

2022-2026 Fairbanks North Star Borough Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

Education & Workforce Development Summary – **DRAFT**

Includes: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats | Targets | Goals | Strategies & Actions | Relevant Plans

Strengths *Internal attributes that contribute to success*

- FNSB has a higher labor participation rate than Alaska
- High school based trade programs and apprenticeship programs are working well
- Military bases offer employment, including civilian jobs
- Strong public school system
- University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) and its many affiliated programs

Weaknesses *Internal barriers to success*

- Female workers have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. More women are choosing to be the ones who stay home with kids, homeschool, provide caretaking, etc.
- Financial costs to access postsecondary education
- High costs and limited availability of child care make it challenging for parents to work
- Limited public transportation
- Winter driving conditions as a barrier to employment for military households especially who are uncomfortable with the 20-30 minute commute

Opportunities *External forces that contribute to success*

- An increasing number of jobs can be done remotely, so Fairbanks could attract individuals who work elsewhere but appreciate the amenities offered in Fairbanks

Threats *External forces that could be barriers to success*

- State budget challenges and uncertainty resulting in cuts to schools, workforce programs, and secondary education institutions such as UAF
- Ongoing impacts from the DHSS data breach continue to negatively impact administration of the state’s child care programs, causing delays in payment and processing of new families and providers
- Delays in background checks causing problems in some industries by delaying hiring (e.g., child care)
- Evolution of work habits during the pandemic and permanent changes to worker preferences and priorities
- Nationwide workforce shortages mean FNSB is competing with other facilities across the country
- Growth of the gig economy impacting availability of workers

Where We Are	What measurements can we use to track progress? Where do we want to be in 5 years?	2026 Targets
72% (2019)	Labor Force Participation Rate – Percentage of FNSB population 16 years and older who are in the workforce. <i>This number has remained steady over the past 5 years</i>	77%
\$68,697	Average Earnings Per Job – Sum of wages, salaries, and earnings divided by the number of people employed. <i>This has grown 7% since 2014; FNSB’s number is slightly lower than Alaska’s average of \$71,106</i>	\$72,131

Other Potential Indicators (need baselines and targets): Gig economy participation, apprenticeship registrations, number of industry occupation vacancies

Sources: Labor Force Participation Rate from U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey; Wages from Bureau of Economic Analysis

Education & Workforce Development Summary for Interior Alaska Economic Summit Review, Feb. 2022

Education & Workforce Development Goals – long term improvements and changes we want to see in five years or more



1. FNSB residents have the education and skills needed for meaningful employment and livable wages.



2. Employers have access to a skilled workforce that meets their unique hiring needs.

Strategies & Actions – the activities we will implement over the next 5 years to accomplish goals & targets and who will lead them	Lead
<p>1. Support Industry-Specific Employment Needs – Continue to develop relevant vocational, technical, and career training programs to fill industry gaps. (Goals 1, 2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Priority employment gaps include educators, health care professionals, mining workers, telecommunication workers, utility operators, farmers, leisure and hospitality employment, construction workers, and aviation. b. Expand the availability of local training and employment events (including job fairs) for residents, university students, and incoming military families to learn about education, training and employment opportunities available in FNSB. c. Support implementation of Alaska’s five workforce development plans, including the Maritime Workforce Plan, the Teacher Education Plan, the Oil & Gas Workforce Plan, the Mining Workforce Plan and the Health Workforce Plan. 	
<p>2. Strong Schools – Encourage excellence in K-12 schools. (Goals 1, 2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Continue to expand STEM education. b. Expand career pathways programming in high schools. 	
<p>3. Military Family Employment – Address barriers to military spouse employment (identified in the Eielson Regional Growth Plan). (Goals 1, 2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Remove barriers for military spouses to obtain occupational licenses. b. Coordinate with the Airman and Family Readiness Center (A&FRC) to supplement existing information sharing with Air Force families before they arrive at EAFB. c. Encourage FNSB-located Job Centers, workforce development program representatives and large employers to participate in military family welcoming programs. d. Prior to PCS, conduct debrief/departure interviews or focus groups with military families regarding experience with FNSB employment and workforce development. e. Expand access to affordable child care services for military households. f. Establish a rideshare program to help DoD household members commute to job centers. 	

