



# Alaska Regional Development Organizations



## Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Report

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FISCAL YEAR 2025 ANNUAL REPORT





## INTRODUCTION

The Alaska Regional Economic Assistance Program was established in 1988 under AS 44.33.895 to encourage the formation of regional development organizations in locations across the state. These [Alaska Regional Development Organizations](#) (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](#) (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](#).

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 October 2025, 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 FY2025, AEDC reported the following sources of revenue:

- \$ 288,250.00 – Private Sector Sponsorships<sup>1</sup>

### 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 2024 and June 2025, including one that was immediately adjourned due to a lack of quorum.

**September 4, 2024 (AEDC Boardroom):** The board approved up to \$25,000 in AEDC funds to meet a \$50,000 fundraising match for Project Anchorage. Members discussed future economic research priorities, including homelessness costs, housing affordability, childcare impacts, and return on investment from community development. Feedback on Project Anchorage emphasized transparency, communication of fund use, and continued community engagement.

**October 2, 2024 (AEDC Boardroom):** Routine approvals were passed. Update topics included [Choose Anchorage](#) initiatives, recognition from the Academies of Anchorage, support for Anchorage Community Development Authority's EV Charging grant, and progress on Project Anchorage polling. Recruitment began for two open positions. The board requested bi-monthly updates on Project Anchorage.

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<sup>1</sup> AEDC reported 43 private sector sponsors, ranging from \$1,000 to \$20,000 each.



**November 6, 2024 (AEDC Boardroom):** The board confirmed routine approvals and acceptance of AEDC's 2023 IRS Form 990 filing. The board approved Resolution 2024-04 to forfeit AEDC's FlyCoin holdings and close the Anchorage Digital account. Update topics included ongoing recruitment and project progress.

**December 4, 2024 (ConocoPhillips):** The board approved 2025 officer and board appointments, Investors Council membership, and the FY2025 budget. AEDC's CEO introduced John Coss, AEDC's new business retention and expansion manager, and previewed the 2025 Economic Forecast Luncheon.

**February 5, 2025 (AEDC Boardroom):** The board confirmed routine approvals and Resolution 2025-1, which added two members to the Investors Council. AEDC's CEO reviewed feedback from the Economic Forecast Luncheon, provided a Project Anchorage update, and reported that AEDC was fully staffed. [Choose Anchorage](#) updates included site selector outreach, veterans' inventory completion, and ongoing grant and research efforts.

**March 5, 2025 (AEDC Boardroom):** This meeting was adjourned immediately due to a lack of quorum.

**April 2, 2025 (AEDC Boardroom):** The board confirmed routine approvals and Resolution 2025-2, creating an *ad hoc* Strategic Planning Committee. John Gregoire of Professional Growth Systems presented on the upcoming strategic planning process. AEDC's CEO gave updates on operations and investor relations.

**May 7, 2025 (AEDC Boardroom):** The board confirmed routine approvals and Resolution 2025-04, updating AEDC's personnel policies to align with new paid leave requirements and immediate leave usage. The alcohol policy was amended for clarity. AEDC's CEO reported on progress toward strategic planning and investor engagement.

**June 4, 2025 (AEDC Boardroom):** The board confirmed routine approvals and adoption of AEDC's Five-Year Vision Statement. AEDC's CEO provided updates on operations, strategic planning, and [Choose Anchorage](#). The meeting concluded with a board and investor roundtable discussion.

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

AEDC's work plan to address Anchorage's regional economic development needs is focused on implementing a temporary three percent sales tax that would reduce property taxes and fund key capital projects aimed at enhancing the city's quality of life. AEDC engaged local business leaders, residents, and community organizations to build support and gather input through public forums and surveys. By utilizing research from the University of Alaska's Center for Economic Development and by prioritizing transparency, AEDC aims to stimulate long-term economic growth and make Anchorage a more desirable place to be.

The board is focusing on two major initiatives within its strategic plan:

1. [Choose Anchorage](#): A framework for revitalization focused on improving four interconnected aspects of Anchorage which will strengthen the city's economic vitality for decades to come.
2. [Project Anchorage](#): An initiative put forward by a coalition of Anchorage-based businesses and business leaders designed to make Anchorage a better place to live, work, and play. This initiative would implement a three percent sales tax to reduce property taxes and invest in quality of life through enhancing capital projects.



### Current Economic Development Initiatives:

In FY2025, 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 proposed a three percent sales tax to the Anchorage Assembly to reduce property taxes and invest in quality of life enhancing capital projects.

As an ongoing practice, AEDC continues to focus on business retention and expansion, workforce development, infrastructure development, and Anchorage's 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 a low unemployment rate of 4.7 percent in 2024, 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.





## BERING STRAIT DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL (KAWERAK, INC.)



**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), operated by Kawerak, Inc., serves as the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee.

### **Funding Reported:**

In FY2025, BSDC reported the following sources of revenue:

- \$10,000,000.00 – U.S. Department of Transportation: Rural Surface Transportation – Wales to Tin City
- \$ 3,248,626.00 – Alaska Department of Public Safety: Village Public Safety Officer
- \$ 2,000,000.00 – Denali Commission: Wales to Tin City Road Improvement
- \$ 1,307,957.00 – U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs: Elim Quarry Development
- \$ 1,053,329.00 – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: Gravel to Gravel Co-stewardship Subaward
- \$ 1,000,000.00 – Denali Commission: Shaktoolik Community Streets
- \$ 638,904.00 – Alaska Department of Education and Early Development: Head Start
- \$ 445,457.47 – U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs: Unaatuq Geothermal Tribal Utility Development
- \$ 441,989.00 – U.S. Department of Justice: Tribal Victim Services Set Aside
- \$ 440,593.91 – U.S. Bureau of Land Management: Plant Conservation
- \$ 383,661.47 – Bureau of Indian Affairs: Tribal Climate Resilience Adaptation Planning
- \$ 373,573.00 – Alaska Department of Health: Native Employment Work Services
- \$ 300,000.00 – U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: ANA Peer Mentoring
- \$ 299,757.66 – U.S. Department of Agriculture: NRCS Reindeer Conferences
- \$ 250,000.00 – U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: Native Connections
- \$ 250,000.00 – U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: Tribal Opioid Response
- \$ 210,000.00 – Denali Commission: Community Utility Assistance and Municipal Accounting Services
- \$ 204,423.85 – Alaska Department of Administration, Office of Public Advocacy: Child Advocacy Center
- \$ 191,543.89 – Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development: Adult Basic Education
- \$ 101,025.00 – National Park Service: Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act projects
- \$ 70,000.00 – U.S. Economic Development Administration: Business Planning



- \$ 66,286.00 – National Park Service: Reindeer Herders Association Elders Project
- \$ 29,780.40 – National Park Service: Fish Rack Exhibit
- \$ 10,000.00 – Bering Straits Regional Housing Authority: Indian Housing Block Grant

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, and others. The value of these partnerships is undisclosed.

### Status of Projects Funded by State or Federal Grants:

**U.S. Department of Transportation: [Rural Surface Transportation](#), Wales to Tin City** - This project will reconstruct and resurface the Wales to Tin City Road from the end of Lopp Lagoon Road to Tin City Air Force State Road. This project will also include drainage improvements and a dust palliative application. Bridges will be constructed at Boulder Creek and Granite Creek to alleviate yearly washouts. This funding will be transferred to the community via a 202(a)9 transfer agreement.

**Alaska Department of Public Safety: [Village Public Safety Officer](#)** – Kawerak receives the region’s grant to operate its VPSO program to provide public safety support services.

**Denali Commission: Wales to Tin City Road Improvement** - Through Kawerak’s Transportation Program, improvements are being made to the road from Wales to Tin City. The project is a complement to the Department of Transportation grant for the re-surfacing of the Wales to Tin City Road.

**U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs: [Elim Quarry Development](#)** - The project will be carried out cooperatively between the Native Village of Elim and the Tribal Energy Development Organization applicant, Kawerak, Inc. Granite samples will be collected through drilling, then tested to determine the quality and quantity product expected to be extracted from the quarry. A preliminary environmental investigation, preparation of possible environmental mitigation strategies, and a plan for eventual quarry development will also be completed with the awarded funding.

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: [Gravel to Gravel](#) Co-stewardship Subaward** – USFWS, in cooperation with the Department of the Interior and Bureau of Land Management, is partnering with Tribes, Indigenous leaders, other agencies, and community partners. These efforts are designed to enhance the resilience of the region’s ecosystems and communities through investments into Indigenous knowledge and western science, informing plans for collective action to support resilient ecosystems and communities in response to the salmon crisis.

**Denali Commission: [Shaktoolik Community Streets](#)** – Through Kawerak’s Transportation Program, the community street system in Shaktoolik will be improved.

**Alaska Department of Education and Early Development: [Head Start](#)** - Head Start is a pre-school program that promotes social competence and structure among three- and four-year old children. Strong parental involvement, health services, and social services are primary components of the Head Start program. Kawerak’s Head Start currently serves the following communities: Brevig Mission, Elim, Gambell, Golovin, Koyuk, Nome, Saint Michael, Shaktoolik, Shishmaref, Teller, and White Mountain. All Head Start children are guided in developing social skills, physical fitness, and educational tools that help them progress toward kindergarten. Children receive appropriate developmental screenings and referrals as needed. Head Start is an inclusive program and 10 percent of enrollment is reserved for children with disabilities.



**U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs: Unaatuq [Geothermal Tribal Utility Development](#)** - The geothermal resource on Unaatuq and Mary's Igloo Native Corporation Tribal land provides economic development and energy security opportunities for the region. The primary goal of this project will be to connect stakeholders to expert consultants with the goal of establishing a Tribal utility structure that can engage in commercial geothermal energy development and management activities. The Unaatuq Geothermal Energy Tribal Utility Development project will take place over a one-year timeline during which time the project group will work with its legal team and its expert consultants to develop a Tribal business charter and/or Tribal utility, the legal infrastructure for such a utility, and economic analysis to confirm the feasibility of this utility. This process will accelerate development of the geothermal resource and ensure Tribal control and direction of the prospective utility.

**U.S. Department of Justice: [Tribal Victim Services Set Aside](#)** - The purpose of this funding is to support the provision of services to crime victims in Alaska Native/American Indian (AN/AI) communities through a discretionary administrative formula program funded under a set-aside designated by law from the Crime Victims Fund (CVF). The goal of TVSSA is to provide support to Tribal communities to develop, expand, and enhance services for victims of crime through directly addressing the needs of crime victims in Tribal communities.

**U.S. Bureau of Land Management: [Plant Conservation](#)** - Kawerak, through its Pilgrim Hot Springs program, is a contributing member to Seeds of Success, a conservation effort to preserve plants in the United States. Program staff work to collect and preserve native plant seed species in the region and submit them to the National Seed Bank for categorization and preservation efforts.

**Bureau of Indian Affairs: [Tribal Climate Resilience Adaptation Planning](#)** - This project will address current and future impacts on Tribal treaty and trust resources, economies, regenerative agriculture and food sovereignty, conservation practices, infrastructure, and human health and safety.

**Alaska Department of Health, Division of Public Assistance: [Native Employment Work Services](#)** - Kawerak Native Employment Work Services (KNEWS) partners with the Division of Public Assistance to provide services to the villages in the Bering Strait Region. Because there is a shortage of paid positions in the region's village communities, KNEWS works with local organizations to provide volunteer work opportunities for clients to gain job skills, improve work habits, and provide useful assistance to community organizations. These volunteer efforts provide services to improve work skills, family wellbeing, and the local communities.

**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: [ANA Peer Mentoring](#)** - The Kawerak Peer Mentoring Program is designed to pair a third- or fourth-year college student with a first- or second-year student in a mentoring relationship. Mentors provide support services, offer resources, and help the incoming students adjust to life in college throughout the academic year. The program seeks to support first- and second-year students in accomplishing academic goals, providing a support system and sense of community on campus, and strengthening the connection to cultural identity for both mentees and mentors.

**U.S. Department of Agriculture: NRCS Reindeer Conferences** - Supported by USDA, Kawerak's Reindeer Herders Association (RHA) is planning to host the 2026 Reindeer Conference in Nome. This event is expected to facilitate an international Arctic knowledge exchange focusing on adapting herding practices to a changing climate and to highlight conservation practices related to land and livestock management.



**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: [Native Connections](#)** – Kawerak’s wellness program supports the Native Connections grant program which focuses on reducing suicidal behavior and substance use among Native youth up to age 24; easing the impacts of substance use, mental illness, and trauma in Tribal communities; and, supporting youth as they transition into adulthood.

**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: [Tribal Opioid Response](#)** - Through the Kawerak wellness program, the purpose of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA) Tribal Opioid Response Grant is to address the opioid crisis in Tribal communities by increasing access to culturally appropriate and evidence-based treatment, including medication for the treatment of opioid use disorder.

**Denali Commission: [Community Utility Assistance and Municipal Accounting Services](#)** - The Community Utility Assistance Program and Municipal Accounting Services (CUAP-MAS) program assists municipalities in the region with administrative and financial capacity related to capital improvement projects. The CUAP-MAS program at Kawerak has been successful in assisting municipalities to improve their office administration practices as well as improving their DEC/RUBA Best Practice scores.

**Alaska Department of Administration, Office of Public Advocacy: [Child Advocacy Center](#)** - The Kawerak Child Advocacy center is a child-friendly, culturally respectful place where caring professionals work together to help children and families cope with sexual abuse, severe physical abuse, and exposure to violence. Referrals are made to the center from the Nome Police Department, Alaska State Troopers, Alaska Department of Family and Community Services’ Office of Children’s Services (OCS), and Tribal courts. The referring agency contacts the center to make appointments for forensic interviewing, medical examinations, and assessments for treatment services. The center provides a comprehensive multidisciplinary team evaluation for child sexual or severe physical abuse with the goal of reducing trauma to children. This process may include a forensic interview, medical examination, victim advocacy, counseling support and referrals, and follow-up services for children and families.

**Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development: [Adult Basic Education](#)** - Kawerak’s Community Education Program known as Nome Regional Adult Education Program provides free basic educational opportunities in adult education, General Educational Development test preparation, and English as a Second Language training. Program services include remediation in reading, writing, and math skills. The program offers face-to-face and virtual tutoring, intensive study courses throughout the region, and distance education options. Workforce development skills, career exploration, and post-secondary options will be offered once participants are suitably academically prepared. The adult education program works closely with Kawerak’s Employment and Training Department.

**National Park Service: [Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act \(NAGPRA\) projects](#)** – NAGPRA will assist regional villages with efforts related to graves erosion.

**U.S. Economic Development Administration: [Business Planning](#)** - The EDA investment will be used to support long-term economic development planning efforts, including the development, implementation, and annually updated Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The CEDS is designed to bring together the public and private sectors in the creation of an economic development roadmap to diversify and strengthen the regional economy. The scope of EDA’s business planning funding includes the following: CEDS development, partnership coordination, building staff capacity, and providing technical assistance.



