Prosperity grant to deliver $185K for a variety of EUP projects in 2016

More than $185,000 from Michigan’s Regional Prosperity Initiative (RPI) will flow into the Eastern Upper Peninsula this year, but it’s not the dollars that have local planners and agencies excited, but rather the possibilities they represent.

Townships, villages and county governments will have the opportunity to apply for mini-grants to foster community development.

A region-wide study of transportation logistics will be another step toward advancing the EUP’s ability to get products and goods to out-of-area markets.

New signage will let locals and visitors know where they can find access points to water trails throughout the region.

Continued enhancement of GIS systems in Chippewa and Mackinac counties will make the use of a variety of mapping products more effective for area planners.

These and several other projects will receive a piece of the RPI pie, thanks to a successful grant application by Eastern Upper Peninsula Regional Planning and Development Commission (EUPRPDC). The Commission board unanimously accepted the grant award at its quarterly meeting in January and the various initiatives should begin to see action as soon as March.

“The RPI funding continues to provide the Commission with much-needed financial support to implement a variety of high-priority projects and initiatives across the region. This program has been integral in launching a series of new efforts led by the Commission and has also allowed EUPRPDC to grow its professional staff and program offerings,” explained Jeff Hagan, Regional Planning CEO.

The funds will also assist with the EUP’s contribution to two Upper Peninsula –wide projects. Some of the monies will be used to supplement required matching funds to develop a Pure Michigan ad campaign featuring the Upper Peninsula. EUPRPDC will also assist the effort by collecting, analyzing and publishing tourism and recreation industry data – a useful tool as continued investment in the region is made.

Another U.P.-wide effort involves collaborating with similar agencies in the central and western U.P. to further foster collaboration among health care organizations. Part of that effort will involve development of a community assessment tool that provides consistent information across the peninsula.

“By working jointly on these UP-wide projects, the Regional Commissions are able to leverage RPI funds to address and implement large scale projects that would otherwise be out of reach for any one of us,” said Hagan.

Some grant dollars will be used to provide staff support and technical assistance to economic development organizations (EDOs) in the area, as well as the cost of shared staffing and expenses of Regional Planning and Workforce Development.

“We are excited to launch this new endeavor to provide direct staff support to our regional EDO’s,” Hagan said. “It has been a changing landscape for economic development in the area with new staff and new initiatives. Through this program and with the benefit of RPI funding, we will be able to provide the additional resources these EDOs need.”
RPI is based on the principle that local citizens and their leaders are best suited to determine the future of regional economies. One caveat of this voluntary, competitive grant process is that it requires multiple organizations to collaborate in the best interest of the region. EUPRPD worked in conjunction with area partners like EUP Michigan Works, county and city Economic Development agencies, and others in the public and private sectors in the development of the grant application.

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