

Meeting Notes

Yukon Kuskokwim Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

2022 1st Quarter Communications Working Group Meeting | March 31, 2022 | 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Attendees

Name	Affiliation	Email
Mark Springer (facilitator)	Bethel Mayor	mspringer@cityofbethel.net
Erik Obrien	Denali Commission	eobrien@denali.gov
Heather Cavanaugh	Alaska Communications	heather.cavanaugh@acsalaska.com
Iliodor Philemonof	Yukon Kuskokwim Regional Tribal Government	iphilemonof@ykrtdg.org
Jenifer Nelson	GCI	jnelson1@gci.com
Kevin Hamer	YKD Broadband Consortium	khamer@akiaktechnology.com
Miranda Strong	Calista Corporation	mstrong@calistacorp.com
Patty Murphy	Yukon Kuskokwim Regional Tribal Government	pmurphy@ykrtdg.org
Sheila Carl	YKD Broadband Consortium	akiarmiu@yahoo.com
Terrance Pearson	Calista Corporation	tpearson@calistacorp.com
Tonia Jimmie	Yukon Kuskokwim Regional Tribal Government	tjimmie@ykrtdg.org
Shelly Wade	Agnew::Beck Consulting	shelly@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.
- Share updates from YK CEDS partners (as time allows).

YK CEDS Action Planning Discussion (NOTE: Items in red font indicate potential follow-up action items)

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?

Communications

STRATEGY 4: Increase connectivity in the region and support Tribal efforts to develop Tribal broadband spectrum.

PRIORITY ACTIONS	LEAD/PARTNERS
<p>4-A. Expand broadband infrastructure and connectivity throughout the region, prioritizing local ownership of key assets. Securing communications infrastructure is an equity issue and supports regional economic expansion. The 8(a) Tribal business structure supports exercising sovereignty and self-determination as well as implementing NTIA opportunities, e.g., the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program.</p>	<p>Lead: YKDTBC</p> <p>Partners: AVCP, Alaska Tribal Spectrum, GCI, ACS, Denali Commission. EDA as a potential funder.</p>

- Heather: State will be developing regional advisory groups for the state broadband office, she suggested coordination between State and the YK region.
- What is the Denali Commission is doing in broadband? What is their work plan? Does it have measurable outcomes? What are the metrics?
Erik:
 - It's a small program, \$750,000.
 - The FY23 broadband budget was cut further.
 - They are coordinating information.
 - Funding stream has changed in recent years – opened a pool of new applicants and funding volume which as translated into new partnerships (Calista, another regional corporation, a Tribe, brand new consortium).
 - The Denali Commission shares information and provide technical assistance; information gathering which leads to grants.

- What can the Denali Commission do to help set-up regional advisory groups, particularly the Tribal groups? They have started meeting with the 12 regional Alaska Native non-profits to set up these advisory groups, in addition to the state-wide advisory groups, so there is a collective of local input feeding into the system.
- Commonwealth North on March 30; Heather attended.
- Rasmuson Foundation is putting ~\$3 million into the broadband initiative. They have made it an area of interest.
 - They have created different advisory groups, one of which is a telecom advisory group with ACS and GCI participating.
 - Look to them as a resource.
- Measures of Success:
 - Need mapping tool, data points.
- The Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) Broadband Plan was shared and conveyed how well detailed and written it is.
- Bethel comes in 20th in slowest of speeds of all counties.
- Technical metrics: Consumer objective is the fastest possible connectivity at the most economical price.
- Just as important as the download and upload speeds and costs is the human metrics.
 - One metric: how does the technical workforce support broadband deployment? What is the workforce, how will they grow? What sort of stable income is available? What sort of training needs?
- If broadband is improved, educational opportunities could be increased; more online/virtual classes will become available, school districts could share instruction, etc.
- Other measures of success: what sort of short- and long-term economic benefit do individuals receive? More teleworking, online sales and services, content creation opportunities could be an outcome.
- How to draw potential industries to come to the region? Can we have a data center in the region? What capabilities do businesses have to physically come to a region and do commerce outside of the community?
- Denali Commission might apply for a distance working telemedicine grant.
- Would be helpful if the FCC opened up a subsidy to increase capacity to the area.
- Erik called in to meeting from Larsen Bay where he has a 10/1 connection; pays \$100 a month for it.

PRIORITY ACTIONS	LEAD/PARTNERS
<p>4-B. Organize a YK Broadband Conference for regional entities and communications businesses. The YK region is the second largest area without broadband internet (i.e., “unserved”) in the country. The Bethel Census Area has the largest unserved general and indigenous population in Alaska. A conference presents the opportunity for networking and collaboration to accelerate expansion of affordable broadband access and use in the region.</p>	<p>Lead: YKDTBC</p> <p>Partners: AVCP, Alaska Tribal Spectrum, Denali Commission, telecommunication companies</p>

PRIORITY ACTIONS	LEAD/PARTNERS
<p>4-C. Encourage partnerships between public, private, and Tribal entities to collaborate on infrastructure projects to achieve affordable, accessible, reliable internet in the YK region. Access to affordable broadband internet will expand economic development, allow access to remote job opportunities, provide telehealth, and virtual education, etc.</p>	<p>Lead: Varies</p> <p>Partners: AVCP, Alaska Tribal Spectrum, Denali Commission, telecommunication companies, YKDTBC</p>

PRIORITY ACTIONS	LEAD/PARTNERS
<p>4-D. Develop YKD Broadband Plan.</p>	<p>Lead: YKDTBC</p> <p>Partners: AVCP, Alaska Tribal Spectrum, GCI, ACS, Denali Commission. EDA as a potential funder.</p>

- This fourth priority action was added at the 3/31/22 meeting; create an equivalent to the TCC Plan.
- Create a tool that does the assessment; achieved through the mapping effort, census data, and other tools.
- Where will the funding come from for this?
- Kevin: emphasized the need for this Plan; one that identifies the outcome measures, business sectors, ones that will help drive decision making. But today, start with initial, technical measures. Need to provide justification for why funding should be prioritized for the region.
- Kevin is hoping the group will make a commitment to create a YKD Broadband Plan.
- Who will do this work? Who has the capacity? What are the mechanisms to talk to all the 56 villages in the region to get quality data?

- Mark: While we don't have a Plan, but we do have a fair number of funding applications in place right now. If funded, will have result of 25/3 to 100/100 to most villages on the Delta. Construction could start on projects before a Plan is complete.
- Maybe an initial a household-level survey.
- Other information is the Census My Tribal Area Data Tool; use this as a resource.
- YK Regional Tribal Government (RTG) is working with the Denali Commission on a grant application to get the data collection done. Been talking to multiple tribes in the region, want support from all the organizations to develop such a plan.
- Big question is who will lead this effort? Need an entity that is an honest broker, one who will advocate for the best broadband at the lowest price. Broad support for the RTG.
- What does the Denali Commission need to make the grant award?
- Would it be helpful to have a letter of support from the Tribal Broadband Consortium?
- Erik: If all 56 communities in the YK region came together to make a statement about the projects they support, providing resolutions, the more likely the infrastructure projects will become funded. Convey the need and urgency.
- Developing a data collection program to be the basis of a Broadband Plan is a good one.
 - Denali Commission has \$100,000 of programmatic funds. They have FY21 remaining budget. They are looking to change its work plan; to allocate a large amount of funds for infrastructure needs.

Measures of Success Guiding Questions

1. 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?
2. Which agency/organization(s) report these data?
 - a. 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?

Priority Measures of Success

If not identified as a priority, it does not mean the indicator is not important. It may be difficult to obtain the baseline and/or comparison data needed to inform the measure of success at this time.

Priority Measures of Success	Data Source(s)	Where this is at Today	Where we want to be in 5 Years
Tribally owned broadband: [#] communities in the YK region are served by Tribally owned broadband.		One community in the YK region is served by Tribally owned broadband. This one community is not out of contracts; generally not available.	All 48 communities in the YK region are served by Tribally owned broadband.
Internet speeds: [#] average upload/download speeds available 100/100 (25/3 is minimum speeds for broadband with low late speeds to allow real-time transmission [basic definition])		[#] average upload/download speeds available	[#] average upload/download speeds available
Cost of internet service: [#] average cost of internet service.		[#] average cost of internet service.	[#] average cost of internet service.

Previously Identified Measures of Success (for reference)

Indicator of Success/Positive Change	Next Steps
<p>Tasks A-C. Amount of reduction in cost to federally subsidized users (i.e., YKHC, School Districts).</p>	<p>Where to find the data: TBD at future Working Group meeting.</p> <p>Who will collect it: TBD at future Working Group meeting.</p>
<p>Tasks A-C. Increase in service quality, as measured by amount of increase in upload and download speeds, decrease in latency and costs. Possible data source(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State of Alaska DCCED Division of Community and Regional Affairs community and consumer pricing data. <p>Broadband mapping data is a source of information and initial analysis (i.e., NTIA and FCC clearinghouses).</p>	<p>Where to find the data: TBD at future Working Group meeting.</p> <p>Who will collect it: TBD at future Working Group meeting.</p>
<p>Tasks A-C. Number of local-hire workforce and local, small business development, and other economic opportunities created.</p>	<p>Where to find the data: TBD at future Working Group meeting.</p> <p>Who will collect it: TBD at future Working Group meeting.</p>
<p>Tasks A-C. Increase in the number of education/training opportunities in the region.</p>	<p>Where to find the data: TBD at future Working Group meeting.</p> <p>Who will collect it: TBD at future Working Group meeting.</p>
<p>Tasks A-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).</p>	<p>Where to find the data: TBD at future Working Group meeting.</p> <p>Who will collect it: TBD at future Working Group meeting.</p>

Other Discussion

- Heather: as the State develops a broadband office; they will be required to submit a state-wide 5-year broadband plan to be qualified for the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act funding.
- Should Shelly or someone else connect with Lisa Von Bargaen, with the Department of Commerce, as it develops the broadband office?
- GCI: happy to partner and help the projects.
- Patty is providing in-kind services to RTG; she is going to reach out to interim Speaker Maxie to see if interested in making an hour on agenda available during next their council work session on April 7, 10:00 am – 1:00 pm. If interested in joining, email Patty.

- Mark: Referenced an [Anchorage Daily News story](#); resources have been requested by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration.

Next Steps & Wrap Up

- Shelly to email notes.
- Kevin to ask RTG to set-up a meeting with board and stakeholders to talk through what they are proposing to do with Denali Commission broadband grant/project and how to morph it into a YKD Broadband Plan.
- Group is in agreement to reconvene quarterly.
- Look ahead to a big collective work session; hopefully in-person in Bethel in the fall.