



## YK Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2021 Work Session

### Communications Focus Area Action Planning Results

**Friday, October 22, 2021 | 10:00AM-12:00PM**

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

**Facilitator:** Mark Springer, Mayor of the City of Bethel

**Team Support:** Freddie Olin, Agnew::Beck Consulting

**Participants:**

<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Miranda	Strong	Calista Corporation
Anny	Cochrane	Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOL/WD)
Adelheid	Herrmann	Alaska Center for Climate Assessment and Policy (ACCAP) at UAF
Terrance	Pearson	Calista Corporation
Clarence	Daniel	Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP)
Mike	Williams, Sr.	Native Village of Akiak
Alba	Brice	Calista Corporation
Jennifer	Hooper	Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP)
Natalie	Hanson	Nuvista Electric Cooperative
Heather	Handyside	GCI, Inc.
Jocelyn	Fenton	Denali Commission
Anna	Sattler	Alaska Village Electric Cooperative (AVEC)
John	Charlie	Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP)
Fatima	Ochante	Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC)
Erik	O'Brien	Denali Commission
Jonathan	Samuelson	The Kuskokwim Corporation
Jenifer	Nelson	GCI, Inc.
Heather	Cavanaugh	Alaska Communications

**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?**

<i>CEDS Strategy #15:</i>	Prioritize and implement regional communications projects.
<i>CEDS Actions:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Connect Bethel to other parts of the state via a fiber optic telecommunications cable; this project will increase connectivity in the region. (proposed focus for the Communications Working Group)</li><li>• Support Tribal efforts to develop Tribal broadband spectrum.</li></ul>

**Q#2: Why is this topic important? What is happening now that we should consider, want to support and/or change?**

- Increasing and rolling out broadband connectivity is highly important for the whole region, which has historically been underserved for communications infrastructure, whether by fiber optic, satellite, or other connectivity methods.
- Individual Tribal governments and Tribal cooperatives/consortia have new opportunities for funding, i.e., FCC 2.5GHz Rural Tribal Window or “Tribal spectrum,” and private businesses are also building partnerships. There are organizational 8(a) ownership structures for Tribes and Tribal coops/consortia, which is important for exercising sovereignty and self-determination, through Tribally-owned businesses. OneWeb has recently partnered with the Native Village of Akiak to provide internet service delivery through the FCC 2.5GHz Tribal spectrum program.
- Alaska Native Corporations and other businesses (i.e., GCI TERRA, ACS FiberOptic Project, OneWeb, etc.) through partnerships are capturing opportunities through the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), and the specific Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program.
- Fiber optic proposals navigate complex rights-of-way and permitting, whether federal, state, federal Indian trust lands, or private lands.
- A big goal is affordability for village residents, in or around the range of urban monthly service prices.
- There are opportunities to train and build a local-hire workforce.
- There could be two different customer tracks: residential and commercial. Identifying priorities for each customer type is important, and then using the right proposal/rollout tools for the best service delivery. Case example: ensure equity in service delivery, prices, and fees. Rural rollout has an imbalanced cost-benefit analysis, but there should be equity regardless.
- FCC broadband spectrum licenses are competitive, and have limitations and time constraints for construction, rollout, and service delivery, which is important to consider.
- The Denali Commission has a specific Broadband Program, which is flexible by design for helping communities most in need. The Commission has also built a plan for the FCC 2.5GHz Tribal spectrum program opportunity, and the pandemic has impacted consistency in the plan. There is an estimated number of ten licenses around the state under this opportunity. The Alaska Tribal Spectrum has worked to simplify and streamline the application process to better meet the needs for all Tribes in the state. Recently there has been an estimated 185 Tribal applications for the opportunity. The US Treasury has recently opened a funding opportunity for Tribes to secure seed or basic operating funding up to \$167,000. Telecommunications cooperatives/businesses like PushTel are important partners to bring into the application and proposal process.
- The recently enacted \$1.3 trillion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act has millions proposed for meeting Tribal and rural broadband connectivity and capacity needs across the nation, and Alaska is well placed to receive appropriate amounts of funding.
- The Bethel area had an historical wireless service, circa late 1990s – early 2000s.

### 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
a. Organize a YK Broadband Conference for regional entities and communications businesses that would be involved in expanding broadband within the YK region to organize and prepare for funding or other support opportunities.	AVCP, YK Delta Tribal Broadband, Alaska Tribal Spectrum, GCI, ACS, Denali Commission, etc. Seek and secure sponsorship funding. EDA is a potential source.
b. Build a cohort of innovators or specialists to assist potential Tribal applicants for the funding opportunities described in Q#5. This will help ensure NOFOs, applications, and proposal processes are accessible, easily understood, and without harsh requirements/ stipulations/ restrictions.	Tribal consortia/cooperatives help alleviate capacity concerns/issues. There is some current outreach and coordination by the Alaska Federation of Natives, and there could be involvement and support by philanthropic organizations.
c. Establish YK Delta Tribal Broadband as a Tribally owned business with full asset ownership, for at least the next three years.	Awaiting pending applications/proposals expected to be determined by November 2021. Initiatives, activities, and strategies have application for the whole region and other Tribes. Fiberoptic and satellite service delivery are goals, to deliver high speed internet for everyone, especially considering telehealth and public/higher education distance delivery.

### 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
<b>Tasks A-C.</b> Amount of reduction in cost to federally subsidized users (i.e., YKHC, School Districts).	TBD at future Working Group meeting.
<b>Tasks A-C.</b> Increase in service quality, as measured by amount of increase in upload and download speeds, decrease in latency and costs. Possible data source(s): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State of Alaska DCCED Division of Community and Regional Affairs community and consumer pricing data.</li> <li>Broadband mapping data is a source of information and initial analysis (i.e., NTIA and FCC clearinghouses).</li> </ul>	TBD at future Working Group meeting.
<b>Tasks A-C.</b> Number of local-hire workforce and local, small business development, and other economic opportunities created.	TBD at future Working Group meeting.
<b>Tasks A-C.</b> Increase in the number of education/training opportunities in the region.	TBD at future Working Group meeting.
<b>Tasks A-B.</b> Increase in the number of users who are utilizing the internet to apply for new or improved services vs. paper-based applications (i.e., grant funding applications from state and federal agencies).	TBD at future Working Group meeting.

**Q#5: What funding opportunities and/or other resources can support our action plan?** (see below for “Potential Funding Sources”)

- US Treasury seed or basic funding up to \$167,000 for Tribes. Erik O’Brien noted Treasury has requested consultation with Tribes across the nation. The deadline for the program is June 2022. Access and affordability needs are important to address during the application and proposal process, as well as local-hire and training.
- A US Economic Development Administration American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 opportunity has recently passed, with a general applicant deadline passed on October 19, 2021. Around ten Alaska Tribes have applied. Related and possibly upcoming Tribal set-aside application opportunities under the same program could have a deadline of March 2022.

**E. Summarize, Closing Comments and Adjourn**

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

- Not discussed.

**When should we meet again?**

- Not discussed.