county or municipality (local agency) to trade all or a portion of its federal fund allocations in a specific fiscal year with MDOT in exchange for state trunkline funds, or with another local agency in exchange for that agency's state trunkline or local funds. Advocates believe this would increase the variety of projects on the entire road system and would increase efficiency.

MDOT and the participating road commissions and municipalities are committed to identifying the road maintenance arrangements that best utilize taxpayer funds. The agencies agree that an independent feasibility study is warranted to examine various alternatives, including changes in contracting and regionalization of maintenance entities, in order to determine the optimal system. The collaborative also supports exploring changes to existing state bidding legislation. Finally, MDOT is willing to discuss other options for allocation of local federal funds, including a Federal Fund Exchange.

It is recommended that a feasibility study be completed by an independent contractor to examine alternative arrangements for state trunkline maintenance and to identify the most cost-effective arrangement. A committee of local agencies and MDOT will be assembled to plan, guide, and evaluate the study. In addition, consideration of legislative changes to state bidding policy is encouraged. Finally, MDOT and local agencies will maintain a dialogue in good faith to discuss optimal arrangements for expenditure of federal funds in relation to local road and transit projects.



Freight Rail

Railroads are reluctant to maintain service to areas where the lines are underutilized. This was the main reason for termination in recent years, for example, of an Escanaba & Lake Superior Railroad (E&LS) track from Mass City to Ontonagon. In order for volumes to remain high enough to be cost-effective, a “transload” facility in the Western U.P. would be beneficial. This is a facility where short-distance truck freight can be easily transferred to rail cars to distant locations. Such an arrangement may be feasible for some trips that run a minimum distance to places like Minneapolis, southern Wisconsin, or Chicago.

Michigan Technological University recently completed a study to assess area export volumes and study three potential sites for a transload facility in the West and Central U.P. Two of the three sites identified are located in the Western Region, in Amasa and Nestoria, with the former primarily serving an industrial park and flooring mill and the latter providing access at the closest proximity possible to several exporters in Baraga County and the Keweenaw Peninsula. A Nestoria facility could provide access to both the E&LS (in the event service is restored) and the Canadian National Railroad (CN) spur to Baraga, which lacks certain physical characteristics needed to host a facility. A cost-benefit analysis and additional study to assess and validate export volumes and shipper demand are required before any further progress can be made in selecting a site.

There is also merit to preserving, reinstating, or establishing new rail access to particular destination industrial facilities or groups of facilities that may themselves support service. The most notable of these cases is potential new or reopened mining facilities. In White Pine, for example, Highland Copper recently purchased the Western U.P.’s last operating copper mine, which had closed in 1995 due to environmental regulations. This location is served by the Canadian National Railway. Other new future ventures are likely in copper mining on the Keweenaw Peninsula and iron mining on the Gogebic Range.

An organization called the Northwoods Rail Transit Commission has a mission to sustain and enhance safe, reliable, and efficient rail service critical to the businesses, communities, and economies in Northern Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. The more specific goal is to preserve the Canadian North Railroad line through Wisconsin to the Upper Peninsula. The commission, which began in Northern Wisconsin, is made up of representatives appointed by each participating governing body. All counties in the Western U.P. Region except Baraga and Keweenaw are members.

WUPRPC understands the importance of rail access to the region and supports efforts to further study export activity and feasibility of a transload facility, with a broader goal to retain or reestablish other rail service wherever appropriate. In accordance, WUPPDR proposes to represent all of its six counties on the Northwoods Rail Transit Commission as a service to membership.



Regional Transit

The region's transit service levels are very low outside of the Cities of Houghton and Hancock and the Gogebic and Ontonagon County systems. Outside of Gogebic and Ontonagon Counties, one or more regional transit authorities could be formed to provide more comprehensive services. This was recommended for the Baraga-Houghton-Keweenaw County area by a 2011 study, but the five-year plan to create an authority has not been implemented due to lack of continuing stakeholder involvement and absence of funding. There has also been sporadic interest in a multi-jurisdictional or countywide system in Iron County. But in lieu of a new transit system, and at lower political cost, individual providers could work together better to fill service gaps that are already well known.

Gogebic County Transit Authority (GCTA) has demonstrated what is possible through guided organizational collaboration. GCTA partners with numerous human services agencies to provide transportation for their consumers as well as serving a role in emergency response transportation. During development of this plan, GCTA began providing services in its geographic area to Upper Peninsula Health Plan members eligible for Medicaid nonemergency transportation. GCTA bills only \$3 per trip for this service – vastly less than the over \$100 that Medicaid reimburses based on what private providers charge. On the statewide level, the Michigan Public Transit Association (MPTA) has proposed that all nonemergency medical trips be arranged and, where possible, provided by public transit agencies. Calls would be routed through a central call center to the appropriate responder.

In mid-2014, as part of a “special message on aging” to the legislature, Governor Snyder directed MDOT to partner with regional planning agencies and metropolitan planning organizations to identify and address gaps in regional transit. MDOT called for development of a report on the status of transit in each planning region. One special area of concern is transit across county lines – connectivity between different providers. Another concern is low levels of service where transit does exist. After exploring these issues, regional planning agencies will categorize and prioritize needs and will report to MDOT in 2015.

This directive also requires agencies to work with the Michigan Association of United Ways to develop a single statewide call center as proposed by MPTA. The center would be reached through the statewide 2-1-1 informational website/phone system operated in the Western Region by the Upper Peninsula Commission on Area Progress. The end result of the directive will be action plans and implementation steps that may lead to transit agency reorganizations and even changes to make state law more flexible.

Public transportation is an area where collaboration and coordination could result in more effective and broader delivery of transit services to the region's public. To avoid unnecessary duplication of effort, WUPRPC supports these initiatives already in progress. Future stages of RPI will be informed by the outcome of WUPPDR's regional transit report to MDOT in 2015.

Long-Distance Trail Routes

As mentioned previously in this plan, there are two types of “trails” in the Western Region: physical trails for conveyance of hikers, bicyclists, ATVers, snowmobilers, and other users; and travel routes



known as “byways” and/or “heritage routes” that connect various points of interest with a common theme but do not necessarily have dedicated infrastructure.

The highest-profile current trail activity is in the first category. Most notable is the ongoing establishment of a continuous non-motorized trail connecting the Wisconsin border at Ironwood to Belle Isle in Detroit. Some stakeholders in the Western Region would like to see a southern “multi-use” (motorized/non-motorized) trail through Gogebic and Iron Counties in addition to a northern hiking trail running largely concurrent with the North Country Trail through Gogebic, Ontonagon, Houghton, and Baraga Counties. The Department of Natural Resources is working out the details between these different interests.

The two existing state byways and heritage routes in the region, Copper Country Trail National Scenic Byway and Iron County Heritage Trail, have united many disparate organizations and individuals in furtherance of common goals. Participants on both trails’ committees include local units of government, state agency staff, historical societies, land conservation organizations, and business enterprises, along with many other stakeholders. Both trails are publicized to visitors using written materials and word of mouth, bolstering the region’s vital tourism economy.

