



Fairbanks North Star Borough Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

Child Care Roundtable

February 11, 2022

Invited Participants

Name	Affiliation	Status
Anna Culley	In-home provider	Attended
Jessica Spittle	Fort Wainwright Child Care Coordinator	Attended
Katie Heiss	Eielson AFB Child Care Coordinator	Attended
Kelly Doughty	Director, Thrivalaska	Attended
Kristi Davis	Child Care Assistance Director, Thrivalaska	Attended
Maria Vilchez	Open Arms Lutheran Child Center	Attended
Michelle Westmoreland	In-home provider	Attended
Sabrina Binkley	Spruce Tree Montessori	Attended
Ginny	Klondike Kids	Invited

The Project Team

Project Steering Committee: the **FNSB Economic Development Commission**

Mayor Bryce Ward | Abigail Riggs | Frank Tomaszewski | Kristan Kelly | Mark Billingsley | Paul Robinson | Russell Talvi



FNSB Project Manager:
Brittany Smart



Contracting Team:
Shelly Wade, AICP
Molly Mylius

Supporting team
members:



Project Purpose

To develop an updated Five-Year FNSB Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).



CEDS must go through a robust update every five years, with shorter, less intensive updates annually.



Reminder: What is a CEDS?

- **A locally-based, regionally-driven economic development roadmap** that guides government and community action.
- Brings the **private and public sector** together to develop a **regional strategy and action plan**.
- Identifies **projects and makes recommendations to:**