**National Park Service: Reindeer Herders Association Elders Project** - This purpose of this project is to collect stories and information from elders regarding the history of reindeer herding in the region. The gathered stories will be shared with the region's stakeholders and the general public in an accessible format that highlights the importance of this piece of the Bering Strait region's culture and identity.

**National Park Service: Fish Rack Exhibit** - This project will provide resources for the cultural center to procure, assemble, and display a fish rack exhibit in the public culture center space.

**Bering Straits Regional Housing Authority: Indian Housing Block Grant** – Block grant funding will support a capital project for housing, conducted in partnership with Bering Straits Regional Housing Authority.

### Meeting Summary:

BSDC held three board meetings between July 2024 and June 2025. All meetings were held in Nome at Kawerak, Inc. and could also be accessed virtually. Key meeting topics included:

#### September 2024:

- Items on the CEDS were reviewed and the council completed a draft of its 2024 annual update.
- The council reviewed a spreadsheet that compiled all the region's communities' Local Economic Development Plans' (LEDPs) priority projects in preparation for discussions on the development and planning of the Bering Strait region's new five-year CEDS. Housing was identified as the top priority in the region.
- Kawerak's energy specialist addressed the council to inform them of the many energy funding opportunities that were becoming available and encouraged the council to discuss including energy as a broad CEDS priority, as energy is rated as the fourth-highest priority within the LEDPs.
  - Funding is currently being sought for the following projects:
    - Bering Strait Regional Energy Plan 2025 Update
    - Energy Steering Committee – Annual Meetings
    - Regional Individual Program Plan Model for Community Renewable Energy
- The remainder of the meeting was facilitated by the University of Alaska Center for Economic Development staff and focused on the development of Bering Strait's new five-year CEDS, to include: summary background, SWOT analysis, strategic direction and action plan, evaluation framework, and community profile updates.

**November 2024:** The CEDS was reviewed by the board for final comments, then released for public comment. The public comment period was scheduled for November 20 through December 20, 2024.

**April 2025:** A quarterly meeting of the ARDOR board was held to introduce new staff members and re-appoint members to the ARDOR board. A new board chair, Megan Onders of the City of Nome, was elected. Robert Keith from the City of Elim remained vice-chair.



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

In September and November 2024, BSDC members and local leaders convened for a meeting and work session to discuss the *Bering Strait CEDS: 2025-2030*. At the session, the board reviewed the 2025-2030 CEDS goals and action plan, then specific actions were identified for the coming five-year period. The table below discusses the goals and actions identified in the 2025-2030 planning session. Goals lined out in the CEDS are not prioritized; each is considered to be of equal importance.

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"> <li>• Research barriers to financing new construction and land ownership in rural Alaska.</li> <li>• Advocate for increased federal funds for housing, such as NAHASDA, BIA HIP, and USDA funding.</li> <li>• Explore establishing a self-help housing program in Nome.</li> <li>• Develop case studies of individuals in the region that have financed and/or built their own homes or multifamily housing.</li> <li>• Examine the viability of increasing the amount of transient housing.</li> <li>• Explore the possibility of working with non-profit groups such as Habitat for Humanity to increase housing capacity.</li> <li>• Conduct a needs assessment of future housing needs in Nome and villages.</li> <li>• Encourage all key partners to work together to develop new housing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decreased persons per household in communities and region</li> <li>• Increased construction projects year over year</li> <li>• Number of construction jobs created</li> <li>• Number of five-star energy homes that have been built</li> <li>• Number and cost of building permits (Nome only)</li> <li>• Number of renovations to existing homes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kawerak, Inc.</li> <li>• Bering Strait Native Corporation</li> <li>• Sitnasuak Corporation</li> <li>• Tribal entities</li> <li>• U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)</li> <li>• Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC)</li> <li>• Nome Community Center</li> <li>• Norton Sound Health Corporation</li> <li>• United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)</li> <li>• Village corporations</li> <li>• Native American Housing Assistance &amp; Self Determination Act of 1996 (NAHASDA)</li> <li>• Bering Strait Development Corporation</li> <li>• Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation</li> <li>• Bureau of Indian Affairs/HIP program</li> <li>• RuralCAP/Self-Help Program</li> <li>• National Renewable Energy Laboratory</li> <li>• Private lenders</li> </ul>



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



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"> <li>• Provide region-wide and village-based training opportunities.</li> <li>• Assist residents of the region with documented disabilities in improving job-related skills.</li> <li>• Explore and promote collaboration on apprenticeship and technical-level type programs for priority industries, such as:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Environmental and safety</li> <li>○ Business and Tribal governance</li> <li>○ Early childhood, K-12, and post-secondary education</li> <li>○ Healthcare (health aide, nursing)</li> <li>○ Project management</li> <li>○ Aviation</li> <li>○ Construction trades (electrician, carpentry, plumbing, welding)</li> <li>○ Engineer (environmental, mechanical, etc.)</li> <li>○ Diesel engine mechanics</li> <li>○ Utility management and operations (electrical, fuel, sewer, energy auditors, etc.)</li> <li>○ Maritime industry (processing, cruise industry, cargo, port operations, cargo/tankers)</li> <li>○ Heavy equipment operations</li> <li>○ Fisheries</li> <li>○ Scientific research and monitoring</li> <li>○ Emergency response (including EMT)</li> <li>○ Natural resource occupations</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Coordinate among entities to provide scholarships for regional residents.</li> <li>• Pursue zero waste initiatives (recycling, backhaul, etc.).</li> <li>• Collaborate with Bering Strait School District and Nome School District to pursue improvements in regional education outcomes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of training courses offered</li> <li>• Number of certified technicians/completions of programs</li> <li>• Number of jobs secured because of the training</li> <li>• Number of residents assisted in gaining job-related skills</li> <li>• Number of scholarships provided</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kawerak, Inc.</li> <li>• Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation</li> <li>• Norton Sound Health Corporation</li> <li>• Bering Strait Native Corporation</li> <li>• Bering Strait village corporations</li> <li>• Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development</li> <li>• UAF Northwest Campus</li> <li>• Bering Strait School District</li> <li>• Nome Public Schools</li> <li>• Northwestern Alaska Career and Technical Center</li> <li>• Alaska Village Electric Cooperative</li> <li>• Tribes</li> <li>• UAF Alaska Sea Grant</li> <li>• Denali Commission</li> </ul>



<p>2.2 Support entrepreneurship and the arts. Provide business planning and research assistance.</p> <p><b>Champion</b></p> <p>Kawerak Business Planning Specialist</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote tuition assistance to individuals interested in new or expanding businesses.</li> <li>Seek new partners and funding to conduct and promote general business startup workshops covering areas such as business planning, marketing, and accounting principles.</li> <li>Promote an environment in which small businesses will succeed by creating networks of resources and business owners.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>Promote Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation small business seed money competitions and provide technical assistance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of individuals completing business-related classes</li> <li>Number of businesses workshops held in the region</li> <li>Amount of investment in new or expanding businesses</li> <li>Number of businesses starts</li> <li>Number of jobs created</li> <li>Continued visitor surveys</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kawerak, Inc.</li> <li>Alaska Small Business Development Center</li> <li>Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation</li> <li>Tribal entities</li> <li>UA Center for Economic Development</li> <li>Nome Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>Small Business Administration</li> <li>UAF Northwest Campus</li> <li>UAA Business Enterprise Institute</li> <li>Tribal State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI)</li> </ul>
<p>2.3 Capitalize on natural resources in environmentally responsible ways.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>Work with NSEDC to explore the feasibility of salmon and other fisheries enhancement programs and novel fisheries enhancement technology.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>Identify and provide support services for responsible resource development.</li> <li>Relying on and supporting research activities in a way that practices self-determination and is collaborative with Tribal entities and communities.</li> <li>Evaluate environmental impacts of proposed developments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tax revenue</li> <li>Gold production and price</li> <li>Fisheries harvest numbers and prices</li> <li>Other mineral production and price</li> <li>Number of Tribes interested in starting a fish hatchery in Norton Sound</li> <li>Number of contaminated sites</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kawerak, Inc.</li> <li>Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation</li> <li>Bering Strait Native Corporation</li> <li>Bering Strait village corporations</li> <li>Tribal councils</li> <li>City of Nome</li> <li>Alaska Department of Natural Resources</li> <li>Alaska Department of Fish and Game</li> <li>Private sector</li> <li>Regional aquaculture</li> <li>Norton Sound Health Corporation</li> <li>Nome Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>UAF Sea Grant</li> <li>Environmental Protection Agency, General Assistance Program</li> </ul>



- Support and advocate for the natural resources which the subsistence economy depends upon.

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
<p>3.1 Improve and increase access to utility infrastructure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete local water and sewer plans for Bering Strait communities, including assessments of the current systems. Also, provide training on how to perform maintenance.</li> <li>• Support utilities and municipalities with pricing and management.</li> <li>• Creation of utility operations and maintenance plans and follow through.</li> <li>• Review of current technology around energy and sanitation to see if they could be implemented.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Implement renewable or low-carbon power systems and efficiency upgrades in communities when feasible.</li> <li>• Work with local, state, and federal partners to perform bulk fuel farm upgrades.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of communities with completed local plans</li> <li>• Number of communities with sufficient sewer and water systems</li> <li>• Percent of homes served in each community</li> <li>• Cost of water, sewer, and electrical service by community</li> <li>• Number of communities following operations and maintenance plans</li> <li>• Amount invested in water/sewer and power infrastructure</li> <li>• Service life remaining on current landfill facilities</li> <li>• Amount of funding dedicated to leach field projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kawerak, Inc.</li> <li>• Norton Sound Health Corporation</li> <li>• Community Utility Assistance Program (NSEDG)</li> <li>• Rural Utility Business Advisor</li> <li>• Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium</li> <li>• Alaska DCCED</li> <li>• Denali Commission</li> <li>• USDA Rural Development</li> <li>• UAF Alaska Center for Energy and Power</li> <li>• Engineering Ministries International</li> <li>• Alaska Energy Authority</li> <li>• Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation</li> </ul>
<p>3.2 Increase internet speeds and decrease costs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow the state and national broadband task forces and advocate for Bering Strait community interests.</li> <li>• Explore the possibility of a Tribal government negotiating government rates with telecom companies.</li> <li>• Work with state and federal legislators and local providers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Price per internet plan</li> <li>• Upload/download speeds</li> <li>• Bandwidth capacity</li> <li>• Number of providers participating in the conversation (GCI, TelAlaska, etc.)</li> <li>• Percent of homes with access to broadband internet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kawerak, Inc.</li> <li>• Alaska Broadband Office</li> <li>• GCI</li> <li>• TelAlaska</li> <li>• Quintillion, LLC.</li> <li>• Starlink</li> <li>• Alaska Regional Development Organizations</li> <li>• Alaska Tribal Spectrum</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be involved in Tribal consultation as broadband policies are being developed.</li> <li>• Document the costs of broadband in rural communities.</li> <li>• Look at the feasibility of a Tribally-owned communication system.</li> </ul>		
3.3 Explore the feasibility of a regional governance model to capture the benefits of resource development projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore the economic feasibility of a borough.</li> <li>• Explore the economic feasibility of a Port Authority.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measure regional interest levels on collaboration models</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kawerak, Inc.</li> <li>• City of Nome</li> <li>• Tribes</li> <li>• Regional municipalities</li> </ul>
3.4 Improve and develop other community building infrastructure and facilities (other than housing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fund and implement building upgrades to bring community facilities up to code.</li> <li>• Develop and implement operations and maintenance plans for shared community facilities.</li> <li>• Review local emergency and hazard mitigation plans to identify community needs for new or existing physical built infrastructure to support emergency response.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amount of funding dedicated to develop or redevelop community structures</li> <li>• Number of plans in effect for building maintenance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kawerak, Inc.</li> <li>• Alaska Energy Authority</li> <li>• U.S. Department of Defense</li> <li>• Bering Strait School District</li> <li>• Tribes</li> <li>• Local city governments</li> </ul>

Goal 4: Decrease the cost of energy

Objective	Activities and Tasks	Performance Measures	Key Partners
4.1 Conduct ongoing energy audits on community and commercial buildings throughout the region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find out which buildings were not audited.</li> <li>• Identify sources of funding to assist with this work.</li> <li>• Make a plan of action for each community on prioritizing building audits.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of audits completed</li> <li>• Improvements made to structures</li> <li>• Reduced energy consumption measured by kWh and gallons of fuel oil.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kawerak, Inc.</li> <li>• Bering Strait Native Corporation</li> <li>• Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation</li> <li>• Alaska Energy Authority</li> <li>• RurAL CAP</li> <li>• Tribal entities</li> <li>• Bering Straits Regional Housing Authority</li> <li>• Municipal governments</li> <li>• Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium</li> <li>• Denali Commission</li> <li>• National Renewable Energy Laboratory</li> </ul>



			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• U.S. Department of Energy</li> <li>• Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development</li> <li>• Alaska Housing Finance Commission</li> </ul>
<p>4.2 Improve the energy efficiency of homes and buildings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect and maintain energy usage data for community buildings and residences.</li> <li>• Complete energy audits for homes, public buildings, and commercial buildings.</li> <li>• Provide energy-specific information to regional grant writers.</li> <li>• Develop an appliance replacement program.</li> <li>• Fund a home energy upgrade program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amount of fuel oil consumption by building and community</li> <li>• kWh usage by building and community</li> <li>• Dollars distributed in funding for energy upgrades</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kawerak, Inc.</li> <li>• Bering Strait Native Corporation</li> <li>• Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation</li> <li>• RurAL CAP</li> <li>• Alaska Energy Authority</li> <li>• Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium</li> <li>• Bering Straits Regional Housing Authority</li> <li>• Tribal entities</li> <li>• USDA-Rural Development</li> <li>• Denali Commission</li> <li>• Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development</li> <li>• United Way</li> <li>• U.S. Department of Energy</li> </ul>
<p>4.3 Explore and evaluate the feasibility of alternative energy upgrade projects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fund the Bering Strait Regional Energy Plan 2025 update and Energy Steering Committee.</li> <li>• Explore and fund a regional independent power producer for community renewable energy projects.</li> <li>• Work with local and regional utilities to identify suitable alternative energy sites and sources.</li> <li>• Work with local, state, and federal partners to explore feasibility and to construct community solar projects.</li> <li>• Work with communities to implement Bering Strait GRID Resiliency Group and deploy funding to Tribes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of community energy action plans completed</li> <li>• Number of identified community projects</li> <li>• Amount of funding dedicated to projects in the region</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kawerak, Inc.</li> <li>• Unaatuq, LLC</li> <li>• Bering Strait Native Corporation</li> <li>• Alaska Village Electric Cooperative</li> <li>• Village corporations</li> <li>• Alaska Center for Energy and Power</li> <li>• Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation</li> <li>• U.S. Department of Energy</li> <li>• Alaska Energy Authority</li> </ul>



			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Renewable Energy Laboratory</li> <li>• Tribal entities</li> <li>• Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development</li> <li>• Alaska Department of Natural Resources</li> <li>• U.S. Economic Development Administration</li> <li>• Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium</li> <li>• U.S. Department of Energy</li> </ul>
<p>4.4 Increase local knowledge of community energy systems and ways to reduce the costs of energy use (for both residents and utilities).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring EnergyWise curriculum to schools in the region.</li> <li>• Monitor and advocate for new energy efficiency programs.</li> <li>• Develop and distribute flyers with energy saving tips.</li> <li>• Develop PSAs on energy efficiency strategies.</li> <li>• Work with local utilities to share information on energy efficiency improvements and clean energy projects.</li> <li>• Continue to advocate to protect the PCE program.</li> <li>• Update Community Energy Profile priority energy projects.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of outreach materials developed and distributed</li> <li>• Number of residents participating in energy efficiency programs</li> <li>• Number of communities with current energy priority lists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kawerak, Inc.</li> <li>• RurAL CAP</li> <li>• Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation</li> <li>• Bering Strait Native Corporation</li> <li>• Tribal entities</li> <li>• Municipalities</li> <li>• KNOM Radio Mission</li> <li>• KICY 850 AM</li> <li>• Nome Nugget</li> <li>• Alaska Village Electric Cooperative</li> <li>• Unalakleet Valley Electric Cooperative</li> <li>• Alaska Energy Authority</li> </ul>

**Current Economic Development Initiatives:**

BSDC staff continue to provide technical assistance, research, and facilitation for community Local Economic Development Plan priority projects. Staff also provide technical assistance to communities in the region for grant writing, project development support, and project planning. BSDC is also focused on the distribution of state, private, and federal funding opportunities to the region, specifically for opportunities that are related to the main CEDS priority areas.

