We’re launching new businesses and growing existing ones to create vibrant, thriving communities in Northern Michigan.
Northern Initiatives is a Community Development Financial Institution. We **deliver loans** and business services to small business owners who **create jobs**.

Enabling the people and communities of Northern Michigan and Northeastern Wisconsin to thrive.
Targeted Geographic Region
One in seven live in poverty.

Many small communities lack a strong, diversified economic base.

Population continues to decline.

Small communities positioned as competing destinations versus singular destination.

Exceptional natural assets coupled with rich cultural heritage.
What Launched Our Tourism Initiatives?
Les Cheneaux
Confirming Demand
Understanding Old Patterns & New Preferences

Market Shift
- Fading Traditions
- Data Lacking to Understand Emerging Markets
- Technology Advances

Increased Demand Experiential/Recreation Travel
- Maritime Anishinaabe
- World-Class Recreation
- Unique, Authentic Offerings

Research
- Pure Michigan
- Federal Data Sources
- State Park Data Sources
Three Initiatives

• The Great Waters
  Five Counties

• The Wilds of Michigan
  Two Counties

• The Tahquamenon Scenic Byway
  Subset of Great Waters.
  Cross over in leaders and stakeholders.
Overall Approach
Community Development

- Tourism
- New Residents
- Visitors
- Community
- Small business

NORTHERN INITIATIVES
Prosperity. That's Our Business
Building the Case for Regional

- Powerful competitive forces increase need for regional branding/marketing of rural Michigan destinations over next several years

- Eastern U.P. challenged by two critical barriers to usage:
  - Low awareness among target geographies
  - Greater distance from target geographies than other competitive regions

- Benefit of effective regional branding/marketing: greater marketing muscle

- Destinations that make up The Great Waters partnership have opportunity:
  - Create a stronger regional identity that can benefit all locales
Identifying Key Regional Assets

- Seney Wildlife Refuge
- Grand Sable Dunes
- Tahquamenon Falls
- Grand Island
- Les Cheneaux Islands
- Pictured Rocks
- Grand Hotel
- Mackinac Bridge
- The Soo Locks
- Kitch-It-Kipi Springs
- Mackinac Island
- Two Hearted River
Identifying and Engaging The Players

- National Forest Service
- Economic Development Organizations
- Tourism Councils & Chambers of Commerce
- Museums & Historical Societies
- Local Government
- Private Business Owners
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources
Connect with Critical Resource Partners

- Hiawatha National Forest Services
- Kellogg Foundation, USDA, State of Michigan
- Superior Watershed Partnership
- MEDC / Travel Michigan
- Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources
- Michigan Department of Transportation
- Northern Initiatives
- Eastern UP Regional Planning and Development

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Insights and Opportunities

**National Park Service**
- Build Business and Community Touches
- Leverage Access to Visitors
- Connect Visitors to Regional Offerings
- Market Research

**State of Michigan**
- Pure Michigan – Far Reaching, Yet out of Reach
- Untapped Resources (Marketing Opportunities)
- Market Research / Insights not being leveraged
- Connectivity / Resource Sharing Constraints

**Regional Planning and Development**
- Local Government Connection
- Recreation and Development Planning Resource
- Funding Connections
- Broad Yet Narrow Reach

**Federally Recognized Tribe**
- Multitude of Opportunities
- Strained Resources
- Understanding - Neither Wolf Nor Dog
- Funding Opportunities and Challenges

**Tourism Associations**
- Territorial Offerings
- Single focus – Heads in beds!
- New Emerging Markets, Old School Practices
- Challenging Planning tools, Practices, Promotion

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Linking Our Value Chain

State of Michigan
Regional Planning and Development Commission
Tourism Associations
United States Forest Service
Tourism Related Businesses
Federally Recognized Tribe
The Gaps

- Communications
- Assets
- Strategy
- Positioning
Communications

• Strived to understand each partner's core strengths and what they were willing to contribute.

• Helped to frame conversations.

• Why and How Approach

• Be mindful of all audiences. To gain momentum we had to both educate the visitors and the locals who would primarily connect with them.
Assets

We identified, detailed, and shared key assets.

- Contacts
- Images, videos
- Recreation offerings
- Promotional copy

Outlined opportunities to collaborate
Strategy

- Leveraged market research, branding experts, and partners to develop a **regional strategy** to bolster tourism.

- Conducted our own research, pairing it with other data sets to confirm our target market and profile our visitors.

- Worked with partner organizations to develop their own strategy plans - including ties to regional efforts.

- Shared sustainability models and worked to create one with our partners.
Convening Strategies

Windshield Assessment

• Force Field Analysis

Establish Shared Understanding of Success Benchmarks

• Defining Success
  Two years from now... How will the committee define success for the initiative?

• Capacity Building
  Two years from now... How will local businesses be connected to this regional tourism efforts?