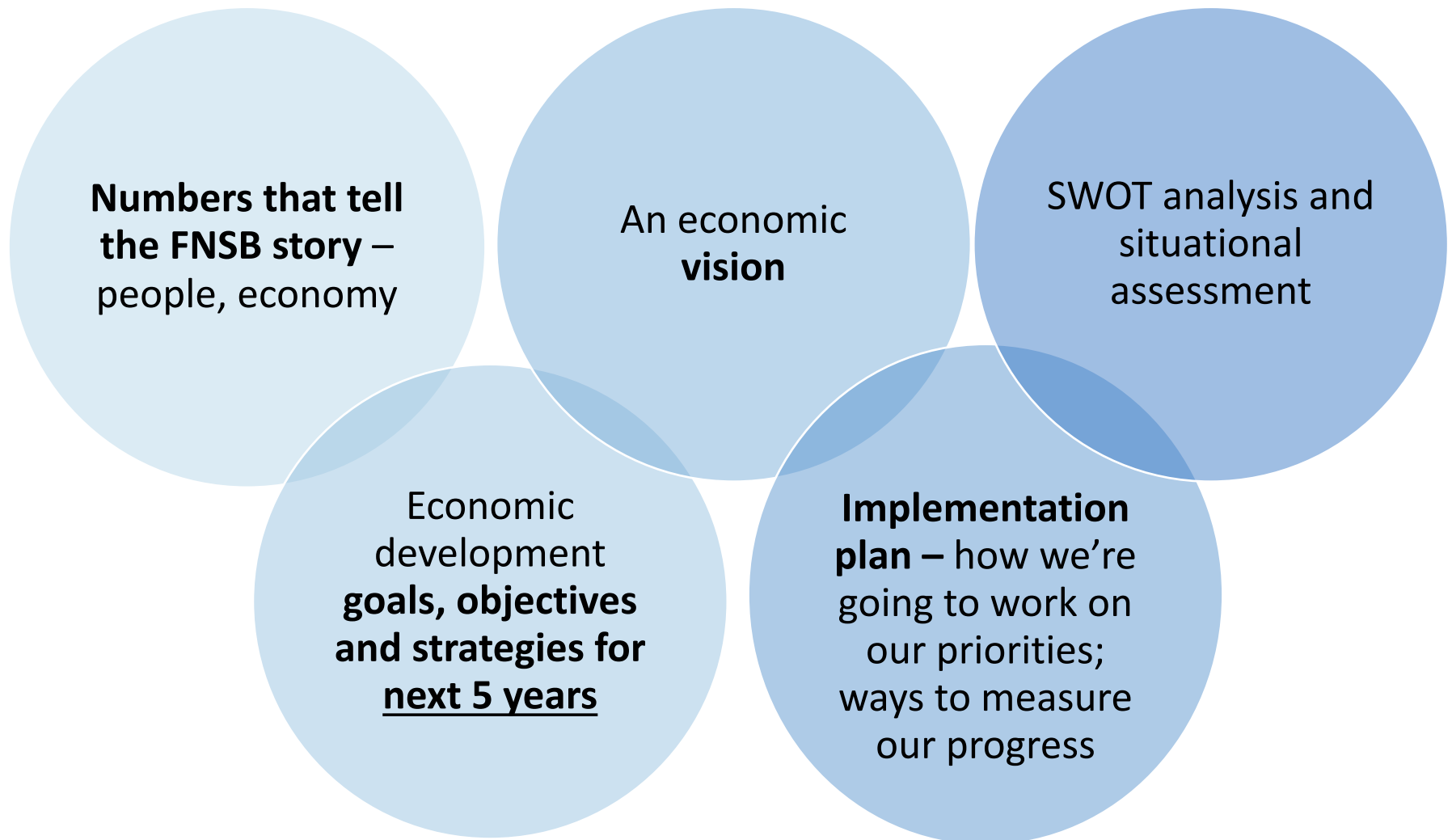
Secure and
support
businesses

Create more
and better
paying jobs

Improve
quality of life

Increase
resilience to
changes,
threats

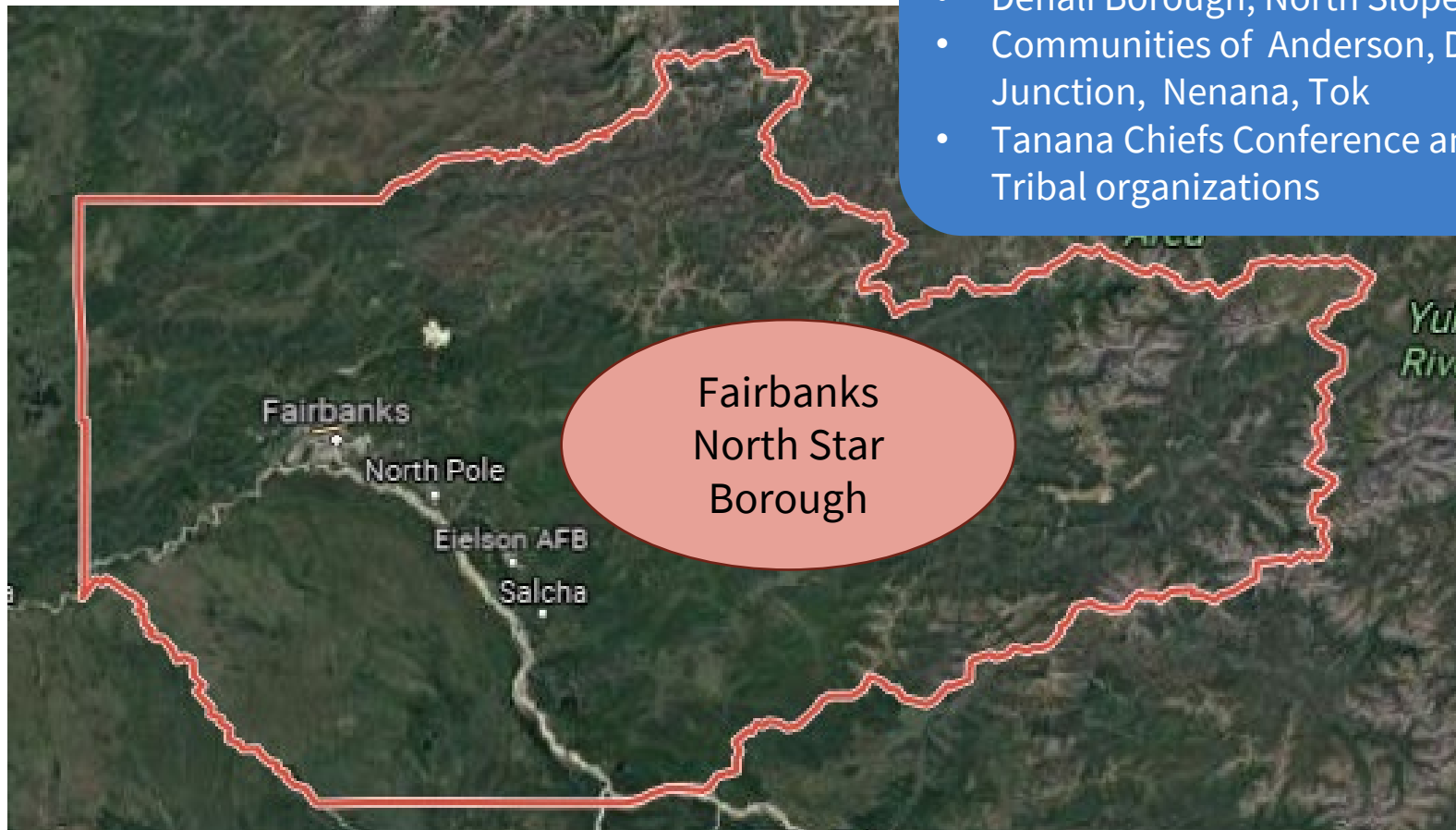
What does a CEDS include?



