



## 2024 Annual Report

I would like to sincerely thank all our members, sponsors and supporters. Your commitment to economic development has given Develop Iosco the ability to accomplish more than we ever thought possible. In 2025 we will continue to establish Iosco County as an economic leader in Northern Michigan and continue to build on the relationships that we have created throughout the State of Michigan to bring more economic success to Iosco County.

*Christopher Martin, Executive Director*

### Our Vision

By facilitating efforts that focus on regional assets, quality of life and education opportunities, Iosco County will experience economic growth, increased employment, and create thriving communities.

### Our Mission

To promote economic development in Iosco County, Michigan

### Facilitating Economic Development

DI's vision is to serve as a convener and facilitator for economic development activities within Iosco County related to business development. The organization accomplishes this goal in several ways. For example, in 2023 DI had the County's leader for recycling efforts be the keynote speaker at its fall community meeting. In addition, DI co-hosted a government officials meeting with the County that spring to share pertinent information with leaders about the opportunities to expand recycling services across the county. Subsequently, in 2024, voters approved a millage that created three recycling centers in the south and east parts of the county. DI is pleased to bring important economic development related topics to the forefront of business, community leaders and residents' discussions.

### Economic Development Capacity Building

Over the course of 2024, DI assisted 17 members to secure more than \$2 million dollars in grants by accessing grant writing services funded by the State of Michigan's Office of Rural Prosperity's Rural Readiness grant. This \$50,000 grant made it possible for DI to educate nearly 100 people from more than 60 different organizations. We will continue offering grant writing assistance to members until the grant ends in May 2025. Members with projects are highly encouraged to reach out for project assistance.

“Develop Iosco has done an exceptional job utilizing Rural Readiness Grant dollars to drive meaningful progress. Their efforts have not only brought significant new investment to the county but have also demonstrated a thoughtful and strategic approach to fostering long-term growth and opportunity.”

- Henry Wolf, Director of Policy and Grant Programs, Office of Rural Prosperity, Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity

## Iosco County

Located in the heart of Lake Huron’s “Sunrise Side,” Iosco is made up of the communities of Au Sable, East Tawas, Hale, Oscoda, Tawas City, and Whittemore.

Iosco County is primarily rural, offering small-town living balanced with 21st century amenities.

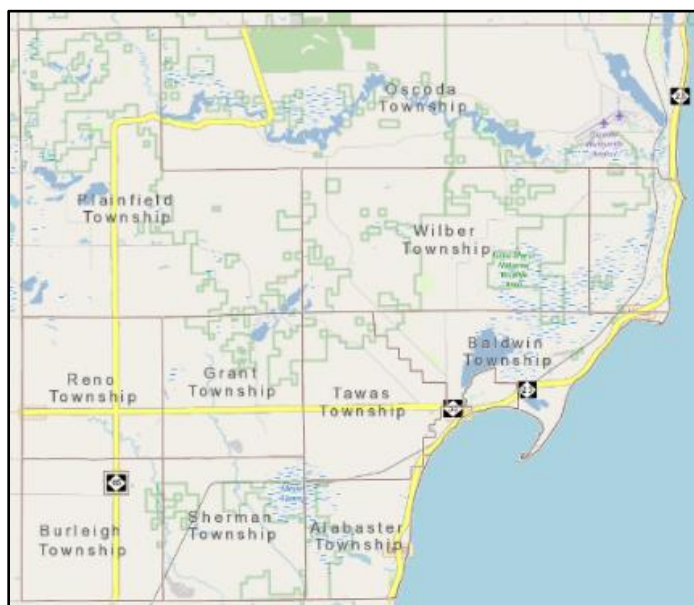
549 square miles

## Demographic Profile

The population in Iosco County, Michigan was 25,319 per American Community Survey data for 2018-2022.

The region has a civilian labor force of 10,091 with a participation rate of 46.8%. Of individuals 25 to 64 in Iosco County, 17.2% have a bachelor’s degree or higher which compares with 35.8% in the nation.

The median household income in Iosco County is \$46,224 and the median house value is \$118,400.



## Cost of Living Index

The Cost of Living Index estimates the relative price levels for consumer goods and services. When applied to wages and salaries, the result is a measure of relative purchasing power. The cost of living is 10.9% lower in Iosco County than the U.S. average.

