

PROJECT DETAILS

Research objectives:

1. Map people, places, organizations, events, resources and institutions that underpin the Chequamegon Bay creative economy
2. Identify distinct creative communities across the region in terms of place-based activity, creative practice, and/or industry;
3. Determine existing value exchanges between regional creative communities;
4. Measure the growth rate of Chequamegon Bay creative economy.
5. Explore key challenges and opportunities facing Chequamegon Bay creative economy;
6. Drawing on regional assets and networks, develop creative economy policy recommendations appropriate for Chequamegon Bay;
7. Analyze how findings and policy recommendations compare to urban creative economy policies and how they could apply to other rural contexts

Research questions;

1. Which creative communities are active in Chequamegon Bay?
2. How do Chequamegon Bay creative communities compare to urban clusters in terms of spatiality, occupational and industry diversity?
3. How have these communities changed over time?
4. How is the 'region' defined by different creative communities?
5. Do place-based characteristics attract specific kinds of creative workers and organizations to particular communities?
6. To what extent do distinct creative communities (place-based and practice-based) interact with others across the region?
7. How might creative networks and assets be leveraged to produce a more sustainable and inclusive regional creative economy?

What are the anticipated study contributions, and how does it relate to previous research in this area? (Include a brief review of the relevant literature).

The creative economy continues to be a strong policy focus among planners and city officials for generating place-based economic, social and cultural impacts. Creative economy research is largely driven by scholarship in agglomeration economies, which suggests that dense clustering of creative industries spur innovation and regional growth. Specifically, this literature emphasizes the impact of urbanization, highlighting the role of diverse industries, thick labor markets, regional specializations, public goods and urban amenities. Drawing on this research, creative economy development policy focuses on financial incentives, flagship development and placemaking initiatives intended to attract creative workers to buzzy, dense, amenity-rich environments. Despite the evidence on the creative economy's growth potential and its potential role in urban revitalization, some scholars critique that such policies may exacerbate gentrification and uneven development, as benefits flow towards specific neighborhoods and urban centers.

These assumptions underpinning creative economy policies and potential negative impacts pose challenges for rural communities, which are already struggling with poverty, decentralized and declining populations, job loss, and lack of public infrastructure. Although there is some research on *rural* creative economies, this literature largely focuses on tourism, which may not create sustainable economic development nor provide equitable benefits to residents and visitors alike. Despite these challenges, rural communities have long attracted artists, musicians, and writers who make up distinct communities

of artistic and cultural practice. Rural areas are also often home to specialized cultural production and craft such as weaving, metalwork, jewelry and furniture. These dynamics suggest that rural creative economies can play an important role in sustainable regional development beyond tourism. However, considering how rural areas do not share key characteristics with metropolitan regions, additional research is required to understand what place-based characteristics attract and retain creatives to rural communities, how rural creative economies function, and how they may be better supported.

The Chequamegon Bay provides a unique case study for exploring these dynamics. The region is home to multiple communities with distinct industrial histories and socio-economic dynamics. Agriculture, fishing, timber and manufacturing remain important, albeit declining, industries across the region. Tourism has become dominant in places like Bayfield. However, the influx of seasonal renters creates challenges for ensuring affordable housing and maintaining infrastructure for existing residents. County seats like Ashland benefit from the presence of government, educational, and health anchors, yet still experience population decline and economic challenges. By exploring creative economy dynamics across the region, the research will provide insight into how the creative economy operates across a range of places that are largely ignored by research in the field dominated by urban or tourism studies. Further, the research will provide a more nuanced understanding of the kinds of policies necessary to promote sustainable development in different rural contexts.

The research design includes an online survey and three focus groups targeting creative workers from across the region, representing diverse creative and cultural fields.

The online survey (see appendix x) will collect basic demographic, occupational, and industry data, information on their experiences as a creative worker in the Chequamegon Bay region, the value of local creative networks, as well as their perspectives on how to further support their work and the regional creative economy more broadly.

Focus groups (see appendix x) will take place in late October across three sites to ensure broad geographic representation: Ashland, Herbster and Red Cliff. Focus group questions will explore issues introduced in the survey including creative workers' attachment to place and communities of practice, networking opportunities across the region, major challenges and gaps facing the region, and opportunities for strengthening the local creative economy. To aid analysis, focus group conversations will be audio-recorded.

