



2022 Marketing Brief

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An Overview of Our Brand

Over the last two years we have watched the growth of business development across our city, including within our own organization and team. There is a shift towards greater collaboration in our economic development community, and building trusted partnerships rooted in transparency is a pillar Innovate Marquette intends to stand on for our community.

We are humbled to bring a few incredible opportunities home to the Marquette area along with our trusted partners:

1. **The first**, being selected to join the highly competitive 2020 cohort of the Rural Innovation Initiative, connecting our community to innovative rural partners all over the country.
2. **The second**, becoming one of just seven rural communities nationwide to receive a Capital Challenge grant via the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) through the Build to Scale (B2S) program. The grant, called Capital Challenge, will infuse \$611,911 into local economic development efforts over the next three years.
3. **And lastly**, Innovate Marquette has been hard at work, collaborating with our local economic development partners to create a new and exciting innovation hub that will bolster and expand our existing entrepreneurial ecosystem.

With all of that in mind we decided it was time to shine all of the hard work our incredible team has done from the inside out. This refresh is a both reflection of and a promise to the community that we serve. While a lot of work has been done, there is also much to do to preserve what makes this community unique and take it into the future.

Brand Narrative

*****Internal use only: the purpose of a brand narrative is to aide in getting putting our internal team and partners in tune with our brand. Read with the intent of getting into the Innovate Marquette mindset such as before board meetings, team meetings, speaking engagements, etc.***

Fueled by the warmth of a sunset over Sugarloaf Mountain and the awe-inspiring appearance of the Northern Lights, Innovate Marquette invites entrepreneurial spirits and innovative minds to accelerate their ideas and business ventures in a community that not only welcomes, but celebrates creativity, ingenuity, and determination.

Innovate Marquette welcomes technology-focused entrepreneurs and innovative business ventures into our downtown innovation hub, a place for those with the gumption to think outside of the nine to five seeking the space, talent, and resources to grow. We are steadfast in our mission to make the Southern shores of Lake Superior a location where entrepreneurship, the



outdoors, and our community are accessible, sustainable, and most importantly, a place where everyone belongs.

With 83 miles of lakeshore and 40+ miles of trails, this northern lifestyle is opulent in natural amenities that pair perfectly with community and collaboration. An international airport, high speed broadband, and a state university create a welcoming space for the innovation teams of established companies and startups alike. From a blossoming creative culture to a mecca in outdoor recreation, this lakeside community has an abundance of thought leaders and generational businesses who prefer balance over the city grind.

Mission

Our mission is to position Marquette as a premier city for innovation and business development through our process to identify, nurture, and cultivate the growth and success of technology-based innovators, entrepreneurs, small businesses, and startups throughout our community. We aim to uplift Marquette's unique business ecosystem by offering access to important resources, funding, workforce talent, and network collaboration. Through this collaboration the Marquette region will continue to be recognized for its ability to draw economic opportunity to the shores of Lake Superior in the years to come.

Together, we can uplift Marquette's unique business ecosystem.

Core Values

The Innovate Marquette team takes pride in upholding our core values through transparency and honesty, as we believe them to be non-negotiable when making decisions not only for our internal team but for the clients and community we serve.

Our company culture is the set of behaviors and practices that have evolved from these values and our mission, reflecting how leaders and employees act even when no one is watching.

1. **Accessibility** - We aim to enable all innovators, inventors, and entrepreneurs to gain equitable and inclusive access to necessary resources, funding, education and collaboration in the Marquette community through our network of ecosystem partners.
2. **Collaboration** - While entrepreneurship is often seen as a lonely endeavor, we believe that by tapping into our vast array of local and regional partners we can leverage the best resources for local entrepreneurs, innovators, and business owners.
3. **Creativity** - We believe creativity is the backbone of entrepreneurship, technology and innovation and are dedicated to supporting creative thinking and businesses to fuel our economy.



4. **Belonging** - Everyone deserves a place where they belong which is why we believe one cannot have innovation without a sense of belonging. We do this by providing equal opportunities and resources to all, including those who may otherwise be excluded or marginalized.
5. **Sustainability** - Sustainable economics and business practices are at the core of our organization. We approach sustainable practices for ourselves, our clients, and our community from a human, social, economic, and environmental perspective.

