

Introduction

The Alaska Statewide Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is a five-year economic development plan for Alaska, active from 2022-2027. Driven by the need to improve the resilience of the state’s economy and intentionally lay a foundation for future growth, this plan follows the U.S. Economic Development Administration’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) guidelines. It takes the place of the prior Statewide CEDS, which was in effect from 2017 to 2022.

Developed between January and July of 2022, the present Statewide CEDS reflects different, but still challenging, economic circumstances than the prior CEDS written in 2016 and 2017. At that time, Alaska faced a recession due to low oil prices, causing employment loss, outmigration, and reduced state government revenues. As of mid-2022, the state economy is recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic and reeling from macroeconomic headwinds in the form of inflation, supply chain challenges, and labor scarcity.

The State of Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development (DCCED) oversaw the development of the 2022-2027 Alaska Statewide CEDS, in partnership with the Alaska Development Team in the Governor’s Office. The University of Alaska Center for Economic Development, under contract with DCCED, performed the background research, public process, and drafting of the document. A Strategy Committee, made up of state leaders from business, government, and the nonprofit sector, provided strategic guidance throughout the process.

Vision

The Alaska Statewide Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy provides an equitable and unified approach to a competitive business environment, expanded job opportunities in the state's Economic Engines and Emerging Industries, and an enduring economic structure where all Alaskans adapt, grow, and thrive.

Mission

To create a shared approach to Alaska’s future prosperity that is locally based, regionally driven, and state connected.

How to use this CEDS

The Alaska Statewide CEDS is the product of a six-month process reflecting extensive analysis of the state economy, the input of hundreds of Alaskans, and the involvement of dozens of business, government, education, and nonprofit leaders. Although led by state government, it is designed to be used broadly by anyone working to strengthen the Alaska economy.

Inspire

The goals and strategies laid out in this CEDS are rooted in extensive evaluation of the state’s economic situation and have been vetted through a public process and guided by a vision of being locally based, regionally driven, and state connected. By presenting an analysis of Alaska’s economic challenges,

opportunities, and strategic directions, this CEDS may inspire civic leaders in the state to act in thoughtful ways that promote opportunity and support a cohesive strategy.

Invest

This strategy will be used to attract greater investment in Alaska from public and private sources. Federal agencies often require a CEDS or other broadly recognized strategic plan to be in place as a prerequisite for certain types of grant funding. Grants can then be utilized to leverage investment from the private sector to produce jobs and sustained economic growth.

Collaborate

Many (but not all) regions of Alaska already have robust CEDS plans in place. A primary reason for the development of the Statewide CEDS is to connect local and regional strategies from the “bottom up” and encourage collaboration between them. Most of the state’s industries span more than one region, as do its foundational gaps like affordable housing. In these cases, collaborative statewide strategies may be required to make progress.

Goals

The following six goals emerged from the process of analyzing Alaska’s current economic situation, and systematically gathering feedback and input from stakeholders around the state. Each goal can be thought of as a broad “bucket,” further broken down into objectives and actions that are SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.

1. **Strengthen Economic Engines.** Economic Engines is the term used throughout this CEDS to describe Alaska’s major basic sectors, which bring money into the state by selling goods or services outside of it. They include oil and gas, mining, seafood, tourism, defense, air cargo, and forestry.
2. **Cultivate and Grow Emerging Sectors.** Emerging Sectors are those small or nascent industries with high growth potential based on Alaska’s competitive advantages. They include mariculture, aerospace, and agriculture, among others, which have the potential to diversify the state economy and ultimately become Economic Engines.
3. **Support a Strong Business Climate and Entrepreneurial Ecosystem.** Industries large and small depend on a climate that makes a state a good place to start and run a business. This goal is concerned with these factors, including access to capital and training for entrepreneurs.
4. **Build and Update Economic Foundations.** Economic Foundations are the assets and elements like infrastructure, housing, quality of life, and cost of living that must be in place for any commercial activity to take place. These factors are not specific to one industry, but broadly support all economic activity.
5. **Develop Alaska’s Workforce and Human Capital.** Economies exist for the good of the people and depend upon a workforce that is prepared and well-trained. This goal strives to improve the readiness of the workforce to permit the greatest possible opportunity to make a good living, and meet the needs of an expanding economy.
6. **Build a Resilient Economy.** Resilience relates to the ability of an economy to avoid or withstand negative events like natural disasters or recessions. It includes proactive and responsive measures to reduce harm to workers, employers, and communities.