Other Relevant Resources

- **Fairbanks North Star Borough School District Strategic Plan.** FNSB School District. December 2019. [View here.](#)
- **Eielson Regional Growth Plan.** Fairbanks North Star Borough. 2018. [View here.](#)
- **UAF Strategic Plan 2027.** University of Alaska Fairbanks. November 2021. [View here.](#)
- **Alaska Workforce Development Plans (includes Health, Maritime, Mining, Educators and Oil & Gas).** University of Alaska. [View here.](#)



Interior Alaska Economic Summit, February 22-23, 2022

Education & Workforce Development Breakout: Discussion Summary (02-23-22)

To view results from the other sessions, visit <https://fnsbcds.com/> (results will be posted by March 11th)

This document compiles feedback and notes from the breakout session. The other tools that were used to guide the discussion include:

- An economic cluster/influencer one-pager that identified a preliminary SWOT analysis, goals, strategies, actions, and measures of success
- A worksheet identifying a proposed economic vision statement and guiding questions for each of the activities. The guiding questions have been copied into this document for reference. The feedback on the economic vision statement was compiled separately and will be released by March 11th.

Participants *(alphabetical by first name, based on sign in sheet)*

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Facilitated by Jinnel Choiniere, Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce

RSVPs: 64 participants

Feedback on the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

Guiding Questions:

1. What did we get right?
2. What's missing?
3. What would you change?
4. What's the most important item in each quadrant?

Discussion Notes:

Color Key: Blue = proposed revision | red = proposed deletion | green = proposed addition

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delete: strong public school system • Add: high school programs and trade schools, pre-college programs • Add: trades and apprenticeships across industries • Add: Alaska Performance (AP) and UA Scholars program • Add: Fairbanks Resource Agency (FRA) is an amazing group • Add: Tiger Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add: cost of living, energy • Add: lack of public employee/teacher benefits • Add: challenges of licensing • Add: career pipelines and lack of awareness of existing training opportunities • Add: limited arts and cultural opportunities • Add: staffing shortages • Add: limited extracurriculars for younger students • Add: economically disadvantaged youth are not successful with remote learning (became apparent during pandemic) • Add: access to assistance programs • Add: winter • Add: competition within the job market • Add: seasonal jobs don't pay a living wage, workers leave • Add: trade jobs do not offer the same flexibility as jobs that can be done remotely; less time off • Add: school bus services prevent working • Add: rapidly aging population not balanced out by working/younger generation

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add: incentivizing young people to stay/ return • Add: TCC offers childcare pay for family members who watch the children of relatives • Add: expand utilization of the Career & Technical College • Add: expand the availability of training and scholarships • Add: focus on bringing in different types of high skilled work • Add: Alaska as a low tax hub for alternative/remote businesses and work • Add: IJJA money will create opportunities for careers • Early college courses/credits in high school • Add: helmets to hardhats program • Add: military folks who retire or are forced out because they cannot pass physical – seeking job opportunities • Add: create certificates that align to local industry needs • Add: small and medium enterprises (SMEs) should interact more with UAF students on career opportunities • Add: promote UAF as a place for students to stay, go to college and have a good job immediately upon graduating • Add: partnerships with Fairbanks Memorial Hospital, Tribal organizations (TCC, FNA), FRA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add: availability and affordability of broadband • Add: state budget cuts to important educational programs and scholarships • Add: no retirement for teachers • Add: potential funding cuts to Fairbanks Resource Agency • Add: licensing for teaching is expensive and difficult • Add: industries and institutions are in silos (schools, military, seniors) • Add: lack of acceptance of alternative/renewable energy • Add: lack of affordable housing • Add: population outflow • Add: work ethic • Add: state workers are understaffed and underpaid, making it hard to retain quality workers who can support the private sector

Goals, Strategies, Actions Discussion Questions

Guiding Questions:

1. What did we get right?
2. What would you change?
3. What's missing?
4. Who will lead each of the strategies? What do you see as you/your organization's role?
5. Which of the strategies is most important for us to focus on over the next year?

