

# 2025



## ANNUAL REPORT

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

PO Box 9  
East Tawas MI 48730

Community. Synergy. Solutions.

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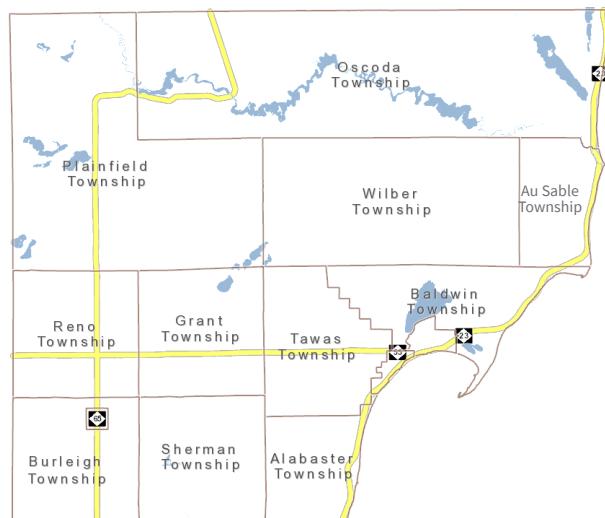


## Our Vision

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



# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

PRESIDENT, BOARD OF DIRECTORS, RICH CASTLE



Going into 2025, I was not expecting much if any adversity as the new incoming President. In fact, I just expected to build upon the significant success of my predecessor, Gloria Brooks. However, with the resignation of our executive director in May, that led to a significant decision point for the future of Develop Iosco and one that would set the tone for my tenure as President.

The Develop Iosco Board of Director's quickly announced Chris Young as interim executive director and developed a sub-committee to search for our next executive director. Instead of months of inactivity, the team pushed forward with our current initiatives and took a step back and re-organized ourselves from an administrative standpoint.

The sub-committee found that Develop Iosco and Iosco County are very capable of attracting talent and was successful in hiring an executive director that could take Develop Iosco into the future and expand significantly on our already successful platform. What the Develop Iosco Board of Director's and Chris Young did during the summer of 2025 showcases the agility and expertise this board possesses to ensure the overall success of this organization.

I want to thank the Board of Director's, Chris Young, Dr. Manuela Kress, former executive director Christopher Martin, and new executive director Jennifer Riggs for making 2025 a huge success regardless of the adversity.

Lastly, I want to thank our membership and our sponsors. Your support of Develop Iosco is key to ensuring our ability to successfully implement our mission: To promote economic development in Iosco County, Michigan. Thank you!

# MEET THE DI BOARD

## OFFICERS



**RICH CASTLE**  
President

Community Affairs Manager -  
Northeast Michigan  
Consumers Energy  
[president@develop-iosco.org](mailto:president@develop-iosco.org)



**FRANCES OMMANI**  
Vice President

Strategy & Development Director  
NEMCSA



**SCOTT PETERS**  
Treasurer

Senior Vice President  
Market Manager (MI)  
Grand Ridge National Bank



**CHRIS YOUNG**  
Communications Officer

Owner, Perceptions Agency  
[contact@develop-iosco.org](mailto:contact@develop-iosco.org)

# DIRECTORS



**GLORIA BROOKS**

Owner, G. Brooks & Associates LLC  
& President, Child Care Back Office



**JAMIE CAIN**

Superintendent  
Iosco RESA



**SARAH COFFIN**

Commercial Lender  
Huron Community Bank  
*Starts in 2026*



**STEPHANIE DILLON**

Community Health Supervisor  
MyMichigan Medical Center  
*Starts in 2026*



**SAMANTHA DUVALL**

Executive Director  
Tawas Area Chamber of  
Commerce



**NANCY HOWSE**

Economic Improvement  
Director (EID)  
Oscoda Township



**PAM O'LAUGHLIN**

Chief Operations Officer,  
Workforce Development, MI  
Works! Region 7B

Develop Iosco's Board is intentionally structured to reflect the full breadth of the county, with members drawn from all five Iosco County Commission districts to ensure geographic balance and representation.

The board also seeks leaders from every major economic sector, including industry, commerce, agriculture, healthcare, education, tourism, and transportation, so that diverse perspectives and expertise inform countywide economic development efforts.

