

CONNECT

SPECIAL EDITION: BUSINESS SERVICES



DIRECTOR'S LETTER



Greetings from Michigan Works! Region 7B!

At Michigan Works! Region 7B, one of our primary goals is to ensure that our businesses and communities feel supported, connected, and equipped for success.

Our work extends far beyond helping individuals find jobs – it's about strengthening the economic and workforce foundations that help our region thrive.

To that end, we're proud to have a Business Solutions Professional (BSP) serving each of our six counties, ensuring that our businesses are connected to information, resources, and funding opportunities.

These dedicated professionals lead our business engagement efforts as Directors of Business Services; and in Arenac, Gladwin, Ogemaw, and Roscommon Counties, they also serve as Director of their local Economic Development Corporation or Committee.

This collaboration between workforce and economic development allows us to take a more comprehensive approach to growth—focusing not only on jobs and training but also on the overall health and vitality of our local economies.

Every day, our Business Solutions Professionals:

- **Connect employers to the Going PRO Talent Fund**
- **Link youth to meaningful job shadows and work experiences**
- **Support businesses with on-the-job training and apprenticeship opportunities**
- **Partner with organizations to secure grants that strengthen communities**
- **Help businesses participate in events like MiCareerQuest Middle Michigan**

Economic development and workforce development go hand in hand—and we're proud to support both throughout our region. Together with our community partners, we're building pathways that empower people, strengthen businesses, and grow opportunity across all of Region 7B.

We hope you enjoy this look at some of the work our Business Services Team is doing to support our businesses, our communities, and our shared future.

Warm regards,

Mark L. Berdan

Executive Director

Michigan Works! Region 7B

On the Cover

One of the most impactful events that we host in partnership with Great Lakes Bay Michigan Works! is MiCareerQuest. Our Business Services Teams work not only to connect businesses with the opportunity to exhibit at the event - they work on-site the day of the event to make sure that employers have what they need. Here, an exhibitor in the Health Care Sector helps a Tawas Area High School student work on intubating a dummy at the 2025 MiCareerQuest Middle Michigan event.

Arenac County EDC awards first Revolving Loan to Standish business owners to revamp historic property

Our Business Services Team at Michigan Works! Region 7B works closely with businesses and community organizations to connect them with grant funding, technical assistance, and resources that help projects move forward and communities thrive. Earlier this year, that partnership played a key role in supporting an important historic restoration effort in downtown Standish.

The Arenac County Economic Development Corporation (EDC), in collaboration with Michigan Works! Region 7B and Arenac County, awarded its first-ever Revolving Loan Fund disbursement to local business owners Lisa and Tim Dixon, who set out to restore and revitalize a significant piece of Standish history.

Back in December 2022, the Dixons—owners of Extreme Graphics, Fitness Five, and Dragon Fire Tae Kwon Do—purchased the corner block at 123 and 125 E. Cedar St. These two buildings, constructed in 1894 and 1908, are among the city’s oldest remaining commercial structures and have long served as anchors in the heart of downtown Standish.

When the Dixons discovered that the properties required extensive work, including urgent foundation repairs, they began exploring creative financing options. During that process, they learned about the Revolving Loan Fund administered by the Arenac County EDC—an initiative developed under the leadership of Jennifer Pierson, Michigan Works! Region 7B Director of Business Services and Economic Development for Arenac County.

The Dixons submitted their application for a \$25,000 loan in October 2024. Thanks to Pierson’s coordination with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the project’s renovation plans were aligned with historic preservation standards—ensuring the buildings’ character would be protected. The loan was approved in March 2025 and officially awarded on April 25, 2025, allowing construction to begin shortly afterward.



Lisa and Tim Dixon, Dixon 5 Enterprises

“The Arenac EDC is proud to support Dixon Five Enterprises through our Revolving Loan Fund Program as they take an important step toward preserving one of Standish’s historic downtown buildings,” Pierson said. “Investments like these not only protect the architectural character of our community but also create opportunities for local businesses to grow and thrive. We commend Dixon Five Enterprises for their commitment to both preservation and progress.”

For more than 130 years, the buildings have served countless roles—from hardware and dry-goods stores to upstairs offices for businesses, the telephone company, and city administration. The Dixons are working to restore that sense of community energy, returning them to individual storefronts and preserving the historic charm that once made the block a natural gathering place.