Appendix A: Recruitment Text (to be disseminated via regional networks)

Are you a farmer, artist, craftsperson, or food producer? Then You Are Part of the Creative Economy!
We want to hear from you!

We are seeking individuals who live in the greater South Shore region AND who derive some or all their income from farming, the arts, handcrafts, or other creative endeavors. We invite you to join us and participate in a series of listening sessions to be held in late October. This is your opportunity to share your experience, thoughts, and input on what should be done to make it easier for creative producers to make a living.

The primary goals for these sessions are:

- Gather each participant's answers to the questions: "What does a creative economy look like in this region?" "What do you need to meet your definition of success as a creative producer in this region?"
- Provide an opportunity for creative producers to connect, network, and collaborate - build a stronger sense of place & connection throughout the region.
- Gather feedback/input from the region's creative producers on what barriers & opportunities exist to create a stronger local economy.

These sessions will not be all talk and no action. The end product of this effort is to identify 2-3 projects that the participants agree are the most important/most impactful for creating a stronger local economy.

These projects (and the other key take aways from the listening sessions) will then be brought forward to local & state leadership, local & state economic development organizations, and other organizations that are in a position to help implement these projects.

Due to the current level of new & active covid cases in the area, we are having to conduct these sessions virtually. Participants can join one of three virtual sessions, each focused on a set of communities within the region

NOVEMBER 13 | 10AM - 12PM* | CORNY, HERBSTER, PORT WING, OULU, IRON RIVER

NOVEMBER 17 | 5:30PM - 7:30PM* | RED CLIFF, LA POINTE, BAYFIELD

NOVEMBER 20 | 2PM - 4PM* | ASHLAND, WASHBURN, MASON, MARENGO

To register, visit: https://northlandcrc.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3koIrRYffGlcGFw11/13 from 2pm – 4pm

If you'd like to participate, please sign for a session here: [link]

This project is a collaborative effort between Northland College's Sustainability Community Development program and Authentic Superior, a non-profit organization dedicated to strengthening the region's creative economy.

Erin Hutchinson, Authentic Superior

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Dr. Nicole Foster

Assistant Professor

Sustainable Community Development

Northland College

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Appendix B: Focus Group Sign Up

1. Your Name
2. Organization or Business Name (if applicable)
3. Main industry (pick one from drop-down list)
 - a. Agriculture / Food
 - b. Architecture / Design
 - c. Craft / Manufacturing
 - d. Cultural / Heritage
 - e. Media / Technology
 - f. Performing Arts
 - g. Visual Arts
 - h. Writing / Publishing
 - i. Other
4. Organization or Business physical address
5. Phone
6. Email address
7. Preferred Listening Session Location and Date:

- Red Cliff 11/6 from 10am-Noon
- Ashland 11/6 from 2pm – 4pm
- Virtual Session: 11/10 from 5:30pm – 7:30pm
- Herbster/Port Wing 11/13 from 2pm-4pm

If you request to attend an in-person listening session, you agree to email a copy of your proof of vaccination against COVID-19 to nfoster@northland.edu no later than one day in advance of the meeting date, and to follow all precautions as recommended by the CDC and county health officials including masking and social distancing. Submitted copies of vaccination records will be destroyed after listening sessions are completed.

We will contact you in 2-3 days confirming your attendance, including the location of the listening session.

Appendix C: Online Survey Consent

This survey is part of an applied research study, *Rural Creative Economies from the Ground Up*, which aims to improve our knowledge of rural creative economies. The project has been developed in collaboration with the non-profit organization, Authentic Superior. The 15-question survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Research findings will be shared with cultural and creative organizations, policymakers, economic development professionals and other stakeholders to improve policymaking and strengthen creative networks. Findings will also be shared through research publications such as journal articles and conference presentations.

The survey is being administrated using Qualtrics, an online tool licensed by Northland College for academic research. Once the survey closes, data will be kept confidential and securely stored on Northland College's password protected servers. We will use location and industry information to map the regional creative economy, so your business may be identifiable in research outputs. However, we will only share information that would typically be already publicly available, such as in a business directory.

