



Alaska Regional Development Organizations



Fiscal Year 2024 Annual Report

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FISCAL YEAR 2024 ANNUAL REPORT



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INTRODUCTION

The Alaska Regional Economic Assistance Program was established in 1988 under AS 44.33.896 to encourage the formation of regional development organizations in locations across the state. These [Alaska Regional Development Organizations](#)^{R-1} (ARDORs) prepare and implement regional development strategies that incorporate local knowledge to foster responsible and sustainable economic growth.

ARDORs are the primary economic development agencies providing support services for their regions, communities, and businesses. ARDORs throughout the state have similar challenges and implement similar scopes of work; however, the form and function of each ARDOR is customized to each specific region. ARDORs encourage economic development and growth in their regions and are strengthened by their connections to the State of Alaska and to other regions through the statewide program.

ARDORs are directed at the local level by elected or appointed boards of directors that reflect the economic diversity and the character of the region. Some ARDORs have achieved additional federal designations that enable the organizations to qualify for increased federal funding. Some ARDORs have also developed business, municipal, and private memberships that reflect the distinct needs of each region.

The ARDOR program was reauthorized for 10 years in the 2021 legislative session. Qualified ARDORs historically received annual base project funding from the [Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development](#)^{R-2} (DCCED) that could be leveraged for funding from federal, local, and private programs. In FY2022, some ARDORs received funding through DCCED to assist with the development of the 2022-2027 [Statewide Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy](#)^{R-3}.

The nine designated ARDORs represent areas that range in size from the urban Municipality of Anchorage to the sparsely populated and sprawling Southeast, Southwest, and Western regions of Alaska. Several rural regions like the Arctic Slope and large expanses of the Interior do not presently have designated ARDORs.

About the data in this report:

In September 2024, DCCED sent a survey instrument to the nine designated ARDORs. This instrument was designed to directly address the reporting requirements of AS 44.33.896(e) relating to the activities of the ARDORs. All ARDORs responded to the survey instrument.

All data in this report is derived from information provided by the ARDORs. Due to significant differences in how each respondent organized and formatted their replies, what appears in this report may differ from the verbatim survey response. The organizations also have different interpretations of the statutory questions, so responses may vary greatly in their level of detail. Any opinions expressed in this report are based upon the survey responses from the nine designated ARDORs and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the State of Alaska or its staff.



ANCHORAGE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION



AEDC
Anchorage Economic
Development Corporation

510 L St, Suite 603
Anchorage, AK 99501
(907) 258-3700
<https://www.aedcweb.com/>

Mission:

To grow a prosperous, sustainable, and diverse economy.

The Anchorage Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) is a private nonprofit corporation (IRS code 501(c)(6)), operating since 1987. It was created by the Municipality of Anchorage and spun off in 1989 to be an independent partner of the Municipality focused on economic development for Anchorage.

Funding Reported:

In fiscal year (FY) 2024, AEDC reported the following sources of revenue:

- \$ 198,500.00 – Private Sector Sponsorships¹

Status of Projects Funded by State or Federal Grants:

AEDC had no outstanding grants from state or federal agencies at the end of the reporting period.

Meeting Summary:

AEDC held nine board meetings between July 2023 and June 2024.

September 6, 2023 (AEDC Boardroom): Discussion topics included approval of the July 2023 financials, the appointment of Jenna Wright as interim President and CEO of AEDC, a resolution to appoint a new board member, a resolution to appoint a new Investor Council member, and a presentation of the ad-hoc sales committee report. This report included a resolution to approve AEDC's establishment and leadership of a business coalition to develop a project plan supporting the establishment of a sales tax in Anchorage, which aims to provide property tax relief and invest in community projects.

October 4, 2023 (Conoco Phillips Boardroom): Discussion topics included approval of the August 2023 financials and end-of-year report, staffing updates, membership drive initiatives, a final review of the 2022 financials, transition planning, and updates on the Choose Anchorage working groups.

¹ AEDC reported 34 private sector sponsors, ranging from \$1,000 to \$15,000 each.



November 8, 2023 (AEDC Boardroom): Discussion topics included approval of the September 2023 financials, a review of open board positions, announcements for the January luncheon, staffing changes, mayoral updates, and AEDC presentations in the community.

December 6, 2023 (GCI Base Camp): Discussion topics included approval of the October 2023 financials, the 2024 budget, two resolutions appointing new board members, a resolution confirming 2024 board positions and officers, the 2024 calendar of meetings, and the appointment of 2024 investor council members. There was also a presentation from Assemblymember Brawley on the 2024 public restrooms bond proposal, on which the board took no position.

February 7, 2024 (AEDC Boardroom): Discussion topics included approval of the November and December 2023 financials, a review of the AEDC economics forecast luncheon, updates on the business coalition for the sales tax initiative (Project Anchorage), fundraising efforts, initiative progress, and a resolution to appoint AEDC as the lead entity for the sales tax effort.

March 6, 2024 (AEDC Boardroom): Discussion topics included approval of the January 2024 financials, a resolution appointing a new board member, a municipal operating grant, and a resolution to create the AEDC Advocacy Fund, a 501(c)(4) organization to manage the sales tax initiative, along with membership and staff changes.

April 3, 2024 (AEDC Boardroom): Discussion topics included approval of the February 2024 financials, progress on the Choose Anchorage initiative, updates on Project Anchorage, and a resolution to approve a letter for Anchorage School District education funding.

May 1, 2024 (AEDC Boardroom): Discussion topics included approval of the March 2024 financials, updates on the 501(c)(4) Advocacy Fund, and presentations from Professional Growth Systems on Choose Anchorage and from both the Ship Creek Group and Northern Compass Group to outline the Project Anchorage plan.

June 5, 2024 (AEDC Boardroom): Discussion topics included approval of the April 2024 financials, the January economic luncheon, the mayoral transition, a guest presentation from Dittman Research on its sales tax poll results, and board action on a response letter for Anchorage Community Land Trust regarding their questions about the sales tax initiative.





Goals, Objectives, and Strategies for Addressing Regional Economic Development Needs:

AEDC's work plan focuses on implementing a temporary three percent sales tax. The purpose of this sales tax would be to reduce property taxes and fund key capital projects aimed at enhancing the quality of life in Anchorage. AEDC will engage, build the support of, and gather input from local business leaders, residents, and community organizations through public forums and surveys.

Drawing inspiration from Oklahoma City's successful model, one-third of the tax revenue will fund community-selected projects, such as parks and infrastructure, and two-thirds will go directly toward property tax relief. Utilizing research from the University of Alaska Center for Economic Development and prioritizing transparency, AEDC aims to stimulate long-term economic growth and make Anchorage a more desirable place to be.

The AEDC board's primary foci are on two major initiatives within its strategic plan:

1. [Choose Anchorage](#)^{R-4}: This initiative creates a framework for revitalization focused on improving four interconnected aspects of Anchorage. The implementation of this framework is designed to strengthen the city's economic vitality for decades to come.
2. [Project Anchorage](#)^{R-5}: This initiative has been put forward by a coalition of Anchorage businesses and business leaders to make Anchorage a better place to live, work, and play. The initiative would implement a three percent sales tax to reduce property taxes and invest in building capital projects to enhance the quality of life within Anchorage.

Current Economic Development Initiatives:

In FY2024, AEDC hosted two economic luncheons focused on the delivery of economic data and forecasts to Anchorage's business community and the broader public. These data and forecasts can be used to make business decisions and strategic investments in the Municipality of Anchorage.

AEDC established a business coalition to develop a proposal that would implement a temporary three percent sales tax to reduce property taxes and invest in quality of life enhancing capital projects.

As an ongoing practice, AEDC focused on business retention and expansion, workforce development, infrastructure development, and Anchorage's overall livability.

Future Economic Development Initiatives:

The Board is focused on actioning and advocating for strategies within AEDC's Choose Anchorage plan that will enhance economic development.



Anticipated Challenges to Regional Economic Development:

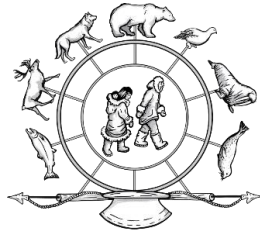
Anchorage’s primary economic challenges are demographic in nature. Anchorage’s population is aging, its working age adult population has declined by an estimated 17,900 in the last decade, and Anchorage loses approximately one-third of its young people (aged 16 to 26) to other U.S. states. This has contributed to historically low unemployment rates of 3.6 percent in 2023, with less than 5,500 people looking for a job in any given month, while employers are posting many more jobs per month, signaling that demand for workers outpaces supply.

In addition to population challenges, Anchorage is facing an affordable housing shortage, a childcare crisis, and a cost of living that is 24 percent higher than the national average while simultaneously having wages that are slightly less than the national average, further reducing residents’ buying power.





BERING STRAIT DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL



KAWERAK, INC.

P.O. Box 948
 Nome, AK 99762
 907-443-5231
<https://kawerak.org/>

Mission:

To serve the people, communities, and businesses of the Bering Strait Region of Alaska by promoting economic opportunities that improve the economic, social, and environmental quality of life. The Council is composed to represent the diverse social, economic, environmental, and political interests of the region.

The Bering Strait Development Council (BSDC) serves as the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee.

Funding Reported:

In FY2024, BSDC reported the following sources of revenue:

- \$33,069,066.00 – U.S. Federal Highway Administration: Emergency Relief for Federally Owned Roads
- \$12,000,000.00 – State of Alaska, Commerce: Capital Projects in Elim, Gambell, Shaktoolik, Shishmaref, and Teller
- \$ 2,050,000.00 – Denali Commission: Cumulative total of five separate projects
- \$ 1,000,000.00 – National Telecommunications and Information Administration: Tribal Broadband
- \$ 548,666.00 – Native American Career and Technical Education Program
- \$ 397,351.00 – U.S. Department of Energy: Pilgrim Hot Springs Geothermal Heating and Cooling
- \$ 324,825.00 – Engineering Ministries International: Municipal Accounting Support Subaward (Year Two)
- \$ 291,550.00 – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: Brownfields Grant
- \$ 271,003.00 – U.S. Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration: Emergency Preparedness
- \$ 180,000.00 – Amalgamated Foundation: Growing Justice Program
- \$ 175,000.00 – State of Alaska, Workforce Development: Alaska Workforce Infusion Grant
- \$ 124,128.00 – U.S. Department of Agriculture: RUS Broadband Technical Assistance
- \$ 70,000.00 – U.S. Economic Development Administration: Community Planning and Development
- \$ 41,861.00 – Haskell Foundation
- \$ 5,000.00 – GCI Gives
- \$ 1,293.52 – Alaska Native Education Grant: Project Remote (Year Three)
- \$ 750.00 – U.S. Department of Transportation: Tribal High Priority Project - Community Streets Grant

Note: All revenue reported are funds received by Kawerak, Inc. at large, rather than BSDC in particular.



In addition to federal funding, BSDC has numerous private sector collaborators who co-host events and provide other direct and indirect support, including the Nome Chamber of Commerce, Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation, University of Alaska Fairbanks - Northwest Campus, and others. The value of these partnerships is undisclosed.

Status of Projects Funded by State or Federal Grants:

U.S. Department of Energy (DOE): The geothermal project funded by DOE will build a small binary power plant capable of generating power from the available geothermal resource using an Organic Rankine Cycle (ORC) with a rated capacity of 75kW for baseload power to the Pilgrim Hot Springs / Unaatuq site while trying to minimize reliance on imported diesel fuel. Further, the project will support Unaatuq's and the broader region's vision of reestablishing permanent Tribal management and development of the traditional site, facilitating creation of a wellness and education center, food production facility, and tourist destination.

Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB): AWIB's award is being utilized for training projects in priority industries under the Alaska Workforce Infusion Grants (AWIG). The goal of these projects is to increase recruitment, training, and staff retention and will help grow Alaska's workforce – particularly within the Bering Strait region.

Native American Career and Technical Education Program (NACTEP): This grant funding is improving career and technical education programs within Kawerak that are consistent with the purposes of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 and that benefit Native Americans and Alaska Natives. These projects build on BSDC's efforts to develop challenging academic and technical standards, and to assist students in meeting such standards, including preparation of students for the high-skill, high-wage, or high-demand occupations in emerging or established professions.

National Telecommunications and Information Administration Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program (NTIA TBCP) Round 1 Equitable Distribution Broadband: The dual Broadband Infrastructure Deployment and Planning project will serve two Alaska Native Villages in our region and will consist of engineering, feasibility, and sustainability studies, which will also include equipment purchases to be used in future projects.

Alaska Native Education Program (ANEP) - Project Remote: ANEP has a simple goal - to make learning accessible in Bering Strait's remote communities so that Tribal members do not have to leave their families, subsistence lifestyle, or home in order to pursue their goals. Throughout the past 3 years, this project has supported middle school students attending ANSEP, high school dual credit/homeschooled students, higher education students, adult education students, trainees, and elders (adults age 50+) in their pursuit of education by providing needed technology and monthly fees for internet connectivity. In total, funds from the program have purchased and distributed over 450 laptops and accessories, as well as over 200 Starlink kits.

Denali Commission: The Commission has funded project installation and assessment for the first 35 miles of trail markers along the Nome/Teller Highway. Forty-three percent of funding has been expended as of June 2024 with project completion expected by September 2025.

Federal Highway Administration - Emergency Relief for Federally Owned Roads (FHWA ERFO) Disaster Relief: Funds are being used to address damage from Typhoon Merbok and provide resilience upgrades to infrastructure in four disadvantaged, rural communities in Western Alaska. In Elim, \$2.4 million will be used to



reconstruct and raise Front Street above 100-year storm levels and repair drainage structures. In Golovin, nearly \$1 million will be used to place rock along a rebuilt berm road to provide protection from future storms. In Koyuk, \$6.6 million will be used to replace an existing storm drain system and reconstruct a barge landing area and a road.

Denali Commission and U.S. Department of Energy: This partnership is strategically collaborating to empower 12 practitioners from each of Alaska's diverse regions, including the general manager of Kawerak, Inc.'s Pilgrim Hot Springs. This project's goal is fostering energy security and advancing the clean energy transition across the state. Our region's ambassador is working to articulate community and regional needs, connect stakeholders, promote capacity development, facilitate regional technical assistance, and develop replicable projects.

U.S. Department of Transportation: Funding through the Community Streets Project are being used to contribute to the costs for the management and construction of community streets in White Mountain.

Economic Development Administration (EDA) Planning Grant: This grant is being used to achieve the following goals from BSDC's work plan:

- 1) Develop a five-year comprehensive economic development strategy (CEDS) and annual updates, including the recent completion of a resiliency component;
- 2) Coordinate economic development planning with partners;
- 3) Build staff capacity and management strength to expand BSDC's ability to seek, obtain, and successfully implement other economic opportunities within the region; and,
- 4) Provide technical assistance and support to individuals, communities, and Tribal entities to implement plan priorities, provide grant training, and pursue state/federal grant opportunities, economic development programs, and regional business development.

Meeting Summary:

BSDC held three board meetings between July 2023 and June 2024. Key meeting topics included:

August 2023 (in Nome at Kawerak, Inc.): BSDC general quarterly meeting, discussion, and reporting. Topics included:

- Potential updates for the 2023 Annual CEDS update.
- Tribal State Small Business Credit Initiative updates to include: 1) current Tribal resolutions submitted to the Alaska Small Business Development Center (AKSBDC), 2) working with AKSBDC, the Alaska Federation of Natives, and the U.S. Treasury, 3) an overview of drafted operating agreements, and 4) advisory board roles.