### Cost of Living Information

	Annual Average Salary	Cost of Living Index (Base US)	US Purchasing Power
Iosco County	\$56,236	89.1	\$63,146
Michigan	\$65,607	98.5	\$66,614
USA	\$72,405	100.0	\$72,405

Source: JobsEQ®  
 Data as of 2024Q2  
 Cost of Living per COLI, data as of 2024Q3, imputed by Chmura where necessary.

## Wage Trends

The average worker in Iosco County earned annual wages of \$56,236 as of 2024Q2. Average annual wages per worker increased 1.7% in the region over the preceding four quarters. For comparison purposes, annual average wages were \$72,405 in the nation as of 2024Q2.

Annual average wages per worker data are derived from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and imputed where necessary. Data are updated through 2024Q1 with preliminary estimates updated to 2024Q2.

## Outgoing President's Message



Time has flown by since May of 2021 when I joined the DI board. People often ask if they can make a difference in their community, and I say yes you can - find a mission you are passionate about and give your time, talent, and treasure. During the past three years as President, I had the honor of working with other DI board members, community leaders, business owners and residents to ensure economic development was an urgent topic of conversation across the county. I look forward to supporting Rich Castle in his role as President and continuing to volunteer on the DI board of directors to support the mission of Develop Iosco to improve the quality of life for those of us who call Iosco County home, who lead businesses and government, and who visit our beautiful surroundings. - *Gloria Brooks*

## Incoming President's Message

In 2020, I was asked to become a board member with Develop Iosco at a time when the organization was not very active and did not appear to have a promising future. My goal for becoming a board member at that time was to help re-establish the organization and help Iosco County become a desirable place to live, work, and relax.

The success and the impact that Develop Iosco has made within Iosco County and northeast Michigan since 2020 has been incredible. As the incoming President for Develop Iosco, my goal for 2025 is to continue to reinforce the continued need for an economic development organization that can serve as a leader and a partner to help build on our quality of life, while continuing to promote the County to prospective homeowners, businessowners, and visitors.

Economic development is a team effort and I want to thank our membership and supporters for your continued support of our mission and vision. Without you and your support, our organization would not be what it is today! I look forward to serving as President and working with you in 2025 to make Iosco County a preferred destination in northern Michigan. – *Rich Castle*



## 2025 Develop Iosco Board of Directors

### Officers

Rich Castle, President  
Fran Ommani, Vice President  
Scott Peters, Treasurer  
Chris Young, Communications  
Officer/Secretary

### Directors

Gloria Brooks  
James Cain  
Samantha Duvall  
Nancy Howse  
Pam O'Laughlin

"Every community in Iosco County is diverse and has its own unique attributes and challenges. I believe that Develop Iosco is a centralized opportunity to look at both and work towards 'developing' a common path to prosperity. It's a matter of working together!"

- *Nancy Howse, newest DI board member  
& Community Development Director  
for Oscoda Township*

# FY 2024 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## Collaboration

DI became a partner of the Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance, with support from both the Tawas Area and Oscoda-AuSable Chambers of Commerce, to represent economic development issues impacting Iosco County. DI's participation also advances visibility and solutions for Northeast Michigan at the state level.



The Michigan Office of Rural Prosperity invited DI's executive director, Chris Martin, to participate in a panel presentation for the Michigan Rural Prosperity Summit in May 2024 to share the outcomes of the grant writing assistance program for Iosco County units of government and nonprofit organizations. This program is now considered a statewide best practice model for economic development.

DI attended three statewide childcare events in Lansing hosted by Michigan's Early Childhood Investment Corporation and Pulse of the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research.



Alpena Community College provided DI access to office and meeting space at the Oscoda Campus to promote economic development and increase visibility of the organization on campus.

## Membership

DI membership increased by 93% in 2024, with 29 new members and one new sponsor generating \$11,000 in additional revenue.

DI members had a 81% renewal rate from 2023 to 2024 generating more than \$38,000 in revenue to support DI's economic development initiatives.

"Our Township has benefited and continues to benefit from being a member of Develop Iosco. As a member, we have taken advantage of the grant writing skills of Manuela Kress. The ability of our Township to use this grant writing expertise was instrumental in our receiving the Community Center Grant for \$750,000 from the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity.