For many years, MDOT has supported corridor management planning projects for the byways using Statewide Planning & Research (SPR) funds. In the Western U.P., much of this work has been done by WUPPDR. Until recently, additional funding was allocated by the Federal Highway Administration to support ongoing planning and development of America’s Byways (including Copper Country Trail). In Fiscal Year 2014, America’s Byways funds disappeared, leaving ongoing WUPPDR and MDOT support of the byways at a level sufficient only for WUPPDR to arrange, attend, and record committee meetings and providing certain coordination and communication assistance. In addition, for Fiscal Year 2015, MDOT SPR funds dedicated to byways have greatly diminished, hampering new planning projects to enliven and promote the byways.

Currently there is an effort by the America’s Byways organization to make byway projects eligible for federal/MDOT Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funds. WUPPDR and the trail committees are highly supportive of this effort, but funding will still be more limited and harder to obtain than in the past, in part because limited TAP funds are open to a wide variety of projects and programs. Loss of funding will impede further building on the strong foundation of activism and business enterprise related to the trails. The Western U.P. Prosperity Region’s economic vitality demands maintenance and expansion of these assets to strengthen the regional economy and continue organizational collaboration.

WUPRPC encourages an effective dialogue between all regional stakeholders and the State Government to ensure that statewide trail route(s) are tailored to the Western Region’s unique characteristics and needs.

Furthermore, it is recommended that, as part of a broader reassessment of the state transportation budget, MDOT reinstate a significant percentage of the original funds to support ongoing and competitive project activities for the region’s byways/heritage routes.



Other Infrastructure

Though it is not the intent of this plan to retread the broad economic development goals of previous regional plans, any type of economic development has infrastructure as a prerequisite. Transportation has been addressed in detail as one of the five major RPI participant categories. It is the consensus of regional planning, workforce development, and business support organizations such as the Upper Peninsula Economic Development Alliance that the other two major infrastructure gaps in the Western U.P. are communications and energy. These issues are discussed below as the basis for some of the action items presented in this five-year plan for economic prosperity.

Communications: Broadband Internet

Improved broadband internet in the Western U.P. is both an everyday need and an economic opportunity. Residents need service to participate in modern daily life, existing businesses need service to stay competitive, and remotely operating businesses would be more viable with availability of faster, more reliable service.

In some areas of the Western U.P., only dial-up internet remains available. Cable and occasionally fiber-optic broadband are available in several urban areas, but others have broadband access only to slower digital subscriber line (DSL) or fixed wireless, as well as satellite service that is less reliable and much more expensive. Broadband providers are reluctant to expand service due to high infrastructure cost and lack of information about customer use and demand.

Connect Michigan is a program in which county plans are done to assess broadband availability and need, with information then made available to providers to encourage and reduce the risk of private investment. WUPPDR is performing reconnaissance and publicity for this program in all six of its counties and seeks funding to complete a Technology Action Plan for each county.

Communications: Cellular Phone/Data Service

Doing business in the Western Region often requires an inordinate amount of travel, and it is vital to keep lines of cellular communication open to maintain productivity. Like broadband internet, cellular phone service is grossly inadequate in many areas of the region. Infrastructure costs are high for serving a relatively small, dispersed user base. Basic equipment and construction costs are only part of the problem. Tower construction is also impeded by regulatory hurdles and public backlash over aesthetics. Use of existing infrastructure for cellular transmitters would mitigate these problems.

State legislation has been proposed to allow placement of wireless transmitters for alternate uses on existing emergency communications towers. Passage of this measure will increase the cost-effectiveness and reduce the regulatory burden for placing new cellular antennas, encouraging their placement and particularly benefiting rural areas.



Energy: Electrical Power

Disparities in electrical power rates are high in the Western Region. Most of the region, especially the Copper Country (Houghton, Keweenaw, Baraga, and Ontonagon Counties), is served by two of the three most expensive utilities in Michigan and has rates far higher than the state and national averages. In the last 13 years, rates of these two utilities have increased by 107 to 116 percent versus 74 percent for the state overall. Meanwhile, certain municipalities in the region have access to much lower-cost power through cooperatives, and the utility covering most of western Gogebic County charges just 11 cents per kilowatt hour versus 21 to 24 cents in the northern Copper Country.

High electricity rates in the affected areas are attributed to many different factors, including: lack of significant local generation, requiring purchase of power from Wisconsin; transmission infrastructure construction ; low energy density; maintenance costs to service a sparse customer base over large areas; and, most recently, expensive subsidies needed to operate a major generation plant in the central U.P. following the loss of a major industrial customer. The full impact of the final factor has yet to be realized.

Although the energy cost problem is fairly well known in the area, it is of a scale that is almost impossible to have a local effect on through legislation, regulation, or consumer pressure. Part of the problem is geographic and cannot be changed, but efficiency and changes to the sources and delivery of power can be. Local action is beginning to take a foothold in the Keweenaw Peninsula, aided by the technology and research focus of Michigan Tech in Houghton.

The Houghton Energy Efficiency Team (HEET) is “a grassroots community organization working to help local residents save energy & take charge of our energy future.” The team has held public meetings to raise awareness and promote Houghton County’s competition for a nationwide five-million-dollar energy prize that would help to improve energy efficiency. The county is a quarterfinalist for the prize, and winning it would be a much-needed jumpstart to resolving part of the problem.

WUPRPC supports HEET as the best current means to address the energy problem and encourages further dialogue with energy providers and regulators to develop mutually beneficial long-term solutions.



Opportunities for Collaboration in Administrative and Supporting Services

Even when it is not feasible or appropriate for organizations to merge their primary functions, efficiencies can be realized internally in administrative or supporting services. Many of the region's small organizations lack the capability to effectively and economically provide human resources, information technology, accounting, and other similar tasks. Each of these services is best provided when a critical mass of workload exists – for example, enough work to employ one (and preferably more) staff person on a full-time basis. This allows full commitment of attention and skill as well as ongoing professional development. Without this level of staffing, individual roles are too divided to hold optimal expertise in any one area. Generalists, unfortunately, are not the best people to meet specific needs.

Whether administrative services are provided by specialists or generalists, some organizations' staff are more effective than others in providing particular services. A starting point for capitalizing on these organizations' assets is to identify specific services provided within various organizations, determine which organizations are best suited to provide each of these services, and redirect all organizations' needs for specific services to those organizations best positioned to provide them.

Reallocation of administrative and supporting services has already begun to occur in certain cases, such as those explained below:

- During development of this plan, and in accordance with the Region 1 Talent District, Michigan Works! combined its three Upper Peninsula agencies (Western, Central, and Eastern) under a single administrative entity. This will streamline all administrative services such as financial and human resources under one umbrella. The agencies retain some autonomy in other respects.
- BHK Child Development provides information technology services under contract for Western Upper Peninsula Michigan Works!
- Copper Country Intermediate School District, through its role as Regional Educational Media Center (REMC) 1, provides information systems, technology support, and telecommunications facilities and services, as well as continuing education for teachers, for all counties of the Western Region except Iron. CCISD also provides information technology and printing services for local school districts under contract. ISDs are well suited to take on administrative support and transportation services, allowing local districts to focus on student education. ISDs can also provide administrative services on a fee basis for nonprofit organizations.
- WUPPDR provides financial bookkeeping for KEDA under contract as one aspect of the organizations' phased merger. KEDA lacks the finances to deliver this dedicated service independently.