The Economic Development Specialist (EDS) Barb Nickels provided an overview of the following BSDC activities and information:

- Letter of support provided for AKSBDC's grant application for the 2023 Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) Capital Readiness Program Grant.
- Grant writer training materials sent to White Mountain, Koyuk, Elim, and Gambell.
- Multiple funding opportunities have been shared with regional development coordinators.



- Final copies were obtained of Solomon and Brevig Mission's Local Economic Development Plans (LEDPs).
- Nome Eskimo Community's Strategic Plan was finalized, and a summary posted to the Kawerak website.
- Joint teleconferences were held with both Wales and Unalakleet to start the process for their new 5-year LEDPs.
- Resolutions were obtained from Saint Michael and Koyuk for their newest LEDP updates.
- Assistance was offered to Council, Diomedea, Gambell, Golovin, Mary's Igloo, Shishmaref, Teller, and White Mountain to update their LEDPs.
- The Nome Annual Berry Festival was held August 19 in conjunction with the arrival of a large cruise ship whose itinerary contained many hours for passenger excursions and activities.
- Twelve regional artists were provided travel scholarships to Nome to attend and sell products at the festival.
- The EDS contracted with the State of Alaska Council on the Arts to provide a mandatory workshop for the artists who received a travel scholarship. This workshop was held at the University of Alaska's Northwest Campus' Computer Lab. Patti Lillie, a former Kawerak employee and now the state's Indigenous Arts and Culture Program Director, travelled to Nome and led the workshop. This workshop offered much information about the different programs and resources offered by the state.
- Staff contracted AKSBDC's business advisor, Russ Talvi, to travel throughout the Bering Strait region to offer a workshop in each of its communities and to meet with regional business owners.
- Staff continues to assist the Native Village of Savoonga with the development of their reindeer meat processing operation. Kawerak, in partnership with local supporters and Tribal leadership in Savoonga, submitted an EDA grant application requesting construction funding in the amount of \$4,630,735, which was successfully funded.
- The EDS facilitated planning meetings with stakeholders to develop a regional economic recovery and resilience plan. The plan was reviewed and approved by the BSDC council and will be included as an addendum to the 2023 updated Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).

December 2023 (Zoom): BSDC general quarterly meeting, discussion and reporting. EDS Barb Nickels provided an overview of the following BSDC activities and information:

- The final draft of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) annual update was completed and approved.
- A summary of the Alaska Business Education Compact (BEC) meeting - Inspiring the Workforce to Choose Alaska – was presented.
- The EDS attended the American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association (AIANTA) conference. Specific workshops of interest included 1) The Business of Art, 2) regional meetings, 3) cultural tourism workshops, 4) mobile workshops, and 5) the Sustainable Tourism Certificate Program.
- Regional tourism opportunities trainings are being planned for our region.



- Provided a letter of support for the City of Nome’s application to the EDA for disaster supplemental funding, focusing on workforce needs in the community. This project will allow the city to better support economic development planning. The city will be working through the Alaska Municipal League (AML) to complete the project.
- The Savoonga Reindeer Subcommittee, Community Planning and Development, Kawerak Legal Department, and the EDA continue to assist the Native Village of Savoonga with its reindeer commercial company project by administering and managing the awarded \$4,630,735 EDA grant.
- Entered into a Memorandum of Agreement with AKSBDC to offer technical assistance, conduct small business workshops, and offer one-on-one business counseling in 16 communities within the Bering Strait Region.

April 2024 (in Nome at Kawerak, Inc.):

Council members received and reviewed all meeting reporting documents prior to the meeting being canceled due to weather. The report included the following information and Council members with questions or comments replied via email to the EDS.

- State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI) Update. Delays continue, but the program is moving forward. Kawerak Tribes joined a consortium with the U.S. Treasury and AKSBDC, along with 129 other Tribes. This is the largest Tribal consortium in the nation and represents almost half of all Tribes in the program nationwide. To date, the U.S. Treasury has approved a total of 33 Tribal applications representing 63 Tribal communities to receive more than \$159 million in funding this year through the SSBCI program.
- All letters from Bering Strait Tribes confirming to join the consortium and all technical assistance Letters of Delegation have been submitted. The last step is to finalize the operating agreements. Attorneys from AFN and AKSBDC are currently working to complete a final draft.
- The EDS applied for a Tribal tourism grant through American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association in the amount of \$47,041. Notifications will be sent out in February 2024 to successful applicants, with the project to be executed between March 2024 and March 2025. BSDC were notified at the end of March that five organizations received awards, one from each region, and that BSDC was not among the recipients.
- The Business Planning Specialist (BPS) continues to provide one-on-one technical assistance to those interested in starting or expanding an existing business and partners with the Alaska Small Business Development Center to offer support.
- AKSBDC recently hired two new rural business advisors, Ruth Wolfe and Kristine McRae, who are located in Nome.
- The EDS continues to administer and monitor the Kawerak/BSDC Bering Strait Arts and Crafts Facebook page. Membership continues to increase, with thousands from within the region posting and selling items on a regular basis.



Goals, Objectives, and Strategies for Addressing Regional Economic Development Needs:

BSDC staff continue to provide technical assistance, research, and facilitation for community Local Economic Development Plan priority projects, grant writing, funding technical assistance to all Tribes, and distribution of state and federal opportunities.

The 2024 CEDS update was in its final draft stage as of the end of FY2024 and will have been completed and approved by the time this publication is released.

Goal 1: Improve community services to increase resiliency and quality of life.			
Objective	Activities and Tasks	Performance Measures	Key Partners
1.1 Increase housing availability, affordability, and accessibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research barriers to financing new construction and land ownership in Rural Alaska. • Advocate for increased federal funds for housing, such as Native American Housing Assistance & Self Determination Act of 1996, Bureau of Indian Affairs Housing Improvement Program (HIP), and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) funding. • Explore establishing a self-help housing program in Nome. • Develop case studies of individuals in the region that have financed and/or built their own homes or multifamily housing. • Examine the viability of increasing the amount of transient housing. • Explore the possibility of working with non-profit groups such as Habitat for Humanity to increase housing capacity. • Conduct a needs assessment of future housing needs in Nome and villages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decreased persons per household in communities and region • Increased construction projects year over year • Number of construction jobs created • Number of five-star energy homes that have been built • Number and cost of building permits (Nome only) • Number of renovations to existing homes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kawerak, Inc. • Bering Strait Native Corporation • Sitnasuak Corporation • Tribal entities • U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) • Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC) • Nome Community Center • Norton Sound Health Corporation • United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) • Village Corporations • Native American Housing Assistance & Self Determination Act of 1996 • Bering Strait Development Corporation • Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation • Bureau of Indian Affairs/HIP program • RuralCAP/Self-Help Program • Cold Climate Housing Research Center (CCHRC) • Private lenders



<p>1.2 Improve public safety and community resiliency.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and update Hazard Mitigation Plans (HMP), Emergency Operation Plans (EOP), and Small Community Emergency Response Plans (SCERP). Support communities and responders in actively developing plans through research and advocacy. Assist grant writers and administrators, region-wide, in obtaining funding for public safety projects. Documenting/tracking “outside of Nome” Emergency Medical Services (EMS) services provided. Develop Memorandums of Agreements (MOAs) between Nome EMS and village entities. Support the development of community adaptation plans. Support communities in developing public safety commissions. Attend the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) meetings bi-monthly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of completed plans Number of projects implemented at the regional and community level Number of MOAs in place between Nome EMS and interested village entities Number of communities with VPSOs or other public safety presence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kawerak, Inc. Alaska State Troopers Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management Alaska Red Cross Norton Sound Health Corporation Municipal governments Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation Volunteer Fire/Search and Rescue/EMS Departments LEPC Village Public Safety Officer (VPSO) United States Coast Guard (USCG)
<p>1.3 Implement Bering Strait Resiliency Planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement EDA-funded Bering Strait Resilience Plan. Provide technical assistance and capacity building for member organizations, local businesses, and other local stakeholders impacted by human and wildlife health emergencies. Establish an Economic Resilience Task Force (ERTF) to plan for, and coordinate the response to, resilience shocks such as natural disasters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of businesses served Amount of relief funding obtained for communities and organizations Number of users on BeringStrait.biz 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kawerak, Inc. Tribal entities Local governments Nome Chamber of Commerce Local businesses

Goal 2: Strengthen our economy in ways that preserve and enhance our quality of life while ensuring our environment is not harmed.

Objective	Activities and Tasks	Performance Measures	Key Partners
<p>2.1 Educate and train residents for employment in growing industries</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide region-wide and village-based training opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of trainings offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kawerak, Inc.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist residents of the region with documented disabilities in improving job-related skills. • Explore and promote collaboration on apprenticeship and technical-level type programs for priority industries, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Environmental and safety ○ Business and Tribal governance ○ Early childhood education ○ Healthcare (health aide, nursing) ○ Project management ○ Aviation ○ Construction trades (electrician, carpentry, plumbing) ○ Engineer (environmental, mechanical, etc.) ○ Diesel engine mechanics ○ Utility management and operations (electrical, fuel, sewer, etc.) ○ Maritime industry (processing, cruise industry, cargo, port operations, cargo/tankers) ○ Heavy equipment operations ○ Fisheries ○ Scientific research and monitoring ○ Emergency response (including EMT) ○ Natural resource occupations • Coordinate among entities to provide scholarships for regional residents. • Pursue zero waste initiatives (recycling, backhaul, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of certified technicians/completions of programs • Number jobs secured because of the training • Number of residents assisted in gaining job-related skills • Number of scholarships provided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation • Norton Sound Health Corporation • Bering Strait Native Corporation • Bering Strait village corporations • Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development • UAF Northwest Campus • Bering Strait School District • Nome Public Schools • Northwestern Alaska Career and Technical Center • Alaska Village Electric Cooperative • Tribes • UAF Alaska Sea Grant • Denali Commission
<p>2.2 Support entrepreneurship and the arts. Provide business planning and research assistance.</p> <p>Champion</p> <p>Kawerak Business Planning Specialist</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote tuition assistance to individuals interested in new or expanding businesses. • Seek new partners and funding to conduct and promote general business startup workshops covering areas such as business planning, marketing, and accounting principles. • Promote an environment in which small businesses will succeed by creating networks of resources and business owners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of individuals completing business-related classes • Number of businesses workshops held in the region • Amount of investment in new or expanding businesses • Number of businesses starts • Number of jobs created • Continued visitor surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kawerak, Inc. • Alaska Small Business Development Center • Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation • Tribal entities • UA Center for Economic Development • Nome Chamber of Commerce • Small Business Administration



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote e-commerce by supporting training workshops and educating individuals and Tribes on the use of the internet as a business and marketing tool. Continue to seek out funding to promote e-commerce. Promote Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation small business seed money competitions and provide technical assistance. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UAF Northwest Campus UAA Business Enterprise Institute
2.3 Capitalize on natural resources in environmentally responsible ways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the Nome Chamber of Commerce to incorporate village concerns and needs into regional tourism planning. Provide technical assistance to villages that have identified tourism as a priority. Work with NSEDC to explore the feasibility of salmon and other fisheries enhancement programs and novel fisheries enhancement technology. Explore the feasibility of seismic work (like what is being done in Kotzebue) toward finding enough natural gas to run a power plant and for residential use. Identify and provide support services for responsible resource development. Relying on and supporting research activities in a way that practices self-determination and is collaborative with tribal entities and communities. Evaluate environmental impacts of proposed developments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tax revenue Gold production and price Fisheries harvest numbers and price Other mineral production and price Number of Tribes interested in starting a fish hatchery in Norton Sound Number of contaminated sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kawerak, Inc. NSEDC Bering Strait Native Corporation Bering Strait village corporations Tribal councils City of Nome Alaska Department of Natural Resources Alaska Department of Fish and Game Private sector Regional aquaculture Norton Sound Health Corporation Nome Chamber of Commerce UAF Sea Grant Environmental Protection Agency, General Assistance Program

Goal 3: Promote economic stability by creating, maintaining, and upgrading infrastructure and regional collaboration to adequately meet our current and anticipated needs.

Objective	Activities and Tasks	Performance Measures	Key Partners
3.1 Improve and increase access to utility infrastructure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete local water and sewer plans for Bering Strait communities, including assessments of the current systems. Also, provide training on how to perform maintenance. Support utilities and municipalities with pricing and management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of communities with completed local plans Number of communities with sufficient sewer and water systems Percent of homes served in each community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kawerak, Inc. Norton Sound Health Corporation Community Utility Assistance Program (NSEDC) Rural Utility Business Advisor



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of utility O&M plans and follow through. • Review of current tech around microgrids and self-contained toilets to see if they could be implemented. • Improve best practice scores with ANTHC and VHS to reach the minimum standard to obtain funding and technical assistance for water/sewer and power infrastructure. • Implement renewable or low-carbon power systems and efficiency upgrades in communities when feasible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of water, sewer, and electrical service by community • Number of communities following O&M plans • Amount invested in water/sewer and power infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium • Alaska DCCED • Denali Commission • USDA Rural Development • UAF Alaska Center for Energy and Power
3.2 Increase internet speeds and decrease costs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow the state and national broadband task forces and advocate for Bering Strait community interests. • Explore the possibility of a Tribal government negotiating government rates with telecom companies. • Work with our state and federal legislators and local providers. • Be involved in Tribal consultation as broadband policies are being developed. • Document the costs of broadband in rural communities. • Look at the feasibility of a Tribally-owned communication system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Price per internet plan • Upload/download speeds • Bandwidth capacity • Number of providers participating in the conversation (GCI, TelAlaska, etc.) • Percent of homes with access to broadband internet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kawerak, Inc. • Alaska Broadband Task Force • GCI • TelAlaska • Quintillion, LLC. • Starlink • Alaska Regional Development Organizations
3.3 Explore the feasibility of a regional governance model to capture the benefits of resource development projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the economic feasibility of a Borough. • Explore the economic feasibility of a Port Authority. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure regional interest levels on collaboration models 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Nome • Tribes • Regional municipalities



Current Economic Development Initiatives:

Current BSDC initiatives include:

- Educating and training regional residents for employment in growing industries.
- Continuing to develop individual community and regional tourism plans for those who have recognized that as a community priority.
- Supporting entrepreneurship through business planning, technical assistance, and research assistance services.
- Capitalizing on natural resources in environmentally responsible ways and exploring the feasibility of a regional governance model to capture the benefits of resource development projects. This includes participating in meetings, providing regional project public comments, and relaying information to the council and to communities.
- Improving access to water and sewer infrastructure.
- Increasing internet availability and speeds while decreasing costs of these services.
- Increasing and providing research for housing availability, affordability, and accessibility. A new BSDC housing coordinator position has been hired.
- Improving public safety and community resilience.
- Identifying other challenges to economic development, most notably inadequate infrastructure.

Future Economic Development Initiatives:

BSDC has identified housing development, job skills training for current and prospective jobs within the region, and lower energy costs within rural Alaska as its most critical future initiatives.