# Message from our Executive Director



Jennifer Riggs  
DI Executive Director  
[executivedirector@develop-iosco.org](mailto:executivedirector@develop-iosco.org)

Stepping into the role of Executive Director in September 2025 has been an honor. In a short time, I have seen how deeply committed our local leaders, businesses, and residents are to strengthening Iosco County's future. That shared dedication has shaped my early months at Develop Iosco and continues to guide our direction.

As we look ahead, Develop Iosco will continue to build capacity, broaden its programs, and deepen its outreach. We will continue supporting our communities in navigating complex funding opportunities, and work alongside residents to shape a shared strategic vision for Iosco County's future. Our efforts will focus on strengthening small businesses, advancing housing initiatives to support our workforce, and engaging youth through programs that encourage leadership, innovation, and long-term connections to the region. With the guidance of our Board and the engagement of community partners, DI is positioned to advance projects that improve quality of life, strengthen our economic foundation, and create a more vibrant, resilient region.

Thank you for welcoming me into this role and for supporting Develop Iosco's work. I am excited for what we will accomplish together in the year ahead.

## Facilitating Economic Development

Develop Iosco continues to serve as a convener and facilitator for economic development across Iosco County, bringing together business owners, officials, and residents to support community-driven progress. In 2025, DI continued its quarterly Community Meetings, highlighting topics central to the county's economic future, including workforce development, childcare availability, tourism, and small business support.

DI also strengthened its capacity in 2025 by hiring a new Executive Director with experience in housing and community development. This added expertise enhances the organization's ability to guide local conversations, support strategic planning, and help communities better understand economic opportunities and challenges. Through these efforts, DI remains committed to elevating key issues, fostering collaboration, and supporting initiatives that strengthen Iosco County's long-term economic vitality.

# Iosco County Economic Snapshot

Iosco County spans 549.5 square miles with a population density of roughly 46 residents per square mile, reflecting its rural character and the unique community dynamics that come with a widely dispersed population.

## Demographic Profile

Iosco County's population increased slightly from 25,319 to 25,333 this year, continuing a pattern of overall stability while reflecting the ongoing demographic shifts seen across rural northern Michigan. The county remains a community with a strong retiree presence, modest in-migration, and steady movement toward lakeshore communities where access to services, recreation, and year-round amenities continues to grow.

## Population & Economic Indicators

	IOSCO COUNTY	STATE OF MICHIGAN
<b>Median age</b>	53.5 years	40.5 years
<b>Median household income</b>	\$47,777	\$69,183
<b>Per-capita income</b>	\$29,934	\$38,952
<b>Poverty rate (population below poverty line)</b>	16.60%	13.50%
<b>Mean travel time to work</b>	21.2 minutes	24.5 minutes
<b>Persons per household</b>	2.2 persons/household	2.4 persons/household
<b>Educational attainment (age 25+)</b>	89.1% high school or higher 17.6 % bachelor's degree or higher	92% high school or higher 32.7% bachelor's degree or higher
<b>Movers in the past year</b>	9.40%	11%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (5-Year Estimates)

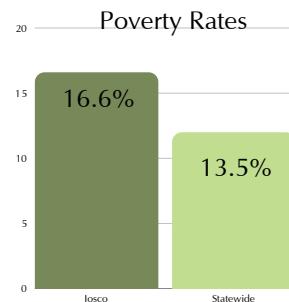
IOSCO COUNTY	2025	2024
Labor Force	10,434	10,210
Employed	9,700	9,527
Unemployed	734	683
Unemployment Rate	7.00%	6.70%

Iosco County's unemployment rate rose slightly from 6.7 percent in August 2024 to 7.0 percent in August 2025. While the labor force expanded modestly over the year, the number of residents facing unemployment increased from 683 to 734, pointing to ongoing workforce challenges.

Source: Michigan Center for Data and Analytics ([milmi.org](http://milmi.org))

Household and per-capita incomes in Iosco County continue to fall below Michigan's statewide averages, reflecting ongoing economic challenges that reinforce the importance of local job creation, workforce development, and expanded access to living-wage employment.

