



Yukon Kuskokwim Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

Connectivity Summary: April 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
0 communities	Communities Served: Number of communities served (defined by at least 100 Mbps download speed, 20 Mbps upload speed). ¹	Need to identify
0 communities	Tribally Owned Broadband Rate: Number of communities served by Tribally owned broadband.	25% of YK communities
Need to identify	Internet Speed: Average upload/download speeds available, in megabits per second (Mbps).	Minimum 100 Mbps download speed Minimum 20 Mbps upload speed
Need to identify	Internet Cost: Average cost of internet service.	\$60 or less/month

Sources: ¹[Alaska Broadband Office](#)

Other Potential Indicators (need baselines and targets): Percentage of remote, local employment; accrued savings for public institutions as broadband infrastructure expands; percentage of local employment in broadband deployment and maintenance jobs; number of communities connected in multiple modes.

Proposed Communications Objectives

1. Increase connectivity in the YK region.
2. Support Tribal efforts to develop the YK Tribal broadband spectrum.

Communications Strategic Direction: Potential Strategies and Actions

Proposed Strategy A: Ensure affordable and safe connectivity throughout the region.

1. Advocate for policies, subsidies, and resources to offset high household internet and broadband costs.
2. Educate communities about safe internet usage with expanding internet accessibility (*Potential partner: Yukon Kuskokwim Health Consortium*).

Proposed Strategy B: Plan for broadband build-out by creating strong partnerships and collaborations between public, private, and Tribal entities on communications infrastructure projects.

3. Organize a Yukon Kuskokwim Broadband Conference that gathers data and inventories existing gaps. Consider whether this conference should occur on an annual basis.
4. Develop a Yukon Kuskokwim Region Broadband Plan that addresses the following subcomponents.
 - Education and Workforce Development Policy: Develop a workforce development strategy for telecommunications infrastructure build-out, including establishing needed trainings as well as collecting and monitoring data (*Potential partner: Yuut Elitnaurviat*).
 - Funding: Build a cohort of innovators or specialists to assist Tribes in pursuing funding opportunities.
 - Regional Data Collection and Monitoring: Build data tracking and reporting into broadband planning efforts to measure progress and successes.
 - Capital Construction Tracking: Utilize currently funded opportunities to develop telecommunications infrastructure. Develop a regional map that shows what projects are due to be completed and which communities will be served (*Potential partner: Alaska Broadband Office*).

Other Relevant Resources and Potential Funding Sources

Relevant Resources (sorted by date published)

- **The Unmet Needs of Environmentally Threatened Alaska Native Villages: Assessment and Recommendations.** Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium. January 2024. [View here.](#)
- **Bristol Bay Broadband Implementation Plan for Virtual Jobs Adoption.** Bristol Bay Native Corporation and the Denali Commission. December 2023. [View here.](#)
- **Mapping HUB.** Alaka Broadband Office. September 2023. [View here.](#)
- **Southwest Alaska Long-haul Microwave and Optical Network (SALMONet) Job Opportunity Evaluation.** Bristol Bay Native Association. 2023. [View here.](#)

Potential Funding Sources

- **Distressed Area Recompete Pilot Program.** Economic Development Administration, US Department of Commerce. Future rounds of funding may be available. [View here.](#)

Strengths and Opportunities <i>Internal and external factors that contribute to our success in this focus area (in alphabetical order)</i>	Weaknesses and Threats <i>Internal and external factors that are barriers to our success in this focus area (in alphabetical order)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued upgrades and expansion of regional telecommunications infrastructure. • Availability of federal funding for broadband infrastructure such as Digital Equity and Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD). • Increased access to training and virtual employment opportunities due to faster, more reliable internet. • Growing acknowledgement of the need for digital equity and Tribal consultation. • More local construction and maintenance jobs for telecommunication broadband systems infrastructure build-out. • Short-term connectivity needs met by Starlink. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable Connectivity Program expires in April 2024 (Potential partner: Alaska Communications System). • Challenges with permitting requirements and securing rights of way. • Communities susceptible to potential scams. • High cost of telecommunications services. • Poor coordination and alignment between funders and organizations. • Limited capacity, technical assistance, and training for telecommunications infrastructure planning. Needs include grant writing, ongoing maintenance, operations, and relevant data collection. • Not enough cell service carriers to meet community needs. • Limited workforce development training and education to meet regional broadband infrastructure needs. • Lack of state regulation over the telecommunications industry. • Despite growing acknowledgement, there is still little engagement with Tribes in broadband planning. • Poor cell, landline, and internet services that do not meet equitable access standards. • Persistent issues with National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) telecommunications infrastructure planning fund disbursement.