**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 assisted Tribal members, IRAs, cities, and corporations, alongside technical assistance provided through an agreement with AKSBDC, in pursuing Tribal State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI) funding. SSBCI is live and open to applicants now. Kawerak shares this information throughout the region.

**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 and logistical challenges 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.





## COPPER VALLEY DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION



Mile 111 Richardson Highway  
P.O. Box 9  
Glennallen, AK 99588  
(907) 822-3071  
<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 2,660<sup>2</sup>. 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 FY2025, CVDA reported the following sources of revenue:

- \$2,062,000.00 – U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development – Secure Family Facility
- \$ 380,000.00 – Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
- \$ 250,000.00 – Denali Commission
- \$ 50,000.00 – U.S. Department of Energy – Energy Ambassador Program
- \$ 40,000.00 – JC Enterprises (Sponsorship)
- \$ 86,000.00 – In-Kind Donations from the Board of Directors' Organizations

### Status of Projects Funded by State or Federal Grants:

CVDA indicates that “all grants and projects of CVDA funded by the state and federal government are meeting or exceeding the goals of the projects, adhering to the prescribed budget with fiduciary responsibility, and attaining desired outcomes.” Any questions relating to specific projects should be directed directly to CVDA.

### Meeting Summary:

CVDA held eight board meetings between July 2024 and June 2025. All meetings had an available Zoom connection, with the majority of meetings held at an onsite location. Key meeting topics included:

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<sup>2</sup> 2024 DCCED Certified Population



**July 24, 2024 (Zoom):** The executive director discussed the HUD grant award appropriation, the Community Change grant, and the [Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy update](#).

**October 9, 2024 (Nummy's):** The executive director updated the board on the HUD grant award appropriation and the Community Change grant. John Becker, CVDA Director, reported on the Copper River Valley Regional Planning Organization (CRV-RPO).

**December 11, 2024 (Nummy's):** The executive director reported on CVDA finances. Dennis McGlothin, CVDA's Secretary-Treasurer, reported on the CRV-RPO. There were also updates on the HUD grant award, the [Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity \(RAISE\)](#) grant award, and the Right of Way grant.

**January 8, 2025 (Nummy's):** The executive director reported on CVDA finances. There were also reports on HUD grant award progress, the Right of Way grant, and the Community Change grant.

**February 12, 2025 (Nummy's):** The executive director reported on CVDA finances. A proposal to have a joint meeting with the CRV-RPO was approved. Other topics included increased compensation for the executive director, increased bookkeeping costs, and the invoice for 2023 taxes.

**March 20, 2025 (Nummy's):** The executive director reported on CVDA finances. Other business included budgeting for the annual meeting, an employee separation discussion, and a U.S. Economic Development Administration disaster relief grant.

**April 2, 2025 (Old Towne Lodge) – Annual Meeting with CVDA and CRV-RPO:** Reports were presented by CVDA President James Horrell, CRV-RPO President Terry Valentine, and CVDA Executive Director Jason Hoke. Tamara Hamby of Copper Basin Business and Tax presented an update on CVDA finances. Other business included the election of CVDA directors and a floor vote to place Jerry Leseman on the CRV-RPO committee.

**May 14, 2025 (Nummy's):** The executive director reported on CVDA finances. Other business included an Economic Development Association business planning grant for Gulkana and discussions regarding a U.S. Department of Transportation Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) grant.

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

CVDA has identified the following goals, objectives, and strategies:

1. Reduce the cost of energy in the Copper Valley region;
2. Increase economic opportunities at Gulkana Airport (GKN) for cargo hub, tourism hub, and agriculture;
3. Increase transportation and access in the Copper River region for residents, businesses, and tourists; and,
4. Facilitate mining interests with federal and state agencies for prospective mineral development.

### **Current Economic Development Initiatives:**

The [Copper Valley Regional CEDS](#) was updated and revised in 2024, with the approval of the U.S. Economic Development Administration. CVDA's board of directors and employees are using the CEDS as a map for economic and resource development.



CVDA has reinvigorated the Copper Valley Energy Team to focus on the high costs of energy in the region and how to alleviate those costs. This has led to the Solomon Gulch Dam Raise application with the Alaska Energy Authority by Copper Valley Electric Association and pursuing additional power generation with Alyeska and Petro Star. These initiatives would lead to electrical prices comparable to Anchorage's.

CVDA has received the first Regional Planning Organization designation from the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities. With this designation, CVDA seeks to extend the Gulkana Airport (GKN) runway by 1,000 feet to accommodate larger cargo aircraft. CVDA seeks to make GKN a cargo hub, food distribution hub, and tourism hub for the region. CVDA is also implementing a long-range transportation plan to proactively plan for the receipt of federal funding and to address local transportation issues, many of which pertain to increasing tourism attraction and accessibility.

In conjunction with the GKN airstrip extension, CVDA seeks to create a food processing center and reefer/freezer warehouse to accommodate agriculture producers and development in the region. This would provide local vendors with a place to process and store food for the delivery and sale to remote areas of the state.

CVDA is seeking to collaborate with the National Park Service, Copper Valley Chamber of Commerce, and other entities to expand the Copper Valley's tourism industry, as the area has the potential to attract tourists to Wrangell-St. Elias that have similar profiles to those visiting Denali National Park. CVDA board members and employees will attend the Alaska Travel Industry Association and Resource Development Council conferences in pursuit of expanding tourism to the Copper Valley region.

CVDA is also focused on the mineral wealth in the region. Much of this wealth is contained within federal lands, which has proven difficult to access for development. Additionally, CVDA is working with its partners to extract critical minerals from the tailing piles of old mines.

### **Future Economic Development Initiatives:**

CVDA has identified the following prospective projects:

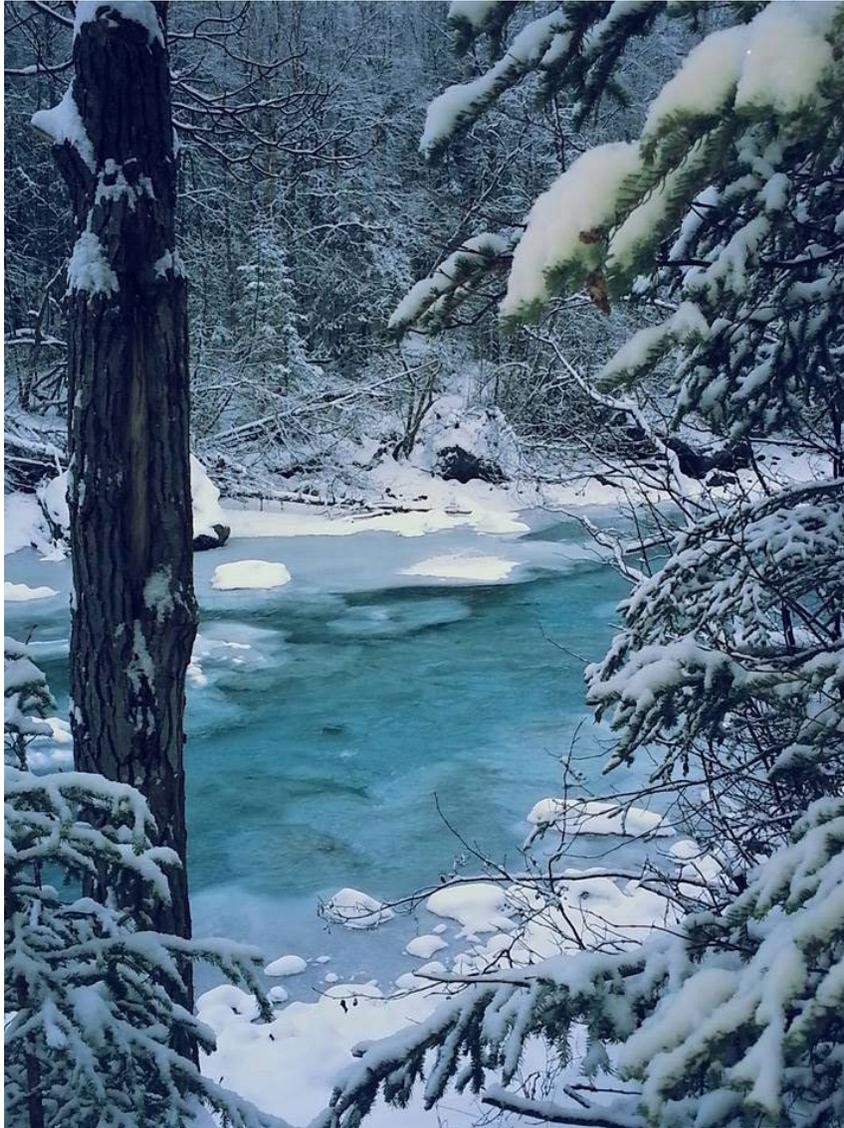
- Military development into the Copper River region made possible by the GKN expansion and through access to the High-frequency Active Auroral Research Program (HAARP);
- Increased tourism through the GKN expansion and working with its local and federal partners; and,
- Preliminary work on a prospective energy megaproject that would feed 140 megawatts into the state grid.
- Facilitating the meetings and application for Copper Valley Electric Association's application to AEA for the Solomon Gulch Dam Pool Raise Project.



### Anticipated Challenges to Regional Economic Development:

CVDA identifies the following challenges:

- Only 11 percent of the land in the Copper River Valley region is privately owned. The rest is owned by the state and federal governments or Ahtna, the regional native corporation. Most of this land is either not easily accessible or is completely inaccessible for business and development.
- There is a lack of housing in the Copper River Valley region.
- While the Copper River Valley region is contained within an area of approximately 25,000 square miles, roughly the size of West Virginia, the current population is roughly 2,660 residents.
- Regional energy costs and costs of living remain high.





## FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION



P.O. Box 71267  
907 Terminal Street  
Fairbanks, AK 99701  
(907) 459-1000  
<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 FY2025, 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 scheduled seven board meetings between July 2024 and June 2025. One of the seven was cancelled due to inclement weather. All meetings were held in the Mona Lisa Drexler Assembly Chambers at the Juanita Helms Administrative Center in Fairbanks. Key meeting topics included:

**July 23, 2024:** [Agenda](#) – Borough administration gave an update on a cooperative agreement for economic development initiatives between the borough, the City of Fairbanks, and the City of North Pole.

**September 3, 2024:** [Agenda](#) – FNSBEDC reviewed and made recommendations to the Borough Assembly related to an ordinance that would issue tax incentives for housing development.

**October 22, 2024:** Meeting was canceled due to inclement weather.



**January 28, 2025:** [Agenda](#) – Fairbanks Economic Development Corporation’s (FEDC) Executive Director, Jomo Stewart, gave an update on a proposed transfer of the Fairbanks ARDOR designation from FNSBEDC to FEDC.

**April 15, 2025:** [Agenda](#) – FNSBEDC reviewed and recommended to the Borough Assembly an application for a property tax exemption for Pleasant Valley Two Rivers Fire Association/Two Rivers Volunteer Fire Department based on the association serving a community purpose.

**April 22, 2025:** [Agenda](#) – FNSBEDC reviewed and recommended that the Borough Assembly issue a letter of support in favor of transferring its ARDOR designation to FEDC.

**May 13, 2025:** [Agenda](#) – FNSBEDC reconvened its April 22, 2025 meeting to continue consideration of transferring its ARDOR designation to FEDC.

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

FNSBEDC indicates that its goals, objectives, and strategies for addressing regional economic development needs can be found in the most recent update to the [Fairbanks North Star Borough’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy](#).

### **Current Economic Development Initiatives:**

FNSBEDC primarily engages through data sharing with the Fairbanks community, compiled in a [quarterly research document](#) available online or as a paper copy at the borough’s community planning department. The borough also provides a \$350,000 grant to FEDC to provide economic development services within the borough. 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, Fairbanks North Star Borough as a regional hub, economic capacity, and analysis.

Through FEDC, FNSBEDC has executed an update to its [Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy](#). Major findings in the updated CEDS include: a projected increase of more than 800 active-duty military service members within the borough; a continued high cost of electricity and home/business heating; continued growth in tourism to pre-pandemic levels; and shortfalls in capacity for childcare, behavioral health services, and health care.

Accordingly, FNSBEDC and the borough government are working to implement housing development incentives to provide for inbound service members, advocating for affordable energy via an in-state natural gas pipeline to serve the Fairbanks area and its military bases, and repurposing vacant public school buildings for community purposes including expanded childcare.

### **Future Economic Development Initiatives:**

Priorities for enhancing regional economic development have been identified in the most recent update to the borough’s [Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy](#) update.



### Anticipated Challenges to Regional Economic Development:

There are several economic development challenges facing the region, including a need for new and better housing, high energy costs, childcare shortfalls that prevent some members of the community from entering the workforce, declining public school enrollment, and some measure of outmigration, which is only partially offset by the increased military population in the region. A more full-fledged list of challenges and opportunities can be found in the borough's [Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy](#) update.