Additionally, with a poverty rate of 16.6 percent compared to the state's 13.5 percent, many residents face financial strain even as the region remains one of the most affordable places to live in northern Michigan. These factors highlight the continued need for targeted economic development strategies, business support services, and community investments that help strengthen long-term economic stability for residents and families across the county.



## Iosco County Housing Units

Median Value of Owner-Occupied Housing	\$122,900
Total Housing Units	19,978
Total Households	11,449
% of Homeownership	82.90%

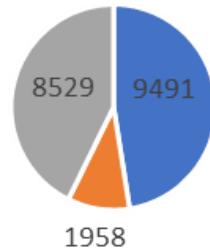
Data Source: Census Reporter, Iosco County, MI Profile

Iosco County's housing profile shows a significant imbalance between the number of available housing units and the number of year-round residents who need stable places to live. With nearly 20,000 housing units compared to 11,449 households, a large share of homes are used seasonally or as second homes, limiting the availability of year-round housing options for local families and workers.

Iosco County's housing occupancy reflects its strong role as a tourism and recreation destination.

A substantial share of homes are not occupied year-round, indicating the prevalence of seasonal and recreational housing. This dynamic contributes to the character of the local economy while also influencing the availability of housing options for year-round residents.

## Iosco County Housing Occupancy



- Homeowner Occupied 47.50%
- Long Term Rental 9.80%
- Not Occupied Year Round 42.70%

## Homeownership v. Homelessness

Although homeownership remains high at 82.9 percent among year-round households, many residents still face barriers to securing stable housing. Local estimates on homelessness vary depending on where the data was collected.

The Fall 2025 General Collection based on the Fall School Count period of districts serving Iosco County indicated that 152 students were homeless. More than 260 students were homeless per the Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI) for the 2023-24 school year in Iosco County and over 400 residents have self-reported needing assistance with homelessness between 2023 and 2025 to Huron Housing Hope.

This data highlights the urgent need for expanded housing solutions and coordinated community planning. This mix of abundant housing units, limited year-round availability, and rising housing insecurity continues to shape local priorities and long-term development strategies.

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Huron Community Bank is pleased to partner with Develop Iosco in its mission to promote economic development in Iosco County, MI. Our commitment to Iosco County aligns with the vision of Develop Iosco, cultivating a place for individuals and businesses to thrive. We are excited about the opportunity to be a part of the positive impact Develop Iosco is making and look forward to collaborating to build a strong foundation for future generations.

- Amy Peterman, SVP, Chief Operations Officer, Huron Community Bank

# ADVOCACY

## Develop Iosco Strengthens Regional Voice at the Northern Michigan Policy Conference

Develop Iosco joined regional partners at the 2025 Northern Michigan Policy Conference to help elevate the priorities of rural and northern communities at the state level. Former Executive Director Christopher Martin, DI President Rich Castle, and Palma Leonatti (former Director of the Oscoda AuSable Area Chamber) attended on behalf of a shared partnership committed to advancing economic opportunity across Iosco County and the Sunrise Side region.



Left: Rich Castle, Christopher Martin, Palma Leonatti at the Northern Michigan Policy Conference



The conference convened state policymakers, agency leaders, and economic development organizations to discuss issues critical to northern Michigan, including housing availability, workforce development, rural infrastructure, and long-term economic competitiveness. Through coordinated participation and relationship-building, Develop Iosco contributed to conversations that connected local challenges with statewide policy solutions. Martin played a key role in supporting conference preparation and outcomes, helping ensure rural perspectives were clearly represented and reinforced through a unified regional voice.

## Develop Iosco Advocates for Iosco County at the State Capitol

That advocacy continued in February, when Develop Iosco joined the Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance in Lansing during the State of the State legislative session. Representing Iosco County as an active Alliance partner, Christopher Martin participated in meetings with state legislators focused on shared budget priorities affecting rural communities across northern Michigan.

During these discussions, Develop Iosco highlighted local needs and progress, including grant readiness work, cross-county economic development collaboration, child care system building, and infrastructure challenges facing small and rural communities. The Alliance advanced priorities centered on strengthening the Office of Rural Prosperity, maintaining support for employer-assisted housing initiatives, and continuing investment in workforce training through the Going Pro Talent Fund. As part of a coalition representing more than 8,000 businesses regionally, Develop Iosco's participation ensured Iosco County's perspective was included in statewide policy conversations and helped strengthen relationships that will support continued advocacy and engagement in the months ahead.