The Dixons continue to work with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) and the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) as they advance the redevelopment of the buildings.

Michigan Works! Region 7B Business Services Team helps design and implement apprenticeships



Kalitta Air Apprentice Program Supervisor Erik Heller answers a question for Manufacturing employers, partners, and education and training providers at a Race to Talent event in October at the Clare-Gladwin RESD's Magnus Center. He was joined on the panel by three apprentices and multiple partners.

Are you interested in learning more about apprenticeship by you're not sure where to start? Start with your local Business Services Team!

At Michigan Works! Region 7B, our Business Services Team partners directly with employers to help design and implement U.S. Department of Labor-Registered (USDOL) Apprenticeship programs.

Across our six-county region, our team works closely with employers to create programs that meet industry-specific needs while offering individuals meaningful career pathways.

In childcare, thanks in part to a grant from the Early Childhood Investment Corporation, we have helped numerous employers develop apprenticeship programs that combine hands-on experience with training and education.

By cultivating talent in this critical sector, we ensure local families have access to high-quality care while creating rewarding career opportunities for participants. Some of this work was showcased

during a Race to Talent event last spring in Gladwin County, where childcare employers were recognized for their commitment to apprenticeship as a strategy.

In Harrison, we hosted a Race to Talent event at the John C. Magnus Center. Apprentices and leaders from Kalitta Air shared their expertise at the event by participating in a panel discussion. Michigan Works! Region 7B supports Kalitta Air in their apprenticeship strategy by helping with things like recruitment, screening, and supportive services.

Across all industries, our Business Services Professionals guide employers through every step of the apprenticeship process – from initial program design and USDOL registration, to connecting apprentices with supportive services.

In addition to helping recruit, train, and retain employees, apprenticeship offers an added benefit to businesses who apply for Going PRO Talent Fund dollars - reimbursement for training for USDOL-Registered apprentices is higher than for non-apprentices.

Incumbent Worker Training helps employee, business prepare for future at North Central Machine



Marianne and Codi, North Central Machine.

At Michigan Works! Region 7B, our Business Solutions Professionals help businesses stay future-ready by connecting them with the right training programs—ensuring their workforce has the skills needed to keep the future manageable and full of possibility.

That's exactly what happened at North Central Machine when Controller Codi Magnuson set out to strengthen his skills and advance in his role.

Codi has been a full-time employee with North Central Machine since 2017, and when his supervisor, Marianne, began exploring training options to support the company's continued growth, she reached out to Brenda Bachelder, Business Solutions Professional for Roscommon County.

After discussing the company's needs, Brenda identified the Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) program as the perfect fit for Codi's professional development.

Returning to college after more than a decade was intimidating, but Codi embraced the challenge—and excelled. Balancing full-time work with school, he earned a 4.0 GPA for the semester, something he had not achieved before.

"Going back to school after over a decade was intimidating, but it ended up being a lot of fun," Codi said. "It was because of Michigan Works! that I was able to take these classes. I am now looking into ways to further my education in accounting."

Marianne saw the transformation firsthand.

"Michigan Works! is very helpful in finding ways to help our employees succeed and develop their skills," she said. "Codi not only excelled in his coursework while maintaining his regular workload; the experience has made him happier and more focused. Because of this experience, Codi now plans to continue his education in accounting. I am very proud of his success and new drive to reach his goals."

The Incumbent Worker Training program has also brought peace of mind to leaders at North Central Machine as they look toward the future.

Investing in Codi's development ensures continuity, stability, and a stronger leadership pipeline. Knowing that Codi is gaining the technical expertise and confidence needed to take on greater responsibility allows the company to plan ahead for long-term success by strengthening the talent they already have.

MiCareerQuest Middle Michigan gives students a hands-on look at careers



Above: Students had a chance to see what you might wear at a day on the job in a clean, sterile environment like the one at Saint-Gobain in Beaverton. Students are pictured here with Ryan Roberts. **Below left:** Neil from Roscommon County Road Commission interacts with a student at the event. **Below right:** An Ogemaw Heights High School student tries her hand at a new trade.



Above left: Students enjoyed taking part in an Amigo Race. **Above right:** Students check out pig lungs in the health care sector.