Anticipated Challenges to Regional Economic Development:

Funding availability for business expansion/start-up: BSDC is assisting Tribal members, IRA's, cities, and corporations, alongside technical assistance provided through an agreement with AKSBDC, to pursue Tribal State Small Business Credit Initiative funding.

Housing: As in most of rural Alaska, housing in the Nome Census Area is expensive and the supply is limited. More than a quarter of homes in the region meet the HUD definition of overcrowding. In the villages, overcrowding rates are even higher. The high cost of construction increases the difficulty of building more homes.

Energy: Villages in the region continue to see increased energy costs region wide. High energy costs make it difficult for residents to start businesses or remain in business.

High Rates of Unemployment: Like other parts of rural Alaska, unemployment in the Nome Census Area is persistently higher than the state and national averages. An inability to fill positions regionwide still exists following the pandemic.



Skills Shortages: A shortage of trained locals often means that jobs in mining, health care, education, and other fields are held by non-locals who relocate to the region. Employers often struggle to find qualified applicants, even as unemployment remains stubbornly high. Because of housing shortages, it has become increasingly harder to even hire non-locals unless a position can be performed remotely.

Geography and Distance: The Bering Straits region depends on air and seasonal barge transportation for the movement of people and goods. The region's isolation from other parts of Alaska and the Lower 48 raises the costs of basic supplies like groceries, consumer goods, energy, and building materials. These cost increases also make doing business in the region more difficult.



Photo credit: DCCED, DCRA's Community Photo Library <https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/dcra/admin/Photo/>



COPPER VALLEY DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION



Mile 111 Richardson Highway
P.O. Box 9
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<https://coppervalley.org/>

Mission:

Facilitating partnerships to improve the quality of life in Alaska's Copper Valley through economic development, while fostering cultural and natural resource development through education and good stewardship.

The Copper Valley Development Association (CVDA) serves the Copper River Census Area, an area of approximately 20,649 square miles and a population of 2,586. CVDA functions as a public and private partnership to address natural resource and economic development opportunities. CVDA does this through information gathering and dissemination and by acting as a liaison between government and the private sector, with the goal of creating self-sufficiency throughout the region through the development and wise use of sustainable resources.

Funding Reported:

In FY2024, CVDA reported the following sources of revenue:

- \$ 44,191.00 – Denali Commission
- \$ 29,881.00 – Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
- \$ 25,615.00 – U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration

Status of Projects Funded by State or Federal Grants:

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS): Funding was granted by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) in August 2022 to create a strategic economic plan for the Copper Valley Region, a newly formed census area with no municipalities within the Unorganized Borough. The CVDA completed and submitted the 2024-2029 CEDS for the Copper River Census Area, which was accepted by the EDA early in FY2025.

Pilot Regional Planning Organization (RPO): The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF), in collaboration with CVDA, have formed the first pilot Regional Planning Organization (RPO) in the state of Alaska. The purpose is to establish a structure for local and regional input and for information exchange on transportation planning and prioritization within the Copper Valley Census Area.



Denali Commission – Transportation Planning Grant: Awarded in 2024, this multi-year transportation planning grant has already launched. CVDA and the Copper River Valley Regional Planning Organization (CRV-RPO) annually identifies and prioritizes projects through various DOT&PF products to determine the transportation needs for the region. CRV-RPO has begun the first phase of the regional long-range transportation plan. CRV-RPO also worked with DOT&PF to update the Gulkana airport layout plan, which ultimately gained FAA approval.

Meeting Summary:

CVDA held five board meetings between July 2023 and June 2024. All meetings were held in-person, with a Zoom connection available. Key meeting topics included:

August 22, 2023:

- President’s report: financial report
- Executive Director’s report
 - Copper River Basin Area Plan – DNR – CVDA comments
 - CEDS – progress update
 - DOT&PF - right of way conflicts
 - Gulkana Airport Layout Plan – update
- Grants/awards update
 - Copper River Valley Regional Planning Organization (CRV-RPO) planning
 - Child Advocacy Center (CAC) secure facility
- New business
 - Glennallen flooding
 - Re-Compete grant application

October 12, 2023:

- President’s report: financial report
- Executive Director’s report
 - Recompete
 - CEDS
 - DOT&PF right of way
 - New grants
 - Fall land managers’ meeting
 - Glennallen flood update
- Application for the Alaska Arctic Energy Ambassador
 - Twelve seats
 - Will apply under the CVDA as the ambassador for the region
- New business: CRV-RPO update

**February 28, 2024 (CVDA Annual Meeting):**

- President's report: financial report
- Executive Director's report: summary of activities for the year
- CRV-RPO report
- DOT&PF report
- Board comments
- Public comments
- New business
 - CVDA – CRV-RPO committee seat appointment
 - DOT&PF – CRV-RPO committee seat appointment
 - CVDA board elections

April 10, 2024:

- President's report: financial report
- Executive Director's report
 - CEDS update
 - Denali Commission transportation planning grant update
 - EPA community challenge grant
 - Child Advocacy Center - HUD update
 - REAP grant update
 - Thriving Communities grant
 - McCarthy Road Planning and Environmental Linkages study update
 - Financial report
 - CRV-RPO report
 - Election of officers

May 16, 2024:

- President's Report: Financial Report
- Executive Director Report
 - CEDS update
 - EPA Community Challenge grant
 - Child Advocacy Center - HUD update
 - CRV-RPO report



Goals, Objectives, and Strategies for Addressing Regional Economic Development Needs:

Energy: Without reducing the high cost of energy, the region will not attract businesses or families that would provide opportunity for economic growth, outward migration will continue, and the population will continue to decline. CVDA's objective is to provide industry and residents with access to reliable and affordable energy by looking at alternative renewable energy sources and ensuring continual access to electrical power.

Proposed actions include:

- Continuing regional energy planning with the regional energy group to identify and develop renewable energy options.
- Collaborating with Copper Valley Electric Association to support efforts to explore the use of renewable energy projects that reduce winter rates.
- Procuring state and federal funding for a reconnaissance study to investigate an underwater intertie connection from Whittier to Valdez.
- Decreasing local dependence on diesel fuel.
- Reducing the regulatory burdens for project implementation.

Transportation: CVDA's objective is to accelerate the development of the FAA Airport Layout Plan (ALP) by securing planning funds and partnering with public and private entities to grow business and increase economic opportunities. Proposed actions include:

- Securing funding for projects in the ALP that are not eligible for FAA Airport Improvement Program funding.
- Establishing a regional planning group, along with DOT&PF and CRV-RPO, to advance and prioritize the components of the ALP.
- Introducing cold storage to the region to reduce truck traffic related to freight.
- Attracting non-aviation business to increase economic development in the region and increase workforce.
- Create a Long-Range Transportation Plan for the region.

Food Security: CVDA's objective is to increase the region's agricultural supply to increase food security and resilience while reducing the dependency on imported food by developing a regional food hub. Proposed actions include:

- Developing cold storage and hydroponic grow facilities for use by local farmers through collaborations with USDA and DEC.
- Creating opportunities to encourage economic development through entrepreneurship, supporting local farmers, and attracting new farmers to the region.
- Providing training and educational opportunities for building career pathways in the school district and in the community to meet the regional need for a skilled workforce.
- Utilizing the central location of the Gulkana Airport to support distribution, export, and production of regionally grown products.
- Reducing the cost of food in the region.



The Copper River Census Area's CEDS 2024-2029 was accepted by the EDA in August 2024. CVDA is currently implementing some of the strategies set forth in that document. CVDA is working to reduce energy costs by partnering with Copper Valley Electric Association (CVEA) to increase hydroelectricity output for the region.

CVDA is a co-applicant for the Environment Protection Agency's Community Challenge Grant, an opportunity that addresses Alaska-specific community energy resilience, improvements to human health, climate resilience, and a pollution reduction strategy to address outdoor air quality and community health. Pursuing funding for the Rural Food hub will increase food security and increase food production for the region, which will bring more affordable and fresher food products to the region while fostering new business opportunities for local entrepreneurs.

Current Economic Development Initiatives:

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS): In August 2022, funding was granted by the EDA to create a strategic economic plan for the Copper River Census Area, a newly formed census area within the Unorganized Borough that contains no municipalities. The CVDA completed and submitted the 2024-2029 CEDS for the Copper River Census Area, which was accepted by the EDA early in FY2025. The CVDA will use the new CEDS as a roadmap for economic development in the Copper River Census Area.

Copper River Valley – Regional Planning Organization (CRV-RPO): CRV-RPO is an ongoing sub-committee of the CVDA that meets bi-monthly to provide local and regional input and information about transportation planning and prioritization for the Copper Valley Census Area to DOT&PF. The vision of CRV-RPO is to create a safe, efficient, accessible, and enjoyable transportation system for the Copper River Valley that enables local and regional citizens to connect with each other and the world. CRV-RPO has contributed to various efforts in the region and the state, partnering with state and federal agencies. The FAA approved the updated Gulkana Airport Layout Plan, a Long-Range Transportation Plan for the region is moving forward, and input is being provided for the McCarthy Planning and Environmental Linkages Study. CRV-RPO also addresses key issues and provides comments on the Statewide Transportation Infrastructure Plan for projects within the Copper River region, providing input on projects including waysides, flood mitigation, and the need for local road improvements. The community now has a strong voice and the ability to provide input and influence what happens in their region.

CopperValley.org Website Update: CVDA indexed webpages so they can be more easily found by the general public and added analytics to track the traffic to the page. CVDA utilizes its website to communicate regional meetings so that anyone in the region can submit information to be included on the calendar. Regional planning pages have been updated to allow documents to be easily found online.

DOT&PF Regional Right of Way Application Initiative: At the Governor's direction, CVDA and DOT&PF are working to create a process in which right-of-way conflicts within the Copper River Census Area are expeditiously addressed.

Regional Liaison: CVDA partnered with state and federal agencies who operate in the Copper River Census Area to promote business retention, development, and all-encompassing growth within the Copper Valley.



Gulkana Airport: Following extensive work in FY2024, the Gulkana Airport Updated Airport Layout Plan was approved by the FAA on September 9, 2024. The approved ALP provides for several lease lots to provide opportunities to support economic growth in the region. CVDA is working with DOT&PF to provide opportunities that will attract businesses to the region that are in line with the CVDA CEDS.

Denali Commission – Transportation Planning Grant: This multi-year transportation planning grant supports the CRV-RPO's efforts in the region to collaborate with DOT&PF to provide a viable transportation infrastructure. Such infrastructure will support projects that increase and support economic development, connect the region's rural communities, and attract economically impactful businesses to the region. CVDA is participating in the McCarthy Road Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study, a regional Long-Range Transportation Plan for the Copper River Census Area, and the Interior Alaska Transportation Plan. To support this work, CVDA has updated its website and public outreach efforts to inform residents of regional projects and of discretionary grants that prospectively benefit the region's residents.

Provisional Family Secure Facility: Community Project Funding (CPF) is awarded through the U.S. Congress and administered by HUD. CVDA, in partnership with the Copper River Basin Child Advocacy Center (CAC), is using these funds to provide a Provisional Family Secure Facility for Trauma Victims and Itinerant Professionals. This project will assist Alaskan children and families who live within the CAC's service region by providing safe interim housing, to build out necessary upgrades to the existing facility, and institute a Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) approach for successful outcomes. The facility will provide safe interim places within the CAC's coverage area.

McCarthy Road PEL Study: CVDA worked in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration - Western Federal Lands (WFL) Highway Division, DOT&PF, and the National Park Service (NPS) to prepare the McCarthy Road PEL study. The study is funded through the Federal Lands Access Program. The CVDA is a member of the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) for this study and provides input at PAC meetings to identify the region's needs, goals, and objectives. This input will be included within a report that identifies places along the corridor that either need improvement or have untapped opportunities for beneficial activities.

Regional Land Managers Meeting: The CVDA hosts a land managers' meeting in the spring and fall of each year. All regional agencies, such as Bureau of Land Management, DNR, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Copper River Watershed Project, Wrangell Institute for Science and Environment, Ahtna, Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission, and National Park Service, are invited and other interested parties are welcome to participate. These agencies are given the opportunity to share information about upcoming projects each spring and report back on progress in the fall.

Regional Energy Group: Stakeholders in the region recognize the need to reduce the high energy cost for the region. The Regional Energy Group has had several meetings to identify resources and projects to help with reducing costs and to develop climate and pollution reduction strategies for the region. The group has put forth several initiatives to develop appropriate projects in the region and will continue to engage and speak with the state and federal representatives supporting the CVDA.



Future Economic Development Initiatives:

CVDA has identified the following prospective projects:

- Developing a regional food hub
- Increasing capacity at the Solomon Gulch Hydro Plant
- Advancing economic development at the Gulkana Airport
- Attracting non-aviation businesses to increase regional economic development and increase the local workforce

Anticipated Challenges to Regional Economic Development:

The following challenges are identified in the Copper River Census Area's CEDS 2024-2029:

Weaknesses and regional competitive disadvantages:

- High energy costs
- High cost of living
- Food security
 - Imported food
 - High cost of food
 - Lack of fresh produce
- High operating costs
- Lack of childcare
- Lack of housing
- Shortages of health care and emergency medical services and providers
- Import-dependent

Negative regional impacts and/or declines:

- Outmigration and declining population
- Labor shortages
- Proposed land designation changes to DNR's Copper Basin Area Plan Revision
- Declining food production
- Economic leakage
- Lack of infrastructure and support services



FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION



P.O. Box 71267

Fairbanks, AK 99707

(907) 459-1351

<https://www.fnsb.gov/452/Economic-Development-Commission>

Mission:

To actively promote, foster, and coordinate public and private initiatives that create capital, diversify the economy, and utilize economic capacity in ways that improve the standard of living, quality of life and sustainability of urban and rural lifestyles.

The Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB) was incorporated in 1964, and the Economic Development Division was founded in 1980. The Fairbanks North Star Borough Economic Development Commission (FNSBEDC), located in the Borough Mayor's Office, is comprised of the mayor and eight commissioners appointed by the Borough Assembly. FNSBEDC is focused on growing, diversifying, and defending the region's economic base, and coordinating economic development initiatives that increase employment opportunities and improve residents' standard of living and quality of life.

Funding Reported:

In FY2024, FNSBEDC reported no sources of external funding.

Status of Projects Funded by State or Federal Grants:

FNSBEDC reported no projects currently being funded by state or federal grants.

Meeting Summary:

FNSBEDC held four board meetings between July 2023 and June 2024. An additional three scheduled meetings were canceled. Key meeting topics included:

July 25, 2023: Meeting was canceled.

August 22, 2023: – [Agenda R-6](#): Review and make a recommendation to the Assembly regarding an economic development exemption application.

September 5, 2023: – [Agenda R-7](#) (reconvened): Review and make a recommendation to the Assembly regarding an economic development exemption application.

October 24, 2023: Meeting was canceled.

January 23, 2024: Meeting was canceled.



February 27, 2024: – [Agenda^{R-8}](#): Review and make a recommendation to the Assembly regarding a housing tax incentive exemption.

April 23, 2024: – [Agenda^{R-9}](#): An update from the Administration on a resolution regarding the Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy and Resiliency (C-PACER) program and the plan for drafting an implementation report; report regarding an event related to community input for updating the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS); report providing a brief overview and analysis of the impact and progress of the FNSB Housing Tax Incentive Program.

