

Meeting Notes

Yukon-Kuskokwim Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

2022 Quarter I Business Development & Entrepreneurship Working Group Meeting, March 30, 2022 | 1:30-3:30 pm

Attendees

Name	Affiliation	Email
Clarence Daniel (facilitator)	Association of Village Council Presidents	clarence@avcp.org
Andrea Gusty	The Kuskokwim Corporation	andrea.gusty@kuskokwim.com
Brenda Pacarro	Calista	bpacarro@calistacorp.com
Deanna Latham	Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation	deanna_latham@ykhc.org
Erik O'Brien	Denali Commission	eobrien@denali.gov
Martha Whitman	Association of Village Council Presidents	mwhitman@avcp.org
Miranda Strong	Calista	mstrong@calistacorp.com
Naomi Digitaki	Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation	Naomi_Digitaki@ykhc.org
Steven Alexie	Donlin Gold	salexie@donlingold.com
Shirley Kelly	Economic Development Administration	skelly2@eda.gov
Molly Mylius (notetaker)	Agnew::Beck Consulting	mmylius@agnewbeck.com

Meeting Objectives

- Discuss and confirm a set of indicators that can be tracked by CEDS partner(s) to measure whether the region is moving toward our desired outcomes within this focus area.
- Confirm key information for priority actions.

YK CEDS Action Planning Discussion

Lead/Partners: Is there at least one organization committed to leading the action/project? This organization will seek funding, manage the implementation and report on the status of the project over the life of the project.

1. If a committed leader does not exist for this project, can one be recruited?
2. If a committed leader cannot be recruited, is this action/project really a priority at this time?

Actions: Are the lead organization(s) for each action clear on what the action is and how it will be implemented?

3. Does the action have a realistic scope of work? Is it doable within the next 1-5 years?
4. Should this Working Group coordinate with partners in other Working Groups?

Business Development and Entrepreneurship

STRATEGY 1: Build interest, investment in, and capacity for locally owned, operated, and innovative businesses.

PRIORITY ACTIONS	LEAD/PARTNERS
<p>1-A. Continue the Small Business Development “Best in the West” competitions to encourage entrepreneurship in the YK region. UAA Center for Economic Development (CED) added a mentorship component to the competition and is always looking for local business owners/operators to help mentor.</p>	<p>Lead: UAA CED Partners: UAF Kuskokwim Campus, Bethel Community Services Foundation, Cultural Center, Alaska Growth Capital, AVCP</p>

1-A Discussion

- Seek additional funding to expand the program/give greater payouts to winners?
- Better promote the Best in the West winners and other emerging small businesses (through the CEDS and elsewhere).
- Expand promotion of Best in the West application opportunities through partner networks.
- Meet with successful businesses to learn what they attribute their success to, share those resources and lessons learned.

PRIORITY ACTIONS	LEAD/PARTNERS
<p>1-B. Develop and robustly distribute 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. The Economic Development Administration (EDA) funded the CED to create manuals (e.g., how to run a fish plant or lodge): https://ua-ced.org/reports (scroll to the bottom)</p>	<p>Lead: UAA CED Partners: TBD</p>

1-B Discussion

- The manuals are at the bottom of this [page](#).
- AVCP can share the manuals with Tribes.
 - The manuals would be more impactful if they could be delivered with support/training. Training could be supported by Economic Adjustment Assistance funds through EDA.
- The Kuskokwim Corporation (TKC) is also interested in delivering manuals and trainings in the region, both in Aniak and via satellite delivery to Tribal offices.
- Other business plan development resources in communities
 - [Alaska Small Business Development Center](#) has resources (Jon Bitner)
 - [Alaska Small Business Assistance Center](#), and UAA CED has supported this in the region in the past
- Invite the EDA to send a representative to attend the annual YK CEDS work session (hopefully in person in 2022) to share more information on EDA funding opportunities to support YK regional priorities.

STRATEGY 2: Encourage larger scale, “anchor” economic development projects with potential to generate revenue, increase wealth and create employment opportunities across the YK region.

PRIORITY ACTIONS	LEAD/PARTNERS
<p>2-A. For each project, work together to examine costs, benefits, potential impacts, mitigation strategies, and opportunities for mutually beneficial investments in regional education, workforce and infrastructure development. Example projects include Donlin Gold Mine and Pilcher Mountain gravel.</p> <p>○</p>	<p>Lead and partners: varies by project</p>

2-A Discussion

- Through EDA’s Technical Assistance Program, large potential construction projects can seek out EDA assistance to support project planning.
- TKC has a Wood Innovations Grant (in year 2), developing a new home design using Middle Kuskokwim wood (in partnership w/Cold Climate Housing). Training a workforce, creating a toolkit for communities that want to build the same type of home, and generating demand for local timber resources, and meeting housing demand by creating energy efficient homes.
- Another suggested action: review regulatory and statutory barriers to economic development in the region. (lead: TBD) Examples of processes that could be considered:
 - The process to develop the STIP (Alaska Statewide Transportation Improvement Program), which prioritizes larger populations.
 - Barriers and limitations to local hire.
 - (Miranda and Clarence will follow up with one another to discuss.