Project Area: FNSB

Key regional partners beyond FNSB boundaries include:

- Denali Borough, North Slope Borough
- Communities of Anderson, Delta Junction, Nenana, Tok
- Tanana Chiefs Conference and other Tribal organizations



Proposed FNSB CEDS Topics/Sectors

Industry Clusters

key sectors that drive the FNSB economy

Energy
Health Care
Military
Natural Resources
(Agriculture, Forestry, Mining)
Research & Innovation
Visitation

Community Influencers

supportive foundations that clusters rely on to grow and flourish

Communications
Education & Workforce Development
Government
Housing and Land Use
Quality of Life
Transportation
Utilities

***Core Child Care Discussion Areas, but access to affordable/quality touches all topics**



Child Care Context

Child Care – Strategies from the Eielson Regional Growth Plan

- Work with the Air Force **to waive part of the national accreditation requirements** so licensed Alaska providers are eligible for Air Force Child Care Fee Assistance.
- **Conduct marketing efforts** to ensure local child care providers know about the opportunities, training needs and requirements associated with the F-35 Beddown.
- Expand **workforce recruitment** to encourage residents and incoming dependents to get trained and licensed as child care providers.
- Continue to implement **Alaska's Quality Recognition and Improvement System (QRIS)** program.
- Increase **communication and collaboration** between EAFB Child and Youth Services programs with community and state child care organizations to increase utilization of community resources.

From page 231 (Education and Early Childhood Development Chapter), Eielson Regional Growth Plan, 2018, available at <http://www.eafbregionalgrowth.com/>

FNSB – Least Affordable Municipality for Infant Child Care in Alaska

Rank	Borough or Census Area	Average Annual Price of Infant Care*	Percent of Median Income: Married Couple with Children	Difference between County-Level and Statewide Affordability**
Statewide Center-Based Affordability: 11.7%				
1	Fairbanks North Star	\$15,324	16.6%	4.9%
2	North Slope	\$15,360	13.2%	1.5%
3	Dillingham	\$10,896	13.1%	1.4%
4	Juneau	\$14,820	12.6%	0.9%
5	Stika	\$14,280	12.4%	0.7%
Statewide Family Child Care Affordability: 8.8%				
1	Fairbanks North Star	\$11,256	12.2%	3.4%
2	Kenai	\$10,800	10.6%	1.8%
3	Ketchikan Gateway	\$9,492	9.5%	0.7%
4	Anchorage	\$9,000	8.4%	-0.4%
5	Haines	\$9,000	8.2%	-0.6%

From Child Care Aware of America – 2019 Alaska County Supplement, with data from U.S. Census Bureau & thread Alaska:
<https://www.childcareaware.org/our-issues/research/the-us-and-the-high-price-of-child-care-2019/2019-price-of-child-care-by-county-alaska/>

COVID-19 Impacts on Child Care

- Most providers reported **increases in the operating costs** of food, supplies, and their rent/mortgage due to COVID-19 (some also noted declines in cost of food).
- **Most providers saw reduced enrollment** as parents kept kids home, but some did experience increases due to school closures.