This grant will not only create a public space that will benefit future generations of Iosco County but will also hire local contractors and craftsmen to boost our local economy. Without this grant, our Township would be unable to afford to undertake the Trailhead Marketplace. As a member of Develop Iosco it is a winning combination if we can all work together and help each other to achieve the results that keep Iosco County moving forward."

- Eric Strayer, Superintendent, AuSable Township

## Community Impact

- Completed four quarterly community meetings providing key content and significant networking opportunities for business owners and community leaders
- Held second Annual Meeting Breakfast at Tawas Bay Beach Resort
- Awarded DI's 2<sup>nd</sup> Volunteer of the Year award to Tony Ommani

	1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter	2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter	3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter	4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter
<b>Host</b>	Grant Township	IRESA	AuSable Township	Tawas City
<b>Location</b>	Sand Lake Community Center	IRESA, Tawas City	Oscoda	Tawas Bay Beach Resort
<b>Local Speaker</b>	Joe Carr	Jamie Cain	Eric Strayer	Annge Horning
<b>Keynote Speaker</b>	Vicki Seltz Barnes Denise Cline	Jamie Cain, Pam O'Loughlin, Dr. Marvin Pichla	Lindsey Clark	Warren Call & Haley Bennet
<b>Topic</b>	MEDC Small Business Topics, M-55 Coast to Coast Byway	Workforce Development Panel	Redevelopment Ready Communities	Economic Development Advocacy

## Funding

- \$100,000 from the Consumers Energy Foundation for the development of a child care management services organization (MSO)
- \$2,500 from the Consumers Energy Foundation for community meetings & networking events
- \$25,000 from Pulse to support the creation of the child care MSO
- \$1,000 from the DTE Foundation for community meetings & networking events
- \$500 from TCA Insurance for the annual breakfast meeting

## Media

- Extensive coverage in articles in the Iosco County News Herald/Oscoda Press
- Monthly radio interviews with DI Executive Director on WKJC
- Expanded social media connections through Facebook and LinkedIn
  - 85% increase in followers on DI Facebook page
  - 115% increase in followers on DI LinkedIn page
  - 9,291 site visitors in last 12 months
  - 3,994 social media views in last 30 days
- Considerably more TV coverage from WBKB in Alpena
- Continued to develop valuable website content [www.develop-iosco.org](http://www.develop-iosco.org)



# FY 2024 INITIATIVES

## Child Care

DI completed the Quad County Child Care Coalition project, funded by Michigan's Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement & Potential (MI-LEAP)'s Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC) in August 2024. The Coalition followed up its Child Care Innovation Report (January 2024) with a feasibility study on creating a separate 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization to provide back-office services to child care business owners.

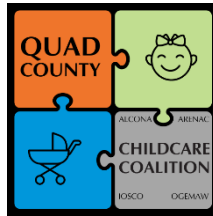
The idea was embraced by other parts of the state and that new entity, the Child Care Back Office (CCBO), was launched in October 2024 and is poised to serve child care business owners across Michigan. The Consumers Energy Foundation and Pulse, from the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, provided \$100,000 and \$25,000 in funding respectively to DI to fund the launch. Additional information can be found at [www.childcarebackoffice.org](http://www.childcarebackoffice.org). DI was a founding member of CCBO and will continue to participate in supporting child care business owners and family's child care needs in Iosco County.



We invite employers to come and learn about the QCCC's Childcare Innovation Report recommendations so they can define action steps to address the recruitment and retention of qualified employees for their business. Up to 2 decision maker representatives per business.

**EMPLOYER CEO ROUNDTABLE**  
THURSDAY 02.29.24 5:30 - 7:30 PM

BOATHOUSE BEER CO. & BOOZERY  
498 W. Lake Street, Tawas City MI 49783  
Scan the QR code to learn more and RSVP (by Feb. 22 please)  
[www.develop-iosco.org/child-care-coalition](http://www.develop-iosco.org/child-care-coalition)



QUAD COUNTY CHILD CARE COALITION  
Childcare Cost Sharing INFO SESSIONS

MI Tri-Share CHILD CARE  
DuoShare

## Grant Writing

- Hired Dr. Manuela Kress of Mid-Michigan Grant Writers & Consultants LLC
- Dr. Kress produced a YouTube grant writing tutorial video
- Held 5 Grant Writing Workshops