Measures of Success Guiding Questions

- What are the most effective measures of success **each strategy**? What measures will tell an accurate story of what is going on with this specific sector and our region’s economy?
- Which agency/organization(s) report these data?
 - If no one – Would we have to collect the data ourselves? If so, who would do that and how? Can they commit to doing that data collection and reporting on a consistent basis?
- If we can’t track our most desired/the best indicator, what proxy indicator(s) can contribute to telling the story (for now)?

STRATEGY 1: Build interest, investment in, and capacity for locally owned, operated, and innovative businesses.

STRATEGY 2: Encourage larger scale, “anchor” economic development projects with potential to generate revenue, increase wealth and create employment opportunities across the YK region.

Priority Measures of Success	Data Source(s)	Where this is at Today	Where we want to be in 5 Years
Entrepreneurship: [#] private businesses owned and operated in YK region communities.	Bureau of Labor Statistics Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (excludes self-employed)	259 businesses are owned and operated in YK region communities in 2019 (201 in Bethel CA, 58 in Kusilvak CA).	[#] businesses are owned and operated in YK region communities. Potential target: 5% growth? Bring closer to AK averages in areas where YK is lagging.
Jobs: [#] of jobs created from new/expanded establishments (founded in the last 5 years) minus jobs lost from closing establishments. Look at jobs created by sector, if possible. Not just new businesses – also established/growing ones.	U.S. Census Bureau Business Dynamic Statistics (see table at bottom of file)	A total of 91 jobs gained (based on 196 jobs created minus 105 jobs lost) in the YK region in 2019.	A total of [#] jobs gained annually in the YK region in 2025. Potential target: 5% growth? Bring closer to AK averages in areas where YK is lagging.
Jobs: [#] jobs in Bethel + Kusilvak Census Area(s) employed by proprietors representing [%] of total regional employment in [YEAR].	Bureau of Economic Analysis if proprietors’ income and employment can serve as a proxy for entrepreneurship.	1,566 jobs in Bethel + Kusilvak Census Area(s) employed by proprietors, representing 15% of total regional employment in 2020.	[#] jobs in Bethel + Kusilvak Census Area(s) employed by proprietors, representing [#]% of total regional employment in 2025.
Wages: \$[#] annual proprietors’ income to Bethel + Kusilvak Census Area(s) Proprietors,	Bureau of Economic Analysis if proprietors’ income and employment can serve	\$30,444,000 annual Proprietors’ income to Bethel + Kusilvak to Bethel + Kusilvak Census Area(s)	[\$#] annual Proprietors’ income to Bethel + Kusilvak to Bethel + Kusilvak Census Area(s)

Priority Measures of Success	Data Source(s)	Where this is at Today	Where we want to be in 5 Years
representing [%] of total regional earnings in [YEAR].	as a proxy for entrepreneurship.	Proprietors, representing 4.39% of total regional earnings in 2020.	Proprietors, representing [#]% of total regional earnings in 2025.

- Reflections on the Proposed Measures of Success
 - Where do larger establishments fit in? Not just small businesses and entrepreneurs.
 - For Best in the West, would be good to know what regional level data they tracking now, related to Best in the West and more broadly. UAA CED would be the contact.
 - Throughout these indicators it is important to distinguish between the type of jobs – high wage/low wage, temporary/permanent, etc.

- Additional Data Already Being Tracked by YK Partners
 - Jobs and Current/Upcoming Employment Opportunities
 - TKC tracks vacancies from all major employers in the region; Andrea can work with staff to share what they have, if desired.
 - Calista works with the Association of General Contractors (AGC) and Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF) to see which projects are coming to the region to anticipate employment needs. Brenda could share what Calista has compiled for the year.
 - Calista is tracking names of all employers in the region (via Laborstats [link](#)).
 - Yuut works with communities that have incoming projects/funds coming in to identify upcoming employment opportunities and train residents to fill those jobs.

- Additional Data Ideas - Available
 - Incoming
 - Migration data – featured in March issue of the Alaska Trends magazine.
 - Unemployment rate
 - Unemployment rate is a helpful metric but does is not the whole picture and doesn't capture the number of jobs available.
 - Rural employers have job openings but don't have people ready or willing to take those jobs. Job readiness is a key need; unemployment data only counts those seeking employment.

- Additional Data Ideas – Not Currently Available/Collected
 - Is there a way to track the importation of services/skills? We want to decrease the number of skilled jobs that require bringing in external people.
 - Incoming jobs from federal infrastructure funding – would likely require a survey of organizations/communities. It will be very important to ensure Tribes are prepared to respond to these infrastructure funding opportunities.