# 2025 Initiatives

## Capacity Building through Grant Writing Support

In 2025, Develop Iosco advanced its work to strengthen the region's competitiveness for state, federal, and philanthropic investment. With renewed support from the Michigan Office of Rural Prosperity, DI expanded its Rural Readiness program through 2026, continuing to provide grant writing assistance and training to local governments, nonprofits, small businesses, and community organizations.

This year also marked DI's expanded service area into Alcona County, where new workshops helped build relationships and support community development efforts across county lines. Additional workshops in Iosco County offered targeted guidance for both small businesses and nonprofits seeking to grow programs and access new funding opportunities.

Through a continued partnership with Dr. Manuela Kress of Mid-Michigan Grant Writers & Consultants, DI provided individualized technical assistance and helped partners prepare strong, competitive applications. These efforts have yielded significant results, reinforcing the long-term value of building local capacity for rural communities.

As we move into 2026, DI will continue offering high-quality grant support services through the Rural Readiness grant program and encouraging members and partners to reach out as they pursue new projects and funding opportunities.

### Grant Highlights

- Delivered one full year of individualized support through partnership with Dr. Manuela Kress
- Secured a second \$50,000 Rural Readiness Grant from the Michigan Office of Rural Prosperity
- Services extended through September 2026
- Expanded service area to Alcona County
- Workshops held:
  - 2 in Alcona County (municipal leaders; nonprofits)
  - 4 in Iosco County (small business; nonprofit; fire and police; grant writing 202)
- Over 100 participants in 2025
- \$15.5 million in funding requests submitted with DI assistance in 2025
- \$4.45 million awarded to date for projects in Iosco and Alcona counties
- Estimated \$59 return for every \$1 invested through the Rural Readiness initiative



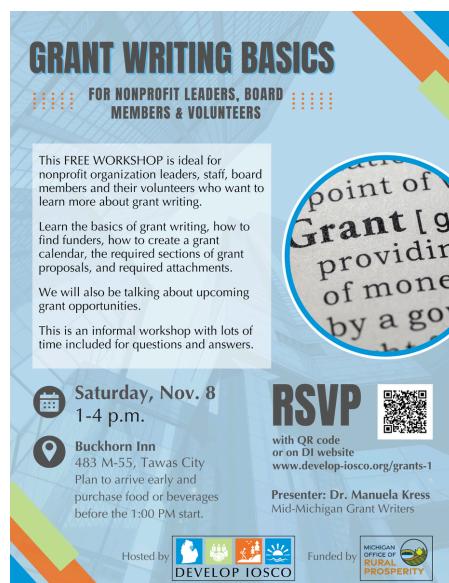
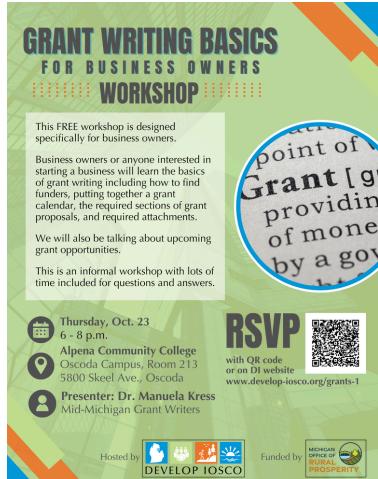
Dr. Manuela Kress and attendees at DI's Nonprofit Grant Writing Workshop in Lincoln, Alcona County

# 2025 Initiatives

## Grant Writing Highlights (continued)

### Grants DI Secured in 2025

- Secured an additional \$50,000 Rural Readiness Grant from the Michigan Office of Rural Prosperity to expand countywide grant-writing support and technical assistance through September 2026.
- Received \$685,581 in MiLEAP funding in partnership with the Sunrise Side Child Care Coalition and Child Care Back Office to launch a regional early-childhood workforce wage pilot supporting providers across Northeast Michigan.
- Awarded a \$100,000 grant from the Early Childhood Investment Corporation to support continued Sunrise Side regional childcare capacity building and coalition coordination.
- Received a \$1,000 Walmart Spark Good grant to support local community development initiatives.
- Consumers Energy awarded \$2,000 in support of DI's continued communication, outreach and community engagement.
- Continued administering previously awarded childcare and regional development grants in partnership with CCBO and coalition partners, helping sustain multi-county collaboration and services throughout 2025.