- WUPPDR staff recently became certified to administer community development block grants for local governments that lack capacity to do so internally. This ability is a valuable regional resource in an environment of diminishing local finances and staffing.

The Western U.P. Regional Prosperity Collaborative has identified several additional opportunities for collaboration to create administrative efficiencies:

- Some local governments within WUPPDR's area have indicated interest in rental rehabilitation projects funded by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA). Increasingly, MSHDA is looking upon these projects more favorably when they are supported by a target market analysis (TMA). A TMA examines market factors to determine which projects are most appropriate for particular areas and populations. Although MSHDA matching funding is available to develop a TMA, it can still be difficult for small rural governments to afford independently. A state-supported regional housing plan developed by WUPPDR would conduct background research to lay the groundwork and context for TMAs, mitigating costs for local governments.
- Many nonprofit organizations in human services, philanthropy, and other areas are struggling to accomplish their missions amid rising operating expenses. These organizations have an opportunity to preserve funds for the people they serve by contracting with an entity dedicated to administrative services. The Portage Health Foundation, which serves the northern four counties of the region, is facilitating and could potentially provide startup funds for an effort by several nonprofit organizations in the region to form a "Human Services Provider Association" (HPSA [tentative name]). HPSA would provide a diversity of supporting services for reasonable fees from participating agencies.
- A wide variety of organizations in the region provide transportation to their consumers as a secondary service. Public transit providers, where available, can provide this service more cost-effectively on a contracted basis. School districts, in particular, could benefit from this service as they struggle to support academics amid declining enrollments. However, by state law, student transportation must be provided by specially marked and signaled vehicles; and by federal regulation, it cannot be provided by federally funded transit agencies on routes specifically set up for student transportation. Laws and regulations should be reevaluated to determine whether transit providers could safely transport the general student population.
- Consistent with the Economic Vitality Incentive Program, townships and municipalities have potential to share administrative services such as technology support, bookkeeping, and management. Townships have larger roles and often higher levels of funding than the villages they include, so a township could consider providing certain administrative support services to a village more cost-effectively on a fee basis. A village would continue to provide locally focused municipal services where they are most needed and appropriate. Sharing of services need not be associated with consolidation; in fact, sharing services can delay or prevent consolidation by creating enough savings for governments to continue to function independently.



- Local governments can also partner to make it easier to meet state eligibility requirements for certain programs. For example, in some of the state's prosperity regions, proposals are underway for regional recreation plans to be created. This would eliminate the need for single or small groups of communities to undertake extensive planning at considerable expense simply to be eligible to apply for Department of Natural Resources grant funds.

The discussion of regionalism in Michigan is more prominent than ever before, and all types of organizations in the state should take this cue to reexamine their own operations so that money can be spent as appropriately and efficiently as possible.



Economic Development Blueprint

The Regional Prosperity Initiative requires development of a “five-year economic development blueprint.” The blueprint for this plan is focused upon six priority strategies selected from the numerous opportunities presented in the preceding two chapters. These strategies were targeted for implementation from 2015 through 2019. The blueprint includes implementation actions, partners, and performance measures.

1. Regional Chamber Alliance

- **Strategy:** Develop an alliance of Western U.P. chambers of commerce.
- Implementation actions
 - Solicit chamber buy-on
 - Hold collaborative meetings
 - Develop collaboration study
- Partners with WUPPDR
 - Western U.P. chambers of commerce
 - Michigan Works!
 - KEDA
- Performance measures
 - Chambers formally involved
 - Meetings held

2. Economic Development Service Delivery

- **Strategy:** Develop a partnership of seven economic development and business assistance organizations to offer services throughout the region.
- Implementation actions
 - Conduct information campaign
 - Train field staff
 - Establish and brand partnership
 - Provide business assistance
- Partners with WUPPDR
 - Michigan Works!
 - KEDA
 - SBDC
 - NI
 - MTEC SmartZone
 - PTAC
 - Local organizations (chambers of commerce, development authorities, etc.)
- Performance measures
 - Expansion of services
 - Service center accessibility
 - Organizations participating
 - Business & workforce metrics



3. CTE/Asset Mapping

- Strategies: Map CTE assets within local and intermediate school districts and institutions of higher education. Improve CTE access and participation.
- Implementation actions
 - Interview and survey educators
 - Develop inventory of district and institution facilities and resources
- Partners with WUPPDR
 - Intermediate and local school districts
 - Institutions of higher education
 - Michigan Works!
- Performance measures
 - Asset map/inventory completed
 - CTE local/state/federal funding
 - Number of programs
 - Total enrollment

4. Connect Michigan

- Strategy: Develop Connect Michigan technology action plans to promote improved broadband access for the Western U.P.
- Implementation actions
 - Research broadband availability and needs
 - Engage the public and service providers
 - Develop technology action plans
- Partners with WUPPDR
 - Local units of government
 - Chambers of commerce
 - Major institutions (including education)
- Performance measures
 - Technology action plans developed
 - Meetings held
 - Providers participating

5. Trunkline Winter Road Maintenance Feasibility Study

- Strategy: Conduct feasibility study of alternative arrangements for state trunkline winter road maintenance.
- Implementation actions
 - Assemble planning and oversight committee
 - Develop RFP for feasibility study
 - Develop feasibility study
- Partners with WUPPDR
 - MDOT
 - Road commissions
 - Local units of government
- Performance measures
 - Oversight committee created
 - Study completed



6. Regional Housing Plan

- Strategy: A regional housing plan will be developed to research housing resources, conditions, and needs, laying groundwork for future sub-regional plans and analyses.
- Implementation actions
 - Perform research and develop inventories
 - Engage the public
 - Develop housing plans
- Partners with WUPPDR
 - Local units of government
 - Human services agencies
 - UPCAP
 - MSHDA
- Performance measures
 - Plan developed

Monitoring and Evaluation

The performance measures in the blueprint are designed to track progress toward meeting “annual measurable goals,” a second component required by RPI. The mechanism for accomplishing and presenting this is a “performance dashboard,” a third required component. The individual goals are included in the dashboard. The dashboard is continually updated and available for public review at <http://www.wuppdr.org/rpi>.

There are three sets of items on the dashboard:

- *Stakeholder Engagement and Transparency* tracks support for, public engagement during, and transparency throughout RPI.
- *Collaborative Actions* tracks sharing of services, with a focus on the expansion of regional economic development services.
- *Regional Prosperity Plan Performance* demonstrates completion of the proposed deliverables for 2014, including development of strategies for this economic development blueprint.

The dashboard contains a combination of indicators that begin with: 1) the 2014 collaborative process and 2) other activities expected to begin in 2015. For both categories, goals will be set for the following year on an annual basis. Though the blueprint is based on implementation over a five-year period, the goals are shorter-term due to uncertainty. As projects progress, it may be possible to extend the goals for more than one year at a time. Goals have already been set for the first category of indicators based on 2014 experience, but they will not be set for the second category unless the projects are funded for implementation. This second category is included only to present the mechanism that will be used in that case.