## 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 FY2025, KPEDD reported the following sources of revenue:

- \$ 175,000.00 – Kenai Peninsula Borough funding
- \$ 166,029.00 – U.S. Economic Development Administration resilience grant
- \$ 88,014.00 – U.S. Economic Development Administration planning grant
- \$ 50,000.00 – Alaska Municipal League
- \$ 48,465.00 – U.S. Economic Development Administration mariculture cluster funding
- \$ 21,000.00 – 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 2024 and June 2025 on the following dates: August 15, 2024; October 17, 2024; January 16, 2025; March 20, 2025; and June 19, 2025. Additionally, a special session was held virtually on September 24, 2024, and an executive meeting was held virtually on April 25, 2025.

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 2025 update, available on the [KPEDD website](#).

## Current Economic Development Initiatives:

The full KPEDD Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and 2025 update have 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 2025 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 even higher costs for real estate, energy, labor, and freight than the Peninsula, 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 and Workforce Development (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 to 39:1.

**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, and eventual permanent closure in 2025, 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 and Public Facilities 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 are 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 continues to rise in comparison. It is also a threat to the region's workforce and employers attracting and retaining qualified employees.





## NORTHWEST ARCTIC BOROUGH COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION



163 Lagoon Street  
Kotzebue, AK 99752  
(907) 442-2500

<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 7,368<sup>3</sup> 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 FY2025, NWABCEDC reported the following sources of revenue:

- \$54,811,907.00 – U.S. Department of Energy: Solar and Heat Pump Grant
- \$25,000,000.00 – Teck Resources, Ltd.: Payment in Lieu of Taxes
- \$11,000,000.00 – NANA Regional Corporation: Village Economic Improvement Fund
- \$7,500,000.00 – Teck Resources, Ltd.: Village Improvement Fund
- \$2,008,765.00 – U.S. Department of Energy: Noatak Solar/Bess IPP
- \$1,998,820.00 – U.S. Department of Energy: Selawik Solar/Bess IPP
- \$1,639,001.00 – Alaska Department of Public Safety: Village Public Safety Officer
- \$1,500,000.00 – U.S. Housing and Urban Development: Ambler Search and Rescue Building
- \$1,500,000.00 – Alaska Department of Public Safety: Shelter Cabins and Public Safety Building
- \$1,134,500.00 – Alaska Energy Authority: Selawik Solar Project
- \$1,100,000.00 – U.S. Forest Service: Payment in Lieu of Taxes
- \$ 900,000.00 – Alaska Department of Commerce: Noorvik Warm Storage
- \$ 650,000.00 – U.S. Department of Energy: Ambler Bulk Fuel Farm

<sup>3</sup> 2024 DCCED Certified Population



- \$ 650,000.00 – Alaska Energy Authority: Ambler Bulk Fuel Farm
- \$ 590,000.00 – Alaska Energy Authority: Multi-Community Engineering Solar PV
- \$ 345,692.62 – Alaska Department of Commerce: Community Assistance Program
- \$ 198,000.00 – Launch Alaska: Energy Shed
- \$ 143,809.00 – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: Climate Pollution Reduction Grant
- \$ 96,810.00 – Alaska Department of Transportation: Ice Roads
- \$ 24,000.00 – U.S. Department of Energy: Arctic Office Ambassador Program

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:

According to NWABCEDC, several federal and state grants are closed as of September 30, 2025. Some federal grants remain on pause or are discontinued. State grants are similarly on pause, and many are reduced or are not available due to state budget reductions and constraints. Federal employee layoffs and state budget reductions for employment, programs, and services are of high concern within the borough. Because funding for education, public safety, airports and roads, and other infrastructure projects are reduced from the State of Alaska, the borough and municipal governments within the borough are under a tremendous amount of pressure to make up for the reduced funding.

### Meeting Summary:

NWABCEDC held two board meetings between July 2024 and June 2025. Both meetings were held in Kotzebue.

**February 28, 2025:** This meeting addressed the following topics:

- EDA CEDS plan
- NANA/Northwest Arctic Borough Energy Steering Committee, regional energy planning
- Upper Kobuk Mining District, Valhalla Metals, Inc. update
- Upper Kobuk Mining District, Ambler Metals, Inc. update
- ADOT and Native Village of Kotzebue, Cape Blossom Road update
- ADFG, Norton Sound/Kotzebue Sound fishery update

**May 29-30, 2025:** This meeting was a two-day work session with Alaska Municipal League to develop a revised five-year CEDS plan for 2025-2030.

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

The revised 2025-2030 CEDS will be presented and approved during FY2026. This document will highlight the revised goals, objectives, and strategies for the region.

### Current Economic Development Initiatives:

The NANA/Northwest Arctic Borough Energy Steering Committee developed a regional plan to reduce the cost of energy in the borough. This plan will be made available to NWABCEDC.



The Northwest Arctic Borough's Village Improvement Commission produced an annual report of village priorities and expenditures in 2025 to Teck and the Northwest Arctic Borough Assembly. NWABCEDC will receive a copy.

### **Future Economic Development Initiatives:**

The Upper Kobuk Mining District seems to be developing into the future economic development driver for the State of Alaska and the Northwest Arctic Borough.

The Ambler Mining District haul road may help borough residents address the high cost of living. Transporting much needed supplies, fuel, and essential goods on the road system would significantly decrease costs.

The potential development of a gas pipeline would improve the quality of life for residents of the Northwest Arctic Borough.

### **Anticipated Challenges to Regional Economic Development:**

The Red Dog Mine is scheduled to close in 2031. Revenue from the mining industry is expected to dramatically decrease for the Northwest Arctic Borough.

The high cost of gravel in the Northwest Arctic Borough hinders all infrastructure projects and development in the region. The high cost of food, fuel, and utilities are a burden to households and businesses alike. The need for affordable housing is increasingly becoming a high priority in the Northwest Arctic Borough. Currently, a three-bedroom home in Selawik is estimated to cost upwards of \$950,000.

These factors reduce the quality of life for all borough residents.





## PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT



**PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND  
ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT  
DISTRICT**

P.O. Box 1059  
700 New England Cannery Rd, Rm 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 FY2025, PWSEDD reported the following sources of revenue:

- \$ 222,068.00 – U.S. Economic Development Administration: Alaska Mariculture Cluster
- \$ 70,000.00 – U.S. Economic Development Administration: Partnership Planning Program
- \$ 62,562.00 – U.S. Department of Agriculture: Kelp drying equipment
- \$ 53,700.00 – Alaska Municipal League Arctic Energy Ambassador Program
- \$ 4,996.75 – Alaska Department of Natural Resources: Cordova Community Garden
- \$ 2,500.00 – Chenega Regional Development Group
- \$ 2,500.00 – Chugach Alaska Corporation
- \$ 2,500.00 – City of Cordova
- \$ 2,500.00 – City of Valdez
- \$ 2,500.00 – City of Whittier
- \$ 1,000.00 – Alyeska Pipeline Service Company
- \$ 1,000.00 – Cordova Telephone Cooperative
- \$ 1,000.00 – Copper Valley Telecomm
- \$ 500.00 – First National Bank of Alaska
- \$ 500.00 – Tatitlek Corporation
- \$ 500.00 – Valdez Fisheries Development Association



## Status of Projects Funded by State or Federal Grants:

**U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration:** PWSEDD is managing three separate grants focused on expanding the capacity to farm and process seaweed in Prince William Sound:

- In 2025, PWSEDD spent \$130,421 in grant funds for kelp processing equipment, including a purpose-built seaweed rotary drum dryer and a shredder. These items will go toward a pilot seaweed processing line that ultimately will be able to produce a range of food-grade and agricultural use seaweed products.
- With local partners, PWSEDD developed a business plan for a shared seafood and fish processing center, completed in May 2025 (\$21,438 spent in 2025).
- PWSEDD is part of the Alaska Mariculture Cluster's Governing Body, a collaboration with three other Alaska Economic Development Districts to support the development of a mariculture sector in state waters to foster economic diversification and assist commercial fishing communities in adapting to changing climate conditions (\$91,647 spent in 2025).

**U.S. Department of Agriculture:** This grant was closed out in June 2025. Funds were used to set up a pilot processing line for seaweed harvested by Prince William Sound kelp farmers. During spring 2025, kelp farmers processed 37,000 wet pounds of kelp. This was the first ever commercial harvest of kelp in the Prince William Sound region.

**Alaska Department of Natural Resources:** The Cordova Community Garden grant was closed in fall 2024.

## Meeting Summary:

PWSEDD held four board meetings between July 2024 and June 2025, all but one by Zoom videoconference. Key meeting topics included:

**September 9, 2024 (Zoom):** A financial position review, staff report, approval of financial statements, and the appointment of a new board member.

**December 5, 2024 (Annual Meeting, Anchorage):** A financial position review, staff report, approval of the 2025 operating budget, presentations by Alaska Municipal League on climate change adaptation, the CEDS plan for 2026-2031, a summary of energy projects, and a broadband update from Cordova Telecom Cooperative.

**March 20, 2025 (Zoom):** A financial position review, staff report, and consideration to add another at-large seat to the PWSEDD board.

**June 5, 2025 (Zoom):** A financial position review, staff report, approval of PWSEDD's 2024 IRS Form 990 tax return, and adoption of the PWSEDD Financial Management Handbook.



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

PWSEDD's CEDS goals and priority objectives 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 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 tourist 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:* There are three specific developments in this area:
  - With support from a technical assistance grant from the Minnesota Housing Partnership, PWSEDD facilitated a Prince William Sound Housing Working Group from January 2023 through April 2025. This work included an attempt to hold a homebuilders and developers roundtable in October 2024 to identify strategies and incentives used by municipal governments in other parts of the country to attract developers and stimulate homebuilding. Ultimately, the roundtable was held as an online event; however, no interest was expressed by developers in building in either Cordova or Valdez.
  - PWSEDD has been working with the Incremental Development Alliance (IDA) to cultivate home-grown housing development resources. Alongside IDA, PWSEDD has put together a series of presentations and workshops to cultivate and support local housing developers. The first presentation was held shortly after the scope of this report. PWSEDD has recruited support and participation from other Economic Development Districts in the state to defray the costs of IDA's services.
  - PWSEDD has completed the 2024/2025 Housing Resource Guide, which compiles information on state and national housing grants, loans, and energy upgrade programs for homeowners, homebuyers, and builders. The guide was shared at the Cordova Health Fair and distributed directly to community members. The guide will also be shared on the PWSEDD website via a blog post.
- *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 (ADOT), Alaska Municipal League, and PWSEDD are coordinating this project together. ADOT contracted with HDR, Inc. for environmental review assistance. A draft environmental assessment has been completed and was scheduled for public comment after the scope of this report.
- *Shared Seafood and Food Processing Center for Cordova:* With grant support from the Alaska Mariculture Cluster, PWSEDD developed 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. PWSEDD is now pursuing a lease or purchase of property to establish a shared seafood/mariculture processing center and will submit an application to EDA for construction funds during FY2026.
- *Arctic Energy Ambassador Program:* With support from Alaska Municipal League, PWSEDD employs a part-time Arctic energy ambassador to facilitate development of energy projects within Prince William Sound communities.
- *Home Electrification and Appliance Rebate (HEAR):* PWSEDD coordinated collaboration among Chugach region Tribal entities to apply for funds from HEAR. Tribal entities have each allocated funding and have the option to consolidate applications and apply as a consortium. Chugach Alaska Corporation has agreed to apply for HEAR funding if PWSEDD will manage the funds.



- *Supported Regional Infrastructure Projects:* PWSEDD has partnered on regional infrastructure priorities such as the reconstruction of a bulk fuel storage facility in Chenega and supported funding for upgrades to the DeLong dock in Whittier.

#### **Goal B – Workforce Development:**

- *Childcare Initiatives:* PWSEDD staff continues to support community partner efforts to increase the number of licensed and in-home childcare providers. A workshop was held in the Native Village of Eyak in July 2025, PWSEDD also worked with Chugachmiut’s Head Start on an expansion grant and has discussed with Chugachmiut about prospective program locations in Cordova.
- *Business Assistance:* PWSEDD provides support to residents and businesses within the region seeking to start a business or expand an existing business. PWSEDD assists 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 three grants awarded for the purpose of expanding mariculture processing capacity in Prince William Sound. USDA’s Rural Business Development Grant was successfully closed out in August 2025. Those funds were used to purchase a shredder, which was used to process 17,000 wet pounds of kelp in June 2025 as part of Prince William Sound’s first commercial harvest. The second grant is being used to pursue the development of a shared seafood and mariculture processing facility. The third grant is from Southeast Conference’s Alaska Mariculture Cluster award. This grant is being used to purchase equipment to establish a pilot processing line for seaweed. Processing will include rinsing/blanching, shredding, drying, and milling of seaweed. PWSEDD anticipates processing 120,000 pounds of seaweed during the 2026 spring harvest.
- *Whittier Tourism Best Management Practices (TBMP):* PWSEDD initially worked with Whittier business partners in 2022 to develop locally appropriate Tourism Best Management Practices. Whittier launched its first full season of TBMP in 2025 with about two dozen businesses joining as voluntary participants.
- *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 19, 2025 in Anchorage. PWSEDD has discussed with NOAA the possibility of facilitating a workshop for Prince William Sound kelp farmers on how to use the Alaska Ocean Observing System mariculture atlas. NOAA is holding workshops on how to use its AOAs atlas in Alaska in 2026. PWSEDD staff will be participating in these workshops.



- *Cordova Community Garden*: PWSEDD partnered with RurAL CAP, who received an award from USDA’s Community Food Program to manage the Cordova community garden and support home gardeners in the community. In April 2025, PWSEDD’s community garden manager held workshops on soil health and seed starts. These workshops were attended by more than two dozen attendees. The community garden manager also collected over 1,200 pounds of discarded vegetables and seaweed to produce compost. This compost was used to help produce soil for use in the community garden’s planter boxes.
- *Outdoor Recreation Tourism*: The Recreation Economy in Rural Communities (RERC) program emphasizes outdoor recreation tourism and downtown beautification as a strategy for attracting visitors. PWSEDD supports RERC with technical assistance. In FY2025, PWSEDD coordinated semi-finalist interviews for RERC grants alongside eight partner representatives from across the Prince William Sound region.

