

**Key Informant Perspectives  
Marquette and Alger Counties  
COMPASS II – January - March 2003  
United Way of Marquette County**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

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### **COMPASS II A Community-Building Initiative**

COMPASS II is a community-building initiative to engage community stakeholders in sustained, collaborative, strategic efforts to strengthen and improve conditions in the community. This initiative is lead by the United Way of Marquette County (UWMC) on behalf of the Alger-Marquette Human Services Coordinating Body (AMHSCB) and the residents of Alger and Marquette Counties. This community-building initiative begins with an assets-based comprehensive community needs assessment, and the goal is the development and pursuit of a community-generated impact plan, including goals, objectives and measures.

COMPASS II goes beyond the original COMPASS, a needs assessment developed by United Way of America in 1988. The United Way of America modified, field-tested and validated this updated version, expanding it to a community-building guide. The last community needs assessment was completed in 1994-95 in an effort lead by the AMHSCB. That assessment focused primarily on the health and human service needs of Marquette and Alger Counties. Human service organizations continue to utilize the information from the 1994-95 assessment to procure funding, plan and initiate programs, and allocate funding to identified priority areas. Recently, area human service organizations' fund-seeking efforts have been hampered by the lack of current critical data. In addition, a significant number of events have occurred, nationally and locally since 1995, including the loss of all funding to the AMHSCB. Therefore, the UWMC assumed the leadership role and is actively sought sponsorship funds to cover the cost to implement this comprehensive community-building initiative.

As with the original COMPASS in 1995, this report describes the process and the partnership sponsoring this survey, relates when possible how this information will be used to develop solutions to the problems identified, and provides certain data and outcomes of surveys. This report exists mainly as a summary of the most pressing community needs according to assessment findings. The report format is designed specifically to replicate the format of its predecessor to facilitate ease in use. As the use of the 1995 COMPASS results continues to the present, comparisons between results of 1995 and 2003 are included herein. This report does not include all information gathered and analyzed in assessing our communities needs. Additional information appears in the attached appendices and through contacts mentioned later in this document. This document is available on the United Way of Marquette County website, [www.unitedway@uwmqt.org](http://www.unitedway@uwmqt.org) and at local libraries.

## **SPONSORS**

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**United Way of Marquette County gratefully acknowledges the following sponsors for their financial support of the 2003 COMPASS II (listed alphabetically):**

- **Alger Marquette Community Action Board**
- **Alger Marquette Human Services Coordinating Body**
- **Frazier Fund**
- **Lutheran Social Services**
- **Marquette Community Foundation**
- **Marquette County Health Department**
- **Marquette Alger Youth Foundation**
- **Medical Care Access Coalition**
- **Reynolds Foundation**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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**A Community Stakeholder Advisory Group guided this assessment effort. Its members offered valuable insights and advice. Stakeholder segments and their representatives are:**

<b><u>Stakeholder Segment</u></b>	<b><u>Representative</u></b>
<b><u>Business/Economic Development</u></b>	<b><u>Sandy Spoelstra</u></b>
<b><u>Community Action</u></b>	<b><u>Earl Hawn</u></b>
<b><u>Disability Community</u></b>	<b><u>Carol Barbacovi-Muscoe</u></b>
<b><u>Disadvantaged</u></b>	<b><u>Robyn Loviska</u></b>
<b><u>Domestic Violence</u></b>	<b><u>Jane Richards</u></b>
<b><u>Education</u></b>	<b><u>June Schaefer</u></b>
<b><u>Elderly</u></b>	<b><u>Jackie Boxer</u></b>
<b><u>Faith Based Organizations</u></b>	<b><u>Nancy Amacher</u></b>
<b><u>Health</u></b>	<b><u>George Sedlacek</u></b>
<b><u>Hospitals</u></b>	<b><u>Karen MacLachlan</u></b>
<b><u>Law Enforcement</u></b>	<b><u>Tony Benaglio</u></b>
<b><u>Local Government</u></b>	<b><u>Rochelle Cotey</u></b>
<b><u>Local Government</u></b>	<b><u>Sandy Gayk</u></b>
<b><u>Mental Health</u></b>	<b><u>Doug Morton</u></b>
<b><u>Tribes</u></b>	<b><u>Leslie Young</u></b>
<b><u>Workforce Development</u></b>	<b><u>Deb Doyle</u></b>
<b><u>Youth</u></b>	<b><u>Judy Watson Olson</u></b>

