



YK Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2021 Work Session

Business Development and Entrepreneurship Focus Area Action Planning Results

Friday, October 22, 2021 | 1:30-3:30pm

Link to recording: <https://www.avcp.org/tribal-resources/community-development/regional-comprehensive-economic-development-strategy/>

Facilitator: Clarence Daniel, Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP)

Team Support: Heather Stewart, Agnew::Beck Consulting

Participants:

First Name	Last Name	Organization
Fannie	Black	Yuut Elitnaurviat (fblack@yuut.org)
Alba	Brice	Calista Corporation
John	Charlie	Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP), Network Infrastructure Director
Anny	Cochrane	Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOL/WD) Workforce Development Manager (anny.cochrane@alaska.gov)
Clarence	Daniel	Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP), Community Development Division
Jackie	Garcia	Calista Corporation (jgarcia@calistacorp.com)
Julie	Gardella	University of Alaska Anchorage, Center for Economic Development (UA CED) and Best in the West (jmgardella@alaska.edu)
Andrea	Gusty	The Kuskokwim Corporation
Natalie	Hanson	Nuvista Light and Electric Coop, Inc.
Shirley	Kelly	U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA)
Colleen	Laroux	Donlin Gold (claraux@donlingold.com)
Deanna	Latham	Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation (YKHC)
Brenda	Pacarro	Calista Corporation (bpacarro@calistacorp.com)
Russell	Pollock	Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation (YKHC)
Leila	Smith Johnson	Calista Corporation (ljohnson@calistacorp.com)
Miranda	Strong	Calista Corporation (mstrong@calistacorp.com)
Michael	Williams Sr	Chief of Akiak Native Community, Chair Kuskokwim Inter-Tribal Fish Commission and Akiak resident

Objective: Review progress on priority CEDS actions, define next steps for implementation, and track progress toward key indicators.

Agenda:

- A. Welcome, Logistics, Roll Call, Breakout Purpose and Agenda Review
- B. Strategy/Action Introduction and Knowledge Sharing

Q#1: What are we focusing on?

CEDS Strategy #2
(modified):

Build interest, investment in, and capacity for locally owned, operated, and innovative businesses.

CEDS Actions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue the Small Business Development “Best in the West” competitions to encourage entrepreneurship in the YK region. • Support micro-lending opportunities for start-ups, entrepreneurs, commercial fishers and small business owners. • Develop “how to” manuals or resource guides that detail success stories, resources and links for where to find information and assistance for a person/entity interested in starting a local produce business. • Develop training program(s) related to all facets of business (e.g., business development, accounting, payroll and labor laws, how to research laws and regulations, growing/harvesting/processing the product, how to add value, market/advertise, customer service, how to sell and transport goods). • See more from 2018-2023 CEDS at end of this document.
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Q#2: Why is this topic important? What is happening now that we should consider, want to support and/or change?

- The Kuskokwim Corporation is working on a regional training and development center in Aniak to bring training to the region. They want to connect with existing programs and increase resident capacity to develop and run their own businesses. The center focuses on small, targeted projects, working with *Yuut Elitnaurviat*, Northern Industrial Training (based in the Mat-Su Valley), and AVCP as partners. The program focuses on “micro-credentialing” helping to get the credentials that go with the ideas people have. We believe it is important to bring training to the region, support local life balance, and strengthen our communities from the inside out.
- There is or was a UA/AVCP program to attend a crash course in Fairbanks focused on people interested in starting a business. The course focused on writing a business plan, which is required by lending agencies. It was a great experience. The business plan helped to get financing to start a business. Marketing classes used to be offered in Bethel. It might be beneficial to recruit for and advertise those classes.
- We have a catcher-seller program for people harvesting and selling produce. People are doing these things in our region, anyway. There are startup programs for these particular small businesses.
- The CEDS Communications Working Group talked about how, with increased internet access, we can expand the potential customer base for goods and services that can be marketed and sold online. Are local Y-K businesses ready to utilize increased internet speed and delivery?
- The Kuskokwim Corporation has (for large projects like runway construction) waived land access fees for projects that commit to local/shareholder hire. The Kuskokwim Corporation works with the workers to ensure they are ready and qualified for the jobs.