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies for Addressing Regional Economic Development Needs:

FNSBEDC recently worked on a self-funded update to the CEDS. This update will be published during the first half of FY2025. FNSB, through the EDC, held work sessions in May 2024 and worked with its contractor to do the update. Notable impacts recognized in the update include:

- Population has been relatively flat with some variation within areas of the Borough.
- Unemployment has decreased since the pandemic.
- Employment has shifted within the Borough with a growth of Military jobs, most likely due to the arrival of F-35s at Eielson.

Goals, objectives, and strategies are outlined in detail within the [Fairbanks North Star Borough Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Update, 2022-2027^{R-10}](#).

Current Economic Development Initiatives:

The FNSB ARDOR primarily engages through data sharing with the Fairbanks community. The FNSB compiles a [quarterly research document^{R-11}](#). The FNSB also provides a \$350,000 grant to the Fairbanks Economic Development Corporation to provide economic development services within the FNSB. The grant focuses on the following activities: local agriculture, cost and sources of energy, access to natural resources, the military and the emerging Arctic, small business development, research and innovation, FNSB as a regional hub, economic capacity, and analysis.

Future Economic Development Initiatives:

Future economic development initiatives are outlined in detail within the Fairbanks North Star Borough Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Update, 2022-2027.

Anticipated Challenges to Regional Economic Development:

Anticipated challenges to regional economic development are described in detail within the Fairbanks North Star Borough Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Update, 2022-2027.



KENAI PENINSULA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT



14896 Kenai Spur Highway, Suite 103A
Kenai, AK 99611
(907) 283-3335
<https://kpedd.org/>

Mission:

To serve Kenai Peninsula Borough residents by enhancing their quality of life through responsible and sustainable regional economic and workforce development.

The Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District (KPEDD) became an ARDOR in 1989. Throughout its history, KPEDD has worked to broaden the economic development of the Kenai Peninsula Borough in southcentral Alaska. Over the organization's history, KPEDD has been involved in a variety of projects promoting economic development in the region, including public works projects, shellfish industry development, international trade, promoting a natural gas pipeline from the North Slope to Cook Inlet, and employee recruitment.

Funding Reported:

In FY2024, KPEDD reported the following sources of revenue:

- \$ 175,000.00 – Kenai Peninsula Borough funding
- \$ 93,750.00 – U.S. Economic Development Administration planning grant
- \$ 87,513.00 – U.S. Economic Development Administration mariculture cluster funding
- \$ 44,414.00 – U.S. Economic Development Administration resilience grant
- \$ 19,750.00 – Private event sponsorship for the Industry Outlook Forum

Status of Projects Funded by State or Federal Grants:

All deliverables from current grants are expected to be completed on time and on budget. KPEDD asks that any questions regarding project details should be made to them directly.

Meeting Summary:

KPEDD held five board meetings at the KPEDD board room between July 2023 and June 2024 on the following dates: August 17, 2023; October 19, 2023; January 18, 2024; March 21, 2024; and June 20, 2024.

KPEDD indicates that board meetings are private and confidential, containing sensitive information for both KPEDD and its clients. KPEDD asks that any questions regarding its meetings be made to them directly.



Goals, Objectives, and Strategies for Addressing Regional Economic Development Needs:

KPEDD's goals, objectives, and strategies are described in the *Future Economic Development Initiatives* section of this summary and within the KPEDD Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and 2024 update, available on the [KPEDD website](#)^{R-12}.

Current Economic Development Initiatives:

The full KPEDD Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and 2024 update has been completed. The strategy and update are available on the KPEDD website. The goals and focus areas outlined in the plan relate to quality of life improvements for Kenai Peninsula residents through the development of:

- Technology and telecommunication infrastructure;
- Workforce and human capital resources;
- Infrastructure and land use opportunities;
- Business climate and entrepreneurship networks;
- Regional partnerships; and,
- Knowledge creation and dissemination.

Future Economic Development Initiatives:

KPEDD indicates that prospective strategies, partners, and metrics can be found at the end of the KPEDD Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and 2024 update, available on the KPEDD website.

Anticipated Challenges to Regional Economic Development:

Regulatory barriers/development costs: Responsible mineral, oil, and gas development all require extensive permitting processes and regulatory hurdles that raise already high development costs. These costs inhibit new investment, especially with Cook Inlet oil and gas development and with mining prospects on the west side of the inlet.

High operating costs: Although some parts of Alaska have much higher costs for real estate, energy, labor, and freight, operating costs on the Peninsula are generally much higher than in the Lower 48.

Workforce limitations: Despite the presence of University of Alaska satellite campuses, the Alaska Vocational Technical Center (AVTEC), and a strong partnership with the Alaska Department of Labor (including the Construction Academy), employers cite limited workforce availability as a major obstacle to business expansion.

Commodity prices: A significant share of the Kenai Peninsula economy relies upon the export of commodities to regions outside of the borough, especially oil, gas, and seafood. The prices for all of these valuable products depend on global market forces outside of local control. These fluctuations contribute to price volatility, heavily influencing the local economy's business success and employment stability.



State fiscal uncertainty: According to KPEDD, many business owners in the region cite the state fiscal situation, namely a lack of resolution on spending, revenues, and Permanent Fund Dividends, as an obstacle to growth and new investment. Potential cuts to state services could threaten public safety and education in the region and new state taxes could dampen business success and investment.

Housing availability:

While housing costs are lower on average across the borough, housing availability, in particular seasonal housing, is a challenge in the borough. Communities that see large seasonal fluctuations in workforce, such as Seward, experience the most dramatic housing gaps. With an aging population, senior housing is expected to become an increasingly prominent issue, with the ratio of population of senior citizens to senior facility beds expected to increase from 22:1 in 2016 to 39:1 in 2030, per the [Alaska Housing Finance Corporation R-13](#).

Aging infrastructure: Transportation infrastructure is critical to keeping down the cost of goods and services and acts as an enabler for tourism, recreation, and subsistence harvesting. Road conditions are a concern boroughwide. In addition, aging pipeline infrastructure, with pipeline leaks limiting the supply of natural gas from Cook Inlet, puts the region's energy systems at risk.

Public transportation: Public transportation options are limited across the borough. The temporary closure of Ravn Airlines in 2020 limited passenger air transportation in the region and uncovered weaknesses in the borough's public transportation system. Public transportation linkages between satellite communities and core business centers, such as the route between Anchor Point and Homer, have been cited as specific needs.

Disruptions to marine travel: Budget reductions to the Alaska Marine Highway System have threatened ferry service in the region. Between Fiscal Years 2016 and 2020, system wide revenues were down by nearly 40 percent. Homer and Seldovia are the only two communities in the region with ferry service, providing critical passenger connections and goods transport between the Kenai Peninsula, Southwest Alaska, and Southeast Alaska.

Limited public funding: According to KPEDD, continued State of Alaska budget issues threaten the borough economy from several angles. Reduced State of Alaska Department of Transportation budgets limit winter road maintenance on the Seward Highway, the main road artery to the majority of the Kenai Peninsula. Local government pass-through revenues from the State of Alaska to city and borough governments are decreasing, leaving local government to fill gaps in funding. In addition, the Division of Motor Vehicles office in Homer could close because of proposed cuts.

Access to early childhood education and general childcare: Early childhood education and childcare access across the Kenai Peninsula Borough is limited and expensive. Of the estimated 4,120 individuals under the age of six living in the borough, 32 percent are not having their early childhood education needs met. On average, households in the borough spent 17 percent of their income on licensed early childhood development services in 2020. Only 29 percent of children entering the education system met 11 of the 13 Alaska Developmental Profile goals. Furthermore, access to childcare for parents who are in or wishing to join the workforce is extremely limited, contributing to the shrinking labor pool. Gaps in early childhood programs in the borough reduce quality of life in the region and impact the long-term strength of the region's economy.



Out-migration: Between 2011 and 2020, Kenai Peninsula Borough experienced net out-migration in six of the 10 years. While migration into and out of a region is natural, constant long-term migration out of the region poses a risk to the strength of the local workforce.

Decline in wages: Over the past decade, the real value of wages in the region has steadily declined, indicating that wage growth on the Kenai Peninsula has not kept up with inflation. This is a threat to quality of life in the region as the real cost of goods and services continue to rise in comparison. It is also a threat to the region's workforce and employers attracting and retaining qualified employees.



Photo credit: DCCED, DCRA's Community Photo Library <https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/dcra/admin/Photo/>



NORTHWEST ARCTIC BOROUGH COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION



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<https://www.nwabor.org/departments/community-and-economic-development/>

Mission:

Promote economic enhancement, research, and development consistent with the traditional culture and values of the people of the region.

The Northwest Arctic Borough Community & Economic Development Commission (NWABCEDC), established in 1989, is located within the Northwest Arctic Borough. With 36,000 square miles of land and 3,560 miles of coastline, the Northwest Arctic Borough is the second largest organized borough in the state. A population of 7,500 residents is spread throughout 11 villages. As a rural ARDOR, NWABCEDC works to achieve a higher quality of life by promoting economic development while respecting and protecting Alaska Native Iñupiat values and traditions.

Funding Reported:

In FY2024, NWABCEDC reported the following sources of revenue:

- \$1,923,944.00 – Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development
- \$4,250,000.00 – Alaska State Legislature
- \$1,889,001.00 – Alaska Department of Public Safety
- \$1,724,500.00 – Alaska Energy Authority
- \$ 198,000.00 – U.S. Department of Energy
- \$1,998,820.00 – U.S. Department of Agriculture
- \$ 143,809.00 – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- \$1,478,046.00 – U.S. Department of the Treasury

Note: All revenue reported by NWABCEDC are funds received by the Northwest Arctic Borough at large, rather than the Community & Economic Development Commission in particular.



Status of Projects Funded by State or Federal Grants:

Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development: American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding was delivered to the Northwest Arctic Borough to provide economic assistance to workers, families, businesses, and industries.

Alaska State Legislature: Construction of a bus barn for Kivalina School and replacing the HVAC system at Buckland School are ongoing (\$2,000,000). The legislature has also issued funds to purchase a firetruck for the Noorvik fire hall (\$900,000) and to construct a VPSO house in Kivalina and public safety building in Deering (\$250,000).

Alaska Department of Public Safety: Public safety funding supported the cost of hiring Village Public Safety Officer personnel for village patrols (\$1,639,001) and the construction of warm storage units to store public safety equipment (\$1,350,000).

Alaska Energy Authority: Funding to support the design (\$590,000) and construction (\$1,134,500) for solar photovoltaic batteries for the communities of Ambler, Kiana, Noorvik, and Selawik.

U.S. Department of Energy: The Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy issued Energyshed funds to conduct 3-D imaging of the borough's utilities.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): EPA awarded funds through the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant to conduct a climate assessment.

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA): USDA provided a pair of Rural Energy Pilot Program grants to support the solar project in Selawik. These grants were issued during a past fiscal year and are being spent down.

U.S. Department of the Treasury: The borough has been awarded State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds to provide municipal assistance.

Meeting Summary:

NWABCEDC held two board meetings between July 2023 and June 2024. Both meetings were held in Anchorage at the downtown NANA office.

November 1, 2023: This meeting included an update from Jeff San Juan of AIDEA on the Ambler Road Project; an update from Shalon Harrington of Ambler Metals; a [Sustainable Economic Futures R-14](#) update by Suzette McFaul and Ryan Witten; and a high-level review of NANA's priorities, projects, and updates from Albie Dallemolle and Sandy Kowalski.

April 19, 2024: This meeting included a Teck Resources, Ltd. update from Wayne Hall; an update on the Piguqtuq Entrepreneurial Inspiration Project from Suzette McFaul, a CEDS update from Nolan Klouda, and an energy update by Ingemar Mathiasson.



Goals, Objectives, and Strategies for Addressing Regional Economic Development Needs:

Goal A: Develop the critical utilities, transportation, energy, and housing infrastructure to lower cost burdens and adapt to climate change while preserving subsistence resources. Improved infrastructure will increase economic development investment; attract new business opportunities; grow, attract, and retain labor force; protect communities from the effects of climate change; and promote sustainability.

Goal B: Develop natural resources, such as minerals, fisheries, agriculture, oil and gas, and tourism, to increase economic diversity while preserving subsistence resources. Promote revenue diversification and stability, broaden business development opportunities, and enhance employment potential in a culturally appropriate way.

Goal C: Improve academic achievement at the K-12 public education level, increase postsecondary opportunities with vocational and academic training, and enhance the employability skills of the local workforce. Develop and prepare the local workforce to meet the competitive needs of economic and business opportunities in a culturally appropriate way.

Current Economic Development Initiatives:

Frank R. Ferguson Memorial Scholarship: The Frank R. Ferguson Memorial Scholarship program is a secondary education funding opportunity available to Northwest Arctic Borough residents. In FY2024, the borough dispersed \$294,708.90 to students.

Small business and entrepreneurship support:

The Small Business Grant Program was created to assist owners who are starting small businesses within the Northwest Arctic Borough. Grant awards of up to \$3,000 per applicant are available, with grant funds available to pay vendors. In FY2024, the borough awarded 9 grants to small business owners from various villages totaling \$18,975.28.

Commercial and subsistence fishing grants: The borough's Commercial Fishing Grant was created to encourage the growth of locally owned businesses operated by commercial fishermen, provide additional employment and income in the region, and promote safety through meeting Coast Guard requirements. The award is \$1,500 and is payable to vendors for required commercial fishing equipment.

The borough's Subsistence Fishing Grant was created to encourage residents' participation in subsistence fishing. This grant is intended to encourage active engagement in this family activity which provides a commodity beneficial to the health and well-being of the community.

With these programs, close to 90 residents around the region were granted subsistence or commercial nets and equipment. Custom nets were ordered through select vendors and shipped on Alaska Air Cargo to Kotzebue, then flown via Bering Air to applicants in the villages.

Sulianich Art Center (SAC): SAC offers a safe and free workspace to local artists while promoting economic development by purchasing and marketing local art for resale. SAC hosts bimonthly workshops for the community to learn skin and fabric sewing. The borough supplies Sulianich with funding for supplies, art merchandise, and carving equipment. This funding totaled \$223,832.03 in FY2024.



Piguqtuq Entrepreneurial Inspiration Project: Sustainable Economic Futures (SEF) extended their work in the region, renewing their contract through the end of December 2024. The project's mission is to engage entrepreneurs, building confidence in their dreams and creating opportunities for the development of local small business economies by connecting them to resources through free and confidential support. The resource team continues to grow, with members from Alaska, Canada, and England. The team has met three times, giving advice, support, and resources to at least 31 clients in the region. Through the project's monthly newsletters, businesses have grown across the Northwest Arctic region's villages.

Alaska Waters Consulting, LLC: In July 2024, the borough signed a contract with Alaska Waters Consulting, LLC to provide free community training sessions and U.S. Coast Guard Six-Pack Licenses to area residents. The two-week course was offered early in FY2025 and licensed three Kotzebue residents and two Ambler residents. Obtaining this license offers opportunities for economic growth, as card holders can offer charter fishing, nature watching tours, or other water-based tourism offerings for up to six paying passengers.

