

YK Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

Connectivity Work Session Meeting Notes

10:00 am – 12:00 pm, Tuesday, February 6, 2024. [Link to meeting recording.](#)

Attendees (alphabetized by organization)

Attendee Name	Organization
Heather Cavanaugh*	Alaska Communications System
Kathleen Redmond*	Alaska Communications System
Romorenzo Marasigan*	Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
Adison Spafford*	Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
Allen Alivkar	Association of Village Council Presidents
Susan Taylor	Bethel Chamber of Commerce
Tisha Kuhns*	Calista Corporation
Thomas Leonard*	Calista Corporation
Colleen Laraux*	Donlin Gold
Jenifer Nelson	GCI, Inc.
Pauline Fisher	Kwethluk Inc.
Kristina Jackson	Kwethluk Inc.
Roberta Murphy	Regional Tribal Government, Chuloonawick
Jonathan Samuelson	The Kuskokwim Corporation
Olivia Henry*	Yukon Kuskokwim Tribal Broadband Consortium

*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

- Clarify Tribally Owned Broadband Rate as a data indicator. The metric goal is to measure the number of Tribes that own broadband infrastructure, which is currently identified as 0 Tribes in the YK.

Objectives, Strategies, and Actions Discussion

What strategies or actions are missing?

*Starred items are noted as a proposed priority; the reordered strategies and actions are the proposed order to complete the work.

- **ADD AS AN ACTION:** Advocate to offset high household internet/broadband costs. Could include funding/policy to individuals. *

- The Affordable Connectivity Program currently provides \$75 (to unserved or impoverished communities) toward an internet/broadband bill. The funds are set to expire April 2024 unless Congress refunds this program; Alaska Communications System is working with the delegation and there are bills in motion that intend to refund this program.
- **Under Action #7:** Use the conference as a planning workshop/launching point to gather data and other up-to-date information and then utilize these materials to inventory gaps and develop an initial draft of the YK Regional Broadband Plan. Consider if we want this to occur annually. *
- Other elements to consider:
 - Education and information sharing on regulatory frameworks that are in place and how that can impact implementation of a Broadband Plan.
 - Invite the 7 regional school districts to the conference.
 - Homework: Check existing organizations doing this work.
- **Clarification to Action #4:** Change to “Yukon Kuskokwim **Region** Broadband Plan” (“Region” because some YK villages are outside the delta but in the region). The Plan will be a five-year update. *
- Actions #1, 2, 3, & 6 would be nested into the Broadband Plan action item.
 - Contingency Plans to include in Broadband Plan development:
 - (Formerly #6) Education & WFD policy – include project management, data collection and monitoring.
 - (Formerly #2) Funding
 - (Formerly #3) Data collecting and monitoring
 - (Formerly #1) Capital construction tracking
- Action #5 would serve as the guiding principle – it is the foundation of all CEDS activities.
- Need to be able to answer – Who can be the champion to help move this work forward?
- **Under #1:** Quick inventory of currently funded projects that will develop regional telecommunications infrastructure.
 - Calista/Alaska Communications System (through National Telecommunications and Information Administration [NTIA] grant): Bring fiber optic backbone and to the home in 7 communities from Bethel to Kalskag.
 - Geographic coverage: Upper Kalskag, Lower Kalskag, Tuluksak, Akiak, Akiachak, Kwethluk, and Napakiak.
 - Includes anchor tenants (hospitals, clinics, schools).
 - GCI/Bethel Native Corporation (through NTIA grant): Fiber backbone and to the home in 13 communities.
 - Geographic coverage: Kalskag to Bethel, including Napaskiak, Napakiak, Eek.
 - There is no overlap with the Calista/Alaska Communications System project.
 - Includes anchor tenants (hospitals, clinics, schools).

- Bushtel (through U.S. Department of Agriculture grant): Microwave system that will serve Shageluk to Kuskokwim to Stony River. Will serve ~5 communities with the overall goal of serving Lime Village.
 - Homework: Determine the YK communities involved.
 - Develop a map that shows what projects are slated to be completed and which communities will be served. Interim mapping option: [Alaska Broadband Office's \(ABO\) map](#); shows which communities are served/unserved, but unsure how up to date this data may be.
- Quintillion (through NTIA grant): Middle-mile grant that covers Nome to Emmonak to Homer. This will be another long-haul connection.
- **ADD AS AN ACTION:** Proactive user education about safe internet usage – communities may be more susceptible to potential scams. Could partner with Yukon Kuskokwim Health Consortium (and their programs/services) and school districts on how to healthily use the internet.
- **Under #6:** Workforce development and education (could work with Yuut Elitnaurviat?); bring in someone from each village to Bethel for short training (e.g., up to 2 weeks).

How can we collaborate to make progress?

- Need to identify potential conference organizer(s).
- Alaska Broadband Office – broadband map.
- Yukon Kuskokwim Health Consortium – safe, healthy internet usage programming.
- Heather Cavanaugh/Kathleen Redmond (Alaska Communications System) – expiring Affordable Connectivity Program details.
- Yuut Elitnaurviat – workforce development and education.

Additional Discussion

- Rebrand: Change all CEDS Communications branding to Connectivity.
- Key takeaway: As we get access to the world, we need to be ready for the world to have access to us.