# 2025 Initiatives

## Strengthening Child Care Across the Sunrise Side



In 2025, Develop losco advanced its leadership in expanding child care access and capacity across Northeast Michigan through its continued support of the Sunrise Side Child Care Coalition. Facilitated by Child Care Back Office (CCBO), the Coalition brings regional partners together to address longstanding child care shortages and strengthen provider sustainability across the 11-county Region 3 service area. A key milestone occurred in Spring 2025 when CCBO hired its first Chief Executive Officer, Sarah Foglesong, providing dedicated leadership to guide the organization's growth and deepen its impact across the region.

Another major step forward was CCBO's achievement of full 501(c)(3) nonprofit status, positioning the organization to grow its services, secure new funding streams, and expand the shared-services model that helps child care providers manage licensing, payroll, enrollment, billing, and compliance. These supports allow providers to focus on delivering high-quality care while reducing administrative burdens that often prevent expansion.

Significant investment also marked the year. The MiLEAP Early Childhood Workforce Wage Pilot awarded \$685,581 to DI for our region. Working closely with DI, CCBO prepared the groundwork for workforce stipends that will begin distributing to early childhood educators in January 2026. This effort is expected to help stabilize and retain the child care workforce, a critical need across the Sunrise Side. DI also secured \$100,000 for planning and pilot services, and a \$100,000 grant from the Early Childhood Investment Corporation supported regional coordination. CCBO received an additional \$400,000 from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to expand shared-service supports and increase operational capacity for providers state wide.

Together, DI and CCBO are laying the foundation for a more accessible, sustainable, and resilient child care system; one that supports working families, strengthens the region's economy, and builds long-term capacity for providers. As the initiative moves into 2026, DI remains committed to ensuring the Sunrise Side has the child care infrastructure needed for families and communities to thrive.



Achieving our full 501(c)(3) status was a critical milestone that significantly enhances CCBO's strategic capacity. Combined with the substantial regional investments secured in 2025, we are now positioned to rapidly scale our shared-services model. This capability is a vital foundation, moving us one step closer to enabling providers to concentrate fully on delivering excellent care and contributing to the creation of a sustainable, high-quality system for working families across the Sunrise Side.

- Sarah Foglesong, CEO, Child Care Back Office

# 2025

## Community Meetings Impact

	1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter
<b>Host</b>	City of Whittemore	Baldwin Township	Oscoda Township	Grant Township
<b>Location</b>	Whittemore Chamber of Commerce	IRESA	Warrior Pavilion	Sand Lake Community Center
<b>Local Speakers</b>	Bob Leslie, Mayor	Christopher Martin, Supervisor	Nancy Howse, Community Development Director	Velda Jennett, Treasurer
		Cathy Pittsley, Clerk		Jennifer Luzar, Adult Education, IRESA
		Jamie Cain, IRESA Superintendent	Jamie Carruthers Soboleski, Controller, Iosco County	Jamie Carruthers Soboleski, Controller, Iosco County
<b>Keynote Speakers</b>	Mike Erickson, President, MyMichigan Health	Darin Lomason, MI Works!	Brandon Adolph, U.S. Small Business Administration	Jennifer Rigterink, Michigan Municipal League
				Dakota Baker, Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance
<b>Topic</b>	The Future of Healthcare in Iosco County	Jobs: Upskill Your Workforce, Talent Attraction & Retention	SBA 101	Harnessing Collaboration to Drive Rural Prosperity
<b>Registered Attendees</b>	77	43	48 (attended)	79 (attended)

# MEDIA

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- Extensive coverage in articles in the Iosco County News Herald/Oscoda Press
- Monthly radio interviews with DI Executive Director on WKJC
- 37.7% increase in followers on both Facebook and LinkedIn pages
- 10,174 website visitors in last 12 months
- Continued development of valuable website content [www.develop-iosco.org](http://www.develop-iosco.org)