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Throughout the winter of 2003, the Director and a Senior Associate of Huron Mountain Research Services personally interviewed 34 local leaders in Marquette and Alger Counties. A list of these key informants may be found in Appendix A. The rubric guide for these interviews, which also serves as the outline for this report, may be found in Appendix B. These interviews are one of three streams of inquiry to constitute the database for Compass II. The other two streams are a telephone survey of the Marquette and Alger communities and a resource inventory of service providing agencies and service supportive clubs and organizations of the two counties.

Compass II is a community building process which contains both provisions for social needs and assets inventories, and community representative visioning councils to deliberate and implement the strategy for improvement, which deliberations and implementation are to be based on the needs and assets inventories. It has been the assignment of Huron Mountain Research Services to do the needs and assets inventories, which will derive from the three streams of inquiry described in the first paragraph above.

Following the order of the rubric, Key Informant responses have been grouped in the following categories:

1. Perspectives on Regional Economic Development
2. Perceptions of Impediments to Regional Economic Development
3. Contributions to Regional Economic Development
4. Perceptions of the Most Significant Social Issues in the Area
5. How Key Informants or their Organizations Ameliorate at Least Some of these Issues
6. Perceptions of the Main Assets of the Region
7. How Key Informants or their Organizations are Associated with these Assets
8. Suggestions for a More Effective Operation of the United Way

**Perspectives on Regional Economic Development**

Key Informants were first asked what they saw as the main prospects for economic development of this region. The three most frequently suggested areas of economic development were

- Tourism
- New, compatible businesses
- Further development of existing industries.

The most frequently identified area of economic development of this region, including Marquette and Alger Counties, was **tourism**. Fully 22 of the 36 Key Informants mentioned tourism as one of or the primary prospect for economic development. In defense of this choice, one respondent said:

This is a natural wonderland.

Another said:

Our area offers assets which people are willing to pay for.

And another, referring to one of the attractions we could offer tourists, said:

We have world class artists.

The second most frequently mentioned type of development, mentioned almost as frequently as was tourism, is **the development of new business**. This option was mentioned with qualifications of the type of business which would be most compatible with this ecological area, or with the local culture. Thus, four respondents stipulated that the businesses should be those with low environmental impact, or those which would be the fit here. Eight respondents stipulated “small, high tech, entrepreneurial businesses.” Five respondents specified high tech service businesses. Finally, the use of the internet, allowing people to work from their homes, could represent an area of new business development. In this connection, one respondent urged use of the internet, “which connects us to the rest of the world without us leaving.” But another rejoined, referencing the proposed use of high technology generally:

I don't think we are capable of taking advantage of electronic technology.

The third most frequently mentioned type of development mentioned was expansion of **the hospital and health services industry** currently in place in Marquette County. The fourth most frequently mentioned type was to **encourage current businesses**, which would include the health services industry. To defend these choices, a number of respondents said, essentially, “build upon what you got.” One respondent specified that “85% of development is going to come from existing businesses.” In this same vein, one other respondent said:

We should build off the fortunes of NMU and of the Hospital, and few companies out ‘at the base’.

Mentioned by at least four Key Informants was **the University**, specifically, and **recreation and sport tournaments**. **Forest products** was mentioned by three, and **more retailers** and the development of Marquette as a “**center of regional governmental entities**” was mentioned by one respondent each.

Finally, in commenting about development in general, one respondent offered:

We should publicize this livable areas as a good place to live.

### **Perceptions of Impediments to Regional Economic Development**

The Key Informants were then asked what they saw as the main impediments to economic development. The frequently most mentioned impediments to regional economic development were:

- Distance, Remoteness
- Attitudinal
- Lack of community support for collective efforts

The most frequently mentioned impediment was **distance or remoteness**. This was mentioned by 11 respondents. Three additional respondents mentioned the climate, specifically the snow.

Seven respondents mentioned **a shared attitude** which they claim is an impediment to economic development. This attitude refers to the lack of ‘system thinkers,’ of the lack of a ‘bigger vision.’ Another respondent referred to the lack of a ‘consistent vision.’