Business Services Team connects employers with future workforce through Talent Tours

Talent Tours are one of the most effective ways to connect employers with the future workforce because they give students the opportunity to explore local industries firsthand and discover the career possibilities that exist right in their own backyards—often with employers they weren't even aware of.

These experiences go beyond simple introductions; they allow students to envision themselves in real roles and better understand the skills and education needed to get there.

The success of these tours is fueled by the strong relationships our Business Solutions Professionals have built with employers across the region. Thanks to their ongoing partnerships and trust, we're able to open doors to real job opportunities for many of these students.



Above: Students from Alternative Educational Academy of Iosco and Ogemaw counties attended a Talent Tour at Tawas Tool on Oct. 2. Here, a student examines a component produced by the company. Below: Ogemaw Heights High School students toured Kalitta Air recently.



Above left: Students from Roscommon High School participated in a Talent Tour at Spicer Boat City in Houghton Lake. Above right: Miller Logging brought their equipment to the Magnus Center for students at Clare-Gladwin Regional Educational Service District's CTE Program.

Ace Electric utilizes Going PRO Talent Fund dollars to meet a need for specialized services in the community



Pictured left to right are Cody Nahs, Ace Electric; Micah Sage, Ace Electric; Brett Hughey, Ace Electric. Michigan Works! Region 7B Executive Director Mark L. Berdan; Michigan Works! Region 7B Chief Operating Officer Pam O’Laughlin, and Ogemaw County Director of Business Services and Economic Development Penny Payea.

One of the things Michigan Works! Region 7B’s Business Services Team does is help local employers access Going PRO Talent Fund training dollars, ensuring businesses can build skilled teams by meeting training goals, and sometimes fill a greater need in the community.

One example of a business who did just that is Ace Electric, owned by Brett Hughey, which has used Going PRO Talent Fund dollars multiple times to upskill employees and strengthen the company’s service capabilities.

In 2025, Brett noticed a critical gap in his county: there was no certified professional in Backflow Technology available locally. Recognizing how this affected both clients and construction projects, he identified a motivated employee, Cody Nahs, and worked with Michigan Works! Region 7B to apply for Going PRO funding for specialized training.

The grant was approved, and Cody successfully earned his Backflow Technology certification.

This achievement not only advanced Cody’s skills but also enabled Ace Electric to provide a vital service locally.

Beyond the immediate service gap, the training strengthened the company’s workforce, giving Cody new credentials, confidence, and opportunities for career growth.

Investing in employees through Going PRO Talent Fund training not only supports business success but also contributes to a more skilled local workforce – a win for employees, employers, and the community alike.

“When businesses receive Going PRO Talent Fund training dollars, it’s more than an investment in skill development – it’s transformational,” said Michigan Works! Region 7B Executive Director Mark L. Berdan. “These dollars help employers fill critical gaps, give workers the chance to grow into higher-skill, higher-wage careers, and strengthen the entire community in the process.”

Clare County BSP finds perfect match for young man looking for meaningful employment



Owen Brown found the perfect place to pursue his future - thanks to help from Clare County Director of Business Services, LeeAnne Comer. LeeAnne placed Owen in an On-The-Job Training opportunity at Federal Broach, where he has shined under their mentorship.

In workforce development, some days feel a little like matchmaking – finding the right person, with the right potential, for the right employer. That is one skill that is at the heart of the Business Services role at Michigan Works! Region 7B, and it's exactly what led to Owen Brown's success.

When Owen, a recent high school graduate from Clare County, was asked what kind of work he wanted, he answered honestly: "I don't know. I haven't done that before."

But his uncertainty didn't disguise his potential – at least not to Clare County Director of Business Services, LeeAnne Comer. Because Owen had previously participated in a Young Professionals cohort, LeeAnne remembered him well. With her background as a Youth Career Advisor, she also recognized his work habits, his strengths, and the kind of environment where he could thrive.

LeeAnne thought about which employer might be a great option for Owen. After exploring a few earlier placement options and building his

confidence along the way, he was placed in an On-the-Job Training (OJT) program as a production worker at Federal Broach in Harrison.

The end result was fantastic. Within his first 90 days, Owen was named Employee of the Month – a milestone that Operations Manager Don Finkbeiner noted "just doesn't happen for someone that new."

