

# YK Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

## Business Development and Entrepreneurship Work Session Meeting Notes

10:00 am – 12:00 pm, Wednesday, February 7, 2024. [Link to meeting recording.](#)

### Attendees (alphabetized by organization)

Attendee Name	Organization
Marilyn Stanislaus	Alakanuk Tribal Council
Audrey Alstrom*	Alaska Energy Authority
Shaun Codman	Alaska Logistics
John P Charlie	Association of Village Council Presidents
Susan Taylor	Bethel Chamber of Commerce
Tisha Kuhns*	Calista Corporation
Brenda Pacarro*	Calista Corporation
Pauline Boratko*	City of Bethel
Stacey Fritz	Cold Climate Housing Research Center
Colleen Laroux*	Donlin Gold
Miles Brookes	Federal Highway Administration, Office of Tribal Transportation
Roberta Murphy	Regional Tribal Government, Chuloonawick
Bob Marquez*	Rural Alaska Community Action Program
Will Hartman	The Kuskokwim Corporation
Marybeth Whalen	Yupit Piciryarit Cultural Center

\*Starred attendees participated in the work session virtually while unmarked attendees participated in person.

Each breakout session featured a specific focus area summary document to guide the discussion. This summary document was used as a baseline and will be updated for the future CEDS document based on Work Session attendee feedback. To view the draft focus area summaries referenced in the breakout sessions, visit the YK CEDS page [here](#).

## Data Indicators Discussion Highlights

- Not discussed during this focus topic breakout session.

## Objectives, Strategies, and Actions Discussion

### What strategies or actions are missing?

\*Starred items are noted as a proposed priority.

- Offer community support for local businesses. \*
- Develop a directory of local businesses (post on the City of Bethel site?). Calista Corporation launched a Shareholder directory website, Calivika: <https://www.calistacorp.com/calista-shareholder-business-directory/> \*

- **Under #1:** Help potential small businesses understand varying market demands and their impacts on business alongside how to market hobbies/skills that lack certification to support community demand (include education and support on different business model types and benefits, e.g. incorporated, LLC, nonprofits, etc.).
- **Under #3:** Include business plan writing and business cohort support through buddy system business promotion.
- **Under #7:** Tourism-related business – think about broader tourism opportunities, e.g. ecotourism, cultural tourism, adventure tourism. What is the resident appetite for tourism? Hasn't traditionally been a regional priority. Two main identified visitor groups:
  - Fishing/Hunting: Fishermen stuck at Bethel airport for the day, catch evening flight; hang out in Bethel at Lions Club, walk to shops & restaurants. Set up Lions Club with magazines, coffee, pastries, etc. Hunting/fishing guides take care of them now. Possibility to partner with guiding companies and Bethel bed & breakfasts to provide more reason to spend time and money in Bethel. Work with guiding companies to build meat donations and social responsibility into operations.
  - Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFRs): Families come to visit.
- Create public third spaces that can serve as a garage/shop/workspace for vehicle/engine repair and/or a commercial kitchen.

#### ***How can we collaborate to make progress? Who should be involved?***

- Laura Ellsworth at Southwest Alaska Art Group.
- Michelle DeWitt at Bethel Community Services Foundation.
- Small Business Administration.
- Corporations – resources for small businesses.
- **Under draft strategy #5:** Bethel/Chamber reestablishment contacts – Bonnie Bradbury, Dave at Job Service.
- **Under draft strategy #6:** Could be TKC or similar.

#### ***Additional Discussion***

- Regional Strengths and Opportunities
  - Maybe less competition? More access to the market?
  - Yuut Elitnaurviat (People's Learning Center) – need rolodex/yellow pages of specialty trades/people (a list of businesses or individuals with the skills, licenses, certifications, endorsements) around region - make it easy to find people with specialty trades (e.g., for AVCP). Also being able to notify skilled workers about re-certification.
  - Shared third spaces that can serve as a garage/shop/workspace for vehicle/engine repair, and a commercial kitchen (possibly in Aniak).
  - Call center when broadband connectivity expands in the region.
  - Buddy system business promotion: Help starting and growing businesses through cross-promotion among businesses; also utilize clients to promote businesses.
  - Opportunity for new businesses within the same industries/field (many small businesses are at or over capacity; this could relieve capacity shortage pressure).

- Identified business type needs: home weatherization; energy rating; 4-stroke vehicle/small engine repair; courier service in Bethel; safe and healthy accommodations in Bethel and surrounding villages (bed and breakfasts); recycling used oil.
- Regional Weaknesses and Threats
  - Many local businesses are at or over capacity.
  - How do people with specialized skills support themselves in-community (the market is often too small to support full time work)? If they have other job(s) to make a living, they are less available for specialized skills (e.g., fixing Toyos). Seasonality of some work combined with small market size is a recurring challenge. People do some work as hobbies because there is not enough work/pay to do the work full-time/"professionally" (e.g., many can fix cars, but garages are full).
  - How can regional and village corporations support shareholders to start small businesses? e.g., CVRF has Honda and Skidoo certified repair techs doing work for tribal residents at a reduced rate.
  - What can we do to address joblessness, addictions, other barriers to local hire?
  - How to help people keep their businesses going? Lots of startup support, but less for sustainability. Especially difficult if a side-gig, giving more free time to it. (maybe also need more people involved - exhaustion of solopreneurs?).
  - Help with business administration (e.g., liability insurance, meeting regulatory requirements) - can be overwhelming/exhausting for a single person. Mentorship, realistic expectations; offer support services to streamline business administration.
  - Hesitancy to invest not knowing/understanding opportunity.
  - How can small businessperson support themselves/not cobble together multiple jobs to survive?