### 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 to help diversify the regional fishing economy.



## 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, Suite 201  
Juneau, AK 99801  
(907) 586-4360  
<https://www.seconference.org/>

### Mission:

**To undertake and support activities that promote strong economies, sustainable communities, and a healthy environment in Southeast Alaska with a vision to facilitate enduring connections that enable dynamic, diverse, and thriving economies across 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 more than 1,000 islands. SEC combines state and federal support with private-sector investments 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 FY2025, SEC reported the following sources of revenue:

- \$ 7,828,266.48 – U.S. Economic Development Administration: Alaska Mariculture Cluster
- \$ 2,055,478.96 – OneUSDA: Southeast Alaska Sustainable Strategy
- \$ 441,501.31 – U.S. Forest Service/Denali Commission: Biomass pellet mill demonstration project
- \$ 292,104.06 – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: Coastal Alaska heat pump incentive program
- \$ 194,629.49 – Alaska Energy Authority: Biomass Energy Program
- \$ 164,978.72 – Alaska Marine Highway System: Electric ferry modernization project
- \$ 153,824.40 – Southeast Conference Membership Revenue
- \$ 86,838.88 – U.S. Department of Agriculture: Renewable energy development
- \$ 81,858.50 – Denali Commission: Solid waste regional planning
- \$ 64,309.16 – U.S. Economic Development Administration: Economic development planning
- \$ 56,267.97 – U.S. Department of Education: Arctic Ambassador project
- \$ 44,820.00 – 2025 Scholarship Auction Revenue
- \$ 34,412.17 – Launch Alaska: Alaska Energy Shed
- \$ 11,212.06 – U.S. Department of Education: Solve IT energy project
- \$ 1,043.00 – Denali Commission: Reconnect broadband project



**Funding Distributed by Southeast Conference (FY2023-2025):**

As part of SEC’s Build Back Better Regional Challenge, considerable investments have been made across the state that increases knowledge, lowers risk, and incentivizes private sector investment. According to SEC, the State of Alaska has also been a beneficiary of the ARDOR’s investments.

Funding has gone to the University of Alaska system with a focus on workforce development; Alaska Department of Fish and Game has received funding from SEC to analyze seaweed population genetics, purchase laboratory equipment, and staff support; and Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation is receiving state-of-the-art shellfish testing equipment, staff support, and training. For the period of FY2023-2025, SEC reports the following investments to the State of Alaska.

UAA	UAF	UAS	Fish & Game	DEC	Total
\$ 677,344.95	\$ 906,294.80	\$ 916,662.72	\$ 547,877.69	\$1,407,467.61	\$4,455,647.77

**Status of Projects Funded by State or Federal Grants:**

**Energy Projects:**

**Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Infrastructure:** SEC participates in Alaska Energy Authority (AEA)’s Alaska Electric Vehicle Working Group that meets quarterly to discuss EVs and charging infrastructure across Alaska. SEC supports AEA’s efforts to reduce barriers to EV adoption and its plans to bring new industries to Alaska to promote our economy and save Alaskans money. SEC participated in the development of the State of Alaska Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Implementation Plan as part of the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Formula Program, as well as promoting partnerships and coordinating installations with the private sector to host charging stations using VW Trust funds.

SEC continues to partner with the Alaska Energy Authority to expand the number of Level 2 chargers available to the public throughout the region. SEC previously purchased EVBox Chargers from Ecokruz for installation at host sites across the region that have since been discontinued. These units were replaced with Siemens units. SEC is in possession of the four chargers scheduled for installation in Juneau while an additional six chargers have been supplied to the Ketchikan Indian Community and Bigfoot Auto in Haines. SEC will follow up with the locations to ensure the chargers are installed and commissioned for use.

**Renewable Energy Development Assistance (REDA):** USDA Rural Development funding to SEC is being used to assist businesses statewide with technical understanding on how to deploy renewable energy resources, provide outreach, and provide technical assistance. SEC is working with RuralCAP and Information Insights in this endeavor. Efforts in the past year have included the development of informational materials, promotion during conferences and large events, write-ups shared in newsletters, targeted outreach campaigns, and the creation of online materials added to SEC’s website.



**Renewable Energy Alaska Project (REAP):** SEC is promoting REAP Technical Assistance Grants (REAP TAG) which provides no-cost energy efficiency audits to businesses. REAP TAG provides a trained energy auditor to assess a business's energy needs and make recommendations. This informs participants which REAP grant is the most appropriate to apply for. Efforts in the past year have focused on promoting REAP to small businesses across the region, particularly those in the seafood and maritime sector.

**Energy Shed:** SEC is working with stakeholders in Kake, Angoon, Hoonah, Yakutat, Haines, and Metlakatla on energy infrastructure inventory and energy project prioritization.

**U.S. Department of Energy, Arctic Energy Ambassador:** The Arctic Energy Ambassador program provides training and support for 12 selected, experienced practitioners from Alaska to improve energy security across the state. The ambassadors were selected in January 2024 for a two-year term, during which they are developing regional, place-based, and collaborative energy leadership across Alaska, along with compiling resources and knowledge-sharing in alignment with the U.S. Department of Energy's Arctic Strategy and the administration's priorities. SEC's executive director continues to serve as an Arctic Energy Ambassador.

**Coastal Alaska Heat Pump Incentive Program (ACES):** In February of 2024, SEC partnered with Alaska Heat Smart to submit an almost \$39 million funding request from EPA's Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) to promote and equip Alaskan households with heat pumps. In July 2024, SEC was awarded the \$36.4 million dollar project and has been working with EPA and project partners Alaska Heat Smart and Alaska Municipal League to complete grant paperwork and partnership coordination. Additionally, SEC applied for funding to assist with heat pump installation and maintenance training.

### **Biomass:**

**Pellet Mill:** The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Denali Commission awarded funds to SEC to pursue a demonstration biomass pellet mill project. This project includes construction of a processing mill in Southeast Alaska and development of a business plan to test the viability of utilizing locally sourced materials to produce cost-effective energy alternatives for residential and commercial heating use. This is a proof-of-concept pilot project for the region to show the potential and opportunity for small scale mills in other locations. The facility will support the timber industry, forest health, and habitat by utilizing natural waste streams from timber harvesting activities, and it will experiment with community biomass waste, such as saw dust, construction debris, used pallets, and cardboard, that often end up burned in landfills. These landfilled materials cause environmental concerns, are costly to communities for final disposal, and do nothing to create jobs or lower energy costs, as could be achieved by converting those waste materials into pellets to be used by local consumers.



During FY2025, SEC revamped the timeline for installation and production to early 2026 and began discussing a partnership with Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska through Generations Southeast to locate the mill at the Generations Southeast Vocational Education campus in Klawock, Alaska. This location would increase access to feedstock supply and provide more transportation options. Placing the facility on the Generations campus allows for workforce development to occur simultaneously to production. This proposal seeks the City of Klawock's approval and support to move forward with site development and operation, ensuring that the project aligns with community goals for local economic growth, renewable energy advancement, and self-sufficient rural development. Mill equipment is still under construction. Delivery is scheduled in late spring or early summer.

**Biomass Technical Assistance:**

- 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 that seek to increase the utilization of wood for energy and biofuels 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, share resources, and discuss lessons learned.
- SEC works in partnership with the University of Alaska-Fairbanks, State of Alaska Division of Forestry, ACEP, REAP, and USFS on a biomass outreach program to assist communities with feasibility plans, provide technical assistance, and provide workforce training to the private sector and communities that have existing biomass systems. SEC participates in statewide roundtables. SEC also planned and co-hosted the 2024 Rural Energy Conference held in Fairbanks.
- SEC staff worked to encourage communities and support them in applying for the Wood Innovation and Community Wood Grants.

**Biomass Operator Training:** SEC, through funds provided by AEA, coordinated and hosted a train-the-trainer cordwood boiler operator training session in August 2025 on Prince of Wales Island. The training brought individuals from multiple communities throughout Alaska. SEC subcontracted with engineering firm DeerStone Consulting to develop curriculum and lead the training.

The cordwood operator training is specific to Garn boiler systems, which are prevalent throughout the state. The training takes place over three days: two days of classroom instruction and one day of in-the-field training performing repairs to existing boiler systems. The training is a key component to ensuring that existing Garn cordwood systems are maintained, run efficiently, and have an adequately trained workforce capable of operating and maintaining these systems.

In addition to the training, team members with SEC, AEA, USFS and DeerStone Consulting perform site visits to inspect systems prior to training events. Team members inspect boilers, collect water samples, generate parts lists, and develop inspection reports to be provided to the communities. Reports touch on topics from the system's overall condition to the availability, cost, and storage of feedstock for the systems. SEC is continuing to work with attendees to support the systems in their communities and enable them to provide training to other communities in their regions.



In FY2025, SEC, AEA, and DeerStone Consulting conducted cordwood operator training in Tanacross from September 24-26, 2024. Attendance exceeded expectations, with 16 individuals attending the first day of training and 13 completing the training. Additionally, SEC staff began planning efforts for training to occur on Prince of Wales Island in FY2026.

**Prince of Wales BDO Zone Rating:** SEC hired contractor Ecostrat to complete a BioDiversity Opportunity Zone rating for the Prince of Wales Island area. This analysis utilized over eighty criteria that examined opportunities and challenges for the languishing timber industry on Prince of Wales Island. While there is ample biomass to support industry growth, many hurdles relating to policies and logistics remain.

#### **Other:**

- SEC participated in a biofuels working group activity to define sustainable maritime fuels. SEC also participates in AEA's working groups related to alternative energy and energy efficiency programs. SEC supports the many programs managed by the state's energy office to lower the cost of energy to Alaskans.
- During FY2025, SEC continued to develop and pursue ways to implement and establish Forest Industry Products Camps to support the value-added processing of young growth timber.

#### **Transportation Projects:**

**AMHS Modernization and High Efficiency Commuter Ferries:** Since 1958, SEC has sought to establish, sustain, and support the ferry system. In recent years, the focus has been on modernization. Now, with the federal priority to reduce emissions, there is a new focus of incorporating renewable energy resources into the operations of AMHS. During FY2025, SEC continued to support and work with ADOT and AMHS teams on a multitude of projects including the AMHS Long-Range Plan, the AMHS High Efficiency Commuter Ferry project, and multiple replacement vessel designs.

- SEC established a new MOA with ADOT to move the High Efficiency Commuter ferry project forward and explore the shoreside power needs for a hybrid-electric ferry, then proceeded to launch the High Efficiency Commuter Ferry project and took the following actions:
  - Coordinated with AMHS on vessel design contracting;
  - Developed a community engagement plan;
  - Established a specialized project team;
  - Designed and released a project webpage;
  - Met with AMHS and ADOT leaders regularly on project progress and needs;
  - Updated a supporting dock project narrative for submission to U.S. Maritime Administration's Port Infrastructure Development Program;
  - Released an RFP for contractor support on energy modeling and uplands design needs;
  - Met with leaders from the five candidate communities; and,
  - Provided project outreach through SEC newsletters, social media and in-person discussions.
- Supported other AMHS ferry replacement efforts, including the Tustumena Replacement Vessel and the Mainliner Replacement Vessel projects.
- Participated in final AMHS Long Range Plan efforts by reviewing draft documents, attending plan presentations, reviewing public comments, and providing assistance when asked.



- Worked with ADOT on port electrification needs, including the preparation and submission of the USDOT Rural and Tribal Assistance Pilot Program grant application.
- Continued to communicate the value of the ferry system to the public through transportation committee meetings, SEC's Mid-Session Summit and Transportation Symposium, presentations at Alaska Travel Industry Association meetings and conferences, and through SEC newsletters and social media.
- Attended the Alaska Marine Highway Operations Board meeting in person and virtually, including providing a project update on SEC's work on the High Efficiency Commuter Ferry project.
- Researched funding opportunities and their applicability to AMHS projects, built an opportunity tracker, and shared findings with AMHS and ADOT, as applicable.
- SEC has been working with southern Southeast Alaska communities and the community of Prince Rupert, British Columbia, Canada to understand the constraints of resuming service in Prince Rupert and to explore opportunities that would restore service that provides a southern connection to the International road system.

**Regional Planning Organization (RPO):** Southeast Conference is working with ADOT to establish and serve as a Regional Planning Organization (RPO) through the ADOT RPO Pilot Program. With many communities separated by vast distances and across bodies of water, with all but four communities (Hyder, Skagway, Haines, and Klukwan) only accessible by water or air service, Southeast Alaska offers many unique transportation and community challenges. Given the complexity of providing meaningful, collaborative engagement to 54 regional community entities, the Southeast RPO will assist in covering the transportation and planning efforts that connect the 35 communities and 19 Tribes in Southeast Alaska. Throughout FY2025, SEC has worked with ADOT to update the RPO to better meet the requirements of the Federal Highway Administration. SEC is awaiting program agreement approval to finalize establishing SEC as an RPO. SEC staff currently serves on the National Association of Development Organizations RPO America council of peers.

**Pacific Northwest to Alaska (PNW2AK) Green Corridor:** The PNW2AK Green Corridor project is a collaboration between ports, municipalities, cruise lines, non-profits and, environmental groups to explore the feasibility of creating the world's first zero-emission "green corridor" for cruise operations between Washington, British Columbia, and Alaska. The group has partnered with the Maersk Mc-Kinney Moller Center to conduct a feasibility study on green methanol. The collective effort meets monthly to receive updates from the Maersk Mc-Kinney Moller Center and the two working groups (policy and emissions framework), and to discuss current conditions. SEC staff have been participating in the monthly meetings to stay informed on potential community impact and to track alignment with other transportation needs to support a multi-model network.



**U.S. Forest Service Long-Range Transportation Planning:** Southeast Alaska is an intricate place requiring multiple modes of transportation across vast areas with many different landowners. In an effort to establish connections and consistency in planning efforts, the USFS, in partnership with ADOT, continued hosting joint community workshops on transportation needs in communities across Southeast Alaska. The primary purpose of these workshops has been to assist in updating the USFS's Long-Range Transportation Plan and prepare ADOT as they plan to update the regional Long-Range Plan in FY2026. Southeast Conference services as a member of the coordination team for these outreach and community involvement efforts. While update activities remain ongoing, in FY2025, SEC participated, either virtually or in-person, in four community meetings to hear from the communities of Yakutat, Gustavus, Skagway, Haines, and Kake.

**Active Transportation:** SEC attended regular state-wide meetings on active transportation with the Alaska Active Transportation Coalition and joined the first ever Alaska Walkability Action Institute effort, developing an active transportation action plan for Sitka.

### Blue Economy Projects:

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

AMC, led by Southeast Conference, is a coalition 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 State of Alaska's DEC laboratory as well as in the University of Alaska system.

**Governance, Coordination, and Outreach:** The Governance Body (GB) is composed of all four southern coastal ARDORs (SEC, KPEDD, PWSEDD, SWAMC), four board members of Alaska Mariculture Alliance (AMA), four regional Tribal executives (Tlingit and Haida, Chugach Alaska Corporation, The Aleut Corporation, and Koniag), and a representative from Alaska's seafood industry. GB guides the grant's work and ensures equity goals are met throughout each AMC project. As part of this process:

- GB meetings were held quarterly. The October 2025 meeting was scheduled in conjunction with One Ocean Week and the Symphony of Seafood in Seattle, WA.
- In October 2024, SEC onboarded two new mariculture coordinators to help coordinate work and manage grant funds.
- SEC launched a [new project website](#) with a public facing project management database (Airtable). The new website features a news and RFP page as well as an insights platform as a means to share project opportunities and news, offering essential benchmarks, insights, and industry data aimed at showcasing Alaska's mariculture industry. Throughout FY2025, SEC maintained the project website with regular news updates, RFP and job opportunities, and other information as necessary.