Regional challenges were discussed:

- As an employer, The Kuskokwim Corporation (also Northstar Distributing): Transportation became a barrier during the pandemic. Airline service slowed for many communities. Even if you had a business in the communities, you couldn’t get the inventory out to the village. Transportation is heavily subsidized by the bypass mail program. How can we address this issue? Advocacy? Work with service carriers?
- Finding willing people to work. What is the solution? This has become a nationwide challenge with the pandemic. Everyone is short-handed. In a small community, we have a small employment pool of people willing to report to work on a regular basis. Businesses cannot compete with tribes when the tribes are getting Federal and other money coming in. The tribes can offer inflated wages with the government funding.
- Another challenge is finding qualified workers and substance abuse (linked issues). Jobs require a person to be clean of drug use to avoid accidents and incidents. How can we ensure more/better wraparound services to help individuals and families to allow them to work toward healthy living?
- Education about business administration. People start running their businesses, don’t realize the tax reporting and other requirements to run the business. Should this kind of education be included in school (early)? The UAA/AVCP partnership class in business planning also included these topics. If still available, this class would be helpful. Include school districts in future.

- In addition to supporting Best in the West, the Center for Economic Development (at UAA) also offers a course called Upstart Alpha, which includes finding customers, writing a business plan, financials. It is free and offered statewide.

C. Action Planning

Q#3: To make measurable progress on this strategy/action, what tasks must happen over the next 1 to 2 years? Who will lead that task? Who will partner with the lead to take action?

Task	Lead and Partners
Task A. Continue the Small Business Development “Best in the West” competitions to encourage entrepreneurship in the Y-K region.	<p>Lead: Center for Economic Development (at UAA)</p> <p>Partners: UAF Kuskokwim Campus, Bethel Community Services Foundation, Cultural Center, Alaska Growth Capital, AVCP</p>
Task B. Develop training program(s) in partnership with school districts (LYSD, LKSD, etc.) related to all facets of business (e.g., business development, accounting, payroll and labor laws, how to research laws and regulations, service or product development, how to add value, market/advertise, customer service, how to sell and transport goods).	<p>Lead: TBD</p> <p>Partners: TBD</p> <p>Maybe through existing LKSD READY Programs. One started right before the pandemic, open to students from Bethel and LKSD villages. Alaska EXCEL program also does job readiness, financial literacy, etc. LKSD does something similar. Maybe bring a business development component into these existing curricula.</p> <p>The Kuskokwim Corporation provides “Lunch and Learns” through Facebook Live to help people with being a good employer and might bring some EDA programs and trainings to people who want to start their own businesses. One limitation with this is a stable internet connection. TKC’s regional training center is looking to broadcast from the training center in Aniak with receiving stations in communities. TKC is also talking with school districts to bring trainings to schools.</p> <p>EDA’s Office of Innovation and Entrepreneurship can help individuals commercialize an idea, provide help with research and development to bring the product to market.</p> <p>Yuut Elitnaurviat could make some changes to accommodate accreditation requirements; there is interest in exploring it.</p>
Task C. Develop “how to” manuals or resource guides that detail success stories, resources and links for where to find information and assistance for a person or organization interested in starting a local business. Post existing resources to CEDS website as appendices or resources.	<p>Lead: Center for Economic Development (at UAA)</p> <p>EDA funded the Center for Economic Development to create some of these, e.g., how to run a fish plant or lodge.¹</p> <p>The manuals are located at: https://ua-ced.org/reports (scroll to the bottom).</p> <p>Partners: TBD</p> <p>https://www.eda.gov/ceds/</p> <p>Maybe a business incubator could be started, too, e.g., https://ahin.org/.</p>
Task D. Make a list of local/regional businesses to showcase.	<p>Lead: Calista Corporation</p> <p>Partners: TBD</p>