### Grant Writing Workshop Results

Total of 96 participants in five workshops to include:

- 10 individuals, 10 businesses
- 50 non-profit representatives from 27 different non-profit organizations
- 26 Government representatives from 13 separate entities (Schools, Public Safety, and other Government Agencies)

### Grant Assistance provided:

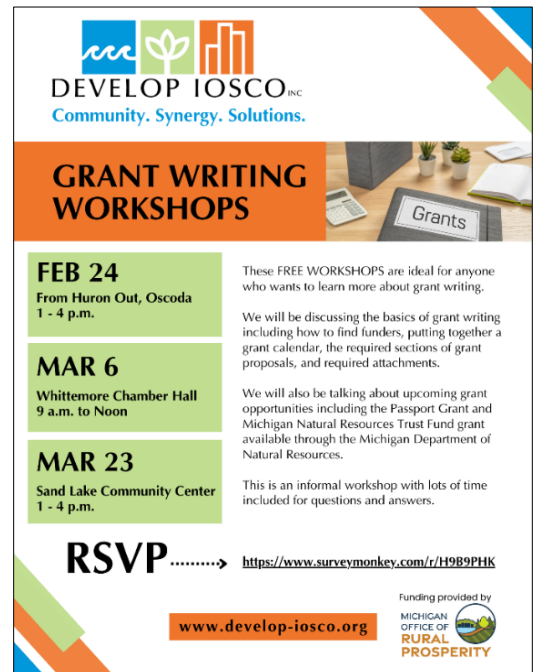
- 17 organizations totaling 290 hours of assistance

### Grants applied for to date:

- 41 grants submitted totaling \$7,223,500

### Grants awarded to date:

- 21 grant awards totaling \$2,266,000



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Community. Synergy. Solutions.

**GRANT WRITING WORKSHOPS**

**FEB 24**  
From Huron Out, Oscoda  
1 - 4 p.m.

**MAR 6**  
Whitemore Chamber Hall  
9 a.m. to Noon

**MAR 23**  
Sand Lake Community Center  
1 - 4 p.m.

These FREE WORKSHOPS are ideal for anyone who wants to learn more about grant writing. We will be discussing the basics of grant writing including how to find funders, putting together a grant calendar, the required sections of grant proposals, and required attachments. We will also be talking about upcoming grant opportunities including the Passport Grant and Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant available through the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. This is an informal workshop with lots of time included for questions and answers.

**RSVP** .....→ <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/H989PHK>

[www.develop-iosco.org](http://www.develop-iosco.org)

Funding provided by MICHIGAN OFFICE OF RURAL PROSPERITY

## Tourism and Recreation

In 2024, the Develop Iosco Tourism & Recreation Committee was developed to collaborate and implement the promotion and marketing of Iosco County to enhance our tourism and recreation industry.

Key stakeholders for the 2024 committee were the Tawas Area Chamber, Tawas Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB), Oscoda AuSable Chamber of Commerce, Oscoda Area CVB, Tawas Wellness Warriors, Michigan Works! Region 7B, MyMichiganBeach.com, Consumers Energy and the Friends of the Tawas Point Lighthouse.

Key accomplishments in 2024 include: Leading the East Tawas Cruise Ship Initiative, building a relationship with the Northeast Michigan Council of Governments (NEMCOG) to support regional tourism and their marketing campaign, gaining a seat on the US23 Sunrise Coastal Byway Management Council and marketing committee, working with NEMCOG to bring back the Discovery Tour and Legislative Tour as part of the US23 Sunrise Coastal Byway, working with NEMCOG on the potential development of a dark sky park in Iosco County including a potential location on the AuSable River and Lake Huron, and working with the Oscoda Buzz Hub to develop the Iosco Buzz Hub and connect to the NEMCOG regional event website.