- AMA finalized its mariculture public relations and outreach plan with its contractor Rising Tide Communications (RTC) in coordination with other entities working on mariculture communications in Alaska. RTC will support AMA in implementing the plan, developing digital and print assets, creating industry events, and supporting other outreach and engagement efforts.
- SEC continues revising the RTC contract to research and draft a plan for public relations, outreach, and engagement.
- Ecotrust was awarded the contract to host a dedicated mariculture liaison position to provide communication, connection, and coordination services to underserved, rural, and Alaska Native communities in Southeast Alaska. In March 2025, SEC staff attended training and strategy planning sessions regarding the mariculture liaison program.
- SEC continues to work with KPEDD, PWSEDD, and SWAMC to coordinate work with industry partners, stakeholders, and AMA liaisons to facilitate communication, events, and project development.

**Workforce Development:** To support industry growth, SEC worked closely with all three universities (UAA, UAF, and UAS) to begin work on developing training materials, curriculum, and an aquatic farm operation training handbook.

- SEC worked on budget revisions with subawards to ensure all workforce development programs and funding are utilized within the grant period.
- Upcoming courses, workshops, and programs funded through AMC are shared on the AMC website.
- SEC sponsored and presented at the [Seagriculture USA](#) conference and hosted an investor forum to engage private investors to identify and address investment gaps.
- The UAF Center for Innovation, Commercialization, and Entrepreneurship hosted a [Mariculture Ideation Session](#) in Kodiak.

**Equipment and Technology:**

- The first round of RFP funding released in spring 2024 experienced complications and provided setbacks, delaying the opening of additional rounds. SEC has worked with EDA to correct previous issues. In February 2025, an RFP was issued for Mariculture Equipment rounds two and three. SEC staff continue to work on finalizing the eight projects selected from the Maritime Equipment Round 1 awards.
- Testing equipment was purchased for Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation.
- Hatch Innovation Services launched the beta version of the [Alaska Mariculture Insights platform](#). Thanks to a State of Alaska EDA Planning Grant, SEC received additional non-AMC funding to expand Hatch's scope of work with the Alaska Mariculture Insights platform, including enhanced interview and surveying efforts, creating interactive map features, publishing a new seaweed dryer assessment report in February 2025, and producing additional video assets.
- SEC solicited proposals for projects that will improve kelp seed quality and scalability in Alaska under the [Kelp Seed Quality Improvement RFP](#). SEC selected three projects for award, with recipients to be announced during FY2026.



- Ten active “other mariculture species” projects are underway. These other species projects explore opportunities with cockle clams, dragon kelp, geoducks, green sea urchins, Kumamoto oysters, Olympia oysters, Pacific razor clams, pinto abalone, red ribbon seaweed, split kelp, and virginica oysters.
- SEC contracted McKinley Research Group and the Pacific Shellfish Institute to perform annual economic research services and reports for the Alaska mariculture industry on current information about oyster and seaweed harvests, farm utilization, seed supply and quality, and mariculture growing techniques. The first annual report was published in November 2024.
- SEC staff continue to check in with and monitor the nine feasibility study projects. A [shared final report](#) was published for two of AMC’s nine Feasibility Studies: The Native Conservancy and Organized Village of Kake. The other seven studies are ongoing, and reports will be published on the [feasibility studies program webpage](#).

**Green Energy:** UAF managed the Green Energy project and presented its work efforts at the Mariculture Conference of Alaska in February 2025.

**Research & Development:** SEC has three strategic partners involved in this project: the Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation (AFDF), Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG), and Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR). Research includes seaweed tissue analysis, chemistry and nutritional profiles and joint innovation projects with the private sector to accelerate development of applied technologies.

- SEC subcontractor Food for Climate League (FCL) published food sector market research for Alaska’s oyster and kelp products. Additional research into non-food markets (animal feed, cosmetics, textiles, packaging, etc.) is also in the works.
- SEC staff attended the Mariculture Conference of Alaska in Sitka in February 2025.
- SEC worked with AFDF to submit all 29 [Joint Innovation Projects](#) (JIP) to the AMRTC Research Library, Alaska’s preeminent mariculture research database. Additionally, the final reports for seven JIPs have been published on the AMC website. This popular program has been effective in establishing partnerships, aiding farmers and mariculture industry to work together, and sharing results.
- SEC onboarded a new contractor, GSI Environmental, that was awarded the [Scientific Consulting Services Related to Heavy Metals and Kelp RFP](#) to develop a plan to evaluate the naturally occurring background levels of lead and cadmium in farmed kelp in Alaska.
- SEC closed and scored the [Kelp Agriculture Product & Testing RFP](#). Three biostimulant-focused projects were selected for funding and are in the contract negotiation phase.
- SEC contracted Spencer Serin of Marine Biologics to create a report on Alaskan kelp processing. This report was published in January 2025 and presents an overview of kelp processing technologies, key market trends, and regulatory considerations to inform product development efforts.
- AFDF awarded a project in December 2024 to Marine Biologics to analyze seaweed tissue data from 15 species of wild and farmed seaweeds collected in 2024. Samples underwent a range of analyses by the lab company Celignis to develop nutritional profiles and characterize and measure carbohydrates and other valuable compounds. Further analysis and synthesis of these results is needed to provide usable information for the Alaska mariculture industry as well as to inform another year of sampling and testing.



- SEC published an overview of Kelson Marine's [Ocean and Wave Simulations and Analysis project](#), which is funded through the AMC's De-Risking Mariculture Investments program, administered through AFDF's subaward. This project will de-risk mariculture investments for Alaska's aquatic farmers by providing detailed environmental data for key oceanographic parameters such as currents, wave height, bathymetry, temperature, wind values, salinity, pH, turbidity, and nutrients.
- SEC published results from the [Seaweed Population Genetics Program](#) in February 2025.

**Marketing:** The market development component project is an essential part of the mariculture grant. This involves working with the private sector to form a steering committee that will guide the market research on seaweed, shellfish, and brand development.

- SEC developed an RFP for large investment in marketing program implementation to help promote mariculture products and lay the groundwork for effective marketing efforts as the industry scales.
- SEC continues to work with Food for Climate League (FCL) on food sector market research and marketing program recommendations. SEC and FCL have also been presenting FCL's market research to AMC's marketing stakeholder committee, which meets every few months to track and inform FCL's work, as well as other AMC research and market development projects. FCL presented at the mariculture conference and produced a nutritional label for Alaska-grown Pacific oysters. FCL also published food sector market research for Alaska's oyster and kelp products. Additional research into non-food markets (animal feed, cosmetics, textiles, packaging, etc.) is in the works.
- SEC will issue a new marketing RFP to take actions to introduce Alaska's kelp and oyster food products to various markets, audiences, conferences, and trade shows.
- The Alaska Shellfish Growers Association (ASGA) conducted a sampling and analysis effort to create a nutritional facts label for Alaska oysters.

**Mariculture Revolving Loan Fund (RLF):** The industry-specific RLF will support all aspects of operations, seeking 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 Southeast Conference with finalizing the AMC RLF administration plan and overall management structure. SEC is partnering with Spruce Root who will administer the half of the funds that are targeted to Alaska Natives and underserved communities. SEC made significant progress with the RLF in FY2025, as the six-member board held its first meeting in February 2025. The program is awaiting final approval from EDA.

**Grant Administration:**

- SEC completed federal audit training and new staff training on invoicing, contracts, compliance, policies, and procedures.
- SEC is working with Ecotrust to evaluate AMC's grant program on an ongoing basis.
- Ecotrust and SEC collaborated to produce AMC's Theory of Change, which illustrates the coalition's vision for catalyzing a viable and sustainable mariculture industry in Alaska and supporting the production of shellfish and seaweed for the long-term benefit of the state's economy, environment, and communities.



- In addition to the AMC website, SEC staff developed and launched the Airtable resource as a second public-facing tool to demonstrate AMC's activities and impacts. SEC offers a dashboard to track all AMC projects that have originated via RFP that can be filtered by region, city, species category (seaweed or shellfish), and budget.

### Other Projects:

**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 other Southeast Alaskans studied the issue of consolidating solid waste disposal, recycling, and scrap metal efforts across the region.

During FY2025, 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. In FY2025, SEC was awarded a Denali Commission Solid Waste Regional Planning grant and hired a contractor to provide research and mapping expertise. This contractor collected information about every community's municipal solid waste disposal costs and processes, then mapped out existing systems and prospective system alternatives.

**Southeast Alaska Reconnect Technical Assistance:** The Denali Commission provided funding for SEC to provide technical assistance for rural underserved communities in Southeast Alaska as they pursue broadband connectivity. During FY2025, the results from USDA's ReConnect round 5 were released and the City of Thorne Bay's application was unsuccessful. SEC continues to partake in regional conversations regarding the internet needs for remote, rural communities as communities wait for future funding rounds to be announced.

**OneUSDA, Southeast Alaska Sustainable Strategy for Economic Development:** SEC is working with its partners at OneUSDA, Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, and Spruce Root on the shared mission to undertake and support activities that promote strong economies, sustainable communities, and a healthy environment in Southeast Alaska.

What makes OneUSDA's Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy (SASS) initiative unique and impactful is a focus on locally driven projects that require greater trust and coordination. These investments are building on the foundation of the state and federally recognized regional CEDS and serve to empower local efforts that strengthen the local, regional, and state economies.

SEC has traveled to and hosted large gatherings that are important for building consensus, facilitating new partnerships and relationships, and growing the equity component of its SASS work.

### Meeting and Event Summary:

SEC held 11 board meetings between July 2024 and June 2025. Nine board meetings were conducted via Zoom, one was held in Ketchikan, and one was held in Juneau. SEC's three annual events during FY2025 included the annual meeting in Ketchikan, the mid-session summit in Juneau, and the transportation symposium in Juneau.



**July 18, 2024 (Zoom):** President Simpson noted that the Ketchikan City Council has not yet addressed SEC's request for free use of the Civic Center for its annual meeting and reminded the board that the executive director's annual evaluation is due. Treasurer Alec Mesdag reported that the finance committee met to discuss the FY2025 budget, with potential amendments expected as new grant awards are confirmed.

Executive Director Robert Venables and staff provided updates: Venables will meet with USDA Under Secretary Homer Wilkes in Ketchikan for a Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy (SASS) roundtable; SEC is facilitating discussions on developing young growth timber opportunities. Staff shared progress on its annual meeting planning, SASS microgrants, Build Back Better (BBB) projects, mariculture hiring, energy initiatives, electric vehicle program interest, and upcoming biomass operator training. The board approved the revised Mission/Values/Vision statement and discussed rollout ideas, such as announcing it at the annual meeting and through social media. The board reviewed the Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) flow chart, clarified roles of the loan advisory board and lending institutions, and approved a \$60,000 donation to the UA Foundation. Members discussed expanding scholarship funds to broaden workforce development opportunities. The FY2025 budget was approved, and nominations of committee members were confirmed.

**August 15, 2024 (Zoom):** The executive director provided updates on staff reports, and discussed annual meeting logistics, Climate Pollution Reduction Grants (CPRG), Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) issues, and BBB with the SEC board. The SEC is prepared to launch the Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) following EDA approval and the establishment of the loan advisory board (LAB); the board approved the recommended LAB roster.

The board held an executive session to review the executive director's annual performance, expressing unanimous appreciation for his contributions and organizational growth. They approved setting goals and adjusting his salary for the coming year. Additionally, correspondence was reviewed, including positive feedback on the recent BBB governance body meeting, and a question was raised about potential shrimp farming.

**September 23, 2024 (Ketchikan):** President Simpson welcomed the other board members to Ketchikan and expressed excitement for SEC's annual conference. The executive director reported on FY2024 finances, highlighting another strong year for SEC, and provided updates on annual meeting logistics, Metlakatla meetings, the Alaska Department of Transportation Regional Planning Organization memorandum of agreement (ADOT MOA), and the scholarship auction.

The board reaffirmed electronic approvals for student scholarships, directed future auctions through the SEC Foundation, and emphasized support for vocational and special certification programs in partnership with the UA Foundation. SEC also approved participating in a Farm Bill letter coordinated by the Pacific Seafood Processors Association and authorized the executive director to sign the ADOT MOA.



**October 15, 2024 (Zoom):** President Kirkpatrick welcomed the board and reviewed FY2024 committee assignments, with members agreeing to continue in their prior roles. The finance committee report included discussion on moving scholarship funds to the SEC Foundation, with the board requesting the CFO proceed with setting up the account. The executive director highlighted the annual meeting's success, staff changes, ongoing ferry and regional planning memorandums of agreement, new forestry opportunities, business climate survey findings, and planned office expansion for CPRG projects. The board approved shifting the 2025 annual meeting to September's third week and established a bank account for the SEC Foundation. Discussion on a politically charged resolution opposing Ballot Measure 2 was tabled. Board members addressed the vacant Northern Private seat and Alaska Native representation, noting potential ex-officio options and the need for dialogue with Tribal leaders to ensure diverse leadership. Correspondence was reviewed with no questions or comments.

**November 21, 2024 (Zoom):** The board discussed filling the vacant Northern Private seat, with several members offering to contact potential candidates from Haines, Yakutat, and nearby areas. Regarding Alaska Native representation, an attendee suggested adding a seat for the regional Tribe. Scheer noted that while an ex-officio seat could be established without a bylaw amendment, adding a voting seat would require one. The board agreed the bylaws committee should review the matter. Meilani Schijvens presented the draft CEDS report for review and prioritization, with plans to circulate it to membership in January after revisions. The board approved Resolution 25-03 (Banking Amendment), the Community Change Grant authorization, and minor employee handbook updates. Discussion on SEC's support of hatcheries and opposition to Proposition 146 resulted in an amended resolution focused on economic development rather than scientific issues. The resolution was referred to the fisheries committee for further consideration.

**December 19, 2024 (Zoom):** The Finance Report highlighted SEC's clean audit, with the final report to be released in the new year. The auditor reminded the board to maintain distinct corporate formalities for the SEC Foundation and Alaska Pellet Supply, even if board members overlap. The executive director highlighted staff role changes, professional development efforts, and his recent trip to Washington, D.C., involving EDA meetings, congressional visits, and the Capitol Christmas Tree event. He also reported on Mid-Session Summit planning and the historic EDA reauthorization expanding support for SEC and partner organizations. The board reported that limited progress was reported on filling the Northern Private board seat, though potential candidates from Sitka were noted. Resolution 25-04, supporting hatcheries and recognizing their economic benefits, was approved unanimously following a recommendation from the seafood committee. The board also approved proposed revisions to the University of Alaska scholarship application to simplify questions and encourage more applicants, with Elizabeth Cornejo recusing herself from discussion.