The third most frequently mentioned impediment, mentioned by five respondents, is the lack of community support for collective efforts. One of these respondents said:

Independence inhibits collective efforts.

Other impediments mentioned by more than one respondent are:

- limited transportation system, including the rail network, four respondents,
- Lack of start up funds, 3 respondents, and
- lack of key industries which foster innovation, two respondents.

One respondent offered:

We lack a full entrepreneurial spirit.

And another offered:

I don't think there are any impediments to tourism.

## **Contributions to Regional Economic Development**

Respondents were asked how they or their organization contributed to the economic development of the region. The three most frequently mentioned contributions were:

- Training, educating youth, workforce development,
- Investment in the area, and
- The employment of area workers.

Eight respondents mentioned their involvement in the training of workers, the education of youth, and workforce development as their contribution to the area's economic development. Another eight mentioned their investment in the area, including financial investment, the expansion of physical structures, or the expansion of operations in the area. And seven additional respondents referred to their employment of, usually, large numbers of local workers as a contribution to economic development.

Four respondents each cited the following contributions:

- Keeping the people informed
- Partnering and networking with local developmental parties
- Provision of capital

Providing sustaining services and the provision of guidance and editorial comment were mentioned by two each.

Finally, three unique contributions were cited.

- Provision of the largest convention center in the UP,
- The provision of strategic planning services, and
- The provision of worker recruitment and placement services.

## **Perceptions of the Most Significant Social Issues in the Area**

Key Informants were then asked to identify what they perceived as the three highest priority social issues, or problems, in Marquette or Alger County. The six issues identified, in order of their frequency of mention are:

- Addiction, particularly alcohol addiction (21 respondents),
- Poverty or joblessness (16 respondents),
- Lack of medical access (10 respondents),
- The emigration of educated young people (6 respondents),
- Domestic violence (4 respondents), and
- Maintenance of quality K-12 education (2 respondents).

The addictive substance most frequently mentioned is alcohol. Fully 16 of the 21 respondents, referred specifically to ‘alcohol abuse’ or simply ‘alcohol.’ Three respondents referred to gambling, and two respondents referred to tobacco.

Nine of the 16 respondents who referred to poverty or joblessness referred specifically to ‘underemployment.’ Five referred to ‘low income’ or ‘poverty.’ And two referred to inadequate economic development and/or insufficient jobs.

‘Lack of medical access’ refers to inadequate health care, health insurance, or, specifically medical access.

Emigration of educated young people is straightforward, and was referred to directly. Domestic violence is undistinguished by three respondents; one respondent specifically referenced child abuse and neglect. Maintaining quality education was otherwise not elaborated.

These represent all of the issues mentioned by the Key Informants. However, it should be noted that issues identified by 10 or more Key Informants are only the top three, 1) Addiction, particularly to alcohol; 2) poverty or joblessness; and 3) lack of medical access.

## **How Key Informants or their Organizations Ameliorate at Least Some of these Issues**

Key Informants identified four major areas which would serve to ameliorate the issues they identified. These are:

- Education, the provision of information,
- Provision of health services,
- Employment of (young) people, and
- Provision of transportation services.

Education and/or the provision of information accounts for eight respondents, the most frequently mentioned ameliorative method. Four specifically sited education, and four generally or specifically referred to the provision of information, particularly to the general public. Envisioned, of course, is an educational campaign; thus, both of these sets of four fit into one category.

Five respondents mentioned the provision of health services as an ameliorative, and five respondents mentioned the employment of people, two specifically referring to young people. Three respondents referred to the provision of transportation services. One respondent referred to the injection of capital, not otherwise specified, as an ameliorative measure.

### Perceptions of the Main Assets of the Region

Three assets were mentioned by 10 or more Key Informants.

- Open, clean environment
- Sense of community; caring, friendly people
- Quality of life

These are not unrelated. Additionally, a number of other assets were mentioned by respondents, most also related to the above three. Those listed by three or more respondents are:

- Quality education,
- Quality health care,
- Northern Michigan University,
- Regional hub,
- Natural resources, and
- Quality of workers.