Invent@NMU Partnership

In July of 2017, Innovate Marquette SmartZone partnered with Invent@NMU to help enhance the program's connection to the community while offering mentorship and enhanced business resources to the Upper Peninsula. Innovate Marquette SmartZone and Invent@NMU are located in one office, making it a one-stop-shop for entrepreneurs and inventors. While Innovate Marquette focuses on tech-focused businesses, Invent@NMU acts as a service provider to product development-based entrepreneurs.

Other Partners

Other partners of Innovate Marquette SmartZone include the City of Marquette, the MEDC, MTEC SmartZone in Houghton/Hancock, Northern Michigan University, local and regional economic development organizations and others.

Make it Marquette Remote Work and Business Attraction Initiative

Make It Marquette was created in 2021 by Innovate Marquette SmartZone to attract, retain, and support the people and ideas that will shape the future of the business economy in Marquette, Michigan through telling the stories of those living, working, and starting businesses in Marquette. This remote worker and business attraction campaign launched first, to celebrate the businesses and people of Marquette, and second, to declare our commitment to authentic economic development that supports those here already, and those making a move to be there. It's a commitment to grow this community with intentionality. We're doing that by working with partners across the public, private, and the economic development landscape, and to attract those who'll appreciate this place as much as we all do.

Why are we passionate about remote work and business attraction? We're here to foster and promote an entrepreneurial ecosystem in Marquette and the greater Upper Peninsula. Within that mission lies an affinity to technology-focused startups and the digital community. Remote work and business attraction brings jobs, capital, and opportunity to the people already here while welcoming those looking for a place to plant roots. The beauty of Make It Marquette is that it's designed to bolster the business economy that's here – those jobs that folks can physically



go to – and to attract those who can choose anywhere thanks to remote work. The beauty of remote work is its open borders; it can be for a new person choosing Marquette, or a NMU grad who wants to stay but studied in a field that doesn't yet have a physical presence here. Either way, we want them to Make It Marquette.

Objectives for the Future

Bringing Access to Resources and Capital to Marquette

With the \$611,911 provided by the Capital Challenge grant and matching funds, Innovate Marquette plans to use the new resources to launch the Make it Marquette Start to Scale (Marquette STS) project, which will leverage educational, economic development and capital investor partnerships. Together with project partners, Marquette STS will educate local angel investors about scalable tech investment opportunities and connect to state, regional and national venture capital (VC) networks. Marquette STS outputs and outcomes include the following:

- Support 30 scalable tech startups with the support of \$5,000 to \$30,000 each of financial assistance for services from crowdfunding members.
- Engage 50 new angel investors to provide \$750,000 in seed funding and sponsor 15 startups through acceleration.
- Cultivate 25 new VC firms to invest \$1.5 million to \$5 million in scalable tech startups in Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

SmartZone's are also a gatekeeper to many state funding programs for Michigan start-ups and new business ventures. Learn more by visiting our [Programs & Services](#) page.

Fueling Creative Technology

We believe creativity is the backbone of entrepreneurship, technology and innovation and are dedicated to supporting creative thinking and business to fuel our economy. From intricate coding and cyber security to mobile app development, art and design shape the way humans think and move through all aspects of entrepreneurship.

Long time client Ambitious Games, founded in 2016, is an indie gaming studio right here in Marquette. Together we have assisted in entrepreneur Silas Talley's advancement from napkin drawing through funding and have connected him to the resources available through Innovate Marquette and our local and regional partners.



Fostering an Entrepreneurial Community of Belonging

Everyone deserves a place where they belong which is why we believe one cannot have innovation without a sense of belonging. We do this by providing equal opportunities and resources to all, as well as those who may otherwise be excluded or marginalized. Providing education, supporting accessibility to resources and networking, or working with products that benefit the community we serve.

One example is our Women in Entrepreneurship event, an annual celebration, free to the public, to share business resources in parallel with a networking opportunity to bring together many of the Upper Peninsula's incredible entrepreneurs and small business owners.

Our upcoming Tech Talks event series, is another example. Here we will educate our Marquette community about the opportunities in the tech field as well as speak to the importance of diversity and inclusion within the space and how we all can work towards a more equitable economy.

Sustainable Business Attraction and Retention

While intricate trail networks, fresh water and an abundance of space are perks of our community it's the people that make it whole. That's why Innovate Marquette created the Make It Marquette initiative in 2021: to attract, retain, and support the people and ideas that will shape the future of the business economy in Marquette, Michigan

By telling the stories of those living, working, and starting businesses in Marquette we declare our commitment to authentic economic development that supports those here already, and those making a move to be there. From the launch of our Local Links ambassador program to creation of a Relocation Guide, we are here to foster a collaborative, regenerative economy to bring opportunity to the Queen City.