- Other Discussion
 - Broadband opportunities and incoming technologies – many upcoming opportunities to build and maintain broadband networks, which will in turn create more remote work opportunities. Where do those jobs fit in? What kind of jobs could be created through this increased technology?
 - Lots of new funding coming in, eligible application pool has grown.
 - Regional planning is essential – broadband is largely shared infrastructure; what should regional coordination look like?
 - Regional coordination is important; however, smaller sub-regional and community level projects are also still valuable to economic development; not every economic development project can/will benefit all 56 communities.
 - See also – YK CEDS Communications Working Group.
 - TKC’s Aniak job center is working to make sure all components of the project and center include an education & training component.
 - Native preference – any data on its application for major employers? Ways to eliminate barriers to local hire?
 - TKC ensures all projects have local hire preferences, works closely with employers to connect them with residents with land entry permits defining the policies (Andrea happy to share examples).
 - Federal funds sometimes cannot have local hire requirements on hiring practices.

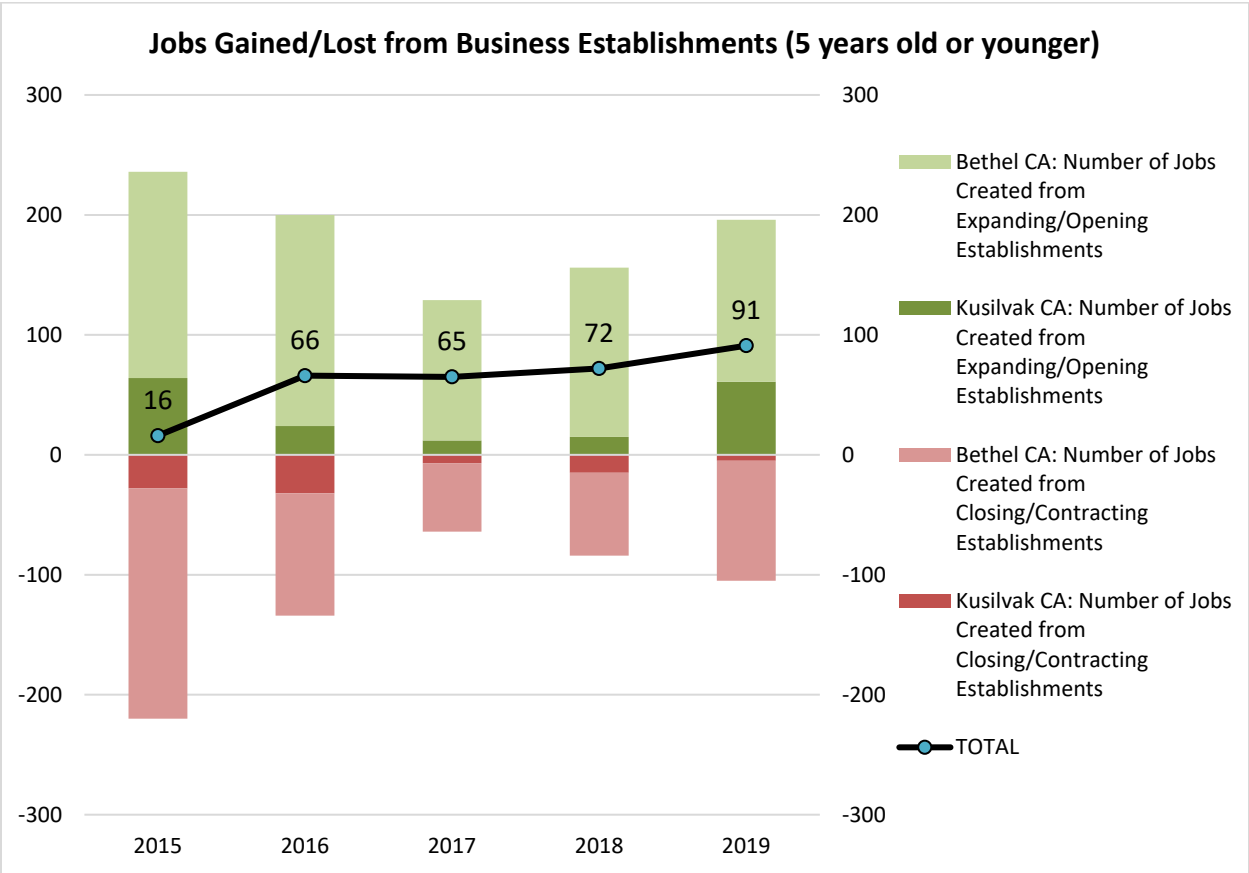
Next Steps & Wrap Up

- 2022 Annual Work Session: dates TBD, hopefully in person.
- The group did not express interest in reconvening between now and the work session.

Previously Identified Measures of Success (for reference)

Indicator of Success/Positive Change	Next Steps
Tasks A-H. Number of Jobs created and/or retained by a business startup.	<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>
Tasks A-H. Amount of private sector investment generated by a business startup/how much private funding is invested in the startup.	<p>Best in the West has a good system to track new business startups and how much money was awarded.</p>

Indicator of Success/Positive Change	Next Steps
<p>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.</p>	
<p>Tasks A-H. Number of New businesses started.</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Task F. Number of Visitors to the Region and visitor spending?</p>	<p>Chamber of Commerce would collect information on visitor statistics.</p>
<p>Tasks B-C. Number of trainings held, students who attended trainings.</p>	<p>Whoever is offering the trainings would report on this indicator.</p>



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Business Dynamic Statistics