
March 2022

Recovery & Resiliency in Southwest Alaska

Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic –
For Now and the Future

PREPARED FOR:



About McKinley Research Group

- Formerly McDowell Group
- Research and consulting since 1972 - 50th Anniversary
- Offices in Anchorage and Juneau
- Community Economic Research, Planning, and Development
- Projects based in SWAMC region including seafood industry, transportation and planning development, visitor industry, healthcare and social services, Alaska Native regional and village corporations, and many more
- Numerous economic development strategies

Plan Purpose

- **Build** from lessons learned during the current pandemic
- **Forward looking** preparedness and response plan for building resiliency to future economic shocks
- Shows the region has **prioritized** strategies and is ready for funding to address these goals
- Not a plan to be “shelved”
- A plan for SWAMC and **YOU**

Resiliency

The ability to avoid, withstand, and recover from economic shifts, natural disasters, and other events.

Planning Process



Resident Survey

150 Respondents



Baseline Data Scan



Regional Plan Review



Stakeholder Interviews

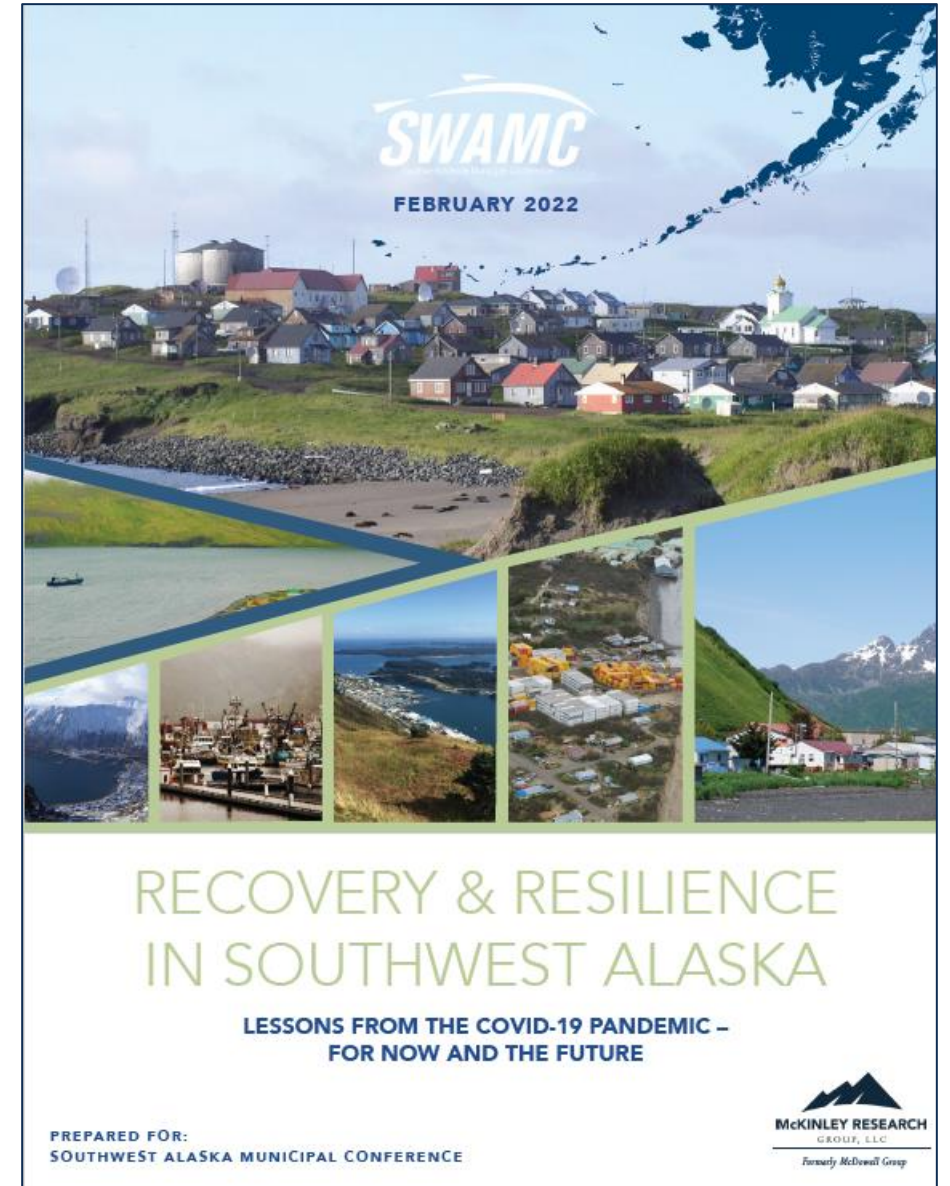
20 + Participants representing local government, seafood, education, visitor industry, transportation, and others



Strategic Recommendations

Plan Overview

- Situational awareness
 - Sets socioeconomic context
 - Identifies major impacts of COVID-19
 - Estimates select COVID-related mitigation funding sources to individuals, businesses, local governments, and others
- Lessons learned
 - Describes interview and survey findings
- Strategic recommendations, action plan, SWAMC roles



Relationship to Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

- CEDS articulate and plan for the **economic direction** for the region
- Resilience is a **common thread** throughout CEDS
- Recovery & Resiliency Plan **complements** SWAMC's current CEDS
- SWAMC CEDS 2020-2024 Goals:
 - Resource Management Advocacy
 - Infrastructure Development and Maintenance Advocacy
 - People and Partnerships Networking
 - Quality of Life Initiatives