Through our People of Marquette series, we tell the stories of those making an impact in our community.

Target Audience and Markets

About Statement

Innovate Marquette was established in 2015, adding its name to the twenty one other SmartZones located in the state of Michigan. Our organization exists as a [service provider to the Michigan Economic Development Corporation \(MEDC\)](#) to transform our community into a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem, complete with the necessary resources, technology, capital,



and array of opportunities to support local tech-focused start-ups, new business ventures, and existing businesses.

Additionally, we are working to attract and retain scalable technology companies and start-ups to the Marquette area in order to create higher-paying jobs and increased opportunities for the community as a whole. We are actively seeking to connect new entrepreneurs, small businesses, startups, and innovators into our ever-growing entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Thanks to the support of the [MEDC](#), the [City of Marquette](#), [Northern Michigan University](#) and our other dedicated partners, Innovate Marquette is able to provide comprehensive support, guidance, and services to local entrepreneurs through our vast network.

Purpose Statement

Innovate Marquette seeks to thoughtfully and powerfully connect our entrepreneurial ecosystem through collaboration to make a business community that is inclusive and approachable for all innovators, entrepreneurs, and business owners. With a focus on technology-based ventures that enable **accessibility**, **sustainability**, and **creativity** within our region we act as a resource with our partners to build opportunities for the careers of the future while honoring the roots and natural wonders signature to Marquette.

Audiences

Tech Boomerangs



“I’m considering moving back to Marquette, but am not sure there is a place for me yet”

MQT County Locals



“I love my town and encourage growth without hindering our ‘small town charm’ ”

**Economic
Development
Partners**



“I’m excited to participate and collaborate in building the future of our city while preserving what makes it special for those who have been here for generations”

Investors



“I’m looking for opportunities to invest in rural areas but want to make infrastructure and resources exist to back my investment and future returns”



Tech Boomerangs

- Make it Marquette overlap with different messaging; NMU alumni, MQT county high schools' alumni, those looking to move back to the area and/or bring their remote job or tech focused business with them.

"I'm considering moving back to Marquette, but am not sure there is a place for me yet"

Candice is from Holland, MI and graduated from NMU with a degree in entrepreneurship in 2010 where she met her now husband Tylor, a NMU & Marquette High School graduate, who works remotely in IT. She has since co-founded and sold multiple ventures in Austin, TX and is looking for the next location to bring her new, sustainable business ideas. With the cost of living rising and a family on the horizon, she and Tylor are highly considering a move to Marquette. They hesitate leaving the amenities and network they've built in Austin behind, but crave being active in the outdoors and business community in Marquette.

What do they need to hear?

There is a place for you here! Innovate Marquette is a premier resource for entrepreneurs looking to relocate their business and life. We recognize the hardship in entrepreneurship and relocation and are here to aide through our vast regional network as well as our Make it Marquette initiative.

- Business relocation success stories
- Incubator and accelerator stories
- Make it MQT Local Links
- Outdoor recreation and local amenities
- Resources and successes of our partners (i.e. housing, childcare, transportation, etc)

How we communicate to them:

- Social & digital media
- Web updates & SEO
- Hosting and sponsoring events both in person and virtually
- Client storytelling
- Press
- Sharing Make it Marquette stories and community-driven news

MQT County Locals

- Make it Marquette overlap with difference messaging; tax payers, business owners, board members, hospital and NMU staff, students, etc.

"I love my town and encourage growth without hindering our 'small town charm'. "



Diane is a lifelong citizen of Marquette and active in her community. She is 61, caring for her parents who also live in town in the home she grew up in, and is married with two kids who both live locally and her grandkids are in the public school system. She's been a homemaker and worked in the shops, and she volunteers to maintain the trail system as well. When her kids were young, she led the PTO and her and a group of girlfriends "adopt" a family or two every year around Christmas time. She's passionate about keeping the small-town charm of MQT and knows her voice is important. Her friends, relatives, and neighborhood Facebook group all rely on her for information, because she attends many city meetings and sits on a committee.

What do they need to hear?

You are an important part of our community, and what matters to you matters to us, too. Through our sustainable approach to building a more accessible community where everyone feels they belong we aim to make entrepreneurship and tech jobs more attainable to locals on the ground. More successful people with good jobs is the high tide that will rise all ships in Marquette.