Strategy Committee

State/Local Government and Education

Alan Weitzner, Executive Director,
Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority

Andrea Noble, Executive Director,
Alaska State Council on the Arts

Bill O'Leary, CEO,
Alaska Railroad Corporation

Curtis Thayer, Executive Director,
Alaska Energy Authority (AEA)

D.J. Fauske, Director,
Government & External Affairs,
North Slope Borough

Dr. Nettie La Belle-Hamer, Vice Chancellor for
Research,
University of Alaska Fairbanks

Gwen Holdmann, Associate Vice Chancellor for
Research,
University of Alaska Fairbanks

Jon Bittner, Executive Director,
Alaska Small Business Development Center
University of Alaska Anchorage

Kyla Pomrenke, Acting Executive Director,
Alaska Workforce Investment Board

Mark Billingsley, Director,
Office of Intellectual Property and
Commercialization,
University of Alaska Fairbanks

Mark Romick, Deputy Executive Director,
Alaska Housing Finance Corporation

Mike Brown, Borough Manager,
Matanuska Susitna Borough

Milton Keeter, Jr., CEO,
Alaska Aerospace Corporation

Steve Noonkesser, Superintendent,
Southwest Region School District
Alaska Broadband Task Force

Steve Ribuffo, Port Director,
Port of Alaska

Trudy Wassel, Division Operations Manager,
Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport

Alaska Regional Development Organizations (ARDORs)

Barbara Nickels, Program Director,
Bering Strait Development Council

Bill Popp, President & CEO,
Anchorage Economic Development Corporation

Brittany Smart, Special Assistant to the Mayor,
Fairbanks North Star Borough Economic
Development Commission

Fritz Westlake,
Director of Community and Economic
Development,
Northwest Arctic Borough Community &
Economic Development Department

Jason Hoke, President of the Board,
Copper Valley Development Association

Kristin Carpenter, Executive Director,
Prince William Sound Economic Development
District

Robert Venables, Executive Director,
Southeast Conference

Shirley Marquardt, Executive Director,
Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference

Tim Dillon, Executive Director,
Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District

Business, Industry, and Nonprofit Associations

Alec Mesdag, Vice President,
Alaska Electric Light & Power

Alicia Amberg, Executive Director,
Associated General Contractors of Alaska

Amy Seitz, Executive Director,
Alaska Farm Bureau

Ana Hoffman, Co-Chair,
Alaska Federation of Natives

Chris Rose, Executive Director,
Renewable Energy Alaska Project (REAP)

Christine O'Connor, Executive Director,
Alaska Telecom Association

Dan McCue, President,
Alaska Credit Union League

David Karp, Senior Vice President,
Saltchuk Family of Companies

Deantha Skibinski, Executive Director,
Alaska Miners Association

Hallie Bissett, Executive Director,
Alaska Native Village Corporation Association

Hans Vogel, President/CEO,
Triverus/Trijet

Isaac Vanderburg, CEO,
Launch Alaska

Joe Michel, Executive Director,
Alaska Trucking Association

Julie Decker, Executive Director,
Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation,
Alaska Mariculture Alliance

Kara Moriarty, CEO,
Alaska Oil and Gas Association

Kati Capozzi, CEO,
Alaska Chamber of Commerce

Laurie Wolf, President & CEO,
The Foraker Group

Leila Kimbrell, Executive Director,
Resource Development Council

Mike Huston, Chief Lending Officer, Northrim
Bank,
Alaska Bankers Association

Rebecca Logan, CEO,
Alaska Support Industry Alliance

Scott Habberstad, Board Chair,
Alaska Travel Industry Association (ATIA)

Tanya Kaquatosh, Senior Vice President,
Doyon, Ltd.

Tessa Axelson, Executive Director,
Alaska Forest Association

Tracy Welch, Executive Director,
United Fishermen of Alaska

Elected Officials

Calvin Schrage, State Representative,
District 25

Dan Ortiz, State Representative,
District 36

Jesse Kiehl, State Senator,
District Q

Robert Myers, State Senator,
District B