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Marquette County Economic Development Exchange

Friday, October 9, 2026 | NMU Jacobetti Complex

Agenda

8:00 – 8:30 AM	**Registration & Networking**
8:30 – 8:45 AM	**Welcome**
8:45 – 9:30 AM	**Finding Common Ground: Engaging Communities on Complex Issues** *Deb Muchmore, Deb Muchmore Consulting* Community projects can become challenging when there are different perspectives and concerns. This session will look at how communities can navigate difficult conversations, build trust, and engage residents early when working through complex projects.
9:30 – 9:45 AM	**Networking Break**
9:45 – 10:30 AM	**Building Strong Teams in Our Rural Communities** Moderator: *Jenna Smith, Manpower* *Debb Brunell, Upper Peninsula Michigan Works!* *Austin Morris, KMI Space* *Nathan Clisch, Integrated Designs, Inc* Finding employees is one challenge. Keeping them is another. This panel will focus on what employers are doing to build strong teams, improve workplace culture, and attract and retain talent in our rural communities.
10:30 – 11:15 AM	**Housing the Workforce: Creative Solutions for Employers** Moderator: *Jennifer Tucker* *John Madigan, Pictured Rocks Cruises* *Jason Meneguzzo, Louie's Fresh Markets* *Nicki Basch, Great Lakes Housing Services* Housing continues to affect the ability of employers to attract and retain workers. This session will look at creative ways employers and community partners are addressing housing needs and give attendees an opportunity to think about solutions that could work in their own communities.

11:15 – 12:00 PM **Lunch – Marquette County Data Update Presentation**
Grace Feed, Marquette County Planning Division

12:00 –12:45 PM **Legislative Advocacy**
Moderator: *Patricia Davis, Kendricks Bordeau, P.C.*
Rep. Karl Bohnak, Michigan State House of Representatives 109th District
Sen. Ed McBroom, Michigan State Senate 38th District
Jay Gage, Upper Peninsula Regional Manager for U.S. Senator Elissa Slotkin
Jodi Ouellette, District Representative for U.S. Representative Jack Bergman, 1st District

Hear directly from legislative leaders about current issues and priorities affecting Marquette County and the Upper Peninsula. This session will provide updates and discussions around issues impacting our businesses, communities, and regional economy.

12:45 – 1:00 PM **Networking Break**

1:00 – 2:15 PM **Beyond the Buzzword: Data Centers Explained for Local Leaders**
Moderator: Natalie Chmiko, Lake Superior Community Partnership

Dakota Baker, Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance
Madeleine Krol, Graham Sustainability Institute
Ron Akers, Charter Township of Van Buren

What does data center development actually mean for a community? This session will help local leaders better understand data centers, what goes into these projects, and what communities should consider when planning for potential development.

2:15 – 2:30 PM **Closing & Regional Collaboration**

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