- Tech Talk events
- Client success stories and information on local job creation
- Sponsorship and participation of local organizations and events
- Transparency on what we are up to, how it is funded, and who it benefits
- Resources and successes of our partners (i.e. housing, childcare, transportation, etc)

How we communicate to them:

- Social & digital media
- Local press
- Sponsorship of certain events and organizations
- Hosting our own events and inviting them in
- City council & LDFA meetings

EDO Partners

- State and local economic development professionals such as the City of Marquette, Travel Marquette innovation hub partners, other SZs, independent accelerators and incubators such as 20 Fathoms; all people who we can continue to network and partner with for the greater good of Marquette and our mission

"I'm excited to participate and collaborate in building the future of our city while preserving what makes it special for those who have been here for generations"

Ed works for an economic development organization in Marquette that is located in the downtown innovation hub. Prior to working in our community, he worked in Lansing with a



passion for passing policy that benefits our rural communities here in the Upper Peninsula. He is excited about the collaboration happening in the area but is struggling to find balance between propelling us forward and assuring those with stake in aspects of the community are heard and valued. Outside of his job he is on several local boards, volunteers for Start the Cycle, and is active in the mountain biking community. His wife is a professor of science at NMU and his son just bought a house in Ishpeming after being priced out of Marquette.

What do they need to hear?

We are here to be your partner and uplift the important work you are doing. Our clients benefit when we all succeed in our mission of making Marquette a premiere city for innovation in sustainability, accessibility, creativity, and a place where everyone belongs.

- Supporting events and accomplishments of other economics development organizations
- Inviting them to participate in our events and accomplishments
- Staying in our lane and collaborating where it makes sense
- Resources and successes of our partners (i.e. housing, childcare, transportation, etc)
- Transparency

How we communicate to them:

- In person meetings
- Local networking events like Econ Club and Connect Marquette events
- Supporting their events and inviting them to participate in our events
- Social & digital media
- Local press

Investors

- Michigan Angel Fund, Innovation Shore Network, big businesses like Ford, NMU Foundation, high net worth individuals, state angel networks, venture capitalists, local investors and manufacturing companies looking to invest in rural areas and entrepreneurs within our client roster

"I'm looking for opportunities to invest in rural areas but want to make infrastructure and resources exist to back my investment and future returns"

Kerry was born and raised in Marquette and has lived in metro Detroit for 30 years. They spend three weeks every summer in their summer home on the Dead River Basin in Negaunee with their partner and three shelter dogs. Kerry is an advisor to the Michigan Angel Fund and active in the Detroit start-up community, but as they edge closer to retirement have been looking to get more involved with start-ups in the U.P. but are leery that there is sufficient infrastructure to breed a return on investment. Kerry's partner Dylan has worked in sustainability for decades and would love to see more sustainable, diverse businesses drive the economy outside of



natural resource extraction. Dylan is interested in getting more involved with the local community, specifically as a mentor to entrepreneurs in the sustainability space. Both are animal lovers actively involved in the Detroit shelters and have a passion for trail running, live music, and locally sourced brews.

What do they need to hear?

There are resources and infrastructure here to prop up entrepreneurs that will help increase chances for a return on investment. Marquette is a thriving rural city booming with opportunity and balanced in both entrepreneurial mindset and nature. While we work as a resource for technology-focused ventures we partner and collaborate with other EDO partners to assure key infrastructure like housing, transportation, childcare, and broadband are top of mind and accessible. Things that Marquette brings to the table includes:

- State university to source talent
- Downtown innovation hub rich in a collaborative mindset
- Incubator and accelerator programs for budding entrepreneurs
- Sustainable business practices are top of mind here
- Marquette city has high speed broadband
- Resources and successes of our partners (i.e. housing, childcare, transportation, etc)
- Our international airport and other local infrastructure are getting many upgrades
- Transparency

How we communicate to them:

- Networking by our internal team
- Word of mouth from other SmartZones and state/regional partners
- Client and innovation hub success in the press
- Social media and digital channels
- Web updates and SEO

Brand Strategy

Innovate Marquette

- **Goal:** To position Marquette as the next great community for tech-focused entrepreneurs that fosters sustainability, accessibility, and creativity within industries like outdoor recreation, manufacturing, and economic advancement. We will do this through our three brands by aiding our audience's understanding of all the growth happening right here in our area. We aim to gain trust from community members, build relationships



with other economic organization partners, gain investment for our clients, and attract tech-focused entrepreneurs to our area and into our process.