Omitted from the dashboard are a number of opportunities that are presented in this plan but not proposed for implementation at this time. These items are considered policy recommendations and/or long-term goals with no clear path. Many of them may warrant further consideration in a later iteration of the Regional Prosperity Initiative.



Appendix

- I. Advisory Committee Members
- II. Stakeholder List
- III. Attendance Lists
- IV. Organizational Profile
 - A. Questionnaire
 - B. Selected Findings



Appendix I:

Advisory Committee Members



2014 Western U.P. RPC Advisory Committee

(Final participants)

Economic Development

City of Ironwood Community Development Department
Collaborative Development Council
Keweenaw Chamber of Commerce
Keweenaw Economic Development Alliance
Northern Initiatives

Michael Brown
Bob LaFave
Cheryl Fahrner
Jeff Ratcliffe
Dennis West

Adult Education

Copper Country Intermediate School District
Gogebic-Ontonagon Intermediate School District

George Stockero
Bruce Mayle

Higher Education

Finlandia University
Gogebic Community College
Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College
Michigan Technological University

Karyn VanDyke
Jim Lorensen
Debbie Parrish
Jim Baker & Beth Hoy

Workforce Development

Michigan Works!

Orrin Bailey & Cherilynn Lamppinen

Transportation

Gogebic County Transit Authority
Houghton County Road Commission
MDOT

Baraga County Road Commission/Rural Task Force 13A
Houghton County Road Commission/Rural Task Force 13A
Gogebic County Road Commission/Rural Task Force 13B

Jim Mildren
Kevin Harju
Vince Bevins, Aaron Johnson,
Chuck Lindstrom
Doug Mills
Kevin Harju
Darrin Pionk



2014 Western U.P. RPC Advisory Committee

(Final participants)

WUPPDR Commission

Chair

Patti Perreto

Private Enterprise

L'Anse Manufacturing
Traxys Power

Mark Massicotte **
JR Richardson

Non-profit

Superior Alliance for Independent Living

Sarah Puera

Philanthropy

Portage Health Foundation

Kevin Store

* Later in process participated as private citizen

** Also Baraga County
Chamber of Commerce



Appendix II: Stakeholder List



2014 Western U.P. RPC Stakeholder List

Education

Baraga Area Schools
L'Anse Area Schools

Jennifer Lynn
Carrie Meyer

Higher Education

Bay College
Finlandia University
Finlandia University
Gogebic Community College
Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College
Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College
Lake Superior State University
Michigan State University (MSU) Extension
Michigan Technological University
Michigan Technological University
Michigan Technological University
Northern Michigan University

M. Kinney
Karin Van Dyke
Philip Johnson
Jim Lorensen
Debbie Parrish
Lynn Aho
R. Wilhelms
Paul Putnam
Elizabeth Hoy
Glenn Mroz
Jim Baker
Robert Eslinger

Transportation

Baraga Road Commission
City of Houghton Transit
Copper Country Limo
Eagles Charter
Gogebic County DOVE
Gogebic County Transit Authority
Gogebic Road Commission
Houghton County Road Commission
Houghton County Veterans' Affairs Transport
Indian Trails
Indian Trails
Indian Trails
Iron County Road Commission
Keweenaw County Road Commission
MDOT Crystal Falls TSC
MDOT Ishpeming TSC
MDOT Planning

Doug Mills
Jodi Reynolds

Jim Mildren
Darren Pionk
Kevin Harju
Drew Crouch
Brenda Cheney
C. Cushman
K. Henry
Doug Tomasoski
Gregg Patrick
Mike Premo
Aaron Johnson
Randy VanPortfliet



2014 Western U.P. RPC Stakeholder List

Transportation (Cont.)

MDOT Planning
 Michigan Tech Transportation Enterprise
 Michigan Tech Transportation Institute
 Michigan Tech Transportation Institute
 Neil's Taxi
 Ontonagon County Road Commission
 OnTran
 Paula's Taxi
 Red Jacket Trolley
 Superior Region Passenger Transportation MDOT

Vince Bevins
 George Dewey
 Pasi Lautala
 William Sproule
 Ron Wakeham
 Mike Maloney
 Vicki White

 Will Shapton
 Chuck Lindstrom

Economic Development

Delta County Economic Development Alliance
 Iron County EDC
 KEDA
 Michigan Economic Development Corporation
 Michigan Economic Development Corporation
 Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural
 Development
 MTEC Smartzone
 Northern Initiatives
 Ontonagon County EDC
 Sault St. Marie EDC
 SBDC
 Schoolcraft County EDC
 U.P. Engineers and Architects
 UPEDA

Jeff Ratcliffe
 Jen Tucker
 Lois Ellis
 Donna LaCourt
 Marilyn Clark
 Dennis West
 Bill Fisher
 K. Claus
 Laura Marohnic

 K. Dillinger
 Holly Peoples

Planning Regions

Central Upper Peninsula Planning & Development
 Eastern Upper Peninsula Regional Planning &
 Development Commission
 Northwest Michigan Council of Governments

Joel Schultz
 Jeff Hagan

 Don Makowski



2014 Western U.P. RPC Stakeholder List

Media

WLUC TV6 / FOX UP

Corrine Bodeman

Workforce Development

Eastern U.P. Michigan Works!
 Goodwill Industries of Northern Wisconsin & Upper
 Michigan, Inc., Calumet Work Center
 Michigan Works!
 Six County Employment Alliance
 Western U.P. Michigan Works!
 Workforce Development Board

Jeff Hagan
 Keith Stenger
 Cherilynn Lampinen
 Orrin Bailey
 Jenna Smith
 Mark Massicotte

Chamber of Commerce/CVB

Alger Chamber of Commerce
 Baraga Chamber
 Bessemer Chamber of Commerce
 Copper Harbor Improvement Association
 Dickinson Chamber of Commerce
 Iron County Chamber
 Ironwood Area Chamber
 Keweenaw Convention & Visitors Bureau
 Keweenaw Peninsula Chamber of Commerce
 Lake Gogebic Area Chamber of Commerce
 Ontonagon County Chamber of Commerce
 Porcupine Mountains Visitor & Convention Bureau
 Wakefield Chamber of Commerce
 Watersmeet Chamber of Commerce
 Western U. P. Convention & Visitors Bureau

Kathy Reynolds
 Debbie Stouffer
 Bruce Orttenburger

Diane Peterson
 Cheryl Fahrner

Adult Education

CCISD
 CCISD
 DIISD
 GOISD
 GOISD

George Stockero
 Lois Weber
 Betsy Hardacre
 Ashley Hawkins
 Bruce Mayle



2014 Western U.P. RPC Stakeholder List

WUPPDR Commission

Human Services/Healthcare

Child and Family Services of the U.P.	Mary Miller-Stroeber
B&B Wheelchair Transportation	Bob Ruoho
Baragaland Senior Citizens	
Baragaland Senior Citizens	Pamela Anderson
BHK New Start	Cheryl Mills
Child and Family Services of the U.P.	Romano Vesecky
Copper Country Mental Health Services	Mick Sheridan
Copper Country Mental Health Services	Tammy Anderson
Copper Country Mental Health Services	Vicki Mikkola
Copper Country Mental Health Services - Institute	Taryn Mack
Gogebic-Ontonagon Community Action Agency	Pat Kangas
Lake Gogebic Senior Center	Nancy Reath
Marquette General Health System	Donald Simila
Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness	Shanna Cheribini
Michigan Department of Human Services - Houghton	Pete Autio
Michigan Department of Human Services - Houghton	Len Richards
Michigan Department of Human Services - Ontonagon	Marie Kinnunen
Michigan Rehabilitation Services	Kathy Flagstadt
Northpointe Behavioral Health Systems	Renee Lupini
Superior Alliance for Independent Living	Nicki Valdez-Bush
Superior Alliance for Independent Living	Sarah Peura
Upper Peninsula Commission for Area Progress	Tracy Lektziant
Vocational Strategies, Inc.	Shelby Hella
Western U.P. Health Department	Barbara Maronen