Discussion Notes:

- Goals
 - Revise: under Goal #1, add benefits
 - Revise: use future tense instead of present tense for both goals
 - Revise: add quality of life concept to both goals
 - Revise: under Goal #1, add incentivizing entry into employment market
 - Revise: under Goal #2, add "long term"
 - Add: address aging out of the workforce
 - Add: Access current needs, not just future needs
 - Add: employers have a reason to bring their business to the interior; new industries, not just oil/mining

- Strategy 1: Support Industry-Specific Needs
 - Revise: change “vocational” to “career and technical education”
 - Add: need for better benefits, especially in K-12 jobs
 - Add: Improve recruitment for training programs
 - Add: agriculture to industries in action a
 - Add: advocate for cooperative business models as a tool for meaningful work
 - Add: create an agricultural workforce plan
 - Add: train employers to provide meaningful employment; consider a co-op training program on how to start a co-op, as a solution to lack of meaningful employment
 - Add: build feedback mechanisms in place so that training pipelines are adaptable and flexible to meet the evolving needs of the future
 - Add: Build industry need projects into UAF courses so students can see opportunities outside of academia
 - Add: build comprehensive UAF-wide internship programs across all degree programs
- Strategy 2: Strong Schools
 - Revise: Reword strategy key words to be “Educational Foundations”
 - Revise: change “K-12” to “birth to 16”
 - Revise: change “STEM” to “STEAM” (action a)
 - Revise: add middle schools to action b; add “career **and technical**”
 - Revise: reword strategy to be, “Increase support of quality public education.”
 - Lead: include Alaska Works Partnership.
 - Add: co-op educators
 - Add: advocate for prioritized K-12 education funding
 - Add: more soft skills taught in K-12 (many professions cannot find interns with needed soft skills)
 - Add: support arts; art helps grow innovation
 - Add: better connect students with potential job paths based on their emerging interests
 - Add: expand tech prep so it happens earlier
 - Add: advocate for improved teacher benefits
 - Add: establish more links and partnerships between the classroom and the real world; expand partnerships with industry from grade school through high school
 - Add: early childhood programs to strategy, plus associated action
 - Add: Address family child care needs
 - Add: connect UAF undergrad students with high school students as mentors and evidence of success
 - Delete: eliminate rideshare program recommendation (action f); virtual options eliminate need
- Strategy 3: Military Family Employment
 - Revise: under action a, revise to also include less restrictive licensing, especially in health care
 - Add: increased outreach by the Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce

- Add: develop and distribute a newcomers brief for new residents
- General comments
 - Throughout this section, strive for people first language
 - Add: 4th strategy, workforce development pipeline – high school → decision → training/school/job
 - Add as action under 4th strategy: more one-on-one career counseling with high school seniors
 - Throughout: it's not just about training employees; employers also need to understand what employees need to be successful and what meaningful employment looks like

Measures of Success Discussion Questions

Guiding Questions:

1. What did we get right?
2. What's missing?
3. What would you change?
4. Which of these indicators will be the most effective at measuring our success?

Discussion Notes:

- Add: graduation rates (high school, college, vocational tech)
- Add: out migration
- Add: seasonal vs. non-seasonal employment
- Add: placement metrics from career programs
- Add: job turnover rates
- Add: selection of majors at UAF
- Add: percentage of graduates from high school and college who stay in the community
- Add: rate of employer sponsored health benefits
- Add: percentage of FNSB employees who grew up in the region