*from Alaska Child Care Market Price Survey Report, 2020-2021), available at
https://www.threadalaska.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Alaska-Child-Care-Market-Price-Survey-Report-2020-and-2021_9.10.2021.pdf*

Alaska Child Care Market Price Survey Report Recommendations

Providers would like to see:

- A concise way to **define and measure quality of care** is needed.
- A detailed look at the **costs to provide care**.
- An assessment of additional **costs that have occurred as a result of COVID-19**.
- Implement **recommendations to the market price survey**, including revising so it is more applicable to smaller providers (not just large programs), adding questions that capture the seasonality of care, and conducting the survey more frequently.

(from Alaska Child Care Market Price Survey Report, 2020-2021), available at https://www.threadalaska.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Alaska-Child-Care-Market-Price-Survey-Report-2020-and-2021_9.10.2021.pdf

Child Care – What We’ve Heard So Far in this CEDS Update

- Affordability, reliability, and access to child care remain a **major/the most significant barrier to employment** for many families, including military households.
- Providers are experiencing challenges with **significantly delayed payments/reimbursement from the State.**
- The **State of Alaska’s May 2021 data breach** continues to impact the **Child Care Program Office. Processes are less efficient** with some systems still offline; have to update providers before families can be updated. Potential long-term impacts with eventual need to digitize paper copies.

Discussion Questions

Discussion Questions

- What is **working well today** in the FNSB child care sector?
- What **factors are a barrier** to a successful child care sector in the FNSB? *This could include cost, program/license oversight, staffing, education, policies, etc.*
- What can we do today and over the next five years to **increase access to and affordability of child care in the community?**

Discussion Notes: Working Well

- Cash funds available and distributed to child care providers and programs. Would be fantastic if it were long term; could be a hiring incentive instead of a reward. Paid out via thread; everyone who works in care settings will receive a payment.
- Stabilization grant funds from child care program office are really helping the larger center providers. Unfortunately these funds are also temporary.
 - Stabilization grant has helped some programs increase their capacity. Child care jobs pay poorly and retention is hard. Would like to invest in our workers, help them grow and get additional professional education/training.
- The Department of Defense Family Child Care (FCC) certifications are more stringent than statewide regulations. With education and promotion, more FCC homes are now being certified off base (4 now through the Air Force, 21 through the Army). This really helps families living off base.
- Thread is doing pre-training for child care employees, which really helps providers through time and cost savings.
- Fort Wainwright is building a child development center with capacity for 330 kids.

Discussion Notes: Areas for Improvement

- Infant care costs, regulations. Department of Defense reimbursement rates are much too low (\$209/week), especially when compared with state rates.
- Finding and retaining staff is a challenge for all child care facilities.
- Fairbanks does not have a local licensing specialist; from 3, to 2, to 1. This will cause problems for providers starting new programs, and for those who are getting recertified. Providers are assigned someone out of Anchorage who is not familiar with communities or programs, and who is largely unresponsive.
- Delays in criminal background checks.. Nursing homes and hospital are allowed to use other avenues for private sector background checks, can child care, too? Employers would probably be willing to pay extra to expedite. Staff are hired but cannot wait for the background check and seek other employment. On Fort Wainwright, staff are hired “provisionally” and go through training while waiting, but cannot count toward ratios.
- Child care wages on military bases are not competitive, making it even harder to hire and retain staff. You can get paid \$18/hr to stock at Walmart, or to be in a classroom with toddlers. Especially with the stress, germs, uncertainty of COVID-19. Application lists keep getting shorter.
- Child care is undervalued by society, even though it is critical to a healthy society and economy. Child care providers are not just babysitters; it’s the same with teachers. The child industry needs help. We need more money to pay people so they can stay. There needs to be a culture shift in how we view the industry.
- Current regulations prohibit the hiring of those under age 18 to count toward ratios; 15 and 16 year olds are great with kids.