Units of Government

Baraga County	Wendy Goodreau
Gogebic County	Juliane Giackino
Gogebic County	LeRoy Kangas
Houghton County	Eric Forsberg
Houghton County	Luann Harynen
Iron County	Sue Clisch
Keweenaw County	Julie Carlson
Ontonagon County	Stacy Preiss



2014 Western U.P. RPC Stakeholder List

Units of Government

Adams Township	
Allouez Township	
Allouez Township	
Bates Township	
Bergland Township	
Bessemer Township	
Bessemer Township	Mike Uskiewicz
Calumet Township	Paul Lehto
Carp Lake Township	J. Hilborn
Crystal Falls Township	
Duncan Township	Frank Pentti
Eagle Harbor Township	Rich Probst, Jr.
Elm River Township	Shawn Hagan
Franklin Township	Glen Ekdahl
Grant Township	Ken Stigers
Greenland Township	
Haight Township	Joseph Pietala
Houghton Township	
Iron River Township	
Ironwood Township	Alan Baron
Laird Township	
L'Anse Township	Brian Jentoft
Mansfield Township	
Marenisco Township	Richard Bouvette
Mastodon Township	
Matchwood Township	Gerald Kitzman
McMillan Township	
Ontonagon Township	Steve Store
Osceola Township	Steve Karpiak
Portage Township	Bruce Petersen
Rockland Township	
Schoolcraft Township	Dennis Racine
Schoolcraft Township	
Sherman Township	
Spurr Township	Michael Hosey
Stanton Township	
Torch Lake Township	Brian Cadwell
Wakefield Township	John Cox



2014 Western U.P. RPC Stakeholder List

Units of Government

Watersmeet Township	
City of Caspian	John Stokoski
City of Crystal Falls	Dorthea Olson
City of Gaastra	Chris Stachowicz
City of Hancock	Glenn Anderson
City of Houghton	Eric Waara
City of Iron River	Perry Franzoi
City of Ironwood	Michael Brown
City of Ironwood	Kim Coonk
City of Ironwood	Scott Erickson
City of Wakefield	Jennifer Jacobson
City of Wakefield	Margot Rusinek
Village of Alpha	Steve Martin
Village of Baraga	Kurt Perron
Village of Calumet	Sue Dana
Village of Copper City	Diana Langdon
Village of Lake Linden	Robert Poirier
Village of L'Anse	Bob LaFave
Village of L'Anse	Paul LeClaire Jr.
Village of Laurium	Ed Vertin
Village of Ontonagon	Joseph Erickson
Village of South Range	Martin Steinmetz
Iron County Parks & Recreation Commission	Sara Basso
Governor Snyder	Dave Nyberg
Michigan State Representative Scott Dianda	Scott Dianda
Michigan State Senator Tom Casperson	Marty Fittante
United States Senator Carl Levin	Amy Berglund
Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa	George Beck

Private Enterprise

American Transmission Company	Brett French
Cloverland Enterprise	Dan Dasho
Coleman Engineering	J. Garske
Extreme Tool	Mike Zacharias
GS Engineering	Glen Simula
Peninsula Powder Coat	Brian Baccus
Rio Tinto	Simon Nish
Semco Energy	Michael Kessler
Superior Shores Resort	Don Kermeen
Traxys Power	JR Richardson



2014 Western U.P. RPC Stakeholder List

Non-Profit

Baraga County Shelter Home	Casey Van Straten
Baraga County Shelter Home	Char Kangas
Barbara Kettle Gundlach Shelter Home	
Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Western U.P.	Maggie Munch
Houghton County Conservation District	Gina Nichols
Little Brothers, Friends of the Elderly	Cathy Aten
Little Brothers, Friends of the Elderly	Mike Aten
MI-TRALE	Don Helsel
Quincy Mine Association	Horst Schmidt
Sustainable Keweenaw Resource Center	Barbara H.
Upper Peninsula Commission for Area Progress	Jonathon Mead
Wisconsin Public Service	T. Penn

Philanthropy

Portage Health Foundation	Kevin Store
Love INC	



Appendix III: Attendance Lists



2014 Western U.P. Meeting Attendance

February 12 Stakeholder Meeting

Erik Geunard
John Cox
Sarah Puera
Sue Cliché
Michael Brown
Bruce Ortenburger
Jim Brennan
Steve Palosaari
Pasi Latala
Bob LaFave
Bonnie Holland
Karyn VanDyke
Gina Nichols
Keith Stenger
Carl Lind
Kevin Codere
Marilyn Clark

Dave Nyberg
Chip Law
Dar Gronevelt
Jim Mildren
Chuck Lindstrom
Glen Simila
Brian Helminen
Jim Baker
Cathy Benda
Kathy Flagstadt
Guy St. Germain
Gernot Joachim
Taryn Mack
Vicki Mikkola
Debbie Stouffer
Paul Lehto
Glenn Anderson

Cherilynn Lampinen
Orrin Bailey
Pete Autio
Steve Karpiak
Joel Schultz
John Kirk
Mark Massicotte
Rich Probst
Paul Stark
Kornay Enal
Joe Erickson
Kim Stoker
Katie Keller
Jerald Wuorenmaa
Amy Spahn
Courtney Hohnholt
Patti Kieckhafer

April 1 Advisory Committee Meeting

Michael Brown
Jim Lorensen
Carl Lind
Sarah Peura
Andy Sikkama
Vince Bevins
Jonathon Mead

Chip Law
Bob LaFave
Bruce Mayle
Doug Mills
Jenna Smith
Mark Massicotte
Bob Black
Guy St. Germain
Len Richards

Kevin Harju
Jeff Ratcliffe
Kim Stoker
Jerald Wuorenmaa
Courtney Hohnholt
Patty Kieckhafer



May 7 Stakeholder Meeting

Pete Autio
Mark Massicotte
Joe Erickson
Dr. Kirk Schott
Kim Stoker
Brett French
Amy Berglund
Jenna Smith
Cherilynn
Lampinen
Dennis West

John Felkon
Debbie Stouffer

Bob LaFave
Doug Mills
Kathy Flagstadt
Chip Law
Dan Crane
Leroy Kangas
Dorthea Olsen
Michael Brown
Ralf Wilhems
Vince Bevins
Rhiannon Haller
Andy Sikkema

Kevin Store
Beth Hoy
Bob Black
John Pelkola
Orrin Bailey
Glen Tolksdorf
Jerald Wuorenmaa
John Cox
Courtney Hohnholt
Den Ferson
Marie Kinnunen
Jeff Ratcliffe