The most frequently mentioned asset, ranking far above all others, is our **geographical environment**, including the beauty of the outdoors, including its beauty, quietness, and opportunities for outdoor recreation. It would also include our cultural artifacts, including the quality of our K-12 and university education, or health and medical services, and the centrality of Marquette in the UP. And there are social benefits, including the collaborative spirit, a caring and friendly people, and a strong sense of community. So, these factors are closely interrelated.

The next two are **‘sense of community,’** including caring, friendly people, mentioned by 12 respondents, and **‘quality of life,’** which includes outdoor recreation, cultural opportunities, and affordable housing, mentioned by 11 respondents. Quality of life, however, also includes the benefits of our environment, which include its beauty, quietness, and opportunities for outdoor recreation. It would also include our cultural artifacts, including the quality of our K-12 and university education, or health and medical services, and the centrality of Marquette in the UP. And there are social benefits, including the collaborative spirit, a caring and friendly people, and a strong sense of community. So, these factors are closely interrelated.

### How Key Informants or their Organizations are Associated with these Assets

Most Key Informants declined to respond to this item. The one ‘association’ mentioned by multiple Informants is the use of the geographic environment to attract employees. Other statements made in response to this item were:

- ▶ The medical center uses the resources of the university.
- ▶ Radio talks a lot about our area.
- ▶ We work with the health care system.
- ▶ We are associated with the work ethic.

### **Objects of Pride**

Key Informants were asked to identify the organizational object of their administration or involvement of which they were most proud. Although this was an orienting question for the following items on the rubric, it, nevertheless, yielded interesting responses. These responses fell into the following three categories:

- Serving people, including the provision of quality employment,
- A significant contribution to the community, and
- Enhanced organization in the community.

### **Suggestions for a More Effective Operation of the United Way**

Key Informants made a number of observations and suggestions with respect to the operation of the United Way. The suggestions may be grouped in six categories,

- The need to enhance communication with the community, generally, and more particularly with respect to
  - its administrative costs,
  - its beneficiaries, and
  - its designation options;
- The need of the Director to become better acquainted in the community; the need to circulate more widely;
- The annual campaign;
- The need for the United Way to assert its leadership;
- The need to focus its allocation process; and
- The need to collaborate.

There were also a few comments made by individual Key Informants, which will also be listed. Before that, the categorical suggestions will be discussed.

The need to **enhance communications with the community**, generally;

The United Way need to visit businesses a little more. It needs to offer incentives to businesses which have to raise money from their employees. Have a reward system: gold, silver, and bronze awards.

The United Way does not “toot their horn enough.”

There is a need to educate the public about the allocation process throughout the year, not just during the campaign.

The United Way has been very good at getting information to the media.

The national United Way affects the image of the local United Way; so, the United Way needs highly effective people to represent them. They have to be reasonable communicators.

“I don’t think the United Way has sufficient presence. I can’t recall hearing or seeing the United Way outside of the campaign.”

its **administrative costs**;

There is a question about its administration costs. They are too high. It is heard that the United Way’s administrative costs are 25%. The concern is that it is not efficient.

its **beneficiaries**;

The United Way needs to inform the public of all the services its funds.

its **designation options**.

Somehow the United Way has to make their appeal better. Some people who work here live out of town. The ability to designate beneficiaries has to be made clear.

The second set of suggestions were of **the need of the Director to become better acquainted in the community**; the need to circulate more widely.

The Director is not sufficiently visible in the community.

We need to have better awareness. The Director has to be the one who facilitates this. We need our own identity.

The Director is insufficiently known in the community. She has to be out there more; she has to network more. “This is a community that needs to see you, feel you, and touch you.”

The third set of suggestions concerned the organization or conduct of **the annual campaign**.

The visibility of the campaign is low.

Use high profile people for campaign chairs.

Chairs are key. They must be strong, effective communicators.

The fourth set of suggestions concerned the **need for the United Way to assert its leadership**.

The United Way can be an advocate, and lever, for community development. The United Way needs to be a spokesperson for continued development. It needs a banner to proclaim its commitment to a healthy community. It has to be a leader.

Representation of the United Way has to be strong and effective.

The fifth set of suggestions related to the need to **focus its allocation process**.

The United Way should move toward a “strategic” goal.

“I don’t think the United Way deals with social issues.”

The distribution panel is a good idea. It could be improved by prioritizing the needs, which should be fed into the panel. This would further its rationality.

