NORTHERN MICHIGAN CHAMBER ALLIANCE

Elevating & advancing local business.

2026 Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Edwin Dean
Email Contact: Edwin.dean@icloud.com
Phone Contact:(231) 386-2256
Campaign Website URL: edwindean103.com

1. **Purpose and Responsibility**
   Why are you seeking this office, and how would you define the responsibility of the office to the people of northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula?

   I am seeking this office because northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula need practical, independent-minded leadership focused on results: affordability, housing, infrastructure, workforce development, public safety, and economic opportunity.

   The responsibility of this office is to be a serious advocate for the region. That means listening to local governments, employers, workers, families, schools, and community organizations, then bringing their needs to Lansing with discipline and urgency.

   Northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula face distinct challenges: long distances, seasonal economies, limited housing supply, workforce shortages, aging infrastructure, and pressure on small businesses. A state representative must understand those realities and fight for policies that help rural and regional communities compete.

   My approach would be simple: protect taxpayers, support small businesses, strengthen local communities, and make sure northern Michigan receives a fair share of state attention and resources.

2. **Jobs, Investment, and Competitiveness**
   What specific policies would you support or develop if elected, to ensure northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula can compete for jobs, investment, infrastructure, and other state and federal resources?

   First, I would support infrastructure investment that directly improves economic competitiveness: roads, bridges, broadband, water systems, sewer capacity, energy reliability, and workforce housing infrastructure. These are basic requirements for business growth.

Second, I would support a more aggressive rural economic development strategy. Northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula need better access to state and federal grant opportunities, technical assistance, and regional planning capacity. Smaller communities often lack the staff capacity to compete with larger metropolitan areas for funding.

Third, I would support targeted workforce and career-training programs connected to actual employer demand. Health care, skilled trades, construction, hospitality, advanced manufacturing, agriculture, maritime industries, and energy all need a stronger talent pipeline.

Fourth, I would push for a more predictable regulatory and permitting environment. Investment follows certainty. Businesses need clear timelines, clear standards, and responsive state agencies.

3. **Housing and Regional Partnerships**
   NMCA's policy framework calls for housing solutions and regional partnerships to address the region's critical housing shortage. What policies or ideas do you have in which you can partner with the Alliance to make a positive impact?

   I'm on the Village of Northport council, and I've seen how government regulations impede housing development.

   We need to reduce the burden of government regulations costing developers time and money. Ideally, I'd like to consolidate and streamline the application process to ensure efficiency and expedency with deadlines beginning at one year. If the administrative costs doesn't reduce the National Builders Association estimate of $90,000 per parcel fee to less than $50,000, Lansing must reduce the regulatory burderns on counties so more afforadable homes can be built.

4. **Workforce Development and Talent Attraction**
   What are your views on programs such as Going PRO, Michigan Reconnect, and talent attraction programs? What would you do to help attract, retain, train, and grow the workforce needed by northern Michigan and Upper Peninsula employers?

   My opinion on Going Pro and Michian Reconnect is positive because they address two issues at once: Michigan lack of blue collar workforce and lack of affordable housing. To have affordable housing we need the workforce, to have the workforce we need afforable housing.

   Luckily, we live in the most beautful place on earth which naturally attracts people. The problem we have is affordability and work. I know if Michigan can foster development in

our workforce and reduces taxes/ other regulatory burdens, we can keep families from leaving to low tax states.

5. **Childcare Access**
   Please describe your view of the need for childcare in the region, and what would you do to enhance access to this resource?

   My understanding is that childcare in Michigan is esstenial workforce infrastructure and with too few providers. The cost is high and it's affecting our families.

   I support practical policies that expand provider capacity, reduce unnecessary startup barriers, support childcare workforce training, and encourage employer-community partnerships.

6. **Education Outcomes and Funding**
   What do you believe is the best action you could take to support growth in measurable outcomes for k-12 students in northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula? How well is Michigan's funding of our higher education systems working, and would you make any changes to the way we fund education in this state?

   We need to teach out kids how to read. We're currently 44th in the nation for fourth grader reading; the age where students switch from learning to read to reading to learn. Mississippi was ranked similiarly to us before they switched from whole lanaguage learn to phonics based instruction. Teaching our kids **the scienec of reading** is the most critical change we can make to their developlment.

   My concern with funding is that the money paid isn't going to the teachers. We are in the top half of per-pupil spending compared to other states, yet our teachers are one of the lowest paid in the country.

   I believe the first step is requiring transparency on overhead costs.

7. **Regulatory Climate and Small Business Growth**
   What regulations, permitting processes, taxes, mandates, or compliance burdens do you believe most limit small business growth in our region? What would you do to make our state's regulatory environment more predictable?

   The biggest burdens I hear from small businesses involve permitting delays, licensing complexity, property tax pressure, labor mandates, energy costs, insurance costs, and unclear agency processes.

   I support permit timelines, one-stop assistance, plain language rules, and faster appeals.

8. **Affordability and Economic Vitality**
   What meaningful changes do you believe would help advance Michigan's economic vitality by making this state a more affordable place to live, work, and do business?

   Michigan's economic vitality depends on affordability. Families, workers, retirees, and businesses all feel the pressure from rising housing costs, energy costs, insurance costs, taxes, childcare costs, and health care costs.

   We need to get back to the fundamentals of government and allow the citizens to prosper by setting the table and getting out of the way.