• Visitor Experience
  Two years from now... How will the visitors experience be different?
Convening Strategies

• Focus on Why and How

• Consider Resource Roundtables —
  Small group discussions, “speed dating style,” designed to aid the planning and implementation processes.

• Placemaking Panels

• Semi Annual Information Sharing Session

• Joint Strategy Sessions
Positioning
The Outputs
ONE ROAD. MANY STORIES.
Points of Interest

- Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum
- Whitefish Point Bird Observatory
- Two Hearted River
- Tahquamenon Rivermouth Unit
- Tahquamenon Logging Museum
- Muskallonge State Park
- Luce County Historical Museum
- Hamilton Lake Natural Area
- Upper Tahquamenon Falls
- Lower Tahquamenon Falls
- Crisp Point Lighthouse
- Eckerman Pond

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Cultural Heritage

Maritime

The Tahquamenon region is enriched with powerful Lake Superior waters. The same waters that have claimed over 200 ships, including the Edmund Fitzgerald, still exist in the region today. Without a doubt, the water is a vital part of this Byway’s history and its future.

Logging

The Tahquamenon forests provided a reason for civilization. The logging industry and the lumberjack lifestyle are forever embedded within the forests that still stand today.

Native American

This land, rugged and raw, has provided, received praise, and been shown respect for its abundant gifts by our first people. Explore the Byway’s woods and waters through Anishinaabe Eyes and connect with Mashkikimikwe (Mother Earth)

NORTHERN INITIATIVES

Prosperity. That's Our Business
One Road. So Many Stories.

The name is simple enough. M-123. A state route through the forests of Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. A road so humble it doesn’t even get a real name. Just 63 miles of scenery. And yet . . . follow where M-123 leads and what will you find? A land of stories and legends, fables and history. Because this one road will take you places you’ve never been before, show you things you’ve never seen before, tell you tales you’ve never heard before. Follow the Tahquamenon River through the heart of the land Michigan’s first people claimed some thousand years ago. Explore the Superior shoreline and relive the history of those who dared to make their way on the world’s mightiest – and deadliest – lake. Step back in time to the age of lumbermen who presumed to take down the great forest . . . and remind yourself the forest still stands. Yes, it’s just one road. But follow this road and you will find something wonderful. The Tahquamenon Scenic Byway. One Road. So Many Stories.
www.explorem123.com
Themed Itineraries

3 Planned Itineraries are available online for download. These are to act as guides, allowing visitors to get headed in the right direction.
Themed Itinerary - Rack Cards

**Paddle Tahquamenon**

2 Day Trip Itinerary

Welcome to the liquid landscape of the Tahquamenon Country. For the latest information on outfitters, shuttles and services visit [EXPLOREM123.COM](http://EXPLOREM123.COM)

**Day 1: Paddle the Tahquamenon River**

**RISE AND SHINE**
Launch at dawn: Begin a six-mile, 3-hour float at the M-123 bridge over the Tahquamenon River just north of Newberry. Get an early start for the best chance at seeing wildlife like deer, otters and even the elusive moose!

Follow a gentle current as the river zigs and zags - taking you through deep forests, open meadows, and quiet backwaters. End your trip at McPhee’s Landing.

**GRAB LUNCH**
Hungry? Travel about an hour northwest of Tahquamenon on M-123, County Road 407 and Arrive at Pretty Lake. Paddle, swim in near silence for a few hours and take in the Silence of the Pretty Lake Quiet Area.

**Kayak the Shipwreck Coast**
5 miles north of Paradise, is home to some of the shipwrecks. Learn more at [EXPLOREM123.COM](http://EXPLOREM123.COM)

**Tour Tahquamenon**

1 Day Trip Itinerary

Welcome to the Tahquamenon Scenic Heritage Byway, a 63-mile journey through Michigan’s Eastern Upper Peninsula. The Tahquamenon region is a vast untamed land, but the wind in the ancient forest sighs a song of welcome to all who enter—let the Byway be your guide.

**EXPLORE MORE**
Continue on to Wildridge Riding Stables near Paradise, a one-hour journey via county roads and M-123.

Look for signs indicating the Tahquamenon Country on horseback!

**RISE AND SHINE**
Hop onto M-123 and begin your journey! Travel a half hour north of Newberry and take a left on Co Rd 407, this will bring you to the amazing Oswald’s Bear Ranch.