Future Economic Development Initiatives:

Potential projects that have been identified include:

1. Cape Blossom port site
2. Noatak Road to Red Dog port site
3. Regional alternative energy projects, including solar in Shungnak and Noatak and heat pumps across the region
4. Ambler Road and mine site development
5. Commercial fishing

Anticipated Challenges to Regional Economic Development:

Anticipated challenges include:

1. **Closure of Red Dog Mine:** Teck Resources, Ltd. is planning to close Red Dog Mine in 2031. Currently, the majority of Northwest Arctic Borough funding comes from Teck, so the mine's closure is the borough's greatest challenge. Exploring alternative economic opportunities and having a plan in place well in advance of the mine's closure is crucial to the borough's economic health.
2. **Commercial fishing downturn:** Commercial fishing operations faced an unusually short season. According to the borough, commercial buyers stopped operating in mid-July because of declines in salmon and trout volumes over the past few years.



PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT



PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND
**ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
DISTRICT**

1000 Orca Road #237
Cordova, AK 99574
(907) 424-5533
<https://www.pwsedd.org/>

Mission:

Fostering economic growth and responsible development in the Prince William Sound region.

Prince William Sound Economic Development District (PWSEDD) was established in 1991 to address the need for a coordinated region-wide planning authority, receiving designation as an ARDOR at that time. In 2001, the agency received designation as a federal Economic Development District. PWSEDD serves the communities of Chenega, Cordova, Tatitlek, Valdez and Whittier. The Chugach National Forest surrounds the region's coastal communities. Economic activity is focused on oil distribution and support services; the maritime sector, including seafood harvesting and production; the visitor industry; and outdoor recreation.

Funding Reported:

In FY2024, PWSEDD reported the following sources of revenue:

- \$ 105,000.00 – U.S. Economic Development Administration: Shared processing facility business plan
- \$ 82,677.77 – U.S. Department of Agriculture, Secure Rural Schools: Title II – trail reconstruction
- \$ 70,000.00 – U.S. Economic Development Administration: Partnership Planning Program
- \$ 67,862.00 – U.S. Economic Development Administration: Alaska Mariculture Cluster
- \$ 39,000.00 – Alaska Community Foundation: CDL training
- \$ 26,052.00 – Cordova Family Resource Center: Cordova Community Garden
- \$ 16,000.00 – U.S. Department of Agriculture: Kelp drying equipment
- \$ 5,000.00 – Holland America and Princess Tours
- \$ 4,998.42 – City of Whittier Tourism Best Management Practices
- \$ 2,500.00 – Chugach Alaska Corporation
- \$ 2,500.00 – Chenega Corporation
- \$ 1,500.00 – Cordova Wireless Communications
- \$ 1,500.00 – Cordova Telephone Cooperative
- \$ 500.00 – Valdez Fisheries Development Association
- \$ 500.00 – First National Bank of Alaska



Status of Projects Funded by State or Federal Grants:

U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration: The \$105,000 grant for a business plan for a shared seafood and food processing center has been fully spent and the plan is complete. Funding for the Partnership Planning Program is ongoing through 2026, per PWSEDD's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. Alaska Mariculture Cluster funds, through collaboration with three other Alaska Economic Development Districts, are supporting the development of a mariculture sector in state waters to foster economic diversification and assist commercial fishing communities adapt to changing climate conditions.

U.S. Department of Agriculture: Of the \$78,562 allocated for purchasing kelp drying equipment, \$16,000 was spent in FY2024. This project is expected to be completed by June 2025. Secure Rural Schools Title II funds were spent on contracting with the Student Conservation Association (SCA) for a trail crew and for purchasing around \$5,000 in supplies to reconstruct the O'Leary Trail on Mount Eyak. The O'Leary Trail connects a U.S. Forest Service-maintained trail to a Sheridan Alpine Association-managed trail on Mount Eyak. The SCA crew re-established the trail tread, rebuilt four water crossings, and added step-and-run boardwalk planks in wet trail sections. Through this project, roughly three miles of trail were restored.

Meeting Summary:

PWSEDD held six board meetings between July 2023 and June 2024, all by Zoom videoconference. Key meeting topics included:

September 7, 2023: Financial position review, staff report, approval of IRS Form 990.

November 20, 2023: Presentations on housing need assessment survey results, regional infrastructure priorities, CEDS updates, PWSEDD board appointments, staff report, financial statements review, election of officers.

December 7, 2023: Financial position review, staff report, approval of a 2024 operating budget.

January 9, 2024: Special meeting regarding the adoption of the 2024 operating budget.

March 7, 2024: Financial position review, staff report, introduction of new PWSEDD staff.

June 20, 2024: Financial position review, staff report, board member appointment to fill unexpired term, vote on halibut bycatch amendment 123, vote on sending a letter of written support to Governor Dunleavy for making an appropriation to the Alaska Housing Trust.

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies for Addressing Regional Economic Development Needs:

PWSEDD's CEDS goals and priority objectives for 2021-2025 are:

Goal A - Improvement and Development of Critical Infrastructure:

- Improve regional connections by enhancing transportation and utilities infrastructure to enhance resilience to climate change, increase economic development opportunities, and enrich the way of life in Prince William Sound.
 - *Priority Objective 1:* Develop regional transportation infrastructure.



- *Priority Objective 2:* Increase broadband internet access and capacity.
- *Priority Objective 3:* Increase housing quality and affordability.
- *Priority Objective 4:* Enhance recreational infrastructure throughout the region.
- *Priority Objective 5:* Increase energy efficiency and integration of renewable resources.

Goal B - Workforce Development:

- Boost the regional continuum of education from early childhood learning through post-secondary opportunities. Enhance employability skills and adapt to the evolving opportunities of regional economic development through education and training.
 - *Priority Objective 1:* Increase access to early childhood education.
 - *Priority Objective 2:* Enhance in-region post-secondary vocational training opportunities.
 - *Priority Objective 3:* Strengthen Prince William Sound College’s connections in-region.

Goal C - Strengthen Existing Industries and Diversify the Economy:

- Seek out new business development and support entrepreneurs’ investments to promote regional industry growth, responsible resource development, and economic diversity. Attract business opportunities to the region that support employment opportunities in every season.
 - *Priority Objective 1:* Build on and sustain Prince William Sound’s blue economy (*i.e.*, development of oceanic resources in a socially and ecologically sustainable way).
 - *Priority Objective 2:* Promote Prince William Sound and its outdoor recreation assets as a tourism destination.
 - *Priority Objective 3:* Support the local arts and humanities community.
 - *Priority Objective 4:* Cultivate entrepreneurship.
 - *Priority Objective 5:* Identify climate change mitigation projects.
 - *Priority Objective 6:* Collaborate with Chugach Alaska Corporation to pursue mining opportunities.
 - *Priority Objective 7:* Support responsible forestry opportunities.
 - *Priority Objective 8:* Attract new residents who telework.

Current Economic Development Initiatives:

Goal A - Improvement and Development of Critical Infrastructure:

- *Housing Development:* The Minnesota Housing Project (MHP) accepted PWSEDD’s request for technical assistance in housing development, with support from the Prince William Sound Housing Working Group, which consists of local governments and Tribes. PWSEDD has contracted with McKinley Research Group (MRG) to conduct a housing needs assessment for Prince William Sound communities. This will include interviews with stakeholders (realtors, builders, housing authority staff, municipal staff, and Tribal staff) and distribution of a housing survey to Prince William Sound residents. MHP helped the Prince William Sound Housing Working Group develop a funding matrix of prospective funding sources, plan for a homebuilders and developers round table meeting, and identify strategies and incentives used by municipal governments in other parts of the country to attract developers and stimulate homebuilding.



- *Ferry Dock Reconfigurations:* An award of \$28 million was issued for ferry dock reconfigurations at Chenega, Tatitlek, and Cordova. Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF), Alaska Municipal League, and PWSEDD are coordinating on this project. DOT&PF and PWSEDD will be conducting the environmental review process in 2024 and 2025.
- *Shared Seafood and Food Processing Center for Cordova:* With grant support from the Alaska Mariculture Cluster, PWSEDD is working with partners to develop a business plan for a shared multi-purpose seafood/food processing center in Cordova. PWSEDD contracted with McKinley Research Group to develop the business plan and lead a series of meetings with project partners. These meetings were held on November 28, 2023; March 25, 2024; and April 11, 2024.

Goal B – Workforce Development:

- *Childcare Initiatives:* PWSEDD staff facilitated the Cordova Childcare Solutions Forum held on February 23 and 24, 2024. Seven community partners attended, as well as staff from the Alaska Division of Healthy Communities, *thread* Alaska, and Chugachmiut. With only one licensed childcare center in Cordova, PWSEDD continues to meet with community partners to identify innovative solutions that lead to additional childcare services.
- *Business Assistance:* PWSEDD provides support to residents and businesses within the region seeking to start a business or expand an existing business. PWSEDD provides assistance with loan application document preparation, expense and revenue projections, selecting accounting software and setting up payroll, financial management guidance, creating marketing materials, and selecting an online commerce portal. PWSEDD staff regularly circulates Incumbent Worker Training grant application information to private employers in the region.

Goal C - Strengthen Existing Industries and Diversify Economy:

- *Mariculture Drying and Processing:* PWSEDD is managing two pilot project grants involving the purchase of equipment for a seaweed processing line. Processing will include the rinsing and blanching, shredding, and drying of seaweed. The expectation is that 20,000 pounds of seaweed will be processed during the spring 2025 harvest.
- *Whittier Tourism Best Management Practices:* PWSEDD drafted a set of Tourism Best Management Practices (TBMP) for use in Whittier during the 2024 tourist season, in tandem with a large coalition of Whittier business owners, residents, city staff, landholders, tourism industry representatives, and other stakeholders. The launch of Whittier's TBMP occurred during the Prince William Sound Stewardship Foundation's 2024 Natural History Symposium, in which PWSEDD staff participated.
- *Cordova Fisheries Climate Adaptation Strategy:* PWSEDD partnered with Dr. Marysia Szymkowiak, a social scientist with NOAA, to conduct an economic vulnerability assessment of Cordova's fishing industry as it relates to climate change. PWSEDD continues to work with Dr. Szymkowiak to develop adaptation strategies for Cordova's fishing industry and its residents at-large.
- *Prince William Sound Marine Use Areas/NOAA Aquaculture Opportunity Areas:* PWSEDD participated in NOAA's workshop on Aquaculture Opportunity Areas (AOAs), held on February 26, 2024. NOAA is anticipated to begin circulating its model for AOAs in Alaska sometime in late 2024.



- *Cordova Community Garden:* PWSEDD partnered with Cordova Family Resource Center to manage the Cordova Community Garden in support of local home gardeners. On March 30, 2024, PWSEDD’s community garden manager held workshops on seed starts and soil health. The manager has also maintained a compost pile for producing quality soil to use in the community garden’s planter boxes.

Future Economic Development Initiatives:

Prospective economic development initiatives include:

- A Prince William Sound Ferry Authority.
- Harbor renovations in Whittier, Valdez, and Tatitlek.
- Construction of middle-income housing in Valdez, Tatitlek, Whittier, Chenega, and Cordova.
- Refinement of Whittier’s Tourism Best Practices and the development of a complementary Wilderness Best Management Practices program for western Prince William Sound.
- Remediation of the contaminated Buckner Building site in Whittier.
- Replacing the Valdez Museum facility with a modern, expanded facility.
- Developing a shared seafood and food product processing facility in Cordova.
- Increasing options for childcare in Cordova and Valdez.
- Creating a “heat map” to identify the locations of various user activities in Prince William Sound for optimal mariculture site development and user conflict mitigation.
- A Prince William Sound climate adaptation strategy.

Anticipated Challenges to Regional Economic Development:

Anticipated challenges include:

- Lack of capacity for kelp drying and processing.
- Lack of consistent, reliable ferry service across Prince William Sound.
- Lack of market-rate housing built to current building code and energy efficiency standards.
- High cost of energy in rural regions.
- Climate change and a lack of resources to conduct adaptation planning.
- Lack of state fiscal support for public education, causing degradation to educational opportunities for pre-K to grade 12 academics, post-secondary academics, and vocational and technical offerings for regional residents.
- Lack of direct support for regional economic development efforts and staffing, as regional coordination is critical for putting together clear, strong project proposals for federal opportunities relating to broadband, energy, infrastructure, food security, and business support.



SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE



9360 Glacier Highway, #201

Juneau, AK 99801

(907) 586-4360

<https://www.seconference.org/>

Mission:

To undertake and support activities that promote strong economies, healthy communities, and a quality environment in Southeast Alaska.

Southeast Conference (SEC) was originally established in 1958 to advocate for the marine transportation needs of Southeast communities, and then continued to work on other economic development priorities in the region. In 1989, SEC became an ARDOR, and subsequently received designation as a federal Economic Development District. The region extends 500 miles along the Southeast Alaska coast from Metlakatla to Yakutat, encompassing 35 communities and 19 Tribes. SEC combines state and federal support with private-sector investment to serve as Southeast Alaska's economic development planning engine, providing a forum for community leaders to gather, decide upon regional priorities, and implement strategies to improve social and economic well-being.

Funding Reported:

In FY2024, SEC reported the following sources of revenue:

- \$ 144,907.39 – Southeast Conference Membership Revenue
- \$ 214,366.43 – U.S. Department of Agriculture: Prince of Wales mariculture processing facility design
- \$ 470,408.42 – OneUSDA: Southeast Alaska Sustainable Strategy
- \$ 19,248.20 – Denali Commission: Reconnect broadband project
- \$ 77,966.68 – U.S. Economic Development Administration: Economic development planning
- \$ 2,333,543.67 – U.S. Economic Development Administration: Alaska Mariculture Cluster
- \$ 5,858.97 – U.S. Department of Agriculture: Renewable energy development
- \$ 94,114.20 – Alaska Marine Highway System: Electric ferry modernization project
- \$ 665,573.39 – U.S. Forest Service/Denali Commission: Biomass pellet mill demonstration project
- \$ 167,634.69 – Alaska Energy Authority: Biomass Energy Program
- \$ 60,000.00 – 2024 Scholarship Auction Revenue
- \$ 2,352.72 – U.S. Department of Education: Solve IT energy project
- \$ 18,568.51 – U.S. Department of Education: Arctic Ambassador project
- \$ 6,000.00 – Spruce Root: Solid waste workforce baler training
- \$ 37,796.31 – U.S. Forest Service: Southeast Alaska Sustainable Strategy
- \$ 9,000.00 – Denali Commission: Workforce baler training



Status of Projects Funded by State or Federal Grants:

Alaska Energy Authority (AEA): SEC continues a close working relationship with AEA and assists with project development and program implementation as needed. SEC also participates in AEA's working groups related to alternative energy and energy efficiency programs, supporting AEA programs that lower the cost of energy for Alaskans. AEA also provides funding to SEC to host cordwood boiler training programs throughout the state. Lastly, SEC works with AEA to support the implementation of electric vehicles and electric vehicle infrastructure by participating in meetings and as the recipient of Volkswagen EV Settlement Funds. SEC's Executive Director served as a member of the Governor's Energy Security Task Force.

