

News Release

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Networks Northwest Awarded Michigan Economic Development Corporation “Innovative Fund” Grant

NORTHWEST LOWER, MI – A \$400,000 Innovative Fund Grant from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) will support the creation of a shared economic development strategy for the 10 counties of Northwest Lower Michigan to improve regional economic competitiveness. The economic development strategy will concentrate on the 31 "growth & investment areas" in the region. Those areas are identified by having the core infrastructure of water, sewer, broadband, staff, and plans for growth.

After a competitive statewide process, the Innovative Fund Grant was awarded to Networks Northwest, which will be collaborating with the region’s economic development organizations to create the shared economic development strategy. Those organizations are the Alliance for Economic Success, Manistee Area Chamber of Commerce, Northern Lakes Economic Alliance, and Traverse Connect.

The shared economic development strategy will include the creation of community marketing plans; “opportunity zone” marketing plans; developing a regional talent development, attraction, and retention strategy; and developing a regional workforce housing strategy. According to the MEDC, this strategy stands out as a unified, comprehensive approach to economic development in Michigan.

“By taking an innovative and holistic approach to its economic development strategy, Networks Northwest is ensuring the region will be a place where businesses can grow, talent wants to live and work, and visitors from around the world will want to visit and explore, for generations to come,” said Jeff Mason, CEO of the MEDC.

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A key component of the project is the ability to take the learnings from the grant to potentially scale the project to support similar outcomes in other rural regions in the state.

“Economic development in rural areas cannot and should not be done in a vacuum. We must seek out collaborative efforts to improve the conditions for talent, business, and community development in the region and across the state. Additionally, it is important to listen to the local decision makers to determine where and how to grow,” said Matt McCauley, CEO of Networks Northwest.

Work on the shared economic development strategy will be done over the next 18 months.

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NOTE to Media: Images are oftentimes available upon request by e-mailing Dan Boss at dan.boss@networksnorthwest.org and stating preferences for resolution (300 dpi?), file format (.tif? .jpg?) and file size (1MB or less?). Or, phone (231) 929-5047. Check our online Media Room at: networksnorthwest.org/media

Founded in 1974, Networks Northwest facilitates and manages various programs and services for the 10 county region. These programs include Northwest Michigan Works, Small Business Development Center, Procurement Technical Assistance Center, various business services, and many different regional planning initiatives in response to our communities’ requests and needs. You will see the broad spectrum of workforce, business and community services Networks Northwest offers if you visit our web site, networksnorthwest.org

Networks Northwest's member counties are: Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee, and Wexford.