



Yukon Kuskokwim Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

**Food Security 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
Need to identify	Traditional Food Harvest: Percent of households who are able to meet their household subsistence needs.	Need to identify
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): Subsistence metrics, such as cost and availability of subsistence equipment, impacts of traditional food on household food security, quantity of traditional food harvests (Potential source: Tanana Chiefs Conference); percentage of food imported into the region; number of reindeer husbandry operations; average food cost shown by household income and size & average percentage of food costs compared with other household expenses; changes in food consumption habits; identify nutrition metrics (Potential partner: Alaska Department of Health and Social Services); percentage of households that report food security; number increase of institutions providing local food, such as hospitals, private sector, restaurants, grocery stores.

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: Protect and revitalize subsistence resources.

1. Strengthen co-Indigenous, place-based stewardship that elevates local and Tribal perspectives in resource management and decision-making.
2. Continue to support the Inter-tribal Fisheries Commissions for the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers.

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

3. Identify funding mechanisms for farm development and farming equipment to remove barriers to entry into jobs as local producers.
4. Expand the availability of local farming and community gardening resources (*Potential partners: University Extension Services, Cooperative Extension; Rural Alaska Community Action Program; Alaska Village Initiatives; Orutsararmiut Native Council (ONC); Alaska Native Plant Society; University of Alaska Fairbanks, Tribal Cooperative Extension*).
5. Identify and dedicate potential land toward farming.
6. Create peer mentorship or apprenticeship opportunities for future farmers to learn on existing farms.
7. Identify YK farm production best practices and collaborate on data and information sharing (*Potential partner: University of Alaska Fairbanks, Tribal Cooperative Extension*).
8. Develop and establish school and community gardens (*Potential partners: Tok, Chickaloon, Tyonek, and Sitka*).
9. Educate communities on canning and food preservation; increase food-preserved storage in the region.
10. Increase advocacy with the US Department of Agriculture and Alaska Villages Initiative about grant awareness and better funding alignment with potential opportunities to grow and store food locally and/or regionally.
11. Investigate and invest in local and regional operations that could expand the produce box model to incorporate traditional protein sources (e.g., reindeer, commercially processed moose).

Proposed Strategy C: Strengthen regional collaboration, information sharing, and data monitoring to improve food security resiliency.

12. Develop tools to better track and share relevant regional data (*Potential partners: Orutsararmiut Native Council, Alaska Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management*).
13. Evaluate household food access. Consider workforce development opportunities that investigate current research and best practices to develop strong regional food security planning (*Potential partner: Yukon Kuskokwim Health Consortium*).
14. Support food security plan development through the development of a Tribal food security plan template. Include a local and regional strategy for coordinating local food distribution and storage, programming that connects affordable, nutritious food to households experiencing food insecurity, and data metrics that identify the level of impact on food security goals.
15. Improve cross-sector collaboration between nonprofits serving community members and federal programs to increase the use of SNAP, WIC, Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and other benefits across the region.
16. Create an information exchange among Arctic, Yukon, and Kuskokwim River fisheries programs.
17. Develop a more regional, collaborative approach to helping communities with plans, grant writing, and project management that increase food security (*Potential partner: Intertribal Agriculture Council, Alaska Chapter; Alaska Native Health Consortium, Food Sovereignty Program; Alaska Food Policy Council*).
18. Prepare recommendations for communities on how to become a food security hub.

Other Potential Actions

19. Serve locally grown and harvested foods in schools (*Potential partner: US Department of Agriculture*).
 - Determine how to share knowledge from other successful communities and regions who have been able to navigate regulation and serve traditional foods in institutional settings.
20. Develop regional food security and safe drinking water storage that can be accessible to the community and support disaster planning.
21. Expand traditional food education in schools and communities, such as plant identification and local food production (*Potential partners: Alaska Native Medical Center, Kotzebue & Yukon Koyukuk Elder Homes, Southeast Fish to School*).
22. Consider community refuse and compost opportunities.
23. Launch prescription produce policy with support from Medicaid and YKHC's diabetes program grant funding. Focus initial six-month efforts on launching this policy alongside Medicaid waivers and refining eligibility criteria for these prescriptions.

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.](#)
- **Tribal Nations in Alaska to receive more than \$7 million in USDA grants.** US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. December 2023. [View here.](#)
- **Neqkiuryaraq – The Art of Preparing Food.** National Institutes of Health (NIH), RePORTER. September 2023. [View here.](#)
- **House Bill 298: Alaska Food Strategy Task Force 2023 Report.** Alaska Food Strategy Task Force. August 2023. [View here.](#)
- **Food System Resilience: A Planning Guide for Local Governments.** John Hopkins, Center for a Livable Future. December 2022. [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.](#)
- **2022 Aruqutet Project.** Bethel Community Service Foundation and Calista Corporation. [View here.](#)
- **Food Security Resources.** Intertribal Agriculture Council – Alaska. [View here.](#)
- **Tribal Food Sovereignty and Security.** University of Alaska Fairbanks. [View here.](#)
- **US Department of Agriculture Regional Food Business Centers, Islands and Remote Areas.** US Department of Agriculture. [View here.](#)

Potential Funding Sources

- **Local Agriculture Market Program.** US Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service. [View here.](#)
- **Growing Rural Opportunities for Wellness – Orchards and Food Forests (GROW-OFF) Grant Program.** Rural Alaska Community Action Program. [View here.](#)
- **Microgrants for Food Security.** Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Agriculture. [View here.](#)
- **Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program.** Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Agriculture. [View Here.](#)
- **Value Added Produce Grants.** US Department of Agriculture, Rural Development. [View here.](#)

Strengths and Opportunities

Internal and external factors that contribute to our success in this focus area (in alphabetical order)

- Alaska-wide food security efforts in the works (House Bill 298, Alaska Food Policy Council's Food Systems Action plan, Alaska Salmon Research Task Force's YK Work Group, etc.).
- Bethel Community Service Foundation operates new food bank.
- Co-Stewardship and co-management discussions and agreements toward local/Tribal management of subsistence and other resources.
- Excellent regional soils for growing produce.
- Increased collaboration between industries and organizations on food security-related topics.
- Lower Kuskokwim, Kashunamiut, and Yupiit School Districts to distribute shelf-stable meals to low-income children during the summer of 2024.
- Opportunity for community food bank expansion.
- Subsistence harvests are a vital regional economic resource that also preserve important cultural traditions.

Weaknesses and Threats

Internal and external factors that are barriers to our success in this focus area (in alphabetical order)

- Bethel Community Service Foundation's food bank provides a safety net for food security, but is not a long-term solution.
- High grocery costs negatively impact community food security.
- Increasingly difficult to eat accessible, nutritious, shared foods.
- Need additional capacity for outreach on supportive services and programs like Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Women, Infants and Children (WIC).
- Poor partnership and coordination for food security and farming initiatives.
- Insufficient infrastructure and limited food storage capacity.
- Lack of regional and community-level data collected and/or available.
- Limited local farming and local produce available.
- Increased regulations are lowering salmon numbers in both the Kuskokwim and Yukon Rivers, resulting in fishery closures.
- Climate change decreasing access to local subsistence foods.
- Increased vessel traffic along Alaska's western coasts negatively impacting subsistence and commercial activities.
- Restrictive state and federal policies and regulations limiting access to traditional food sources.
- Underdeveloped regional agriculture/farming industry.