Marquette County Economic Exchange
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TALENT ISSUE BRIEF

LAKE SUPERIOR COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

Talent fuels growth, innovation, and community resilience. Marquette County's economy is only as strong as the people who power it, yet the region faces pressing challenges: a rising unemployment rate (7.2% as of March 2025), youth unemployment exceeding 11%, and persistent difficulties retaining graduates from Northern Michigan University (NMU). At the same time, many employers report difficulty filling key roles, from healthcare to skilled trades to engineering.

These trends underscore a dual challenge: aligning the skills of the local workforce with evolving industry needs while also making Marquette County a place where talented people choose to stay, work, and build their lives. Like many rural regions, the county contends with limited professional opportunities, competition for high-skill roles, and a service-heavy job base. Yet Marquette also has distinct advantages: a strong university anchor, a tradition of entrepreneurship, and a high quality of life that—if paired with sufficient housing, childcare, and career opportunities—could help it retain and attract the next generation of workers.

The question is not whether Marquette County has talent, but how the community can better develop, connect, and retain that talent in ways that drive long-term prosperity.

Labor Force & Unemployment

- **Civilian Labor Force:** 33,951 individuals (April 2025, not seasonally adjusted) (FRED)
- **Unemployment Rate Trends:** 6.30% Current (October 2025) (Lower than the previous month rate of 6.40; 5.70% in October 2024) (Fed Reserve Bank of St. Louis)
- **Employment Levels:** 31,790 employed residents (Feb. 2025), up from ~29,600 in late 2022 (YCharts)

Summary Table

Metric/Area	Value/Insights
Civilian Labor Force	33,951 (April 2025)
Unemployment Rate	6.30% (Current)
Employed Residents	31,790 (Feb. 2025)
Key Employment Sectors	Healthcare, Retail, Education, Government and Natural Resources
Common Occupations	Admin support, Sales, Food service
Employer Mix	68% private; 7–8% nonprofit, state, local
Education & Jobs	High School Diploma 28%, Bachelors Degree 24%, Graduate Degree and Higher 11%
Wages	Avg. wage ~$52K; per-capita income ~$50,900
Market Sentiment	Limited professional jobs; strong competition even for engineering roles; service jobs dominate

Potential Discussion Questions

These guiding questions are designed to spark lively and collaborative discussions in each breakout session.

1. How can employers, educators, and governments partner to create stronger career pathways (apprenticeships, internships, job-matching)?
2. What investments in housing, childcare, and quality of life are most urgent to attract and retain workers?
3. Which sectors (healthcare, renewable energy, tech, manufacturing) offer the most immediate opportunities for collaborative growth—and how can we scale them?

Want to Learn More?

- Bureau of Labor Statistics & FRED: Employment Data – Marquette County
- Lake Superior Community Partnership (LSCP): Workforce Reports
- Jobs & Talent: Lake Superior Community Partnership
- DataUSA: Marquette County Industry & Occupation Dashboards
- UP Labor Study 2023-05-26_UP-Labor-Market-Report-FINAL.pdf
- NMU: Career Services & regional talent pipeline reports
- NMU Teacher Pipeline NMU Participates in Teacher Pipeline | Northern Today
- NMU Center for Rural Health Launches U.P. Healthcare Provider Talent Survey | Northern Today
- NMU Home | Career Services