

YK Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

Education and Workforce Development Work Session Meeting Notes

1:30 pm – 3:30 pm, Wednesday, February 7, 2024 | [Link to meeting recording](#)

Attendees (alphabetized by organization)

Attendee Name	Organization
Mary Ayunerak	Alakanuk Tribal Council
Marilyn Stanislaus	Alakanuk Tribal Council
Romorenzo Marasigan *	Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
Shaun Codman	Alaska Logistics
Michael Black *	Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium
Jenni Harrison *	Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium
Henry Combs	Association of Village Council Presidents
Sam Crow	Association of Village Council Presidents
Devon Smith	Association of Village Council Presidents
Coralette Waite *	Association of Village Council Presidents
Christine Brink	Association of Village Council Presidents, Regional Housing Authority
Brenda Pacarro *	Calista Corporation
Iliodor Philemonof	Calista Corporation
Tracy Pleasant	City of Quinhagak
Stacey Fritz	Cold Climate Housing Research Center
Colleen Laraux *	Donlin Gold
Miles Brookes	Federal Highway Administration, Office of Tribal Transportation
Pauline Fisher	Kwethluk Inc.
George Guy	Kwethluk Inc.
Kristina Jackson	Kwethluk Inc.
Richard G Berezkin	Kwethluk IRA Council
Martin Andrew	Organized Village of Kwethluk
Iva Karoly-Lister	Rural Alaska Community Action Program
Bob Marquez *	Rural Alaska Community Action Program
Will Hartman	The Kuskokwim Corporation
Archie Andrew	Tuntutuliak Community Services Association
Ann Fischer	U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Science
Brett Nelson	U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Science
Robert Chambers	U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Development
Mike Hoffman	Yuut Elitnaurviat
Selena Malone	Yuut Elitnaurviat
Tiffany Tony	Yuut Elitnaurviat

*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

- Identify skills gap – if people aren't getting jobs, why not?
- Define metrics for those unfamiliar with data sources; e.g., who is counted in the unemployment rate.
- Number of residents using and needing benefits.
- Graduation rates.
- Graduates who are going into jobs.
- How dropout numbers correlate with GED graduates.
- Capture the story of those who are educated or trained in the region but leave for jobs.
- Remove Bethel numbers from data or show separately so they don't skew the entire region.
- Track seasonality of employment.
- University of Alaska Fairbanks completion rates.
- Poverty rate, adjusted for the YK.
- Job vacancy rates.
- Measure safety and health of community; i.e., number of schools, VPSOs, health aides, etc.

Objectives, Strategies, and Actions Discussion

What strategies or actions are missing?

*Starred items are noted as a proposed priority.

- **Strategy A: Collectively develop and implement regional vocational training workforce development plans for crucially needed occupations.**

Other ideas to add to the list, from group discussion:

- Provide mental health and wellness support alongside education and training. *
- Recognize and address the need for childcare in all workforce related discussions. *
- Additional topics for workforce training needs: *
 - Small engine repair – boats, four-wheelers, snowmachines.
 - Food safety.
 - Soft skills, how to apply for jobs, how to be a good employee.
 - Budgeting and money management.
 - Welding.
 - Occupational safety, including safety for workers in harsh conditions, like ice road maintenance (this cross references with an idea from the Transportation group.)
 - Tribal administrative skills.
 - Accounting.
 - Construction jobs that can be done in the winter.
 - Local and Indigenous health care workers and mental health counselors.
 - Commercial fishing.

- Increase options for remote training and certifications, including more technically advanced remote training, like commercial driver's license (CDL) and heavy equipment simulators. Coordinate with training centers and other regional groups to increase access to internet and computers to allow for more online training opportunities. *
- Fund and develop a workforce needs assessment (See additional discussion below) *
- Offer competitive wages. *
- Standardize culturally appropriate worker benefits. Imbed cultural values in the workforce. *
- Develop a campaign to bring YK locals back to the region.
- Develop programs to help employed people to grow and climb the career ladder; don't just focus resources and programs on the unemployed.
- Incentivize education and job retention.
- Develop network that supports part time workers to transition to full time work.
- Target not just young people with workforce development programs but also adults transitioning careers or leaving recovery or jail.
- Explore partnerships with unions (See additional discussion below)
- De-emphasize traditional college only for "smart" kids. Provide information on all opportunities including Vocational Education opportunities.
- Address the need for teachers and trainers.

How can we collaborate to make progress?

- Yuut does great work to connect people to training opportunities. Keep up support for them.
- Partner with schools to provide job and career opportunities sooner and throughout all grades. Provide more vocational education and skills building in schools.

Additional Discussion

- Most unions have been trying to establish more rural/community partnerships especially leading up to the many upcoming and planned projects. They will be looking for workers. A local workforce is very attractive to avoid travel and lodging stipends for workers they must bring in for projects. Communities could work with unions on training locals who then can be added to the "list" of local union employees and can be called up on these big projects; that keeps the workforce local and the workers at home or close to home.
- Workforce needs assessment – Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) and Village Safe Water have massive plans for infrastructure in YK Delta. Over the next five years there is going to be an enormous demand for skilled labor in all of these areas. How can we match up the upcoming projects with training opportunities and get out ahead of it? ANTHC could help with quantifying needs for the water and sewer projects they have planning in coming years.
- There is a source for "Where We Are Today for Percent of Jobs Filled by Regional Residents for 2022" (reported in Feb 2024) = Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area = 84.9% and Bethel Census Area = 86.8% in the Nonresidents Working in Alaska 2022 report from Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (published Feb. 2024) <https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/reshire/nonres.pdf>