¹ <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59f6b60bcf81e02892fd0261/t/5b7b61db2b6a2817e12ba2f9/1534812638258/FINAL+Business+Plan+Handbook.pdf>

<p>Task E. Facebook group to share job postings or possible work opportunities (e.g., if a construction project is slated).</p>	<p>Lead: Calista Corporation</p> <p>Calista Human Resources is the Facebook Group to share YK Region job opportunities and future job opportunities https://www.facebook.com/calista.hr</p> <p>Partners: TBD</p>
<p>Task F. Research re-establishing a regional Chamber of Commerce or Y-K Business Alliance. Having a Chamber of Commerce would give the region access to a national Chamber of Commerce network to support local businesses.</p>	<p>Lead: Calista Corporation</p> <p>Calista can lead the research whether this is something that would be supported in the region.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bonnie Bradbury was the person who most recently coordinated the Chamber of Commerce. Other state Chambers have developed visitor guides for their regions. EDA Planning Grant process has helped fund printing of regional visitor guides. <p>Partners: TBD</p>
<p>Task G. Explore organizing a regional business conference.</p> <p><i>For example, one mid-Kuskokwim tribe has a number of businesses and others are always looking to them for guidance. There may be some value to sharing best practices, and just as valuable, what has failed. Also to talk about indicators and developing realistic and motivating targets for them.</i></p>	<p>Lead: TBD</p> <p>Partners: Center for Economic Development (at UAA) /Best in the West</p> <p>Could this be included as part of the Best in the West competition? Could it include a youth component?</p> <p>https://www.1millioncups.com/anchorage/ https://www.1millioncups.com/organize (streamed to Facebook Live. Yvonne Jackson just presented. Yvonne's recording on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/1MillionCupsAnchorage/videos/1518023188597501/) It says "I Million Cups Anchorage" but we also serve statewide. It is part of a nationwide organization and they will not let us be "I Million Cups Alaska"</p>
<p>Task H. Support micro-lending opportunities for start-ups, entrepreneurs, commercial fishers, and small business owners.</p>	<p>Lead: TBD</p> <p>Partners: TBD</p> <p>AK Growth Capital? https://www.alaskagrowth.com/about-us/ Alaska Growth Capital is actively looking to increase their lending in the region</p> <p>EDA's Office of Innovation and Entrepreneurship to assist eligible organizations interested in offering a microlending program. EDA provides funding to start the program but not for lending itself. There are other revolving loan funds in Alaska that can provide the funding for the loans. EDA Loan Specialists can also help advise on how to set up the program.</p> <p>A CDFI could offer micro-lending for business as well as loans for home ownership: https://www.cdfifund.gov/</p>

D. Indicators of Success

Q#4: How will we measure our success on the actions above? What data will tell us we're making a difference? A year or two from now, what SPECIFIC positive change do we want to make? Is this data available? Where can we find it? Who will collect it?

Indicator of Success/Positive Change	2-Year Target
<p>I. Tasks A-H. Number of Jobs created and/or retained by a business startup.</p>	<p>TKC also sends out a regional e-newsletter listing each job at all businesses in our communities. It is a low-cost effort that has been fairly effective in raising awareness of opportunities. It would be easily duplicated in other communities or sub regions.</p>