At the end of the survey you will be asked if you would like to stay updated on the project via email. You will also have the opportunity to sign up for a listening session. We will not share your email address or phone number in any publications or presentations, and your responses to this survey will remain confidential.

Participation in this project is completely voluntary, and you may ask to withdraw your information from the project at any time. If you have any questions, please contact the principal investigator:

Name: Dr. Nicole Foster, Social Responsibility

Email: nfoster@northland.edu **Phone:** 715-682-1311

ELECTRONIC CONSENT: Please select your choice below. You may print a copy of this consent form for your records. Clicking on the "Agree" button indicates that

- You have read the above information
- You voluntarily agree to participate
- You are 18 years of age or older

Agree

Disagree

Appendix D: Online Survey Questions

1. Your Name
2. Organization or Business Name (if applicable)
3. Main industry (pick one from drop-down list)
 - a. Agriculture / Food
 - b. Architecture / Design
 - c. Craft / Manufacturing
 - d. Cultural / Heritage
 - e. Media / Technology
 - f. Performing Arts
 - g. Visual Arts
 - h. Writing / Publishing
 - i. Other
4. Describe your practice or work in more detail. What do you design, create, make, sell, or grow? Alternatively, how do you support other creative workers by developing, marketing or sharing their work?
5. How would you classify your work/business?
 - a. Non-commercial / hobby
 - b. Self-Employed / Sole Proprietorship
 - c. Partnership
 - d. Private Corporation (LLC or other)
 - e. Non-profit
 - f. Social Enterprise
 - g. Cooperative
 - h. Other
6. How long have you worked in the South Shore / Chequamegon Bay region?
7. What is the physical address for your business or work. We will use this information to map the regional creative economy.
8. Tell us three main reasons why you work in the South Shore / Chequamegon Bay region.
9. Who do you typically produce or sell to? Estimate how much you produce for the following markets.
 - a. Local town (e.g. Ashland, Red Cliff, Herbster)
 - b. South Shore / Chequamegon Bay region
 - c. Wider region (including Upper Peninsula, Duluth, Twin Cities)

- d. Midwest
- e. National
- f. Global

10. On average, how often do you collaborate or network with other regional artists, makers, producers or other creative / cultural organizations?
 - a. 1-2 times a month
 - b. Few times a year
 - c. Never or very rarely
11. What are the main ways you collaborate or network with other regional creative workers or organizations?
12. Likert Scale: The South Shore / Chequamegon Bay is home to a small but strong network of creative producers, makers and artists.
13. Likert Scale: South Shore / Chequamegon Bay offers what I need to thrive as a maker, artist, producer or supporter of the creative economy.
14. Likert Scale: I have the skills and knowledge needed to sustain or grow my organization or creative practice.
15. Please provide any further details or context for your answers.
16. Would you like to stay up to date on the project?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
17. Are you interested in participating in a listening session to share more about your experiences?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
18. (if yes to either #16 or #17) Please provide your contact information so we may follow up with you.
 - a. Email address
 - b. Phone number

Appendix E Consent Form to Participate in a Research Study Northland College

Project Title: Rural Creative Economies from the Ground Up

Contact: Dr. Nicole Foster

Department: Sustainable Community Development, Social Responsibility

Email: nfoster@northland.edu

Phone: 715-682-1311

Introduction

In collaboration with Authentic Superior, you are invited to participate in an applied research project exploring the local creative economy. Please read this form and ask any questions that you have before agreeing to participate in the study.

Purpose of the Study

Creative economies (local networks of artists, writers, makers, musicians, and other creative producers) have been shown to create positive impacts on regions in terms of economic development and improving quality of life. However, most research and policymaking focus on urban areas, not rural communities. This study aims to improve our knowledge of rural creative economies so that we can develop better policies and outcomes for places like the South Shore and Chequamegon Bay and the creative workers who live there. You will be invited to hear findings along with local and state policymakers, economic development professionals and other community stakeholders to discuss how to implement recommendations. Findings will also be shared through research publications such as journal articles and conference presentations.