The cordwood boiler operator training sessions are held annually on Prince of Wales Island and in the Interior Alaska community of Tanacross. SEC subcontracted engineering firm DeerStone Consulting to develop curriculum and lead the training sessions. The cordwood operator training is specific to Garn boiler systems, which are prevalent throughout the state. The training occurs over three days – two days classroom instruction and one day in-the-field training performing repairs to existing boiler systems. Between the two trainings in 2024, 27 participants received certificates of completion. These trainings are key to ensuring existing Garn cordwood systems are maintained, run efficiently, and have an adequately trained workforce to operate and maintain them. Prior to training events, team members with SEC, AEA, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), and DeerStone Consulting perform site visits to inspect systems. Team members inspect boilers, collect water samples, generate parts lists, and develop inspection reports for the communities that include the system's overall condition and the availability, cost, and storage of feedstock.

U.S. Forest Service: SEC has long been a leader in promoting renewable energy infrastructure for Southeast Alaska and the state as a whole. Full utilization of local resources for energy needs has consistently been a regional priority. One of the local resources is woody biomass, utilizing urban and forest residues. Utilization of woody biomass for thermal energy (*i.e.*, heat) creates local employment, utilizes local resources, and develops local infrastructure. A recent survey found that two-thirds of Southeast residents' energy consumption was for thermal heat. SEC sees a possible solution, embracing new technology that utilizes biomass waste streams and is right sized to meet a local community's heating needs.

USFS and the Denali Commission awarded funding to SEC to pursue a demonstration biomass pellet mill project to be constructed in Ketchikan as a proof-of-concept pilot project for other proposed locations. The facility will support the timber industry, forest health, and habitat by utilizing natural waste streams, allowing experimentation with community biomass waste, such as used pallets and cardboard.

AEA and USFS – Biomass Technical Support: SEC's energy coordinator and biomass assistant work with AEA and USFS to provide technical support and facilitation for biomass energy projects across the state. SEC's energy coordinator chairs the Alaska Wood Energy Development Task Group, which consists of a coalition of federal agencies, state agencies, and not-for-profit organizations seeking to increase the utilization of wood for energy and biofuel production in Alaska. One of the group's primary objectives is to vet and approve feasibility studies for biomass systems. The group also meets monthly to share updates on projects around the state, resources, and lessons learned.



SEC works in partnership with University of Alaska-Fairbanks; State of Alaska, Division of Forestry; the Alaska Center for Energy and Power (ACEP); the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP); and USFS on a biomass outreach program that assists communities with feasibility plans and provides technical assistance and workforce training to both the private sector and to communities that have existing systems. SEC participates in statewide roundtables and cross-border collaborations. SEC recently hosted the Alaska-Canada Biomass Conference, which included a pre-conference field trip to a biomass project site in Nenana and a post-conference trip to a sawmill in Delta Junction. Both venues feature model examples of the work underway in many parts of Alaska. SEC was involved in drafting the agenda and selecting speakers and topics for the 2024 Rural Energy Conference held in Fairbanks.

Denali Commission: The Denali Commission provided funding for SEC for the pellet mill pilot project and to provide technical assistance for rural underserved communities in Southeast Alaska. These funds have been used in community efforts and private sector investment to leverage other federal funding opportunities, bringing in over a million dollars to date.

USDA Rural Development – Renewable Energy Development: USDA Rural Development’s funding to SEC is being used to provide outreach, technical assistance and technical understanding on how to deploy renewable energy resources to Alaskan businesses. SEC energy team members are working to promote the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) to regional businesses. The program covers up to 50 percent of project costs for energy efficiency improvements or up to \$500,000 for renewable energy systems. These projects can include more efficient refrigeration systems for commercial fishing vessels, solar panels or heat pumps that offset diesel consumption, or small geothermal and hydro projects. SEC is also promoting REAP Technical Assistance Grants (TAG) which provides no-cost energy efficiency audits to businesses. REAP TAG provides a trained energy auditor to assess a business’ energy needs and make recommendations that informs which REAP program grant is most appropriate for the business. SEC’s efforts in FY2024 included development of informational materials, promotion during conferences and large events, newsletter write-ups, targeted outreach campaigns, and the creation of online materials posted to the [Southeast Conference website](#) ^{R-15}.

OneUSDA, Southeast Alaska Sustainable Strategy for Economic Development: SEC is partnering with OneUSDA, USFS, Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (CCTHITA), and Spruce Root to undertake and support activities that promote strong economies, sustainable communities, and a healthy environment through its Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy (SASS). The investments made through SASS empower the local efforts already identified in SEC’s CEDS.

SEC has hosted and traveled to gatherings designed to build consensus, facilitate new partnerships and relationships, and grow the equity component of SASS. FY2024 events included SEC’s 2023 annual meeting and 2024 mid-session summit, the Sustainable Southeast Partnership (SSP) 2024 spring retreat, and the Transformative Scenario Planning event with Spruce Root and REOS Group.

USFS partnered with SEC to measure the overall economic impact of SASS investments. SASS partners reported spending \$4.65 million in USDA funding in 2023, and a combined \$6 million over two years. The combined 2022 and 2023 expenditures catalyzed \$8.8 million in economic activity, created 114 full-time equivalent jobs, and paid \$3.6 million in wages to Southeast Alaska residents. More significant economic impacts are expected over the next two years, as many projects have not begun or are in preliminary stages.



To date, there are four subaward recipients:

- *Alaska Sustainable Fisheries Trust (ASFT)*: ASFT's three projects support rural and indigenous residents in regaining access to Southeast Alaska fisheries. With the support of SASS, ASFT paid back loans used to purchase \$800,000 of quota for their local fish fund, trained and placed 12 apprentices on fishing vessels, and released a report examining barriers to fisheries access, specifically a multi-decade decline in fisheries participation in coastal Southeast Alaska communities and particularly within largely indigenous communities.
- *Alaska Oyster Cooperative (AOC)*: AOC's project will support the design and eventual construction of facilities to expand oyster production and distribution for five oyster farms in the Prince of Wales Island community of Naukati. With SASS support, AOC secured permits to lease 0.61 acres of state land and contracted a consulting firm to provide design and engineering services.
- *OceansAlaska (OA)*: OA's project will grow sustainable shellfish mariculture in Southeast Alaska through workforce training opportunities in a state-of-the-art shellfish hatchery. Through the SASS framework, SEC helped OA relocate their floating hatchery, improve facilities, and make valuable industry connections that led to expanded training opportunities and connections with Tribal entities and the UA system.
- *Craig City School District (CCSD)*: CCSD will install a wood chip boiler system to reduce heating costs by 85 percent while utilizing a local, renewable, and sustainable energy source. SEC's SASS funding is building a new wood shop for CCSD, and the retired wood shop will house the project's wood chip boiler. This wood chip boiler is expected to save 360,000 gallons of heating oil from being burned over the next 20 years.

SEC is also leading a project to build a pellet mill facility on Gravina Island, near Ketchikan. The facility will create jobs while utilizing forestry by-products and other municipal solid waste for a renewable and sustainable biomass energy solution. Through SASS funding SEC has leased a site on Gravina Island, purchased the necessary wood processing and pellet producing equipment, and begun evaluating the feedstock and transportation needs for the mill's operation.

SEC is distributing \$200,000 in microgrants to 15 projects that will build organizational capacity, fund preliminary project development, and attract private investment for Southeast Alaskan entities conducting work that aligns with SASS' economic development goals.

EDA Build Back Better Regional Challenge (BBBRC): SEC continues to lead the effort to accelerate the state's developing mariculture industry. After receiving an initial planning grant under the EDA's Build Back Better Regional Challenge program, EDA awarded SEC and the Alaska Mariculture Cluster (AMC) \$49 million to develop a sustainable mariculture industry for the long-term benefit of Alaska's economy, environment, and communities. The AMC BBBRC project is a four-year program, with a project period of October 1, 2022, to September 30, 2026.

AMC is a coalition led by SEC that includes members of Alaska's mariculture industry, Tribal organizations, state regulatory agencies, Alaska's university system, economic development districts, trade organizations, and others. As part of this program, SEC is making significant investment in the DEC's laboratory as well as in the University of Alaska.



1. *Governance, Coordination and Outreach:* The Governance Body (GB) is composed of all four southern coastal ARDORs (SEC, KPEDD, PWSEDD, SWAMC), four board members of AMA, four regional Tribal executives (CCTHITA, Chugach Alaska Corporation, The Aleut Corporation, and Koniag), as well as a representative from the Alaska fisheries industry. GB has met quarterly since April 2023. GB guides the grant's work and ensures that equity goals are met throughout each AMC project. Five Tribal liaisons were hired in each region to ensure AMC's priority needs and goals for mariculture in Alaska Native communities are met and to keep these communities fully informed of the opportunities available within AMC BBBRC.
2. *Workforce Development to Support Industry Growth:* SEC works closely with all three state universities [University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA), University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF), University of Alaska Southeast (UAS)] to develop training materials, curriculum, and an aquatic farm operation training handbook. University of Alaska Anchorage's Prince William Sound Community College campus has created a marine resources technician certification. University of Alaska Southeast is offering several mariculture courses. University of Alaska Fairbanks has created several mariculture-related trainings and workshops including seaweed genetics, seaweed stabilization, introductory seaweed cultivation and processing, abalone hatcheries, and Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (*i.e.*, food safety). Plans are underway to develop a mariculture training farm, to be based at Kodiak Seafood and Marine Science Center. An Alaska kelp farming manual is on track for completion during FY2025.
3. *Equipment and Technology:* SEC made an initial round \$2.1 million to fund equipment purchases for nine entities engaging in mariculture. A second round of equipment funding is due to be released in the first half of FY2025. SEC is also administering funding for kelp processing feasibility studies across the state as well as researching the cultivation of new mariculture species that have potential for commercial applications. SEC has executed a subaward agreement with DEC to modernize the state's equipment for toxin testing. DEC has purchased all equipment necessary to transfer state laboratory analysis to the Turner method of testing for PST in shellfish.
4. *Green Energy:* SEC is working with Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation (AFDF) to assess the energy usage of the mariculture industry and will develop a best practice guide to lower energy costs and consumption.
5. *Research and Development:* SEC has three strategic partners involved in this project: AFDF, ADFG, and Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Research includes seaweed tissue analysis, chemistry and nutritional profiles, and joint innovation projects with the private sector to accelerate development of applied technologies. Both AFDF and ADFG will be purchasing equipment for this component project.
6. *Marketing:* The market development component project is an essential part of the mariculture grant. SEC is working with the private sector to form a steering committee that will guide the market research on seaweed, shellfish, and brand development.



7. *Mariculture Revolving Loan Fund*: This industry specific revolving loan fund (RLF) will support all aspects of operations and seeks to fill the gaps left unmet by traditional financing institutions. SEC is working with financial institutions and industry stakeholders within and outside of Alaska to develop an administrative structure, loan policies, and products that will meet the needs of Alaska's developing mariculture industry and assist SEC in finalizing the AMC RLF Administration Plan and overall management structure. SEC is partnering with Spruce Root, who will administer half the funds that are targeted to Alaska Natives and underserved communities.

Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS): Since 1958 SEC has sought to establish, sustain, and support the ferry system. In recent years, the focus has been on modernization and, with the federal priority to reduce emissions, incorporating renewable energy resources into the operations of AMHS. Throughout FY2024, SEC continued to work with DOT&PF and AMHS on a multitude of projects including the AMHS Long-Range Plan, the AMHS Low/No Emission Ferry Pilot Program and multiple replacement vessel designs.

SEC has prioritized the development of the next generation of the modernized, low-emission ferry development as part of the AMHS Long Range Plan. SEC is working with AMHS to evaluate the logistics of relocating the Ketchikan-side terminal for the M/V Lituya from AMHS Berth Three to a site at/near Saxman. After community meetings in FY2023 resulted in the support of a berth in Saxman, in FY2024 SEC staff worked with DOT&PF to prepare three grant applications in support of the Low/No Emission Ferry Pilot Program (Port Infrastructure Development Program, Clean Ports Program, and Federal Transit Administration Rural Ferry Grant). SEC staff continues to provide project updates to the City of Saxman, Metlakatla Indian Community, DOT&PF, and Senator Murkowski's staff, as well as outreach to other entities and communities that were identified as potential routes for the pilot program. SEC staff offered presentations on the Low/No Emissions ferry research analysis in December 2023 to the Alaska Marine Highway Operations Board (AMHOB) and to a transportation committee in the Municipality of Skagway.

In addition to the Low/No Emissions ferry, SEC staff continues to actively support the AMHS director and AMHS contractors with the Tustumena Replacement Vessel project, including conversations related to design and development of the Mainline Replacement Vessel and the Low/No Emission Ferry projects. These meetings revealed the complexities of working through design and component specification processes for the construction of ferries that meet the needs of AMHS routes, incorporate battery systems, adhere to federal procurement and Buy America requirements that come with the use of federal dollars, and the complexity of working with different U.S. DOT agencies.

SEC staff also support the AMHS Long-Range Plan efforts as AMHS, AMHOB, and consultants work to create the 2045 Long-Range Plan of the ferry system to modernize AMHS and develop a community driven, collective plan that will provide reliable and sustainable ferry service for future generations. Work for this effort includes assisting with outreach and community engagement, reviewing findings, and providing feedback to the research team as AMHS engages AMHOB, ferry focus groups, community meetings, and open-house events. SEC also created a partnership with the National Association of Development Organizations to fund and conduct an additional business survey to better understand the business use of the ferry system and the economic impact associated with less, more, or similar service levels. The AMHS Long-Range Plan remained under development in FY2024 and is anticipated to be completed during FY2025.



The Southeast Alaska Solid Waste Authority (SEASWA): SEASWA was developed through the joint efforts of SEC and Southeast Alaskan leaders. For many years, members of SEC and others in Southeast Alaska studied the issue of consolidating solid waste disposal, recycling, and scrap metal efforts across the region.

During FY2024, SEC continued to support SEASWA activities as the discussions broadened to include additional municipalities and stakeholders. SEC staff provided monthly meeting support and assisted in the coordination and facilitation of two in-person SEASWA board meetings during SEC events. The regional tire chipper purchased by SEC continues to move from community to community. The current model of municipal solid waste management strategy in Southeast Alaska is increasingly to ship waste south to Washington or Oregon as landfills continue to close or reach capacity. The SEASWA board is seeking new ways to reduce, reuse, recycle, and rely on capacities and capabilities within the region to better handle waste. SEC staff in collaboration with SEASWA members and the City and Borough of Sitka have applied for a Denali Commission Solid Waste Regional Planning grant to kickstart these efforts.

Alaska Energy Authority – Alaska Electric Vehicle Working Group (AEVWG): SEC meets quarterly as a member of AEVWG to discuss electric vehicles (EV) and charging infrastructure in Alaska. SEC supports AEA’s efforts to reduce barriers to EV adoption and its plans for opportunities to introduce new industries to Alaska, promote the state’s economy, and save its residents money. SEC participated in the development of the state’s Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Implementation Plan as part of the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Formula Program and promoted partnerships with the private sector to host charging stations.

SEC received more than \$100,000 from AEA through Volkswagen EV Settlement Funds. SEC is using the funds to purchase Level 2 EV chargers in Southeast Alaska communities that do not have public charging stations. SEC promoted this program via its website, newsletters, conferences, and in-person meetings. As a result, applications were approved for two chargers in Ketchikan and a charger in Haines. These chargers have been purchased and delivered, with installation scheduled during FY2025.