- **Strategy:** We will continue to develop our website SEO strategy to include pages on our incubator and accelerator program, entrepreneur in residence program, service offerings, as well as a backlog of short form content that can be used as free resources to the community at large. In addition, storytelling through written and video content will be at the center of driving the information from these pages and our organization to the end user. Lastly, sponsorships and event marketing will allow us to continue building in-person relationships with our partners and the community as well as help funnel new clients and investors through our door.
- **Implementation:**
 - Content and video marketing will be done through targeted digital channels to tell the stories of our client and partner success, Make it Marquette initiative, Invent@NMU program, and community sponsorships & events.
 - We'll continue building media relationships through our partnership with Siren. In addition we will begin to build relationships in other tech hub locations (such as Detroit and Ann Arbor) through podcasts, written stories, and pitching of our part in rural economic development.
 - Print media placement like ads, rack cards, etc. will be important for our in person events and sponsorships.
- **Timelines:** We'll have a Summer 2022 focus on crafting the entrepreneur in residence program story and planning for client storytelling beginning with Ambitious Games. Come Fall 2022 we should be in a good place to begin incubator, accelerator, Protolab, and innovation hub storytelling. All throughout we will be building media awareness, continuing to develop our website, and participating in a variety of community events.

Invent@NMU

- **Goal:** Our goal is two-part: (1) To educate the on-campus community about who we are and what we do and why entrepreneurship is both important and relevant to all academic concentrations in order to fuel the campus economy and bring top talent to our program. (2) To educate the greater Marquette community on who we are and what we do for entrepreneurs who have an idea that is in the product development stage.



- **Strategy:** We aim to help our various audiences understand our process of idea incubation and Invent@NMU as a service provider and mentorship program of IMQT. We will do this through video and written storytelling, creation of process graphics and educational materials, updating our website, and client storytelling.
- **Implementation:** Across digital channels (social, email, web, with addition of TikTok). All will be owned by our student team with monthly direction from the Director of Marketing and day to day support from the marketing coordinator. We will also make sure to have a presence in all aligned on-campus events including partnering with other student organizations.
- **Timelines:** Brand style guide and website updates to be made by the end of Summer 2022. We will also use the summer to create a back log of video and graphic content to push out once school comes back in the fall.

Make it Marquette

- **Goal:** We'll begin to tie our work through the Make it Marquette initiative back to the end goal of SmartZones across the state and here locally in Marquette - growing tech-focused jobs in the Marquette area through attraction.
- **Strategy:** We will do this through the expansion of our Local Links program, sponsorship of NMU homecoming with targeted elements towards investors and talent attraction, website build out of business and careers page as well as housing page, and short form educational content. The SEO strategy currently in place across our website and blogs will continue as well as carry over to YouTube and Innovate Marquette. Our PoM series will end and we will strategize utilizing Innovate Marquette client storytelling across our platforms through video as well as short form video storytelling like Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts
- **Implementation:** A marketing assistant will continue to spearhead social media channels for Make it Marquette, our marketing coordinator and content writer (as needed) will continue to develop written content to drive our SEO strategy and tell stories of the opportunities in the greater Marquette area for business development and entrepreneurship. Our People of Marquette series will end this year but I would like to utilize our IMQT client storytelling as Reels on our IG platform.
- **Timelines:** End of the summer to collect and strategize on Local Links program expansion and events, Maddie will work to build out new pages on our website in parallel



with the IMQT website to build links between the brands by the end of summer and before our NMU Homecoming sponsorship. Our People of Marquette series will end this year and I would like to utilize our IMQT client story telling as Reels on our IG platform.

Critical Communications Plan

This plan will be utilized to aide our entire team in effective, intentional communications across all of our audience demographics to continue being transparent and trustworthy in the eyes and hearts of our community.

Partnership Marketing

Partnership marketing will allow us to expand our reach across all of our target markets through the following strategies:

- Continuation of our contract with strategic communication partner Siren
- Content creation and management, including pitching and contributing to important online and print publications that will get us in front of our target audience in other areas of the state and Midwest region (i.e. StartUp Nation, TechTown, etc.)
- Community building and development (innovation hub, sponsorships, event marketing, event partnerships, team board participation, etc.)

Upcoming Projects

Our marketing team will focus on the branding and storytelling of the following projects:



- Vanbassador collaboration (TBD)



Client Storytelling

Success stories on the docket:

[REDACTED]