June 24 Advisory Committee Meeting

Chip Law
Guy St. Germain
Jane Markkanen
Mark Massicotte
Bob LaFave
Kevin Store
Kim Stoker

Len Richards
George Stockero
Jerald Wuorenmaa
Beth Hoy
Jeff Ratcliffe
Courtney Hohnholt
Michael Brown

Jim Mildren
Dennis West
Jon Mead
Orrin Bailey
Vince Bevins

July 30 Advisory Committee Meeting

Beth Hoy
Jeff Ratcliffe
Bruce Mayle
Chip Law
Jim Baker
Len Richards
Kevin Harju
Bob LaFave
Doug Mills

Jerald Wuorenmaa
Kim Stoker
Erik Powers
Courtney Hohnholt
Bruce Mayle
Jane Markkanen
Mark Massicotte
George Stockero
Michael Brown

Jim Mildren
Sarah Peura
Terry Thomma
Orrin Bailey
Vince Bevins
Mike Primeau
Patti Peretto



August 6 Stakeholder Meeting

Chip Law
Keith Stenger
Taryn Mack
Jeff Ratcliffe
Horst Schmidt
Karin VanDyke
Beth Hoy
Jim Mildren
Bruce Mayle
Cheryl Fahrner
Cherilynn Lampinen
Orrin Bailey

George Stockero
Kim Stoker
Jerald Wuorenmaa
Erik Powers
Jane Markanen
Courtney Hohnholt
Donna LaCourt
Mark Massiotte
Scott Dianda
Susie Landers
Doug Mills
Kevin Harju

Debbie Stouffer
Joel Hagan
Jim Lorensen
Sara J. Basso
Michael Brown
Sarah Peura
Lois Ellis
Robert Eslinger
Chuck Lindstrom
John Pelkola
Vince Bevins
Orrin Bailey

September 9 Advisory Committee Meeting

Len Richards
Kim Stoker
Erik Powers
Jerald Wuorenmaa
Courtney Hohnholt

Jane Markkanen
Orrin Bailey
Bruce Mayle
Stacey Crouch
Bob LaFave

Vince Bevins
Darren Young
Cheryl Fahrner

October 22 Advisory Committee Meeting

Kim Stoker
Erik Powers
Jerald Wuorenmaa
Doug Mills
Courtney Hohnholt
Bob LaFave

Cherilynn Lampinen
Katie Keller
Jeff Ratcliffe
Jim Lorensen
Sara Basso
Jim Brennan

Michael Brown
Jim Mildren
Vince Bevins
Cheryl Fahrner



November 5 Stakeholder Meeting

Tom Stephenson
 Jen Tucker
 Corrine Bodeman
 Brett French
 Jim Mildren
 Cherilynn Lampinen
 Kirk Schott
 Kim Stoker
 Jerald Wuorenmaa
 Katie Keller
 Courtney Hohnholt
 Sara Basso
 Joe Erickson

Jeff Ratcliffe
 Cheryl Fahrner
 Caroline Penny
 Doug Mills
 Keith Stenger
 Amy Berglund
 Karin Van Dyke
 Kate Beer
 Julee Karala
 Aaron Johnson
 Dan Dasho
 Michael Brown
 Jim Lorensen

Orrin Bailey
 Joel Schultz
 Dennis West
 David McCartney
 Randy VanPortfleit
 Taryn Mack
 Kevin Store
 Kathy Flagstadt
 Horst Schmidt
 Beth Hoy
 Mary Niemala

December 10 Advisory Committee Meeting

Kim Stoker
 Jerald Wuorenmaa
 Erik Powers
 Courtney Hohnholt
 Cheryl Fahrner
 Mark Massicotte
 Kevin Store

Beth Hoy
 Jeff Ratcliffe
 Bruce Mayle
 Karin Van Dyke
 Bob LaFave
 Doug Mills
 George Stockero

Cherilynn Lampinen
 Jim Mildren
 Jim Lorensen
 Michael Brown
 Aaron Johnson
 Chuck Lindstrom
 Jonathon Mead



2014 Western U.P. RPC Subcommittee Meeting Attendance

Economic Development I, April 28

Kim Stoker
 Jerald Wuorenmaa
 Jeff Ratcliffe
 Joe Erickson
 Patty Kieckhafer

Mark Massicotte

Economic Development II, August 22

Kim Stoker
 Jerald Wuorenmaa
 Jeff Ratcliffe

Donna LaCourt

Education – Michigan Tech Mobile Lab, August 6

Jerald Wuorenmaa
 George Stockero
 Beth Hoy

Karin Van Dyke

Education – KBOCC Grand Opening, August 21

Kim Stoker
 Jerald Wuorenmaa
 Jeff Ratcliffe
 George Stockero
 Bruce Mayle
 Debbie Parrish

Transportation I, May 22

Jerald Wuorenmaa
 Andy Sikkema
 Vince Bevins
 Doug Mills
 Kevin Harju
 Paul Lehto
 Glenn Anderson
 Jeff Ratcliffe

Transportation II, September 24

Jerald Wuorenmaa
 Aaron Johnson
 Vince Bevins
 Doug Mills
 Kevin Harju
 Paul Lehto
 Glenn Anderson



2014 Western U.P. RPC Subcommittee Meeting Attendance

Transportation Conference Call, October 7

Jerald Wuorenmaa
 Aaron Johnson
 Vince Bevins
 Chuck Lindstrom
 Doug Mills
 Kevin Harju
 Darren Pionk

Education I, July 10

Kim Stoker
 Jerald Wuorenmaa
 Jeff Ratcliffe
 Jane Markkanen
 George Stockero
 Bruce Mayle
 Debbie Parrish
 Karin Van Dyke

Education II, September 17

Kim Stoker
 Jerald Wuorenmaa
 Jeff Ratcliffe
 George Stockero
 Jim Baker
 Beth Hoy
 Wendy Warmuth
 Stacy Crouch

Education III, October 6

Jerald Wuorenmaa
 Karin Van Dyke
 Jeff Ratcliffe
 George Stockero



Appendix IV: Organizational Profiles



Background

WUPPDR recognized early on that there was a lack of information in the Western Upper Peninsula about what organizations “do” – or even what organizations exist. To WUPPDR’s knowledge, an inventory of the roles, activities, and resources of the region’s organizations had never been developed. This type of information was considered a prerequisite for identifying opportunities for collaboration. Therefore, WUPPDR took on the task of interviewing organizations’ representatives, collecting other data, and developing “organizational profiles” of a wide variety of nonprofit and publicly funded organizations.

The majority of profiles fell into the five required participant categories of RPI (economic and workforce development, adult and higher education, and transportation). However, selected organizations from other areas, such as human services and philanthropy, were also included. Many of these organizations provided certain services of the five required categories (such as transportation) as a secondary function. Nearly fifty profiles were developed over the course of approximately nine months.

Contents

Information in the profiles was gathered through a questionnaire and has not been confirmed with other sources. In almost all cases, the questionnaire was administered in meetings in person or via videoconference. A few organizations preferred or were only able to complete the profiles via e-mail.