	<p>Best in the West has a good system to track new business startups and how much money was awarded.</p> <p>An indicator of success for #1 is contacting the State of Alaska, Research and Analysis Division, to capture the employment data based on job opportunities.</p>
2. Tasks A-H. Amount of private sector investment generated by a business startup/how much private funding is invested in the startup.	Best in the West has a good system to track new business startups and how much money was awarded.
3. Tasks A-H. Amount of public sector investment to the region. For example, Donlin Gold is a private business that benefits from a number of public supports. If the infrastructure bill is passed, it will generate a lot of private investment, businesses and jobs.	
4. Tasks A-H. Number of New businesses started.	Chamber of Commerce could collect information on businesses started. If businesses are getting State of Alaska business licenses, anyone can look that up on the State (DCRA) website by community.
5. Task F. Number of Visitors to the Region and visitor spending?	Chamber of Commerce would collect information on visitor statistics.
6. Tasks B-C. Number of trainings held, students who attended trainings.	Whoever is offering the trainings would report on this indicator.
Q#5: What funding opportunities and/or other resources can support our action plan? (see below for “Potential Funding Sources”)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EDA’s Office of Innovation and Entrepreneurship can assist eligible organizations interested in offering a microlending program. EDA provides funding to start the program but not for the lending itself. There are other revolving loan funds in Alaska that can provide the funding for the loans. EDA Loan Specialists can also help advise on how to set up the program. EDA’s Office of Innovation and Entrepreneurship can help individuals commercialize an idea, provide help with research and development to bring the product to market. 	

E. Summarize, Closing Comments and Adjourn

What final comments, questions or concerns do we have as individuals/as a group?

- Donlin Gold will create a lot of small local/regional business development opportunity.
- Regarding Item G below:
 - EDA’s Office of Innovation and Entrepreneurship can assist eligible organizations interested in offering a microlending program. EDA provides funding to start the program but not for the lending itself. There are other revolving loan funds in Alaska that can provide the funding for the loans. EDA Loan Specialists can also help advise on how to set up the program.
- Regarding Item I below:
 - EDA’s Office of Innovation and Entrepreneurship can help individuals commercialize an idea, provide help with research and development to bring the product to market.

- What are the needs that villages have? As villages are now leaning toward efficient commodities (e.g., 4-stroke engines, 4-wheers, trucks), maybe a recycling center for used oil?
- Regarding Item O below:
 - Best in the West/CED did a revamp of their curriculum to add a mentorship component. They pair all participants with a mentor and are always looking for people to serve as mentors and provide business advice to participants. Many are based out of Anchorage; there are not as many in the region. They are always looking for local business owners/operators to help provide mentorship. The status of the vacated Y-K regional position is unknown.

When should we meet again?

- Meet quarterly.
- Miranda and Brenda volunteered to lead the quarterly meeting in **January and suggested January 25, afternoon 2pm.**

From 2018 – 2023 YK CEDS

Goal C – Support and Grow Local Business Development and Entrepreneurship

- A. Conduct finance, business basics, and life management skills education in communities to help residents understand credit, loans, insurance and banking opportunities, starting with youth in junior and senior high schools and including young and older adults. **(Priority Strategy #11)**
- B. Collectively invest in regional community and economic development. **(Priority Strategy #12)**
- C. Promote farm-to-table and seafood-to-table commercial and export opportunities for locally grown and harvested goods, including value-added processing. **(Priority Strategy #13)**
- D. Establish a tanning operations company or factory in the region to process harvested furs for export, local use and arts/crafts. **(Priority Strategy #14)**
- E. Support Donlin Gold's efforts to open a mine near Donlin Creek.
- F. Support 'cottage industries', such as knitting cooperatives and traditional crafts; and 'pocket industries' such as bed bug eradication and casket making.
- G. Create micro-lending opportunities to support start-ups, entrepreneurs, and commercial fishers.
- H. Expand tourism offerings such as ecotourism packages, birding trips and guided scenic tours.
- I. Encourage local innovation.
- J. Establish work banks to encourage residents to take on income-earning roles in the community, such as cleaning, childcare and chopping wood.
- K. Grow and support local guides and outfitters.
- L. Expand distribution of AVCP's Yukon-Kuskokwim Business Start-up guide.
- M. Support and increase the retail sector in the region.
- N. Establish a visitor center at the Bethel airport.
- O. Expand promotion and incentives to encourage increased awareness of and participation in the Best in the West business competition – for example, add additional services for winners such as mentorship, assistance/advice with business management, taxes, etc.
- P. Encourage village corporations to expand and invest outside of their communities.
- Q. Establish a subsistence processing plant in the Lower Kuskokwim sub-region.
- R. Explore viability of creating a bottled water business/facility in the region.