**January 16, 2025 (Zoom):** The executive director highlighted Mid-Session Summit planning, the upcoming Board of Fish meeting, and progress on the AMHS long-range plan. Dan Lesh reported steady progress with the BBB project and an extension request for SASS funding. The discussion included REAP program funding concerns, with Executive Director Venables encouraging outreach to SEC for assistance connecting with available programs. Conversations continued regarding identifying a person to fill the Northern Private board seat and establishing a Tribal member seat. Correspondence was reviewed without further questions, and it was noted that Petersburg received an \$8.8 million Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant for a vessel haul-out.



**February 12, 2025 (Juneau):** President Kirkpatrick highlighted the success of the Mid-Session Summit and thanked attendees. The finance committee report was deferred. The executive director reported strong attendance, positive financial results, and updates on federal funding, noting that most SEC programs are stable, though the EPA CPRG heat pump project remains frozen. The EDA BBB Mariculture program is back on track, and the Revolving Loan Fund is near final approval with lender interest. The board was informed of interest from a Haines member in the vacant Northern Private Board seat and the possibility of a dedicated SEC board seat for the regional Tribe, with the board unanimously approving giving the executive director the authority to pursue the legal structure for a full voting Tribal seat. Under new business, the board approved reaffirming unencumbered funds for the EDA Partnership Planning Grant and authorized the executive director to accept and administer the Denali Commission grant for SEASWA regional planning efforts. Discussion included planning a board retreat in late April/early May.

**March 20, 2025 (Zoom):** President Kirkpatrick reported that the finance committee reviewed SEC's finances, noting uncertainty in some grant-funded programs, and encouraged board questions. The executive director confirmed most funding remains stable, except for USDA-funded programs and REDA. Updates included board member liability insurance, the Revolving Loan Fund delay due to EDA attorneys, progress on the AMHS Long Range Plan, the slow pellet mill development, and monitoring of the Ketchikan shipyard. Staffing changes were noted, with the addition of a new Alaska Fellow.

Michael Ganey, Alaska Marine Lines' service center manager in Haines, was appointed to the Northern Private Board seat until the next annual meeting. The bylaws committee was established to review bylaws and consider a Tribal designated seat. The board retreat was postponed until fall, with options to be presented at the next meeting. Forestry policy discussion was deferred to focus on the Tongass Collaborative. Proposed personnel handbook updates were approved. The CEDS public comment period closed, and communities will be asked for resolutions or letters of support.

**April 17, 2025 (Zoom):** Treasurer Alec Mesdag reported that SEC continues to operate on most grants despite federal pauses, except for the SASS grant, while RLF has cleared final hurdles and will soon be ready to launch. The executive director confirmed that minor adjustments remain before RLF launch and noted state priorities for securing match funds for energy and transportation projects. Staffing updates include a REAP replacement for Clay Good and recruitment for two energy and mariculture positions. Transportation and Special Projects Manager Kaitlyn Jared highlighted AMHS ferry projects, a Port Infrastructure Development Program (PIDP) dock grant for Saxman, the 2030 CEDS draft review, and the solid waste project, while the board discussed delays in federal funding responses.

The board agreed to hold a retreat day in Juneau in October. The SEC scholarship committee's award recommendations were approved unanimously (with Elizabeth Cornejo recused). Forestry policy updates were provided, with the new natural resources director focusing more on forestry, and the board was encouraged to provide feedback.



**May 15, 2025 (Zoom):** Agenda items included scheduling the economic development committee meeting for early June and bylaws revisions: updating the mission statement, recognizing lifetime members online, removing outdated communication references, creating a Tribally recognized board seat within the thirteen-member limit, and clarifying that board members are not required to participate in RFP awards. The board agreed on a date of October 9, 2025, for the next SEC retreat and reaffirmed the SEC BBB Revolving Loan Fund with the EDA. The executive director was authorized to pursue grant funding for The Tongass Collaborative, facilitating stakeholder engagement and developing a five-year plan for Tongass timber management following the closure of Meridian. Resolution 25-05 was approved unanimously. The nominations committee was established with Koester, Cabrera, and Goucher. The board also approved re-engaging services for the annual audit.

**Annual Meeting (September 24-26, 2024, Ketchikan):** Southeast Conference successfully held its Economic Summit and 66th Annual Meeting. The annual meeting was held in Ketchikan and hosted 312 participants who heard from over 90 presenters covering a wide range of regional economic issues from mariculture to childcare. Highlights included a “Conversation with Alaska’s Commissioners” panel, and a Transportation Outlook Perspectives panel with a guest speaker, the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Aviation and International Affairs. SEC’s scholarship auction raised over \$40,000.

FY2025 year’s theme, “Navigating the Changing Tides,” was demonstrated in each presentation and panel discussion as well as in industry updates and projections. All presentations, as well as full recordings of the meeting, can be found [online](#).

**Mid-Session Summit & Transportation Symposium (February 11-12, 2024, Juneau):** This year’s event hosted 64 speakers that provided updates to over 200 in-person and virtual attendees. Additionally, on February 13th, SEC hosted its 4th annual Transportation Symposium in Juneau to focus on regional transportation issues and to help communities move their local projects forward. This event welcomed approximately 50 attendees to hear from 18 speakers and to participate in a transportation planning tabletop exercise that supports ADOT’s Thriving Communities program.

## **Publications:**

**[2025 Regional Business Climate Survey](#):** Each year SEC conducts a regional business climate survey to track Southeast Alaska business confidence for operating and investing into the region. A total of 422 Southeast Alaska business owners and top managers, representing a combined staff of approximately 11,600 workers, responded to the survey in April 2025. Survey analysis includes the following key findings:

- Business leaders’ optimism about Southeast Alaska’s economic prospects has declined, marking one of the weaker outlooks recorded by the annual survey; however, most businesses remain generally optimistic. In 2025, 63 percent of businesses hold a positive economic outlook, while 37 percent have a negative outlook.
- About half (47 percent) of the businesses surveyed anticipate that federal actions, notably tariffs, executive orders, and cuts in federal funding and staffing, will have negative effects on their operations.



- A challenge highlighted by the report is the continued shortage and high cost of housing. Seventy-nine percent of employers indicate that housing issues directly cause employee turnover or deter potential hires from moving to the region. Housing shortages and pricing are most problematic for employers in Juneau and Sitka.

**[2025 Southeast Alaska by the Numbers](#)**: Southeast Alaska by the Numbers provides a detailed review and update of the region's demographics and economic activities.

The top three takeaways in the 2025 edition include:

- The top economic problem is the regional decline in younger people. The region has lost 7,700 kids and residents of prime working age in the past decade.
- Southeast Alaska's economy is changing. There are continued losses in timber, seafood, and state government jobs but growth in mining, tourism, and health care.
- The economic outlook for Southeast Alaska is hazy due to uncertainty regarding federal policies.

**[Southeast Alaska 2030 Economic Plan](#)**: As the U.S. Economic Development Administration's Economic Development District, Southeast Conference is responsible for updating and housing the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Every five years, SEC is responsible for working with regional entities to update the CEDS. In FY2025, SEC continued to work with the public, completing a new Southeast Alaska 2030 Economic Plan in May 2025.

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

In FY2025, SEC continued to support the initiatives and goals of the Southeast Alaska 2025 Economic Plan and to perform the roles and responsibilities of an ARDOR and Economic Development District. Specific activities included:

#### **Goals:**

1. Complete the [Southeast Alaska 2030 Economic Plan](#);
2. Partner with communities, Tribes, private sector businesses, and non-profits, as well as state and federal entities to develop and implement projects that align with the initiatives of the [Southeast Alaska 2025 Economic Plan](#);
3. Revitalize and modernize Alaska's forestry and seafood industries;
4. Support the region and state to connect resources and understand the economic and community conditions in the region; and,
5. Support the State of Alaska in efforts to update the Alaska Marine Highway System fleet and complete the long-range transportation plan.

#### **Objectives:**

1. Complete work in existing projects as scoped;
2. Secure or help to secure additional funding for regionally desired projects; and,
3. Host committee meetings and membership meetings.

**Strategies:**

1. Establish partnerships with communities, Tribes, private sector businesses, and non-profits, as well as state and federal entities, as appropriate, on project management and when applying for funding; and
2. Participate in planning efforts across the state, region, and within communities.

**Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS):**

SEC is responsible for identifying regional priorities for economic and community development. A new 2030 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for Southeast Alaska was released in May 2025 to present this work. The [Southeast Alaska 2030 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 a year, more than 30 workshops and strategic planning meetings were held during which SEC members developed and prioritized 45 economic initiatives, seven priority 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 final document includes the latest regional data, which will be updated annually. The top two priorities of the economic plan were identified as supporting the sustainable development of housing; supporting the stability, sustainability and longevity of the Alaska Marine Highway System; and increasing childcare capacity in Southeast Alaska.

**CEDS Presentations and Outreach:**

Southeast Conference is continually involved in countless conversations, presentations, committees, and projects that support Southeast Alaska's CEDS. SEC staff actively engaged with the Alaska Division of Community and Regional Affairs, ADOT, AIDEA, SBA, SBDC, ARDORs, USDA Rural Development, Alaska Energy Authority, Alaska Center for Energy and Power, REAP, USFS, EPA, Denali Commission, University of Alaska, and other stakeholder groups, including communities, Tribes, and the Alaska Municipal League, to develop and implement projects that align with the strategies in the CEDS. By working with Tribes, communities, state agencies, and federal partners to pursue the initiatives in the regional CEDS, Southeast Conference works together to collectively and collaboratively achieve effective economic development for all.

SEC has presented the regional CEDS and initiative projects extensively including, but not limited to, several Southeast community chambers of commerce and Rotary groups, the Alaska Municipal League, the National Association of Development Organizations, Western Governors' Association, Alaska Travel Industry Association, Pacific Northwest Economic Region, other industry organizations, and federal and state representatives.

SEC wrote 38 letters of support for regional projects throughout the region for projects that support the regional economic initiatives identified in the Five-Year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.



### Current Economic Development Initiatives:

Throughout FY2025, Southeast Conference and its team of 16 staff members worked to support the region in achieving the goals of both the [2025 Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy \(CEDS\)](#) and the [2030 CEDS](#). Combined, SEC supported 96 regional initiatives in FY2025. To do so, SEC served as manager or lead for several projects. Additionally, SEC provided technical assistance, grant writing, meeting facilitation, and more to communities, Tribes, and entities throughout the region to support communities that receive funding, increase community capacity, and successfully implement projects.

### Future Economic Development Initiatives:

Most of the identified projects are multi-year projects that will continue for three to five years, yet 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 prospective projects for economic opportunities. SEC is seeking funding and partners to implement the following projects in FY2026:

- Increasing capacity and versatility;
- Supporting training programs and events;
- Expanding high-speed broadband;
- Revitalizing SEATrails to support the outdoor recreation economy;
- Increasing local business ownership and entrepreneurship;
- Developing regional solutions and support for increased child care;
- Increasing and diversifying housing options;
- Providing resources for communities to be proactive in disaster planning as well as efficient in disaster recovery;
- Working with communities to ensure they have diverse transportation options including active transportation;
- Pursuing a transformation forestry project that utilizes young growth to support the forest health, habitat needs, and economic opportunities on Prince of Wales Island; and,
- Supporting a regional seafood modernization effort that highlights the unique fisheries of our region.

### Anticipated Challenges to Regional Economic Development:

In the [2025 business climate survey](#), community members and business leaders continued to identify affordable housing as a roadblock to economic development. An overwhelming majority (79 percent) of employers indicate that housing issues directly cause employee turnover or deter potential hires from moving to the Southeast Alaska region. Housing pressures are intertwined with broader cost of living concerns, including childcare affordability, further complicating labor attraction and retention in Southeast Alaska. Other challenges identified by the business community in 2025 include: the uncertainty and negative impacts from federal actions, low fish numbers and prices, rising operational costs, regulatory obstacles, lack of childcare, and reduced public support in investments in social infrastructure.



## SOUTHWEST ALASKA MUNICIPAL CONFERENCE



721 Sesame Street, Suite 1A  
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 FY2025, SWAMC reported the following sources of revenue:

- \$ 102,263.00 – U.S. Economic Development Administration: Alaska Mariculture Cluster Subrecipient
- \$ 75,000.00 – U.S. Economic Development Administration: Partnership Planning Grant
- \$ 2,100.00 – U.S. Department of Agriculture – Rural Development: Energy Efficiency
- \$ 71,445.00 – Sponsorships and earned income
- \$ 22,647.00 – Membership dues

### Status of Projects Funded by State or Federal Grants:

**U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA):** Alaska Mariculture Cluster work is ongoing through September 2026, with a possible extension through 2027. Kodiak cluster development and local food security production have increased significantly through the program's direct and indirect efforts. Seed production and identification of steady markets continue to be obstacles to ongoing development. Future work includes additional outreach to the Aleutians; continuing work to develop markets, processing capacity, seeding sourcing, and growing; resolving transportation and logistics challenges; and charting post-grant continuity. Partnership Planning program work is ongoing. A five-year program update has been initiated with a targeted publication date of March 2026.



**U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA):** The third round of energy efficiency audits resulted in additional reductions in carbon emissions by fishing vessels, community buildings, and community facilities. The grant was closed out in March 2025.

### Meeting Summary:

SWAMC held nine board meetings between July 2024 and June 2025. The dates, locations, and agenda descriptions for these meetings were not made available by SWAMC at the time of publishing.

In addition to the nine governance board meetings, SWAMC held two other meetings of note:

**November 18, 2024 – Board Planning Retreat (Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association Headquarters, Anchorage):** Topics included planning for the economic summit and annual membership meeting, setting a direction for the CEDS, onboarding the new executive director, and reviewing SWAMC’s organizational status.

**March 4-6, 2025 – Economic Summit and Annual Membership Meeting (Hotel Captain Cook, Anchorage):** The economic summit opened with a half-day transportation planning session with help from the Alaska Department of Transportation, the Alaska Municipal League, and community members.

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

The [Southwest Alaska Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy](#) is summarized below, emphasizing only the top priorities.

