NORTHERN MICHIGAN CHAMBER ALLIANCE

Elevating & advancing local business.

2026 Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance Candidate Questionnaire

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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'm seeking this office because northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula deserve a representative who truly understands the realities of living and doing business here. I've spent my life in rural Michigan raising a family, running a small business, and working alongside the people who keep this region moving. I've seen the difference between how large corporations operate and what small businesses need to survive. I know firsthand that our challenges are not the same as those in urban areas, and our solutions have to be shaped by the people who live and work here.

The responsibility of this office is to be a steady, accessible partner to the communities and employers of northern Michigan. That means listening to local leaders, supporting policies that strengthen our workforce, improving infrastructure that businesses rely on, protecting the natural resources that drive our economy, and making sure rural voices are not an afterthought in statewide decisions.

Northern Michigan and the U.P. deserve representation that shows up, understands the stakes, and works collaboratively to build long-term economic stability and opportunity. That's the commitment I'm bringing to this race.

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?

My goal is simple: make sure northern Michigan and the U.P. have the tools, investment, and attention needed to grow:
Expand skilled-trades training, apprenticeships, and employer-driven workforce programs that match the needs of northern Michigan industries.

Support childcare access so people can actually take the jobs we're training them for.

Strengthen partnerships between schools, community colleges, and local employers to keep talent in the region.

Invest in roads and bridges that improve the flow of traffic in northern Michigan that industries rely on, including tourism, manufacturing, agriculture, and forest products.

Improve energy reliability and grid resilience to lower costs. Support community utility co-ops.

Support housing initiatives that make it possible for workers to live where the jobs are.

Support policies that safeguard clean water, healthy forests, and outdoor recreation, all core economic drivers for northern Michigan and the U.P.

Advocate for funding formulas that reflect the realities of rural service delivery, long distances, aging infrastructure, and smaller tax bases.

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?

The Alliance's regional approach is exactly the kind of collaboration we need, and I'm committed to working alongside you to make measurable progress.

Ensure state economic development programs include housing components.

Support employer-driven housing initiatives.

Incentives to convert vacant or underused buildings into housing.

Support for local zoning updates that allow duplexes, accessory dwelling units, and mixed-use housing where communities choose to permit them.

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?

Programs like Going PRO, Michigan Reconnect, and talent-attraction initiatives are essential tools for northern Michigan and the U.P. They help employers fill critical skill gaps, give workers affordable pathways into high-demand careers, and make our region more competitive for investment. I support strengthening these programs because they deliver real results for both workers and businesses.

Continue supporting Going PRO and ensure small and mid-sized rural employers can easily access the grants.

Expand Michigan Reconnect and short-term credential programs so adults can upskill without taking on debt.

Expand career and technical education in middle and high schools. By creating pathways into the workforce, trades, entrepreneurship, military service and higher education.

Strengthen partnerships between K-12 schools, community colleges, and local employers so students see clear pathways to good-paying local careers.

Partner with local chambers and employers to market the region to young professionals.

Invest in workforce housing so employees can live near the jobs they're trained for.

Improve childcare access, which is one of the biggest barriers to the workforce.

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?

Childcare isn't a side issue in northern Michigan and the U.P. it is one of the biggest workforce barriers we face. Employers can't hire, parents can't work, and communities can't grow if families don't have reliable, affordable childcare. I would:

Advocate for reimbursement rates that reflect the true cost of care in rural areas.

Promote programs that help childcare workers access training, credentials, and fair wages.

Develop programs for before and after school and summer education programs partially funded by parents for a nominal fee.

Increase grants and startup support for in-home providers and small centers, which are often the only viable model in low-population areas.

Streamline licensing and reduce unnecessary red tape while maintaining safety standards.

Support shared-services networks so small providers can pool administrative costs.

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?

The best way to improve measurable outcomes for K-12 students in northern Michigan and the U.P. is to focus on the fundamentals that actually move the needle: early literacy, strong career pathways, teacher retention, and equitable access to the resources rural schools need to compete. Our students are just as capable as students anywhere else but they don't

always have the same opportunities.
Expand evidence-based early literacy programs and tutoring.

Support smaller class sizes and intervention staff in rural districts where one struggling student can shift an entire classroom.

Expand CTE programs, skilled-trades partnerships, and work-based learning so students see real career opportunities in northern Michigan.

Support transportation funding so rural students can actually access regional CTE centers.

Strengthen partnerships between schools, community colleges, and employers to align training with local industry needs.

Incentivize teacher recruitment and retention in high-need rural areas.

Support programs that help paraprofessionals become certified teachers.

Expand housing and childcare solutions for educators because workforce shortages affect schools too.

It is imperative that we continue the 6mil education tax on property.

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?

Small businesses in northern Michigan and the U.P. consistently say the same thing: They're asking for clear, consistent, predictable rules that don't change every year or get interpreted differently depending on who you talk to. The biggest barriers aren't always the regulations themselves, but the uncertainty, delays, and complexity around them.

I would work to fix the basics:

Long wait times for environmental, building, and licensing approvals. Businesses should know how long a permit will take, what information is required, and who to contact for help.

One centralized portal for permits, licensing and compliance

Clear documents written in plain language

Any decision I make will take into consideration the cost impact on small and seasonal businesses.

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 becomes more affordable and more competitive when we focus on the basics that matter to families and employers.

Lower costs, reliable infrastructure, a strong workforce, and predictable rules are what drive long-term economic growth in northern Michigan and the U.P.