Meeting and Event Summary:

SEC held 10 board meetings between July 2023 and June 2024. Eight board meetings were conducted via Zoom, one was held in Sitka prior to SEC’s annual meeting, and one was held in Haines. SEC’s two annual events during FY2024 included the annual meeting in Sitka and the mid-session summit in Juneau.

July 28, 2023 (Zoom): President Simpson reported on her work with the executive director on the organizational structure review and the annual meeting. Discussion and review of finances on various projects, including the revolving loan fund, the Alaska Pellet Supply project, and FTA funding for the transportation program. The executive director gave an update on the annual meeting, provided program reports, and reported on the travel and presentations made on behalf of SEC. The board approved purchasing equipment from Alaska Pellet Supply utilizing grant funds. Board comments included the logistical needs for the annual meeting. The board acknowledged the extraordinary efforts that THCC undertook on behalf of the troll fisheries. The board then adjourned to executive session to evaluate a performance review of the executive director.

September 18, 2023 (Sitka): The board met prior to the beginning of the annual meeting in Sitka. The finance committee updated that the federal audit would be taking place over the next few weeks and that new staff will add capacity to the finance department. The board approved the ballot for board elections to occur during



the annual meeting and approved the three proposed priorities for the organization, as presented by the executive director:

1. *Organizational Structure:* Work with a third party, Workplace Solutions, to examine the personnel organization chart, job descriptions, and reporting structures to support an efficient and effective organization.
2. *Professional Development:* SEC seeks to provide a professional development track for each employee.
3. *Organizational Values, Vision, and Mission:* In collaboration with the board, strategically explore and revamp the organization's vision and mission and establish organizational values.

Action was also taken to formally establish Alaska Pellet Supply and Service, LLC, approving its articles of incorporation. Many letters of support have been provided by SEC to communities and organizations that align with the regional CEDS.

September 21-29, 2023 (Zoom): SEC was posed with an immediate need request. Alaska Mariculture Alliance (AMA) is a newly formed association that grew from the governor's mariculture task force and is integral to the Build Back Better regional grant, as well as being a sub-awardee of the grant. As a young entity, it faces financial constraints to prepay for activities until grant reimbursement could occur. The board was asked to consider granting \$20,000 of working capital to AMA with conditions. The request was passed by the unanimous consent of participating SEC board members on September 29, 2023.

October 30, 2023 (Zoom): The board congratulated staff on a successful annual meeting and scholarship auction, where \$60,000 was raised to support workforce development in the region. The executive director also reported that the Alaska-Canada Wood Energy Biomass Conference was a success and had notable international presence. An update was given on SASS-related work, including design funding for the Craig-based mariculture processing facility and discussions relating to kelp research and development. The board approved the creation of a revolving loan fund program and an application for funding from Denali Commission for SEASWA training.

November 28, 2023 (Zoom): Plans for the upcoming Mid-Session Summit (MSS) and Transportation Symposium were discussed. A request for speaker recommendations for this event was made to the board. The executive director reported on SEC's new team members and on the recent trip to the National Associations of Development Organizations (NADO) event, where SEC's executive director was elected to serve on NADO's board of directors. The executive director also attended a U.S. Senate hearing where the EDA reauthorization was heard and moved from committee. SEC's board discussed letters of support for issues facing the region, including hydro energy projects, specific community projects, and housing.

January 18, 2024 (Zoom): The executive director informed the board that he and three others from the Energy Security Task Force presented to the house majority and reported on the energy programs with which SEC is involved, including the Energyshed, Arctic Energy Ambassadors, and the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant submission. Staff reported that the SASS program is looking to roll out a microgrant program, that mariculture has a \$16 million equipment program with a high participation rate, and that MSS was making progress. The board approved applying for funding to establish a Biomass Development Opportunity Zone on Prince of Wales Island, to execute a contract for the purchase of a pellet mill, and for the completion of SEC's CEDS plan.



March 27, 2024 (Haines): SEC’s finance committee reported that the federal audit, findings, and processes showed that SEC’s finances are solid with no extraordinary issues. SEC was awarded a three-year EDA planning grant and would begin renewing the CEDS for release in 2025. SEC is participating in the AFDF-led Seafood Industry Modernization Initiative that was discussed following the MSS panel discussion about industry needs, with approval from the board to participate in modernization efforts.

April 18, 2024 (Zoom): The executive director stated that SEC submitted an application for EPA’s CPRG program for promoting and installing heat pumps from Ketchikan to Kodiak. Staff reported on current projects including SASS, mariculture, the pellet mill, Regional Planning Organization, and electric ferry development. The board approved granting the SEC Foundation \$10,000 for working capital, re-affirming the letter to the Alaska State Legislature in support of the proposed Renewable Energy Projects, the awarding of scholarships to University of Alaska students, and approving SEC staff to serve as the alternate for the SEC-appointed Southeast Alaska Regional Dive Fisheries Association board seat.

May 16, 2024 (Zoom): The executive director reported that SEC was moving forward with the design and pre-construction activities for the Prince of Wales Island mariculture processing facility, although no construction funds were secured during the legislative session. SEC is working with the City of Saxman, Ketchikan Gateway Borough, and AMHS to apply for a Port Infrastructure Development Program grant for new ferry docking infrastructure in Saxman. SEC is also working with the AMHS long range planning team on forging a new path forward for the ferry system rather than minor corrections. SEC has also kicked off the new CEDS process with committee meetings. SEC’s board continues to discuss its scholarship program, how to make funding available for more programs, and how to get more Southeast Alaska residents to apply. The executive director updated the board on SEC’s request to facilitate conversations with Tongass National Forest stakeholders and the forestry industry as part of The Tongass Collaborative (TTC). This request aligns with the needs of the small sawmills, BDO efforts, and Solvelt grant applications where SEC is already involved.

June 26, 2024 (Zoom): The executive director reported that SEC has been very busy with visits from DOE, site tours with Senator Murkowski, development of a Memorandum of Agreement with DOT&PF on the electric ferry project, the awarding of a \$500,000 grant to SEASWA for regional solid waste planning, and transformative work on the CEDS. Preparations for the economic summit and 66th annual meeting are also underway.

Annual Meeting (September 19-21, 2023, Sitka): SEC’s annual meeting featured 90 speakers and panelists. Highlights included a “Conversation with Alaska’s Commissioners” panel; an investors’ panel speaking specifically to rural Southeast Alaskan communities, featuring EDA’s Deputy Assistant Secretary, Cristina Killingsworth, and US Deputy Undersecretary Farah Ahmad from USDA Rural Development. The University of Alaska scholarship auction raised \$60,000. SEC reports that this year’s theme, “Be the Compass. Lead the Way,” was demonstrated in each presentation, panel discussion, and industry updates and projections. All presentations, as well as full recordings of the meeting, can be found [online](#) ^{R-16}.

Mid-Session Summit (February 6-7, 2024, Juneau): The FY2024 mid-session summit was held February 6 and 7, with the 3rd annual transportation summit held on February 8. SEC welcomed 225 attendees to the Elizabeth Peratrovich Hall in Juneau. The mid-session summit featured 85 speakers and panelists. Eighteen businesses and organizations participated as sponsors. The transportation summit covered transportation planning at the community level, with presentations by federal, state, and Tribal agencies.



Publications:

2024 Regional Business Climate Survey: Each year SEC conducts a regional business climate survey to track Southeast Alaska business confidence. Here are the top findings:

- **Strong Business Climate Overall:** More than two-thirds (67 percent) of regional business leaders currently have a positive view of the Southeast Alaska business climate, the second highest positivity rating since recording began in 2010.
- **Strong Visitor Sector:** The regional tourism sector is reportedly strong, with 83 percent of tourism business leaders calling the current business climate good or very good; and more than half reporting a better or much better outlook in the summer of 2024, moving into 2025. A quarter of tourism leaders have plans to increase capacity, with 28 percent expanding staffing levels to meet rising demand.
- **Seafood Sector in Decline:** Leaders in the seafood industry are experiencing significant economic challenges marked by historically low salmon prices, rising operational costs, and unfavorable global dynamics. Nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of seafood leaders call the current Southeast business climate poor or very poor, with 43 percent projecting that the next 12 months will be worse or much worse.
- **Outlook is Slightly Below Average:** Just over two-thirds (68 percent) of respondents describe the economic outlook for their business or industry over the next 12 months as positive. Thirty percent of regional business leaders say that their business or sector is on track for continued improvement or growth over the next year. Compared to past survey years, these rates are slightly below average.
- **Housing, Workforce Challenges:** Southeast business leaders continue to identify housing as the top obstacle to economic development, with its presence critical for creating a vibrant business climate in the region. The housing shortage is deterring young families and workers from relocating to, or remaining in, the region.
- **Businesses are Hiring:** The survey shows that about a quarter (24 percent) of regional businesses are actively hiring or anticipate growing their workforce over the next 12 months.
- **Industry Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOTs):** Business leaders were asked to participate in sector-specific SWOTs. The sectors that received their own SWOTs in 2024 include seafood, energy, transportation, tourism, and mining.
- **Open-ended Comments:** While significant challenges related to workforce, housing, transportation, and inflation were emphasized, there is also optimism and opportunities for growth. Addressing housing affordability and improving transportation infrastructure are seen as crucial steps for supporting sustained economic development in Southeast Alaska.

2024 Southeast Alaska by the Numbers: Southeast Alaska's economy is strong. In 2023 jobs were up by three percent and wages have been growing faster than the rate of inflation. Tourism jobs grew by 26 percent, an increase of 1,700 year-round-equivalent jobs. Tourism workers earned \$105 million more in wages than the year before.

In 2023, the region's fishermen brought in the largest catch in more than a decade, but with a catch value \$66 million less than the prior year's smaller catch, as global drivers fueled low seafood prices.



Government, healthcare, retail, construction, finance, and mining sectors all added workers to their payrolls. Tribal government grew by nine percent. Regional Gross Domestic Product was up by 31 percent; however, state jobs, social services employment, and professional and business services were down. Population and school enrollment declined.

In 2024, Southeast business leaders are mostly optimistic. The regional economy has reportedly recovered from the pandemic. The construction industry is responding to \$334 million in infrastructure bill investments in Southeast Alaska. Inflation has dropped to 1.5 percent. Tourism is having another strong year, as 1.675 million cruise passengers are expected to visit. While jobs continue to grow, so do concerns about the lack of a sufficient workforce in the region.

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies for Addressing Regional Economic Development Needs:

SEC is responsible for identifying regional priorities for economic and community development. The [Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy \(CEDS\) for Southeast Alaska^{R-17}](#), released in April 2021, presents this work. This 2025 Southeast Alaska Economic Plan is a strategy-driven plan developed by a diverse workgroup of local representatives from private, public, and nonprofit sectors. Over the course of 12 months, 36 workshops and strategic planning meetings SEC members developed and prioritized fifty economic initiatives, four main objectives, a resilience plan, regional and industry specific SWOTs analyses, and much more. More than 400 stakeholders representing small businesses, Tribes, Alaska Native organizations, municipalities, and nonprofits were involved in various elements of the planning process. The document includes the latest regional data, which is updated annually. The four main priorities of the economic plan were identified as 1) sustain and support the Alaska Marine Highway System, 2) develop mariculture, 3) market Southeast Alaska to attract more visitor spending and visitor opportunities, and 4) promote beneficial electrification.

Current Economic Development Initiatives:

In addition to the conferences and publications produced, SEC is continually involved in conversations, presentations, committees, projects, and other activities that support SEC's CEDS. SEC staff actively engaged with DCRA, AIDEA, SBA, Alaska Small Business Development Center, ARDORs, USDA-RD, AEA, Alaska Center for Energy and Power, Renewable Energy Alaska Project, U.S. Forest Service, the Denali Commission, University of Alaska, communities, Tribes, the Alaska Municipal League, and other stakeholder groups to develop and implement strategies to provide technical assistance to small businesses in need of state and federal aid and to plan for revitalizing the regional and statewide economies.

SEC has presented to several Southeast Alaska community chambers of commerce and Rotary groups, as well as the Alaska Municipal League, the National Association of Development Organizations, Western Governors' Association, Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District's annual meeting, mariculture presentations, pellet mill presentations, and low-emissions ferries presentations.

SEC wrote numerous letters of support for regional projects that support regional economic initiatives, as identified in SEC's CEDS.



Future Economic Development Initiatives:

Most of the projects identified through the report are multi-year projects that will continue for three to five years. With historic funding levels available through the federal government, SEC is actively working with communities and Tribes in the region to take advantage of the numerous potential projects for economic opportunities. SEC continues to work with the forestry stakeholders in southern Southeast Alaska to examine young growth timber as an emerging commodity, facilitating conversations to plan activities that support the forest health, habitat needs, and economic opportunities on Prince of Wales Island. Other areas of opportunity where SEC is involved include fisheries modernization efforts, the revitalization of SEATrails to support the outdoor recreation economy, workforce development and training needs, and community housing solutions.

Anticipated Challenges to Regional Economic Development:

In the recent 2024 business climate survey, community members and business leaders continued to identify lack of affordable housing and reduced AMHS ferry service as roadblocks for economic development. These factors continue to contribute to the labor shortages: inflation, supply chain issues, high energy costs, and transportation challenges which continue to impact the region. In 2024, a majority of business leaders in the Timber and Seafood sectors felt the overall business climate was poor or very poor. Business leaders say it is critical for government to focus on housing initiatives, attracting and retaining a workforce-aged population, transportation, and the development of a state fiscal plan in order to create a vibrant business climate. Despite these challenges, the overall outlook continues to improve dramatically with 69 percent of respondents having a positive outlook of the current overall business climate.



Photo credit: Southeast Conference - 2024



SOUTHWEST ALASKA MUNICIPAL CONFERENCE



Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference

3300 Arctic Boulevard, Suite 203
Anchorage, AK 99503
(907) 562-7380
<https://swamc.org/>

Mission:

SWAMC is a regional membership organization that advances the collective interests of Southwest Alaska people, businesses, and communities. SWAMC helps promote economic opportunities to improve quality of life and influences long-term responsible development.

Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference (SWAMC) is a non-profit, regional economic development organization for Southwest Alaska comprised of the Alaskan Peninsula, Aleutian/Pribilof Islands, Bristol Bay, and Kodiak Island. SWAMC received ARDOR designation in 1989 and received federal Economic Development District designation in 1991. Tasked to pursue public-private partnerships based on sound strategic planning efforts, SWAMC acts as a liaison between state government and regional leaders by hosting summits, communicating priorities and opportunities, implementing initiatives, and acting as a unified voice for the region. SWAMC was originally founded to advocate for rural community needs and the responsible development of the region's commercial seafood industry. It remains committed to issues associated with commercial fishing, as well as telecommunications and energy infrastructure, in the region.

Funding Reported:

In FY2024, SWAMC reported the following sources of revenue:

- \$ 78,801.00 – U.S. Department of Agriculture: Renewable Energy Development Assistance Energy Audit
- \$ 75,000.00 – U.S. Economic Development Administration: Build Back Better Regional Challenge Grant
- \$ 29,677.00 – Membership dues

Status of Projects Funded by State or Federal Grants:

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA): Renewable Energy Development Assistance – Energy Audit Program funds were used to benefit small businesses and fishing vessels. Funding will be closed out in FY2025.