*Come Relax on*  
**TAWAS BAY**  
A Future Great Lakes Cruise Destination

**Natural Shoreline and Forest**

- Au Sable River Kayak Tour
- Lumberman's Monument & Iargo Springs Preserve
- Sandy Beaches

**Natural Adventure Excursions**

**Quaint Local Shopping & Dining**

- Local Cafés & Chocolatier
- Retail Shopping and Dining
- Beach Picnics and Parks

**Walkable Downtown**

**Historic Sites**

- Tawas Point State Park
- Fishing and Birding
- Private Tours of the Historic Lighthouse

**Lighthouse Excursion**

Rich Castle  
231-735-3619  
info@develop-iosco.org

DEVELOP IOSCO™

PO Box 9 East Tawas, MI 48730  
develop-iosco.org



## Lower AuSable Prosperity Group

DI participated in all four of the Lower AuSable Prosperity Group meetings in 2024, led by Iosco County, and has been an integral part of the development of the Prosperity Plan. This plan will help guide the community through any of the three possible scenarios for the future of the dams. We are eagerly awaiting to hear the decision that will be made by Consumers Energy in the first quarter of 2025 on the future of the dams in Iosco County.

“We greatly appreciate Consumers Energy’s approach of involving the community on such a high level to make such an impactful decision. Preparing our community through planning, such as the work done by the Lower AuSable Prosperity Group, will ensure that no matter what happens we have a great plan for economic success in Iosco County.” – *Chris Martin, DI Executive Director*



**DEVELOP IOSCO** INC

## **MEMBERS**

### **BUSINESS & CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS**

Alpena Community College

Black Bear Coffee

Child Care Back Office (CCBO)

Consumers Energy

DTE Foundation

FISH Inc. - Tawas

Gilbert Drugs

G. Brooks & Associates LLC

Huron Housing Hope

Huron Shores Artisan Hall

Iosco County Coats for Kids

Iosco County Commission on Aging

Iosco Exploration Trail

Northern MI Children's Assessment Center

Northeast Michigan Council of Governments (NEMCOG)

Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency (NEMCSA)

O'Connors

Oscoda-AuSable Chamber of Commerce

Pam Loveless Enterprises Inc.

Perceptions Agency

PKL Cares

Sunrise Side Animal Rescue

Tawas Area Chamber of Commerce

Tawas Bay Ice Arena

Tawas Bay Insurance

Tawas Bay Players

Tawas Wellness Warriors

TCA Insurance

Whittemore Chamber of Commerce

Witz End/WE Players Inc.

### **INDIVIDUALS**

Blinda Baker

Michelle Bacarella

Vicki Seltz Barnes

David & Amanda Bergeron

Wendy Hoin

Alycia Mooney

Michael Timreck





DEVELOP IOSCO<sup>INC</sup>

## MEMBERS

### GOVERNMENT ENTITIES

Alabaster Township  
AuSable Township  
Baldwin Township  
Burleigh Township  
City of East Tawas  
City of Tawas City  
City of Whittemore

Grant Township  
Iosco County  
Plainfield Township  
Reno Township  
Tawas Township  
Wilber Township

Governmental Entities  
contributed \$1/per resident  
from their respective areas

## PREMIER EVENT SPONSORS

**ALPENA**  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**Consumers Energy**  
Count on Us<sup>®</sup>

**DTE**

 **TCA**  
INSURANCE

“Over the past two years, Iosco County has formed a valuable relationship with Develop Iosco. This relationship has been a partnership in some aspects and through a service agreement in others. In both scenarios, the citizens within our county have received value added benefits through the efforts undertaken by Develop Iosco either working with the County or independently on its own. We look forward to continuing collaboration with Develop Iosco on current initiatives and others as they arise. Develop Iosco has been instrumental in increasing capacity in areas that would not have received the time or effort needed had Develop Iosco not taken the lead.”

- Jamie Carruthers Soboleski, Iosco County Controller/Finance Director



DEVELOP IOSCO INC

## Economic Development VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR 2024

Presented to Tony Ommani for the  
advancement of economic  
development and quality of life  
in Iosco County.

In 2023, DI created and presented the inaugural *Blinda Baker Economic Development Volunteer of the Year Award* to Blinda in recognition of her many years of service to DI as well as other organizations in Iosco County.



Above: Blinda Baker presenting Tony Ommani with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Blinda Baker Economic Development Volunteer of the Year award.

Left: Oscoda Area Schools Superintendent Scott Moore nominated Tony for the award.

### How can you partner with DI to advance economic development in Iosco County?

- Join our membership
- Attend our quarterly meetings
- Make a donation (DI is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit)
- Share DI news with your network
- Become a dues member
- Follow, comment and share our social media posts on Facebook & LinkedIn



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