**Don’t Miss: Crisp Point Lighthouse**
Head north on M-123 to experience one of the remote lighthouses on the Great Lakes. As you travel along the coastline you will find primitive forest and rugged shoreline that expose the raw beauty of Michigan’s Upper Peninsula.
Located in an aged, pristine Michigan forest, Tahquamenon Falls is a gem of Upper Peninsula. The third mightiest waterfall east of the Mississippi, the Upper Falls captivates all of its onlookers. With a roughly 50 foot drop and spanning 200 feet across, the fall allows the dark, tannin-colored water to be seen.
App Promotion
Brand Utilization Guides
## Capacity Building Efforts

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<thead>
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<th>Federal Partners</th>
<th>Capacity Building for Nonprofits</th>
<th>Business Development Efforts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Improved data gathering system and date sharing. Assisted in design and implementation of seasonal visitor surveys.</td>
<td>• Organizational Level Strategic Planning</td>
<td>• Financial Literacy Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Repositioned to see themselves as community development partners.</td>
<td>• Social Media Training</td>
<td>• Social Media Training</td>
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<td>• Increasing Online Presence</td>
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<td>• Positioning for Assessment Increase</td>
<td>• Access to Capital</td>
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</table>
Where is Each Initiative Today?
Notable Shifts and Outcomes

For the Communities

• Tourism revenues stabilized -- and increased in some communities, *despite economic downturns and less-than-ideal weather conditions*

• Tourism jobs have been retained/created.

• Perception has shifted regarding “low-wage industry not worth focusing on.”

• Sizeable influx of development resources secured to launch and build out the effort.
Notable Shifts and Outcomes

For Partners

• Private/public partnerships unfolded, yielding favorable results.

• Organizations apply regional best practices to their local efforts – Great growth here!

• Talk at the State and National level recognized value in regional.

• Growing connection to public land holders’ role in community development.

• Linkages – State & Federal, regional & local – to firm owners strengthened.
Gauging The Bottom Line
Financial - New Business

- Affordable access to a large, forested land parcel in a region that enjoyed the perfect climate for mushing.
- Provided owners with a way to turn a hobby into a viable business.
- 2 year-round and 8 seasonal employees.

Nature’s Kennel
Financial - Old Property, New Business

- Rising cost of living, enticed business owners to relocate from Seattle, Washington

- Owners saw high potential to start a business in an unused, beautiful old building.

- Created three new jobs.
Financial Capital

Emerging Visitor Trends Shape Strategy

Since 2010, Northern Initiatives has worked with local travel and tourism organizations and area businesses and attractions to field seasonal surveys of visitors to the Upper Peninsula (UP). Visitor surveys were fielded in two UP regions: the Great Waters area, covering the eastern UP and the Wilds of Michigan area, incorporating Gogebic and Ontonagon Counties. Results are leveraged to drive ongoing regional tourism development efforts.
Natural Capital

- Increased volunteer restoration and maintenance projects
- Building community awareness of value of Natural Resource Based Economy.
- State Byway Designation leads to $300K+ in development resources for region

The Tahquamenon Scenic Byway

What happens when nature, culture, and community connect? Communities Prosper

Join us. Explore opportunities. Leverage expert resources.

Wednesday, June 11, 2014 - Seminar 10:00 – 3:00 pm
Comfort Inn  Newberry, Michigan
Built Capital

- New business starts
  Great Lakes Coffee Co.

- Exhibit expansion
  Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum

- Learning Lodge Construction
  Tahquamenon Logging Museum
  Paradise MI

- New Signage

- Reconstructed Boardwalk
  Tahquamenon Logging Museum
Northern Initiatives has trained dozens of small business owners and local leaders throughout the region on:

- Financial Literacy
- Marketing and Promotion
- Social Media
- Regional Branding
- Strategic Planning
- Identification/document of Natural and Cultural Assets
New Partnerships have emerging:

- Natures Kennel, a sled dog tour company, now offers rides on premises at Tahquamenon State Park.
- Joint outdoor advertising – between nonprofits and private for provide business.
- Pictured Rocks Boat Cruises offers its services at no charge to tourism groups for fund raising efforts.

Relationships have been strengthened.

MEDC/Travel Michigan
Tourism Association Boards
Tribal Partners
Political Capital

Regional Tourism Efforts Gaining Credibility

Evidenced by high level of engagement and data sharing with:
- Michigan Economic Development Corporation/Travel Michigan
- National Forest Service
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources
- National Park Service

Referenced in:
- The Future of Michigan’s Parks and Outdoor Recreation: A Report to Governor Rick Snyder authored by The Michigan State Parks and Outdoor Recreation Blue Ribbon Panel
- United States Forest Service Best Practice Regional Meetings
Local Control and Ownership

- Owning role in community development
- Building community partnerships
- Connect Visitors to Regional Offerings
- Collaborating with broader base
- Bridging planning and promotion
- Greater collaboration
- Sharing data/resources
- Owning regional offerings
- Inclusive approach.
- State call out of assets
- Greater levels of engagement
- Increased tools adoption
- Greater investments
- Elevated presence with Travel Michigan
- Stronger connections to public and private partnership
- Elevated presence with Travel Michigan
- Stronger connections to public and private partnership
- Elevated presence with Travel Michigan

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Three Key Insights
Upward Mobility

How these efforts improve livelihoods of low-income people, firms and places.

- **Elevates underutilized assets** – Small communities find collective influence with State, connections foster actionable collaboration.

- **Regional branding has encouraged linkages and cross collaboration**, resulting in expanded offerings, extended seasons, new markets, and improved market share.

- That’s prosperity for all, including— and perhaps most importantly – low-Income people and places.