Additionally, on his own time, and with no prior experience, Owen created a Work Instruction for the machine he operates – a document the company described as "the best Work Instruction we have ever seen."

His initiative paid off. Owen earned a significant raise within his first 90 days and is now being considered for a future role as a Maintenance Technician, a path that could launch a long-term skilled trades career.

"We definitely want to hang on to this young man," Finkbeiner said. "He has great potential."

Through it all, Owen remains steady and humble: "It is just work that needs to be done," he said.

Roscommon County Economic Development Committee focuses efforts on



Above: Pictured left to right are members of the county-wide marketing committee: Vicki Barnes, Tracy Smith, Alma Crossley, Kathy Jernigan, Michigan Works! Region 7B Director of Business Services and Economic Development Brenda Bachelder, and Jan Waltz.

At left: The first fish on the Freshwater Trail was unveiled in Saint Helen. Additional fish are planned for other Roscommon County locations.

The Roscommon County Fresh Water Trail is making a splash as part of a county-wide tourism initiative led by the Roscommon County Economic Development Committee (EDC) and the county-wide Marketing Committee.

In Roscommon County, as in several of our partner counties, Michigan Works! Region 7B Business Solutions Professionals play a dual role: supporting businesses with workforce development services while also providing economic development leadership.

That means our team is not only helping employers build strong talent pipelines – we're also working to attract people, investment, and visitors to the region.

And in Northern Michigan, where outdoor recreation and tourism drive so much of the local economy, that work matters.

The centerpiece of the Fresh Water Trail? Five larger-than-life fish sculptures, each installed at a

public location across Roscommon County to celebrate its world-class lakes, rivers, and recreation assets – and to encourage residents and visitors alike to explore all that Roscommon County has to offer.

The first fish was unveiled on June 1 in St. Helen, with more set to follow in Denton Township, the Village of Roscommon, Higgins Lake/Lyon Township, and Houghton Lake/Roscommon Township.

This creative tourism project was made possible through funding from the Roscommon County EDC, and reflects the region's shared commitment to supporting local recreation, boosting small businesses, and strengthening community pride.

Michigan Works! Region 7B is proud to support the efforts of the communities we serve as they work to elevate tourism, promote outdoor recreation, and showcase the natural assets that make our region unforgettable.

Small Manufacturers gather in Ogemaw County for SBA 'Made in America' Listening Tour



Manufacturers from Ogemaw and Iosco counties gathered at the Michigan Works! Region 7B Ogemaw County Service Center with representatives from several state and local partners to talk about small business and manufacturing. Ogemaw County Director of Business Services and Economic Development Penny Payea and Iosco County Director of Business Services Darin Lomason helped bring their employers to the table for this impactful event.

Manufacturers from Ogemaw and Iosco Counties came together at the Made in America Small Business Manufacturing Listening Tour at the Ogemaw County Service Center to explore opportunities for growth, collaboration, and workforce development in the region.

Michigan Works! Region 7B's Business Services team played a key role in connecting businesses with partners, resources, information, and workshops designed to help them thrive. Hosted in partnership with the Small Business Administration's Michigan District Office, the Ogemaw and Iosco County Economic Development Corporations, the Lake Huron Region Small Business Development Center (SBDC), and the Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center (MMTC), the event offered a deep dive into the challenges facing small manufacturing firms.

Presenters sharing expertise and resources included Brandon Adolph from the Small Business Administration, Penny Payea, Ogemaw County

Director of Business Services & Economic Development, Darin Lomason, Iosco County Director of Business Services at Michigan Works! Region 7B, Tammy Dupuis from the Small Business Development Center, Pete Schmidt of the Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center, Gary Witkowski of Great Lakes Commercial Finance, and Tammy Moore from the Northeast Michigan APEX Accelerator.

The discussions focused on workforce development, funding opportunities, operational resources, and training programs that can make a real difference for small manufacturers in rural communities.

Michigan Works! Region 7B continues to play a critical role in connecting employers with the talent, training, and resources they need, ensuring businesses are supported and prepared for sustainable growth in the region's competitive manufacturing landscape.



WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT:

- ✓ Apprenticeship
- ✓ Going PRO Talent Fund
- ✓ Grant opportunities
- ✓ Training programs

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