

# Keynote Lineup

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**December 2, 2019**  
NMC Hagerty Center  
715 E. Front St.  
Traverse City, MI 49686

Cost: \$30

Includes conference registration, lunch, and reception!

**Christine Quinn**  
**Regional Administrator, U.S. Department of Labor**



Christine Quinn was appointed as the Regional Administrator of Region 5 - Chicago, US Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, on November 29, 2015. She provides leadership to ten states in America's heartland in designing and oversight of Workforce Systems for employers, youth, and adults - with a focus on customer satisfaction, continuous improvement, and effective and efficient management of resources.

Prior to her appointment Quinn was Director of the Michigan Workforce Development Agency overseeing the staff and programs, including the state's workforce initiatives, adult education, the Veterans' Services Division, and programs related to migrant and seasonal workers. Over two years she was successful in obtaining \$30 million to fund the Skilled Trades Training Fund, providing competitive awards for the development and implementation of employer responsive training that enhances talent incomes, productivity, and employment retention, while increasing the quality and competitiveness of Michigan's businesses. Quinn previously served as President of South Central Michigan Works!, a local workforce board. She earned national recognition for establishing business solutions processes within Michigan's workforce system, and for partnering with Michigan State University to create a curriculum leading to Business Solutions Professional certification. This remains a cornerstone for the systems demand driven approach to workforce/talent development.

Topics: Rural talent development and rural talent attraction

**Penny Lewandowski**  
**Principal, Change at the Edges**



Recognized as a thought leader in entrepreneurship and building an entrepreneurial culture, Penny is off to her newest adventure with her company Change at the Edges. Penny is a certified personal coach and a board member of the International Economic Development Council. She is a frequent speaker on new ways to think about economic development – especially how a grow-from-within strategy leads to thriving and sustainable economies. She is also a passionate and motivational keynote speaker on topics that cover everything from fear, to change and managing the unexpected success. She is author of a blog, "Penny on the Edge."

Topics: Rural Business Development, entrepreneur-led economic development

## **Dawne Bell, CEO Early Childhood Investment Corporation**



Dawne Bell has over eighteen years of experience as a nonprofit leader and fundraiser, specializing on issues affecting children and families. A native Michigander, she has directed award-winning organizations in Michigan, New Mexico, New York City and Arizona. Before returning to her home state in 2018 to join the Early Childhood Investment Corporation as CEO, she most recently led a non-partisan advocacy coalition victory in Arizona, working with the Ducey Administration to increase TANF funding for early child care and education.

Dawne has an MPA from Grand Valley State University and a BA from Kalamazoo College. A graduate of the Fundraising School at Indiana University-Purdue University, she has raised over \$30 million for numerous causes and held the CFRE credential since 2009.

Topics: Childcare challenges and solutions in rural areas

## **Ken Sikkema Public Sector Consultants (Former Michigan Senate Majority Leader)**



A former legislator, Ken is known for his stripes as a prominent Republican. While that distinction sets him apart from most people at a non-partisan policy research company, he is squarely in the firm's center when it comes to finding effective policy solutions rooted in evidence-based research. His unusually broad perspective was shaped by serving, at various times, in the minority and majority, as well as during the historic two years of shared power in the Michigan House of Representatives.

PSC staff and clients value Ken for his ability to provide historical context on almost every public policy issue, as well as his extraordinary collegiality and statesmanlike conduct—attributes he honed while serving alongside five different Michigan governors. Ken is particularly skilled at helping PSC's clients think strategically about their projects—from the proper identification of the problem, to how policymakers think about issues, to the most persuasive ways of presenting findings to influence leaders. He is frequently sought out to provide commentary on and analysis of politics and current events, as well as to offer perspective and counsel to state government leaders.

Ken served in the Michigan Legislature for 20 years—12 in the House and eight in the Senate.

## **Chris Uhl**

### **Executive Director – Eastern Region, IFF**



Chris Uhl joined IFF as the Executive Director – Eastern Region in 2017. Located in IFF's Detroit office, Uhl oversees IFF's full-range of services in Michigan and Ohio, including lending, real estate consulting, and community strategies program operations.

Prior to joining IFF, Uhl served in leadership roles at Rock Ventures LLC, The Skillman Foundation, and Detroit Children's Fund, as well as working several years as a banker at major financial institutions. As Vice President of Social Innovation at The Skillman Foundation, Mr. Uhl helped the foundation move beyond grants to program-related investments in the form of low-interest loans and loan guarantees. He most recently led community investment efforts at Rock Ventures, a Detroit firm that serves and connects a portfolio of more than 100 companies owned by Dan Gilbert – the founder of Quicken Loans and majority owner of the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Topics: rural housing & childcare challenges in Midwest, rural development from 4 distinct vantage points – banking, philanthropy, venture capital, non-profit

## **Professor Jean Hardy**

### **University of Michigan**

"Promoting a Rural Agenda for Economic Development and Technological Advancement in Michigan"



Jean Hardy, MSI is a researcher and PhD Candidate at the University of Michigan School of Information. His research investigates the promotion and advancement of high-tech economies by municipalities, economic and community developers, businesses, and universities in the rural Midwestern United States. Jean is a leader in establishing the academic field of rural computing and his writing has been published in prestigious venues for information and computer science, such as *Information, Communication, & Society* and *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction*.

## **Marty Fittante, CEO InvestUP**



Marty is the former chief of staff for Michigan State Senator Tom Casperson. His legislative works spans numerous industries, including forestry, mining, and health care. He was previously external affairs director for the House Policy Office, a position that he held after serving as legislative director during Senator Casperson's terms in the Michigan House of Representatives. As a policy advisor, he managed three statewide task forces that addressed job creation, education, and agriculture. Marty and his wife Lisa also own an accounting firm in Iron Mountain that serves small and medium sized businesses.

Marty is the inaugural recipient of the Jon Farley Michigan Legislative Staff Award, given to an exceptional staffer who is motivated by a dedication to service and a desire to foster an environment in Lansing based on merit and results. He is also the recipient of the Michigan Junior Chamber of Commerce President's Award of Excellence, and the Daily Press Neighbors Award, presented to residents who "give the Central U.P. its heart and soul."

Marty will talk about an effort he is working on in conjunction with the Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance – to boost rural focus within the Governor's administration by promoting a rural affairs and development department or rural cabinet level position.