The responses were compiled and analyzed to develop a number of easy-to-understand charts illustrating trends and issues faced by organizations. Many of the findings related to funding issues.

For some perspective, the following is a summary of the major topics explored in the questionnaire:

- **Business Profile:** type of organization and services provided, mission statement, service area
- **Financials:** funding sources, total budget*, “hard” (reliable & consistent year-to-year) versus “soft” (temporary and/or inconsistent) money funding, numbers and types of employees, budget trend, related changes in staffing and services, confidence in funding stream
- **Governance:** governing body type and membership; meeting frequency, location, and costs
- **Business Environment/Consolidation of Services:** Unmet needs of the population served and of the organization itself, other providers of similar services, existing memoranda of understanding, existing collaboration with other agencies, barriers to collaboration

Following this page are:

- Standard questionnaire form
- Presentation of selected findings (includes map of service areas of profiled organizations)

At the time of plan publication, the individual profiles are under final review by respondents. When complete, the profiles themselves will be made available online at <http://www.wuppdr.org/rpi>.

* Revenues and expenses reported on 2012 IRS 990 forms were later added where available.



Appendix IV A: Organizational Profiles Questionnaire



**Organizational Profile Questionnaire
2014 RPI Survey
WUPPDR**

Organization: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

Name: _____ Position: _____

Email: _____

Business Profile

1. Type of Organization:

City County State Federal
Regional Non-profit Public Other _____

Are you a branch or subsidiary of a bigger organization? Yes No

Name: _____

Is your current structure the result of consolidations, reorganizations, or expansions within agencies?

2. What service do you provide:

Adult Education	Higher Ed	Pre-K – 12 education
Healthcare	Economic Development	Charity
Workforce Development	Human Services	Natural resources
Transportation	Chamber of Commerce	Tourism
Other		



Organizational Profile Questionnaire 2014 RPI Survey WUPPDR

3. Mission Statement: (Ask for copy – when make the appt.)

4. Service Area: _____

Financials

5. How is your agency funded?

	Percentage		Percentage
Federal	_____	Dues	_____
State	_____	Endowment	_____
Local	_____	Donations	_____

6. What is your total annual budget?

7. How much is:

Hard money _____ (Regular funding allocation, such as a continuing state budget line item)

Soft money _____ (Project-specific or other non-continuing funds)

8. Employees (number):

Full-time _____

Part-time _____

Temporary _____

Volunteer _____



Organizational Profile Questionnaire
2014 RPI Survey
WUPPDR

9. Has your budget changed from last year?

(Comments)

10. Do you have any discretionary funds? Yes No

If yes, what percentage of your budget? _____

What are they used for?

11. Has your budget lead to changes in the services you provide? Yes No

How?

12. Has your budget lead to changes in the services you provide? Yes No

What?

13. Do you have any flexibility to increase revenues? Yes No

(Comments)

14. How confident are you about your funding stream? Confident Unsure Not confident

(Comments)



Organizational Profile Questionnaire 2014 RPI Survey WUPPDR

Governance

15. Do you have a board or governing group responsible for your organization? Yes No

If yes, how many members are:

Volunteer _____ Paid _____ Staff _____

16. How often do they meet?

Monthly Biannual Annual Other _____

17. Where do they meet?

Agency office Public building Restaurant/bar
Rotates Other _____

18. Are meeting costs reimbursed for board meetings? Yes No

If yes, who covers these costs?

What are those costs as a percentage of your budget?

Business Environment/Consolidation of Services

19. What are areas of unmet needs or services for the *area or population you serve*?

20. Does anyone else provide services similar to your agencies in your area? Yes No

21. What are areas of unmet needs or services for your *organization*?

Staffing	Office space	Office equipment
Travel resources	Conference attendance	Bookkeeping
IT	Janitorial	Bulk purchasing

Comments:



Organizational Profile Questionnaire
2014 RPI Survey
WUPPDR

Governance

22. Do you have a *Memorandum of Understanding* with any organization? Yes No

If yes, who?

What are the terms?

23. Have you collaborated with another agency to provide services? Yes No

Why/why not?

24. Are there barriers for your organization that make collaboration difficult?

Funding	Privacy regulations	Governmental regulations
Travel Expenses	Compatible service providers	Staffing
Personalities/history	Other	

Comments:

25. What one thing would help your agency most?

26. Final thoughts



Appendix IV B:

Organizational Profiles

Selected Findings



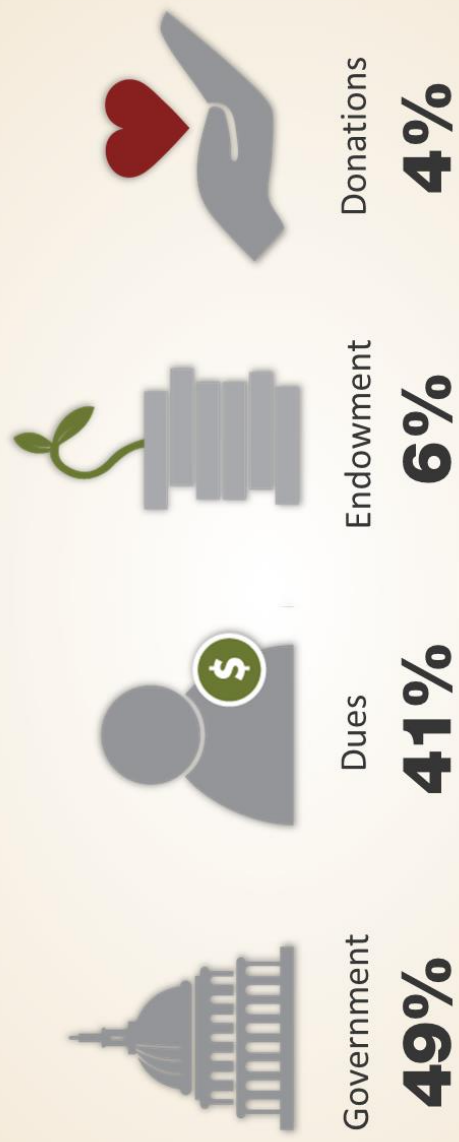
Survey Respondents (organizations) From Each Industry

	3	Higher Education		5	Adult Education		4	Pre-K-12 Ed		1	Healthcare		9	Economic Development		1	Charity
	5	Workforce Development		2	Transportation		3	Natural Resources		3	Human Services		8	Chamber of Commerce		8	Tourism



ENCOURAGING COLLABORATION TO
CREATE PROSPERITY IN OUR REGION

Average Funding Allocation by Source



ENCOURAGING COLLABORATION TO
CREATE PROSPERITY IN OUR REGION

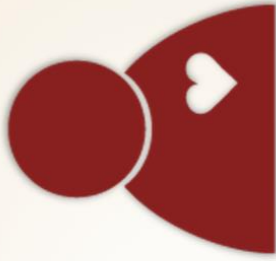
Average Employment by Classification



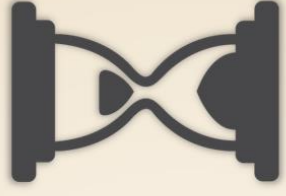
Part-Time
63%



Full-Time
27%



Volunteer
1%



Temporary
9%



ENCOURAGING COLLABORATION TO
CREATE PROSPERITY IN OUR REGION

Budget Trend

Increase



Decrease or Stay the Same



ENCOURAGING COLLABORATION TO
CREATE PROSPERITY IN OUR REGION

**Changes in Staffing
Due to Budget**

34%



**Changes in Services
Due to Budget**

44%



ENCOURAGING COLLABORATION TO
CREATE PROSPERITY IN OUR REGION

Flexibility to Increase Revenues

34% US



ENCOURAGING COLLABORATION TO
CREATE PROSPERITY IN OUR REGION

Barriers to Collaboration

24



Funding

2



Privacy Regulations

5



Governmental Regulations

11



Travel Expenses

5



Compatible Service Providers

8



Staffing

8



Personalities/History



ENCOURAGING COLLABORATION TO
CREATE PROSPERITY IN OUR REGION

The one thing that
would help
the most...