What you will be asked to do

You are invited to participate in a two-hour face-to-face or virtual focus group with other creative workers from across the region. We will ask you questions about why you work in the area, your participation in local networks, challenges you face as a creative worker and ideas you have for strengthening the local creative economy. The focus groups are scheduled for mid-November in community spaces across the region. You can request to attend whichever focus group is most convenient for you. All participants who attend an in-person focus group must provide proof of full vaccination against COVID-19 at least one day in advance of the scheduled meeting. Participants will also be required to follow current CDC and county public health recommendations regarding masking and social distancing to ensure everyone's health and safety. For participants who are not vaccinated or prefer not to meet face-to-face, there is an option to join a virtual focus group.

Risks of Participating in the Project

We will follow all CDC and regional county health office recommendations for mitigating the spread of COVID-19. However, we cannot eliminate all health risks associated with meeting in-person. Please consider attending a virtual focus group or completing the online survey if you have any concerns. Should the CDC and/or county health officials advise against meeting in

person despite vaccination status, we will reschedule in-person meetings and increase virtual offerings. We do not anticipate any other risks related to the research.

Benefits of Participating in the Project

You will have the opportunity to network with artists, producers, musicians and other creative workers from across the region and share your ideas for strengthening the local creative economy. In collaboration with Authentic Superior, and with relationships with ArtsWisconsin, UW-Extension offices, and local economic development officials, the project is intended to positively impact the regional creative economy by identifying and sharing priorities and policy recommendations.

Confidentiality

The records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. All research records will be securely stored on Northland College servers, which are password protected. Audio-recordings of focus groups will be erased after they are transcribed. We will not include any identifying information in sharing documents or research publications with the following exception. We will produce maps of the regional creative economy so it may be possible to identify your business location using research findings. Please also note that we cannot guarantee confidentiality of anything you share during a focus group due to the nature of this group activity.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may refuse to take part in the study *at any time* without affecting your relationship with the investigators of this study or Northland College. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You have the right not to answer any single question, as well as to withdraw completely from the project at any point during the process; additionally, you have the right to request that the researchers not use any of your contributions for the study. However, once focus group recordings have been transcribed and anonymized, it may not be possible to completely remove your information.

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

Your signature below indicates that you have decided to participate in this project, and that you have read and understood the information provided above. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep.

Participant’s Name (printed) _____

Participant’s Signature _____ Date _____

Investigator’s Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix F Focus Group Questions

1. Introductions
 - a. Creative Practice or Work Focus
 - b. Work location
2. Reasons for living/working in South Shore/Chequamegon Bay
 - a. How long have you been working in the area?
 - b. What attracted you to the area? Retains you?
 - c. Probe for specific locational preferences / characteristics
3. Local v Regional identity
 - a. Cultural or other distinction between towns? Niche identities? Or is there a regional creative identity that connects places?
 - b. Does professional practice connect with these identities?
 - c. How do these identities compare with other groups like city officials, chamber of commerce, etc.
4. Creative Economy Value
 - a. Talk about the kinds of impacts you have on the region.
 - i. Probe for value for audiences, tourists, residents, place
 - ii. Probe for types of values – cultural, social, economic
 - b. How do you create that value?
 - c. Do you feel that the impacts you make are recognized by local officials? Residents?
 - d. Why or why not?
5. Creative Collaboration
 - a. How often do you collaborate with other makers, producers, artists in the region?
 - b. What kinds of creative producers do you collaborate with (probe for diversity in practice, industry, place)
 - c. Probe for diverse value exchanges – sharing knowledge, resources, events, other
 - d. What are the main opportunities for regional networking and collaboration.
 - e. Probe for gaps – what kinds of networking opportunities are needed?
6. Regional Resources
 - a. Which resources have been most helpful for your practice / work – e.g. spaces, funding, events, organizations?
 - b. Do you feel you have everything you need to thrive as an artist, maker, producer?
 - c. What's missing? Major challenges facing creative workers?
 - d. If you could wave a magic wand and make one change to the region in terms of the creative economy – a project, an event, a space, anything, what would that be? (generate project ideas)
7. How would you like to be involved in future conversations or planning?