Discussion: Recommendations for the Next Five Years

- Address the slow process of background checks and approve private sector solutions (e.g., those used for health care).
- Address licensing barriers.
- Advocate for fair wages/incentives/subsidies to increase provider pay.
- Expand advocacy to promote the entrepreneurial opportunity of becoming a state-licensed provider.
 - When parents call thread for referrals, and they can't find anyone, thread encourages them to become a licensed provider and take another child or two.
 - thread used to advertise and had classes, but with the licensing barriers, it was discouraging for folk.
- Convene child care providers and other stakeholders (state, military) for quarterly meetings. Don't want to compete or create barriers – we all share common objectives.
- Military-based providers can participate in thread-provided trainings, but not cash payments – continue to build this relationship.
- Focus on the zero to two range. That is the age group that is hardest and most expensive to serve.



Next Steps and Wrap-Up

Next Steps

- February 2022 – Conclude sector outreach
- **February 22-23, 2022 – Economic Summit**
- April 2022 – Release public review draft
- June 2022 – Release final draft

Interior Alaska Economic Summit

February
22-23, 2022

View the flyer
online [here](#)



Save the Date: February 22nd -23rd 2022

2022 Interior Alaska Economic Summit

The 2022 Interior Alaska Economic Summit will bring regional community, business, and industry leaders together to collaborate on economic opportunities as we work towards a stronger, more resilient Interior Alaska economy. The Summit is free and will be held at the Westmark in Fairbanks.

Topics for Breakout Sessions

(preliminary at-a-glance agenda on reverse)



RSVP Today

More details coming soon. RSVP and stay informed: www.surveymonkey.com/r/IAEconSummit



PURPOSE & OUTCOMES

- The 2022 Interior Alaska Economic Summit will inform development of the updated 5-Year Fairbanks North Star Borough Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).
- Participants will review and confirm CEDS components, including a shared economic development vision, goals, and 5-year priorities.
- The updated CEDS will better position the community for funding & investment opportunities.

Interior Alaska Economic Summit

February
22-23, 2022

View the at-a-
glance agenda
online [here](#)

Tuesday

February 22nd – Focus on Industry Clusters

Time	Topic		Virtual Option?
9:00 – 9:45 am	Opening Plenary: Welcome and Inspiration		Yes
9:45 – 10:00 am	<i>Break</i>		
10:00 – 11:45 am	Industry Breakouts Round 1	Agriculture	No
		Energy	No
11:45 am – 1:00 pm	<i>Lunch – on your own</i>		
1:00 – 2:45 pm	Industry Breakouts Round 2	Forestry	No
		Health Care	No
2:45 – 3:00 pm	<i>Break</i>		
3:00 – 5:00 pm	Industry Breakouts Round 3	Mining	No
		Research and Innovation	No
		Visitor Industry	No

Wednesday

February 23rd – Focus on Community Influencers

Time	Topic		Virtual Option?
9:00 – 10:45 am	Influencer Breakouts Round 1	Small Business Development & Entrepreneurship	No
		Communications (phone, internet connectivity)	No
10:45 – 11:00 am	<i>Break</i>		
11:00 am – 12:45 pm	Influencer Breakouts Round 2	Land Use, Housing, & Environment (includes utilities)	No
		Indoor & Outdoor Recreation (includes entertainment, retail, parks, trails)	No
12:45 – 1:45 pm	<i>Lunch – on your own</i>		
1:45 – 3:30 pm	Influencer Breakouts Round 3	Education & Workforce Development	No
		Transportation (includes roads, aviation, rail, bike/pedestrian connections)	No
3:30 – 4:00 pm	<i>Break</i>		
4:00 – 5:00 pm	Closing Plenary: Summary of Results and Next Steps		Yes

Learn More on Our Website



2021 Fairbanks North Star Borough Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Update

PURPOSE

WHAT IS INCLUDED?

TOPICS

PROJECT TEAM

GET INVOLVED

SCHEDULE

RESOURCES

CONTACT US

A Stronger, More Resilient Economy.

www.FNSBCEDS.com

Thank you!

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