ENCOURAGING COLLABORATION TO
CREATE PROSPERITY IN OUR REGION

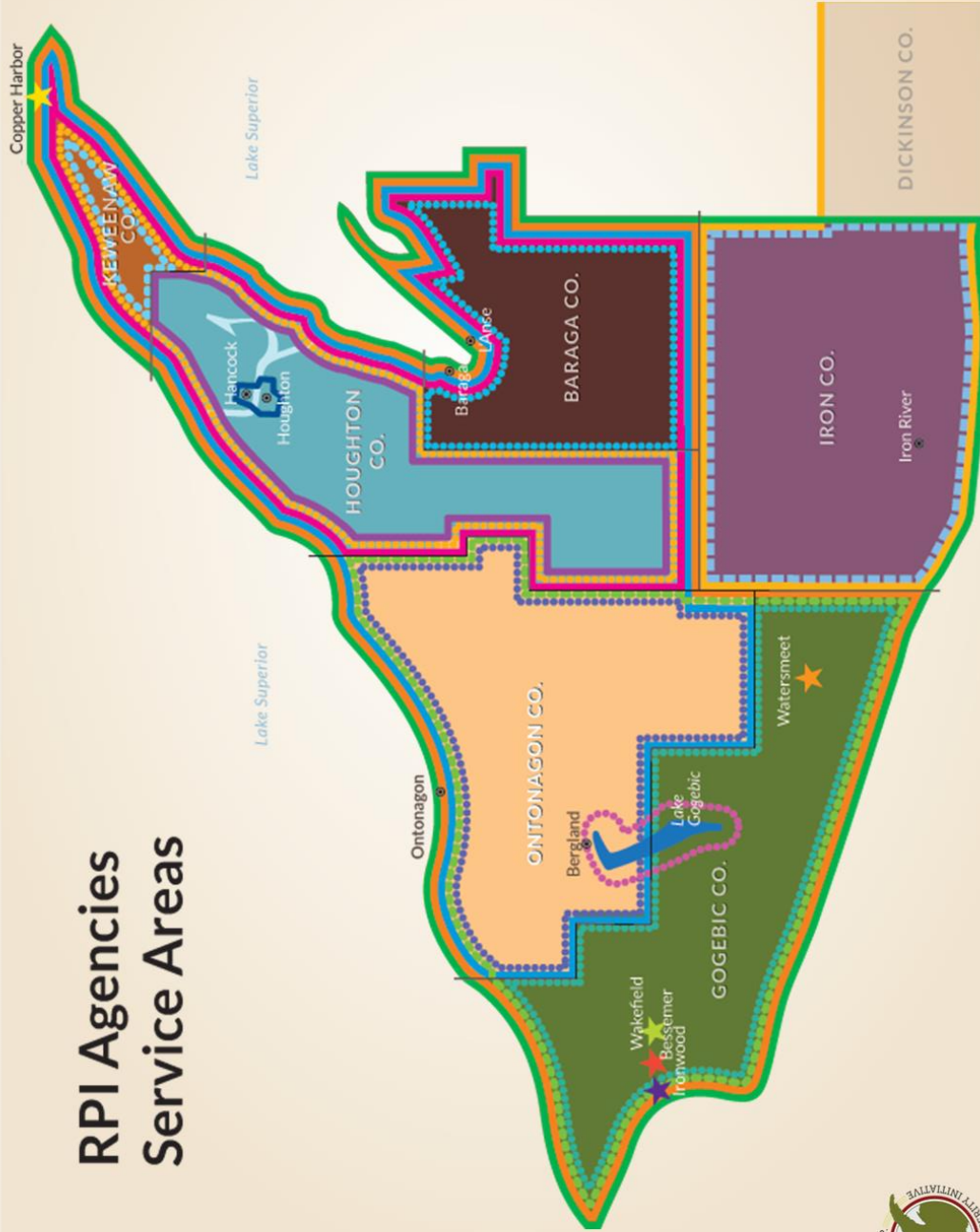


Increased Funding



ENCOURAGING COLLABORATION TO
CREATE PROSPERITY IN OUR REGION

RPI Agencies Service Areas



- AGENCY**
- Michigan Works!
 - Upper Peninsula Economic Development Alliance
 - Small Business Development Center
 - MSU Foundation
 - Northern Initiatives
 - Gogebic Community College
 - Michigan Technological University
 - Finlandia University
 - Superior Alliance for Independent Living
 - Upper Peninsula Commission for Area Progress
 - Western Upper Peninsula Planning & Development Region
 - Western Upper Peninsula Health Department
 - Goodwill Industries
 - Portage Health Foundation
 - Copper Country Mental Health
 - Keweenaw Economic Development Alliance
 - Baraga-Houghton-Keweenaw Child Development
 - Copper Country Intermediate School District
 - Baraga-Houghton-Keweenaw Community Action Agency
 - Dickinson-Iron Community Services Agency
 - Dickinson-Iron Intermediate School District
 - Gogebic-Ontonagon Community Action Agency
 - Gogebic-Ontonagon Intermediate School District
 - Keweenaw Convention & Visitors Bureau
 - Keweenaw Chamber of Commerce
 - Houghton/Keweenaw Conservation District
 - Gogebic County Road Commission
 - Gogebic County Transit Authority
 - Western Upper Peninsula Convention & Visitors Bureau
 - Ironwood Chamber of Commerce
 - Baraga County Convention & Visitors Bureau
 - Baraga County Economic Development Corporation
 - Baraga County Chamber of Commerce
 - Baraga County Road Commission
 - Ontonagon County Chamber of Commerce
 - Ontonagon County Transit (On-Train)
 - Porcupine Mountain Ontonagon Area Convention & Visitors Bureau
 - Ontonagon County Road Commission
 - Ontonagon County Economic Development Corporation
 - Keweenaw County Road Commission
 - Houghton County Road Commission
 - Iron County Road Commission
 - Iron County Chamber of Commerce
 - Copper Harbor Improvement Association
 - Watersmeet Chamber of Commerce
 - Houghton Public Transit
 - MTEC SmartZone
 - Hancock Public Transit
 - Wakefield Chamber of Commerce
 - Lake Gogebic Chamber of Commerce
 - Bessemer Chamber of Commerce
 - Ironwood Economic Development Corporation
 - Ironwood Community Development Department