U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA): SWAMC continued its partnership with Southeast Conference using EDA Build Back Better funds on behalf of the Alaska Mariculture Cluster. The partnership implemented Phase 2 by supplying \$75,000 in a non-federal funding match to support the development of the mariculture industry in Alaska and plan an advisory role to the governance body.



Meeting Summary:

SWAMC held 12 board meetings between July 2023 and June 2024. The July board meeting and retreat, as well as the pre- and post-conference board meetings in March at SWAMC's annual in-person Economic Summit and Membership Meeting, are held in Anchorage. All other monthly meetings are held via Zoom on the third Thursday of the month.

All meeting agendas include the previous month's financial report for board review and approval; the minutes of the previous month's board meeting; governance and policy additions or changes for review; and discussion and follow up if needed. Meetings also include addressing any management or program issues and updates for board review, discussion, and decision making. A full staff report is provided to the board, and any questions for the executive director are answered or scheduled for further discussion at the next meeting. The financial reports were presented by Foraker Group prior to March 2024, at which time Arctic Tern Professional Services took over SWAMC's accounting duties.

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies for Addressing Regional Economic Development Needs:

Each goal includes detailed strategies aimed at fostering economic stability, community resilience, and sustainable growth tailored to the unique resources and challenges of Southwest Alaska.

Goal 1 – Resources Management Advocacy

- **Fisheries & Tourism Development:** Promote sustainable fisheries and encourage tourism investments that preserve and utilize regional cultural and natural assets.
- **New Resource Development:** Support responsible resource development that complements the traditional fishing economy and integrates outreach into mariculture industry development.
- **Fisheries Access:** Retain access to commercial and subsistence fisheries for residents.
- **Strategies:** Collect and analyze data for economic trends, advocate for funding, develop mariculture, support public-private partnerships, seek grants, and highlight regional opportunities at economic summits.

Goal 2 – Infrastructure Development and Maintenance Advocacy

- **Energy & Local Ownership:** Enhance energy efficiency, promote local control over energy systems, and support low-cost, sustainable power generation.
- **Community Planning & Communications:** Facilitate infrastructure planning, including broadband deployment and transportation improvements, with a focus on resilience.
- **Strategies:** Support infrastructure projects, advocate for transportation improvements, assist in grant and loan access, engage in energy planning, maintain communication with stakeholders, and address affordable housing.

Goal 3 – People and Partnerships Networking

- **Funding and Training:** Secure funding for regional projects, support workforce training, align education with job market needs, and promote Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) programs.



- **Economic Planning:** Develop disaster-resilient economic plans and foster regional economic partnerships; nurture better communication with regional corporations, villages, and Tribal councils; and seek additional funding sources for ecotourism and cultural tourism projects.
- **Strategies:** Partner with workforce organizations, coordinate training needs, advocate for economic interests, conduct workforce re-integration efforts for parents, organize networking events, expand SWAMC membership, and support disaster preparedness.

Goal 4 – Quality of Life Initiatives

- **Community Well-Being:** Promote access to employment, housing, childcare, healthcare, and cultural experiences that contribute to quality of life in Southwest Alaska.
- **Strategies:** Assist with substance abuse prevention, highlight cultural values, and support educational opportunities for Southwest Alaska students.

Current Economic Development Initiatives:

SWAMC continues to manage the USDA Renewable Energy Development Assistance Energy Audit (REDA-EA) grant. This grant provides subsidized energy audits to small businesses statewide. Over the three-year program through June 2024, 92 energy audits have been completed and, through its partners, SWAMC has helped 35 small businesses access nearly \$435,000 from USDA's REAP grant program to implement the energy efficiency measures identified in their audit, including \$235,000 directed to SWAMC communities. SWAMC's REDA-EA grant will be closed out in FY2025.

SWAMC continued its partnership with Southeast Conference on behalf of the Alaska Mariculture Cluster to apply for the Economic Development Administration's Build Back Better Regional Challenge grant. SWAMC partnered with the Alaska Mariculture Cluster to implement Phase 2 by providing \$75,000 in non-federal match annually to support the development of the mariculture industry in Alaska and play an advisory role to the governance body.

Future Economic Development Initiatives:

Potential projects identified by SWAMC that may enhance economic development in Southwest Alaska include:

- Renewable Energy Projects
 - Expanding energy infrastructure with renewable sources such as wind, solar, and hydroelectric systems to reduce high local energy costs and improve sustainability.
- Broadband and Communication Upgrades
 - Improving broadband access to enhance communication and to support remote business operations, education, healthcare, and tourism. Backing initiatives that continue existing broadband efforts or increase access to Starlink satellite broadband until terrestrial broadband is functional.
- Value-Added Seafood Processing Facilities
 - Developing facilities to support value-added seafood products (e.g., smoked, canned, or packaged fish) to increase revenue from local fisheries.



- Mariculture and Aquaculture Development
 - Promoting new mariculture ventures for species like kelp and shellfish, which can diversify income and complement traditional fishing industries.
- Affordable Housing Initiatives
 - Increasing the supply of affordable, quality housing to attract and retain a local workforce and support regional growth.
- Transportation and Port Improvements
 - Upgrading ports, harbors, and transportation infrastructure to improve goods movement, support tourism, and bolster connectivity within the Alaska Marine Highway System.
- STEM and Workforce Development Programs
 - Launching training initiatives focused on STEM fields to prepare residents for local industries and emerging technologies.
 - Support the new building of the Southwest Alaska Vocational and Educational Center to bring employment and training to our region.
- Climate Resilience and Environmental Planning
 - Implementing projects aimed at mitigating climate impacts on fisheries, infrastructure, and local economies, such as shoreline stabilization and sustainable resource management practices.
- Tourism and Cultural Heritage Promotion
 - Developing cultural and eco-tourism attractions that highlight Southwest Alaska's unique environment, history, and Native cultures to attract visitors and grow the regional tourism economy.
- Subsistence and Fisheries Access Preservation
 - Implementing projects aimed at protecting commercial and subsistence fishing rights and access, ensuring these resources remain available to residents and contribute to regional food security.

Anticipated Challenges to Regional Economic Development:

Southwest Alaska faces several persistent economic and infrastructure challenges that affect its growth and sustainability. Notable issues include high power costs, difficulty with infrastructure planning due to limited road access, and fluctuating seafood industry conditions.

- Resources:
 - *Environmental and Market Vulnerabilities:* Extreme weather, seasonal resource availability, and volatile prices hinder long-term planning; closure of fisheries processing plants and limited locations to sell catch.
 - *Economic Barriers:* Limited value-added manufacturing due to high energy and shipping costs.
 - *Conflict and Competition:* Resource development conflicts (e.g., fishing vs. mining), climate change impacts, and external competition in seafood markets
 - *Regulatory Constraints:* Federal environmental regulations affecting resource use and expansion.



- Infrastructure:
 - *Geographic and Logistical Limitations:* High transportation costs in a large, remote coastal region, with limited reliable air service and communication infrastructure.
 - *Maintenance and Energy:* Aging industrial facilities and high energy costs make ongoing maintenance difficult and expensive.
 - *Housing and Public Investment:* Limited quality affordable housing, declining public infrastructure investment, and reduced Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) service.
- People and Partnerships:
 - *Workforce and Demographics:* Aging population, lack of training in seafood technology, and an outward migration of younger and older residents due to cost of living and limited local resources.
 - *Subsistence and Public Funding:* Substance abuse issues, limited treatment facilities, and heavy reliance on public funding for local governance.
 - *Regional Connectivity:* Limited air and marine travel options reduce interconnectivity across the region.

These challenges reflect the unique obstacles in developing sustainable and resilient economic strategies for Southwest Alaska. Understanding these challenges enhances economic development in Southwest Alaska by providing a clear roadmap for targeted solutions. Here's how addressing these issues can support growth:

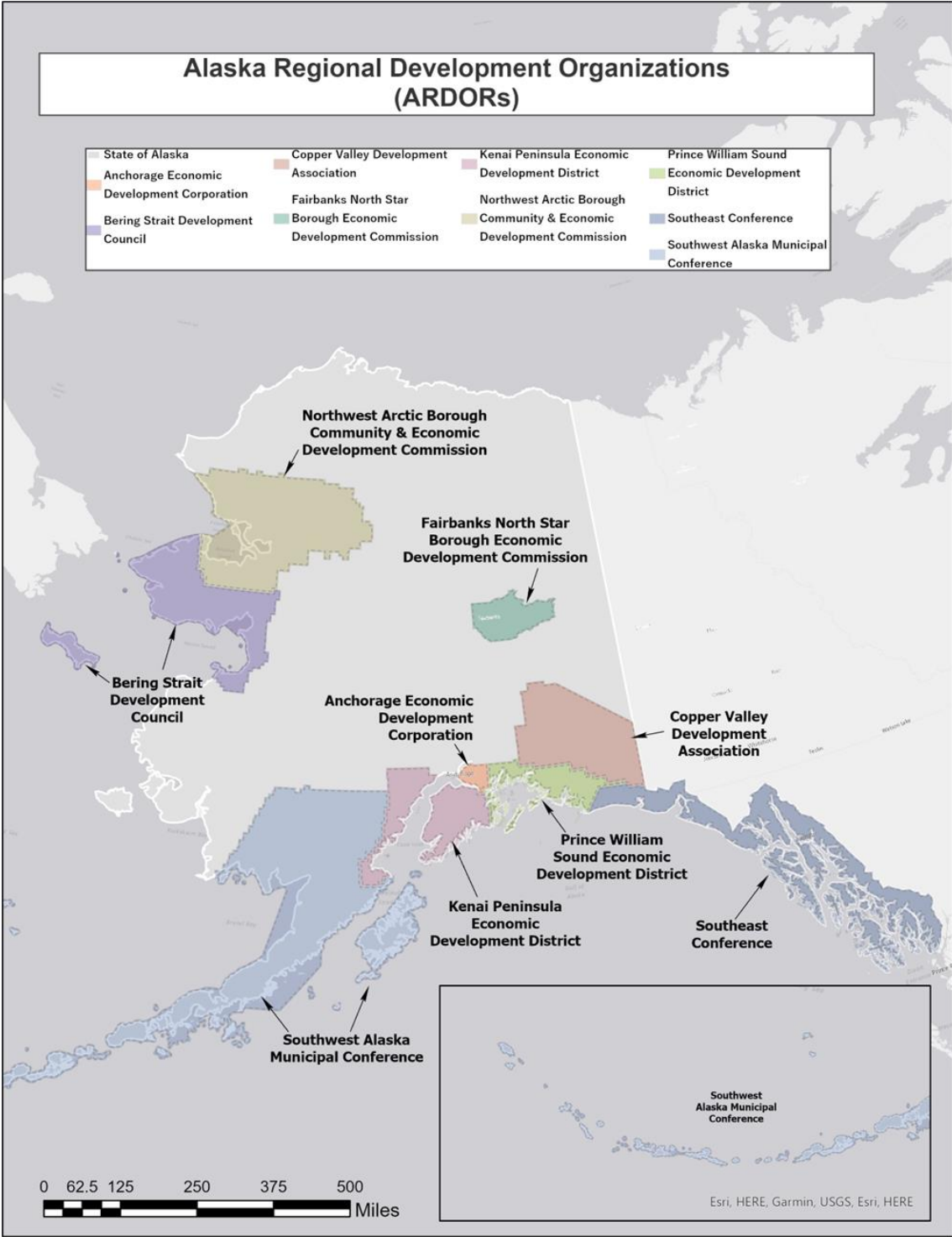
- Strategic Resource Management:
 - *Informed Planning:* By recognizing the volatility in resource availability and market conditions, stakeholders can push for diversified revenue streams and prioritize sustainable practices. Addressing conflicts between industries (e.g., fishing vs. mining) also allows for balanced resource management.
 - *Infrastructure for Value-Added Manufacturing:* Improving energy access and lowering costs can help foster local manufacturing, which adds economic value, reduces dependence on raw resource exports, and creates jobs.
- Improved Infrastructure:
 - *Enhanced Connectivity and Accessibility:* By addressing high transportation and maintenance costs, Southwest Alaska can improve its infrastructure, making it easier for goods and services to move through the region. Improved air and marine connectivity can also boost tourism and commercial activities.
 - *Affordable Housing and Communication:* Adding affordable housing and reliable communication (e.g., broadband internet) will lead to attracting and retaining a workforce, supporting remote business operations, and enhancing quality of life for residents.
 - *Sustainable Energy Solutions:* Lowering energy costs and investing in renewable sources can make business operations more cost-effective, allowing the region to attract and support new industries.

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- Investing in People and Partnerships:
 - *Workforce Development*: Addressing skill gaps through training in new technologies, especially in the seafood and resource sectors, provides local employment opportunities and retains younger residents.
 - *Building Resilient Communities*: By supporting local governance and reducing reliance on external funding, communities can have more control over their economic future. Regional partnerships also build a cooperative approach to economic goals, such as shared transportation services and collaborative resource management.
- Long-Term Strategic Vision:
 - *Adaptive Economic Planning*: Recognizing potential climate impacts and regulatory constraints encourages proactive rather than reactive planning, allowing for resilience against market and environmental shifts.
 - *Fostering Partnerships*: Strengthening networks between local government, regional corporations, Tribal entities, businesses, and public-private partnerships can attract investments and leverage resources, expanding opportunities for sustainable growth.

By focusing on these areas, Southwest Alaska can create a more resilient economy, boost local employment, improve quality of life, and attract investment that aligns with the region’s unique resources and goals.



ARDORS MAP



Map credit: DCCED, DCRA, Mapping, Analytics, and Data Resources Section

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LINK APPENDIX

Reference	Page	Displayed Text	Link
R-1	1	Alaska Regional Development Organizations	https://alaska-economic-data-dcced.hub.arcgis.com/pages/ardor
R-2	1	Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development	https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/
R-3	1	Statewide Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy	https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/StatewideComprehensiveEconomicDevelopmentStrategy.aspx
R-4	4	Choose Anchorage	https://aedcweb.com/choose-anchorage/
R-5	4	Project Anchorage	https://projectanchorage.com/
R-6	25	August 22, 2023: – Agenda	https://fnsb.portal.civicclerk.com/event/5193/overview
R-7	25	September 5, 2023: – Agenda	https://fnsb.portal.civicclerk.com/event/4909/overview
R-8	26	February 27, 2024: – Agenda	https://fnsb.portal.civicclerk.com/event/5193/overview
R-9	26	April 23, 2024: – Agenda	https://fnsb.portal.civicclerk.com/event/5115/overview
R-10	26	Fairbanks North Star Borough Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Update, 2022-2027	https://www.fnsb.gov/DocumentCenter/View/10776/Comprehensive-Economic-Development-Strategy-Update-2022-2027?bidId=
R-11	26	quarterly research document	https://www.fnsb.gov/179/Community-Research-Quarterly-CRQ
R-12	28	KPEDD website	https://www.kpedd.org/
R-13	29	Alaska Housing Finance Corporation	https://www.ahfc.us/pros/energy/alaska-housing-assessment/2018-housing-assessment/census-area-senior-housing-needs
R-14	32	Sustainable Economic Futures	https://sefcanada.com/
R-15	42	Southeast Conference website	http://www.seconference.org/energy-audit/
R-16	48	online	https://www.seconference.org/2023-annual-meeting-presentations/
R-17	50	Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for Southeast Alaska	https://www.seconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Updated-CEDS-2025-April-2024.pdf