## Communications

- 17 Newsletters and Grant Connectors sent
- 4 Event Surveys
- 1 Membership Survey
- 1 Strategic Planning Survey

# MEMBERSHIP

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- Membership grew by 38% to 69 members in 2025, expanding DI's countywide reach and strengthening regional collaboration.
- Oscoda Township joined as a new municipal member, bringing DI to 12 of 14 local units of government participating.
- DI saw 35 member renewals in 2025, generating \$44,500 in continued support for countywide economic development efforts.
- 25 new members joined Develop Iosco, contributing an additional \$9,000 and expanding DI's network of engaged businesses, nonprofits, and community partners.
- Combined, these membership changes strengthened DI's financial foundation and broadened community participation across key sectors.
- Tawas Area Schools, Hale Area Schools and Oscoda Area Schools all joined DI in 2025 in collaboration, bringing synergy to the work DI is doing to support community development.

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School districts are the heartbeat of their communities and play a crucial role in their overall prosperity and success. Our Iosco County School Districts understand the value and importance of connection with the greater community on both a civic and economic basis. Develop Iosco gives our schools robust support and a platform to collaborate and strengthen those bonds of connection and opportunity.

- Jamie Cain, Superintendent, IRESA

# HARNESSING COLLABORATION

## ALPENA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

“ Collaboration turns shared vision into shared impact ”

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



Develop Iosco now serves as the lead organization for the ECIC grant supporting the Region 3 Sunrise Side Childcare Coalition, with NEMCOG as the co-lead partner. The coalition itself is operated by Child Care Back Office, and together these partners coordinate regional strategies and funding to strengthen child care access and capacity across Northeast Michigan.



Develop Iosco is a full member of the Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance, working alongside regional organizations to elevate the voice of rural communities in statewide policy and economic development conversations. Through this partnership, DI helps shape shared advocacy priorities and contributes local expertise to initiatives that strengthen economic opportunity across Northern Michigan.

Develop Iosco partnered with PNC to deliver a Lunch and Learn series offering practical guidance on writing a business plan, starting a small business, and understanding small business banking services this year. This collaboration provided entrepreneurs and community members with accessible training and direct support to help them strengthen and grow their ventures.



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Iosco County greatly values our relationship and service agreement with Develop Iosco. The service agreement allows Iosco County to rely on Develop Iosco for important aspects of County economic development that Iosco County staff simply do not have the capacity or resources needed to perform the work successfully. We have a strong working relationship that we hope to continue into the future for the benefit of all our citizens.

- Jamie Carruthers Soboleski, CPA, MBA, Iosco County Controller/Finance Director

# 2025 MEMBERSHIP

## BUSINESS & CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS

Alpena Community College  
AuSable Hardware  
Biggby Coffee – Oscoda  
Child Care Back Office (CCBO)  
Consumers Energy Foundation  
Cynthia Irwin LLC  
Dangler Guys  
Downtown Oscoda Beautification  
DTE Foundation  
Eastern National Forest Interpretive Assoc.  
FISH Inc. – Tawas  
Fun First Therapy  
G. Brooks & Associates LLC  
Great Lakes Insurance of MI  
Hale Area Schools  
Heritage Coast Sailing & Rowing  
Huntington Bank  
Huron Community Bank  
Huron Housing Hope  
Huron Shores Artisan Hall  
Iosco County Coats for Kids  
Iosco County Commission on Aging  
Iosco County Medical Care Facility  
Iosco Exploration Trail  
Iosco Regional Education Service Agency  
Mermaid Coast Cottages  
My Michigan Health  
Northland Area Federal Credit Union  
Northern MI Children's Assessment Center  
Northeast Michigan Council of Governments  
Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency  
O'Connors  
Oscoda Area Schools  
Oscoda-AuSable Chamber of Commerce  
Oscoda-Wurtsmith Airport Authority  
Perceptions Agency

Palomino Hope  
PNC Bank  
Sunrise Side Animal Rescue  
Tawas Area Chamber of Commerce  
Tawas Area Schools  
Tawas Bay Beach Resort  
Tawas Bay Players  
Tawas Wellness Warriors  
TCA Insurance  
The Buckhorn Inn  
VFW Post 3735  
WE Players  
Whittemore Chamber of Commerce

## INDIVIDUALS

Michelle Bacarella  
Blinda Baker  
Vicki Seltz Barnes  
Amanda Bergeron  
David Bergeron  
Natasha Hardy  
Wendy Hoin

## 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  
Oscoda Township  
Plainfield Township  
Tawas Township  
Wilber Township

# PLATINUM SPONSORS

Our Platinum Sponsorship program experienced significant growth this year, expanding from four to eight partners and strengthening the foundation that supports our programs and initiatives.