#### Goal 1 – Resources Management Advocacy

- **Fisheries Development:** Promote conservation-based fisheries opportunities that provide a sustainable income base to the communities, businesses, and residents of Southwest coastal Alaska. Continuing providing aid for pandemic recovery and building resiliency for the fisheries industry using lessons learned and the recommendations from SWAMC’s recovery and resiliency plan. Continue to participate in state and federal fisheries policy meetings.
- **Tourism Development:** Encourage investment in new and existing tourism opportunities that grow and retain regional wealth by taking advantage of the region’s unique cultural, environmental, and natural charm to draw visitors to the region. Build resiliency for the tourism industry using lessons learned and recommendations from SWAMC’s recovery and resiliency plan. Work with communities interested in pursuing visitor services and help them identify and plan for new prospects.
- **New Resource Development:** Promote new responsible natural resource development that does not threaten the sustainability of the historic regional fisheries-based economy. Pursue mariculture industry processing needs and engage local vessels for harvesting. Work with Tribal fishermen’s organizations and vessel owners.
- **Fisheries Access:** Promote efforts to retain commercial and subsistence fisheries access rights for regional residents. Continue to support commercial fisheries organizations and Tribes throughout the fish management process by attending and participating in federal and state fisheries policy meetings in Alaska.



- **Strategies:**
  - Research, collect, and curate relevant data to showcase economic trends, provide support for grant applications, and demonstrate economic development needs in the SWAMC region. Identify capital needs projects from our communities and place on our SWAMC website for use by legislators and business interests.
  - Attend regulatory and policy meetings virtually and in person. Convey information and discussion points from these meetings to the SWAMC board and membership through monthly board meetings and newsletters.
  - Advocate for adequate state funding to support regulatory and scientific agencies that oversee research and manage natural resources vital to the region’s economy and culture.

## Goal 2 – Infrastructure Development and Maintenance Advocacy

- **Energy Efficiency:** Energy Efficiency – Encourage energy audits, energy education, and energy infrastructure retrofits to reduce consumers’ long-term cost of power through energy efficiency and conservation by continuing to administer the USDA REDA energy audit program in the Southwest Alaska region and statewide, as required by new grant language.
- **Ownership of Energy Systems:** Promote local ownership of energy-related planning, decision-making, and project development.
- **Low-Cost Power:** Facilitate information-sharing and community adoption of infrastructure that may supply sustainable lower-cost power generation.
- **Strategies:**
  - Advocate for regional, local, public, and private transportation projects that provide vital transportation services such as ports, harbors, runways, air services, and marine transportation services, including the Alaska Marine Highway System. Continue to advocate and educate Alaska’s congressional delegation and State of Alaska.
  - Advocate for, facilitate improvements to, and facilitate maintenance of cellular and broadband services throughout the SWAMC region.
  - Connect communities to funding opportunities and operational plans that best suit their communities using federal and state dollars.

## Goal 3 – People and Partnerships Networking

- **Shared Benefit:** Secure funding streams from local, regional, state, and federal entities for projects that benefit the region, communities, businesses, members, and other key stakeholders who have been negatively affected by COVID-19 impacts.
- **Strengthen Emergency Operations Center Structures:** Provide resources, such as emergency management toolkits or guides, updates on essential services, public health guidelines, best practices, and tips for developing employee policies, with available financial resources.
- **Training and Education:** Promote professional development programs and facilitate the development of these programs to match employee skillsets with the skillsets employers require for the healthcare, seafood, and maritime Industries.



- **Strategies:**
  - Coordinate business workforce needs with colleges, job training institutions, and high school curriculums to prepare residents of the SWAMC region for high-paying employment opportunities.
  - Support and champion Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) programs and training to help prepare young people for jobs that are technical or technology driven.
  - Advocate for SWAMC regional economic issues and interests before the Alaska State Legislature and United States Congress. Advocate for regional needs and for funding relevant to those needs.

**Goal 4 – Quality of Life Initiatives**

- **Collective Happiness:** Promote access to employment, housing, networks, culture, community, technology, healthcare, and adventure.
- **Strategies:**
  - Assist communities with planning and seeking funding to address substance abuse issues in the SWAMC region. Partner with organizations that are successfully educating students on the dangers of addiction.
  - Support efforts to spotlight and increase awareness of and opportunities for the sharing of cultural values.
  - Support local schools and universities to maintain an array of educational opportunities for students from Southwest Alaska.

SWAMC has also created the following work plan identifying its current economic development strategies:

Focus Area	What	Why	Timeline	Partners
People and Partnerships	Continue the Regional Recovery and Resiliency Plan. Assist communities in becoming more resilient by helping them plan and prepare for economic disasters.	To better prepare SWAMC communities to respond to and recover from economic and natural disasters using guidance learned from the COVID pandemic.	2022-2025	Regional Tribal and municipal organizations, health care providers, seafood industry participants, and other relevant stakeholders
Resources	Educate, advocate, and assist in the development of the mariculture industry to diversify rural economies. Provide comprehensive training opportunities in Kodiak.	To diversify the marine resource mix to provide new jobs and business opportunities between seasonal fishing seasons, with a focus on kelp and seaweed.	2022-2025	Southeast Conference, Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation (AFDF), Alaska Sea Grant, Blue Evolution, and Tribal entities



People and Partnerships	Support Alaska Maritime Workforce Development efforts to SWAMC communities, Tribal organizations, schools, and businesses. Partner with UAA and ASA for EDA jobs grant.	To develop a trained maritime workforce that meets employer needs, supports the fishing and marine transportation industry, and provides better local access to good paying jobs.	2022-2025	Alaska Safety Alliance, University of Alaska Anchorage, regional Tribal and municipal partners
Infrastructure	Provide communities with final mile broadband solutions unique to their needs and help them fund the procurement and construction phase.	Affordable broadband is a necessity to engage in business, education, job training, communication, healthcare, and other endeavors in the 21st Century. COVID-19 brought the critical need for broadband in underserved communities into sharp focus.	2022-2025	Alaska Tribal Broadband, The Aleut Corporation, Aleutians East Borough, APICDA, Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association, NTIA, Alaska Tribal Spectrum, and State of Alaska
Resources Management and Infrastructure	Continue to advocate for sustainable fisheries policies and affordable energy in the region.	To provide a sustainable income base and transition to affordable energy sources to the communities, businesses, and residents of Southwest Coastal Alaska.	2022-2025	Regional Tribal and municipal organizations, law and policy makers, and other relevant stakeholders
Infrastructure and Maintenance	Continue to advocate for infrastructure upgrades and new buildings for economic stability and growth, especially with opportunities for federal funding.	To build economic resiliency and independence for local communities.	2022-2025	Regional Tribal and municipal organizations, law and policy makers, and other relevant stakeholders
People and Partnerships	Annual Economic Summit and Membership Meeting	To focus on regional resilience and recovery and new business opportunities in the region. Focus on forward planning that protects against unpredictable disasters and strengthens weakness identified in SWAMC's SWOT/CEDS document.	March 2025	State, local, and federal agencies, business partners, legislators, fisheries participants, communications industry, Tribal organizations, and regional economic development organizations
Infrastructure	Advocate for the continuation of the Alaska Marine Highway System service to Kodiak and communities west to Unalaska. Participate in working groups with other stakeholders to maintain a revitalized Alaska Marine Highway System.	Private transportation costs deter some economic development and activity that the AMHS can provide to municipalities and Tribes.	2021-2025	Southeast Conference, Prince William Sound Economic Development District, Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, City of Kodiak, City of Unalaska, City of Sand Point, City of King Cove, City of Chignik, City of Akutan, City of False Pass, and the Alaska Marine Highway Operations Board



<p>People and Partnerships</p>	<p>Elevate childcare workforce development as an economic development initiative. Advocate for additional funding to support childcare sector development. Connect in-region organizations to childcare workforce training opportunities. Advocate for state childcare licensure policy review to better understand implications for Southwest.</p>	<p>To promote access to employment for working families, workforce development for childcare workers, and improve community health and quality of life.</p>	<p>2022-2025</p>	<p>Regional Tribal and municipal organizations, law and policy makers, thread Alaska, community health providers, and workforce development partners</p>
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**Current Economic Development Initiatives:**

SWAMC has identified the following current economic development initiatives:

**Regional Planning:**

- **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)**: This effort is ongoing. SWAMC initiated activities to update the foundational regional economic development plan.
- **Southwest Alaska Transportation Plan**: SWAMC began discussions with the Alaska Department of Transportation (ADOT) regarding an update to the region’s plan, serving as the regional planning organization and facilitating regional discussions and public engagement. SWAMC has begun the process to apply to serve as the regional planning organization with the goal to finalize the process during Calendar Year 2026.
- **Alaska Marine Highway Long-range Plan**: SWAMC continued to play a role on the Alaska Marine Highway Operations Board and the AMHS long-range planning process. Through representation on the board and through encouraging public engagement in the planning process, SWAMC helped ensure that the ADOT-led process is representative of the region’s interests, moves the system toward stabilization and modernization, and ensures ongoing ferry service while the system is made current. The long-range plan was accepted by the Alaska Marine Highway Operations Board and is anticipated to be made public in the next fiscal year. SWAMC staff continued to press for progress on the Tustumena Replacement Vessel (TRV). The TRV has been delayed by extra-regional issues, events, and funding, including Made in America provisions. Several key hurdles have been cleared by AMHS leadership and the project continues to move forward.



### Projects and Initiatives:

- Continued implementation of the energy efficiency initiative to reduce carbon emissions and improve operational efficiencies amongst the fishing fleet, community facilities, and commercial buildings. This project has been closed out.
- Through the [Build Back Better Alaska Mariculture](#) program, SWAMC's mariculture director worked throughout the year to develop the sector, provide technical assistance to mariculture farmers and prospective farmers, attend various industry and market meetings to advance and share learning, expand market awareness and opportunities, and create further awareness about mariculture opportunities in Southwest Alaska.
- Kodiak mariculture growers initiated efforts to establish a cooperative.
- A floating upweller system unit (*i.e.*, FLUPSY) is slated to be installed in Larsen Bay.
- Other entities in the Kodiak area submitted equipment grants to further processing capacity.

### Advocacy and Convenings:

In addition to its annual economic summit, SWAMC held special topic meetings and webinars on the topics of workforce development, housing, mariculture, and Arctic policy.

### Future Economic Development Initiatives:

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

- Licensing and permitting reform to reverse the loss of fishing access by residents;
- Modernization of the shoreside seafood processing sector;
- Improved alignment of postsecondary education to in-demand occupations in seafood, marine transportation, tourism, skilled trades, and healthcare occupations;
- A comprehensive inventory of maritime infrastructure and re-investment strategies;
- Re-establishment of a regional tourism strategy focused on developing the cruise-tour, adventure, and ecotourism sectors;
- Broader collaboration and alternative models for rural housing development; and,
- Convening communities and agencies for regional hazard mitigation planning sessions to address increasing risks from slope failures, coastal and riverine flooding, coastal erosion, and increased storm frequency and strength.

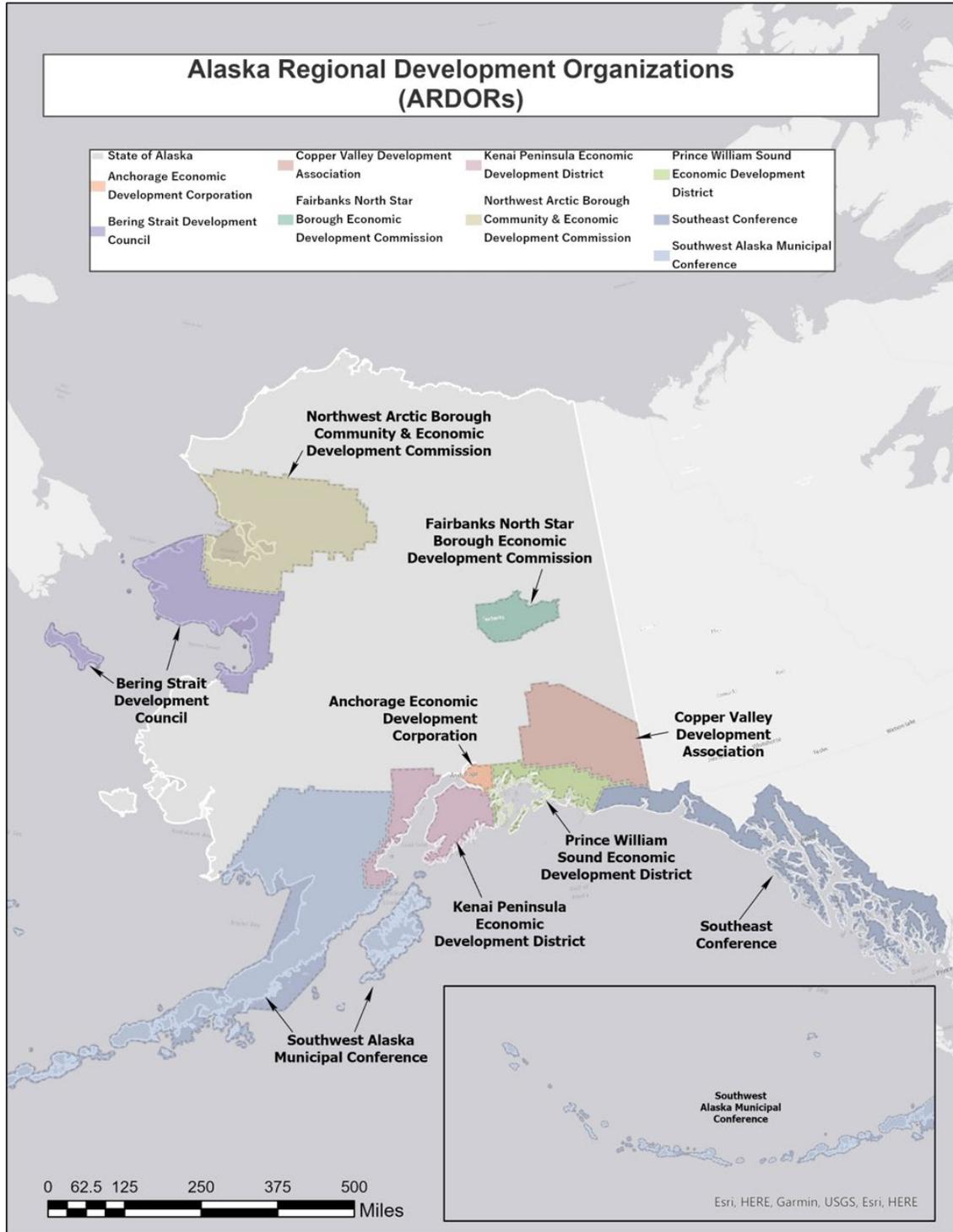


### Anticipated Challenges to Regional Economic Development:

Southwest Alaska faces several persistent economic and infrastructure challenges that affect current and future growth and sustainability. Notable issues include high power costs, limited infrastructure and the resulting high transportation costs, 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, loss of commercial transportation options, delays in stabilizing the Alaska Marine Highway System, and increased uncertainty to access healthcare and other critical services
  - *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

# ARDORS MAP (AS OF 6/30/2025)



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# STATE OF ALASKA



# DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, COMMUNITY, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## DIVISION OF COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS