



2024-2028 Yukon Kuskokwim Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

Food Security Summary: Work Session Draft – February 2024

Where We Are Today	What data indicators can we monitor to track progress? Where do we want to be in 5 years?	Where We Aim to Be in 2028
Need to identify	Farms and Gardens: Number of commercial and community farms and gardens.	Need to identify
Need to identify	Local Food Businesses: Number of businesses providing local food (farm-to-table or seafood-to-table) products.	Need to identify
Need to identify	Jobs: Number of value-added production and distribution jobs in the agriculture and fishing industries.	Need to identify
Need to identify	Local Food Schools: Number of schools serving local food products.	Need to identify

Other Potential Indicators (Need baselines and targets): Number of reindeer husbandry operations; average food cost shown by household income and size; changes in food consumption habits; cost and availability of subsistence equipment.

Proposed Food Security Objective

1. Everyone has year-round access to nutritious, culturally appropriate, and affordable food.

Food Security Strategic Direction: Potential Strategies and Actions

Proposed Strategy A: Identify ways to mitigate climate impacts on subsistence resources.

1. Strengthen co-Indigenous, place-based stewardship that creates a stronger local workforce.
2. Increase advocacy with United States Department of Agriculture and Alaska Villages Initiative.

Proposed Strategy B: Identify ways to grow and produce more food locally.

3. Expand work with the University Extension Services, Cooperative Extension; Rural Alaska Community Action Program; Alaska Village Initiatives; Orutsararmiut Native Council (ONC); and Alaska Native Plant Society as well as other regional organizations to support the local development of farming and community gardening resources.
4. Develop farm infrastructure (including housing) to dedicate land toward farming.
5. Create peer mentorship or apprenticeship opportunities for future farmers to learn on pre-developed farms.
6. Identify funding mechanisms for farm infrastructure development and farming equipment to remove barriers to entry into jobs as local producers.
7. Identify YK farm production best practices through innovation and collaboration and collaborate on any data and information sharing.
8. Develop and establish community gardens.

Other Potential Actions

9. Improve cross-sector collaboration to increase the use of SNAP, WIC, and other benefits across the region.
10. Prepare recommendations for communities on how to become a food security hub.
11. Encourage communities to establish food security supplies.
12. Develop tools and processes to better track relevant regional data like total annual subsistence harvests.
13. Increase education in schools on subsistence and local food production.
14. Serve locally grown and harvested foods in schools.
15. Create an information exchange among Arctic, Yukon, and Kuskokwim River fisheries programs.

Guiding Questions for YK CEDS Work Session Breakouts

1. What strategies or actions are missing?
2. Which strategies and actions are the most important to achieve first and over the next five years?
3. How can we collaborate to make progress?

Other Relevant Resources and Potential Funding Sources

Relevant Resources

- The Unmet Needs of Environmentally Threatened Alaska Native Villages: Assessment and Recommendations. Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium. January 2024. [View here.](#)
- Food Security and Sovereignty in Alaska Native Communities: Recommendations for Improving Language and Inclusivity in Food and Agriculture Planning. Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of Alaska Fairbanks and Alaska Food Policy Council. January 2024. [View here.](#)
- House Bill 298: Alaska Food Strategy Task Force 2023 Report. Alaska Food Strategy Task Force. August 2023. [View here.](#)
- Changes in Sharing and Participation are Important Predictors of the Health of Traditional Harvest Practices in Indigenous Communities in Alaska. ResearchGate. June 2022. [View here.](#)
- Tribal Food Sovereignty and Security. University of Alaska Fairbanks. <https://www.uaf.edu/ces/districts/tribes/tribal-food-sovereignty-security.php>
- United States Department of Agriculture Regional Food Business Centers, Islands and Remote Areas. United States Department of Agriculture. <https://www.akfoodpolicycouncil.org/business-center>

Potential Funding Sources

- Growing Rural Opportunities for Wellness – Orchards and Food Forests (GROW-OFF) Grant Program. Rural Alaska Community Action Program. January 2024. [View here.](#)
- Microgrants for Food Security. Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Agriculture. Applications to open early 2024. [View here.](#)

Strengths and Opportunities

Internal and external factors that contribute to our success in this focus area

- Alaska-wide food security efforts are in the works (House Bill 298, Alaska Food Policy Council’s Food Systems Action plan, Alaska Salmon Research Task Force’s YK Work Group).
- Alaska secured \$5.9M from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to provide shelf-stable meals to 11 school districts (including Lower Kuskokwim, Kashunamiut, and Yupiit) for distribution to low-income children during the summer of 2024.
- Subsistence harvests are an essential economic resource for many YK residents and preserve important cultural traditions.
- Increased collaboration between industries and organizations on food security-related topics.
- Co-Stewardship and co-management discussions and agreements toward local/Tribal management of subsistence and other resources.
- Formalize data collection (some agencies are already working toward this!).
- The region has excellent soils for growing produce.
- Providing food banks is an opportunity for communities to experience hunger relief.

Weaknesses and Threats

Internal and external factors that are barriers to our success in this focus area

- High grocery costs are negatively impacting communities.
- It is becoming increasingly more difficult to have accessible, nutritious, shared foods.
- Climate change impacts on local subsistence foods.
- Limited local farming and local produce available.
- The region has an underdeveloped agriculture/farming industry.
- Lack of regional and community-level data collected and/or available.
- Lack of infrastructure and limited storage capacity (limited freezers, dry storage, fuel to support the storage, etc.).
- Lack of coordination between regions on food security related work.
- Low salmon numbers in both the Kuskokwim and Yukon Rivers and resulting fishery closures and increased regulations.
- Lack of partnership to develop land into farms.
- Lack of capacity for outreach on supportive services and programs like Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Women, Infants and Children (WIC), etc.
- State and federal policies and regulations sometimes restrict access to traditional food sources.
- Increases in vessel traffic along Alaska’s western coasts could negatively harm subsistence and commercial activities.