Finally, the sixth set of suggestions concerned the **need to collaborate**.

The United Way should work with the Lake Superior Partnership.

The United Way and the Community Foundation ought to coordinate their granting procedures.

There were also these comments made by individual Key Informants:

- United Way money is diluted by taking on more and more agencies.
- The United Way ought to offer education to member agencies, to manage more effectively. Technical assistance should be offered. Counsel collaboration with complementary organizations.
- Get administrative costs subsidized by local business.
- The United Way should have no more than a 30 day campaign.
- There is this issue: Although the United Way is there, many agencies raise their own funds.
- For us, the paperwork required is not worth the effort to get the small grant.

The main issues concerning the United Way was for it to inform the community more frequently and more thoroughly, for the Director to circulate more, and to be in the public more often, and for the United Way to play a leadership role in the County with respect to social issues and community development.

## APPENDIX A

### List of Key Informants Interviewed

Rose Allard, United Cerebral Palsy of Michigan  
Michael Anderegg, Judge, Marquette County Probate Court  
Judith Bailey, Ph.D., President, Northern Michigan University  
Leslie Bek, Les is More  
Mary Bowerman, Munising  
Jacki Boxer-Silta, Marquette County Commission on Ageing  
Stu Bradley, Edward Jones Investments  
Amy Clickner, Lake Superior Community Partnership  
Rochelle Cotey, Al-Tran  
Beth Davis, Lutheran Social Services  
Deb Doyle, Michigan Works!  
Julia Hadas, Marquette County FIA  
Earl Hawn, AMCAB  
Rita Hodgins, Regional MSU Extension Office  
Walt Lindala, Great Lakes Radio  
Sue LeGalley, Marquette  
Robyn Loviska, Alter-Marquette FIA  
Ray Miles, Bell Memorial, Interim CEO  
Hugh Miller, Peninsula Medical Center  
Doug Morton, Pathways  
William Nemacheck, CEO, Marquette General Hospital  
Carole Pence, Pence Consulting  
Steve Powers, Marquette County Supervisor  
Robert Raica, Marquette General Hospital  
Jim Reeves, Publisher and General Manager, The Mining Journal  
Amy Rosemergy, SAIL  
Rich Rossway, Bell Memorial Hospital  
Don Ryan, CCI  
June Schaffer, Ph.D., Superintendent, Marquette-Alger Regional Educational Service  
Agency  
George Sedlacek, Marquette County Department of Health  
Michael Skytta, Wells-Fargo  
Patrick Smith, Superintendent, Marquette Area Public Schools  
Brad Van Sluyters, WLUC-TV6  
Judy Watson-Olson, Marquette/Alger Youth Foundation  
Dennis West, Northern Initiatives

## APPENDIX B

### Key Informant Interview Rubric

### Key Informants' Interviews COMPASS II -- January 2003

#### Rubric

Hello. I am \_\_\_\_\_, Director; Senior Associate of Huron Mountain Research Services. I am conducting this interview as part of the COMPASS II Community Asset Survey. This is an enterprise of the Marquette Alger Human Services Coordinating Body, and it is facilitated by the United Way of Marquette County.

The United Way is funding this survey with non-donor dollars.

1. What do you see as the main prospects for the economic development of this region?
2. What would you say are the main impediments to the economic development of this region?
3. How can (you, your company/association/office) contribute to the economic development of this region?

Turning now to social issue:

4. What do you see as the three (3) highest priority social (issues/problems) in Marquette County? In Alger County?
5. Can (you, your company/association/office) contribute (significantly) to the amelioration of these problems?
6. What would you identify as the three (3) main assets of this region?
7. Is/are (you, your company/association/office) associated with these assets?
8. Is the United Way (of Marquette County) effective in dealing with these issue/problems?

Now to talk about your (company/association/office).

9. What would you identify as the proudest accomplishment of your (company/organization/office)?
10. How many (employees/members/participants) does your (company/association/office) currently have?
11. What is your current level of production?

And now a couple of questions about the United Way.

12. Could the United Way be more effective? How?
13. The United Way fell very short of its contribution goal this last fall. How could the United Way raise (more money/money more effectively/be more successful)?

Is there anything else you would like to add?