## Sponsorships Secured in 2025

- Alpena Community College contributed \$500 and provided the in-kind use of office space to support DI's administrative and outreach activities.
- Consumers Energy gave \$1,000 sponsorship in support for countywide programming.
- DTE Energy provided a \$2,000 sponsorship to advance DI's community and economic development efforts.
- Huntington Bank contributed \$1,000 in sponsorship to support DI's mission and programming.
- Huron Community Bank contributed \$1,000 in sponsorship to further DI's programs and countywide initiatives.
- MyMichigan Health supported DI with a \$1,000 sponsorship to strengthen regional community initiatives.
- PNC Bank provided a \$1,000 sponsorship in support of DI's Lunch & Learn series.



Community owned for better banking



# 2026

## Strategic Input

At the Q4 Community Meeting DI asked attendees to partake in strategic planning for Iosco's future. Below are the results.

"What single word or phrase best describes the future you hope to see for Iosco County?"



When asked "which areas do you think Develop Iosco has made to most progress in?" attendees ranked grant writing support highest, followed by child care needs. Community engagement and events and recreation, environment and tourism were tied for next. Close behind was regional collaboration and partnerships, and lastly business retention and support. This question clearly showed a need to work on business support in our future.

If DI could focus on only three priorities over the next two years, which would you choose? Attendees ranked supporting small business as the most important initiative for DI to prioritize. Secondly, and almost tied were supporting the build or more primary residency housing and engaging and retaining youth. There was less support for strengthening broadband access and expanding trails and other recreation. Ranked last was promoting clean energy and environmental projects. Attendees offered the following comments for priorities that were not identified for ranking:

- Collaboration & working together
- Pediatric Dentistry
- Additional doctors to the area
- Merging Tawas & East Tawas
- Helping more students go to college
- Environmental, lake protection
- Continuing to bring partners from across the county together
- Attracting retirees and remote workers
- Recruiting young people to return to the area after completing their college education
- Mental health needs attention

# 2026

## Strategic Planning Goals

With input from the community and strategic planning from DI's Board of Directors here are DI's goals for 2026.

### **Promoting Talent Attraction & Workforce Growth**

DI is focused on helping employers find talent and making Iosco County an attractive place to live and work. This includes sharing workforce data to support jobseekers and businesses, strengthening the early childhood workforce through regional partnerships, and supporting broadband initiatives that enable remote work and attract new professionals to the area.

### **Strengthening Member & Business Engagement**

We are committed to growing and supporting our membership by listening, responding, and amplifying success. This includes conducting an annual member survey, issuing letters of support for local projects, increasing overall membership, and highlighting member success stories through our quarterly communications. We are also strengthening partnerships with regional economic development and child care organizations to expand shared programming and grant opportunities.

### **Building Stronger Tourism Partnerships**

DI will be seeking grant funds to implement and promote Explore Iosco, a countywide tourism marketing and branding initiative designed to increase visibility, visitation, and local economic impact.

### **Supporting Housing Development**

Housing remains a critical priority. We are partnering regionally to explore new tools such as a regional Land Bank model, engaging developers on residential and mixed-use opportunities, and encouraging board members and community stakeholders to actively support housing initiatives across the county.

### **Empowering Youth & Community Innovation**

DI is investing in the next generation by adding a youth representative to our board, seeking funding to launch a Youth Innovation Challenge with local schools, and securing sponsorships and grant funding to support student entrepreneurship.

### **Strengthening Develop Iosco's Capacity**

To sustain and expand our impact, we are actively pursuing grants and sponsorships each year and continuing to serve as a fiscal and administrative partner for local organizations seeking funding, helping bring more resources into Iosco County.