Strategic Recommendations

Goal A: Resource Management Advocacy

- 1) Maintain Functioning Commercial Fisheries
- 2) Support Ongoing Seasonal Tourism

Goal B: Infrastructure Development and Maintenance Advocacy

- 1) Improve Broadband Capacities
- 2) Improve Supply Chain Systems

Goal C: People and Partnerships Networking

- 1) Maximize Capture of Federal and Other Support Funding
- 2) Strengthen Emergency Operations Center Structures
- 3) Continue Building Communications between Industry and Communities

Goal D: Quality of Life Initiatives

- 1) Enhance Childcare Services and Support



Strategic Recommendations

- 1) Does this reflect the actions that should be taken?
- 2) Does this reflect SWAMC's role?
- 3) How can my organization partner with SWAMC

GOAL A: RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT



Strategic Recommendation 1: Maintain Functioning Commercial Fisheries

Commercial fisheries are the biggest economic driver in the Southwest Region.

Action Plan

- Develop a simple seafood industry reference guide for emergency managers
- Assess/identify quarantine options for individual communities
- Identify support mechanism for relief resources and funds

SWAMC Roles

- Identify funding/manage development of seafood industry reference guide
- Facilitate community conversations around best practice quarantine options
- Develop a resource describing regional seafood industry to aid policymakers and regional leaders with fast-paced response situations

Strategic Recommendation 2: Support Ongoing Seasonal Tourism

Support for the tourism industry increases economic diversification, building resiliency to economic shocks in other sectors.

Action Plan

- Assess current position and visitor marketing in the region
- Deploy additional marketing to attract travel-ready market segments
- Continue support of entrepreneurial ventures
- Engage with Alaska Native Cultural Tourism plan to expand market awareness and promotion

SWAMC Roles

- Advocate for marketing funding for operators
- Promote responsible tourism to help minimize visitor impacts on small communities
- Convene tour operators to develop regional tour packages
- Advocate for National Park infrastructure improvements
- Promote ecotourism

GOAL B: INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE



Strategic Recommendation 1: Improve Broadband Capacities

Internet access is essential to access relief funding and spread information, as well as business competitiveness.

Action Plan

- Capitalize on funding opportunities for broadband access improvements
- Continue support for further tribal broadband funding
- Implement “Broadband-in-a-Box” plan

SWAMC Roles

- Continue to educate and advocate with Alaska’s congressional delegation and State of Alaska
- Connect communities to funding and operational plans that best suit their community
- Convene stakeholders to identify strategic funding partnerships

Strategic Recommendation 2: Improve Supply Chain Systems

Maintaining essential air and waterborne transportation is critical to the flow of people, goods, and fuel into the region. Infrastructure to warehouse goods, including temperature-sensitive medical supplies and food, could build resilience and mitigate food insecurity.

Action Plan

- Assess need for/capacity to provide added food and materials storage for emergency purposes
- Enhance necessary fuel storage
- Seek opportunities to incorporate renewable energy solutions
- Restore, augment, and enhance regional transportation services

SWAMC Roles

- Monitor and promote energy-related funding opportunities
- Advocate for increased funding to meet energy needs
- Advocate for ferry system funding and routes serving Southwest
- Advocate for essential air service designation in the region

GOAL C: PEOPLE AND PARTNERSHIPS NETWORKING



Strategic Recommendation 1:

Maximize Capture of Federal and Other Support Funding

Increased capacity to support awareness of, applications to, and effective spending of these available emergency resources and relief is critical and time sensitive

Action Plan

- Strengthen communication between tribal, municipal, and state organizations/governments
- Create a plan describing how support can be provided to residents and businesses
- Inform federal officials of unique characteristics of the region in implementing federal funding

SWAMC Roles

- Advocate for regional needs and relevant funding
- Provide technical assistance to communities and regional organizations
- Develop tools and materials to build awareness of and ease access to funding
- Ensure regional CEDS encompasses all communities

Strategic Recommendation 2: Strengthen Emergency Operations Center Structures

Continued training on EOC best practices will position communities for effective disaster response.

Action Plan

- Increase training on how to activate an EOC and strengthen preparedness
- Conduct emergency drills to enhance preparedness
- Leverage health care providers' networks and capabilities

SWAMC Roles

- Develop a list of important emergency management contacts at the State/regional levels
- Provide resources such as emergency management toolkits or guides, updates on essential services, public health guidelines, best practices and tips for developing employee policies, and available financial resources

Strategic Recommendation 3: Continue Building Communications between Industry and Communities

Effective communication regarding emergency plans will ensure organizations have the capacity to meet objectives.

Action Plan

- Build productive community networks and relationships
- Develop emergency communications plan
- Develop/update list of regional and community emergency contacts
- Host online versions of community emergency response plans
- Use common platforms for hosting webinars or online meetings

SWAMC Roles

- Hub for relaying and interpreting information flowing between government, industry, nonprofits, and residents
- Help inform residents about local businesses they can support during and after a disaster

GOAL D: QUALITY OF LIFE INITIATIVES



Strategic Recommendation 1: Enhance Childcare Services/Support

Childcare should be viewed as critical infrastructure for workforce and community development. Enhanced childcare access supports labor force participation and helps families stay in the region.

Action Plan

- Secure funding for childcare infrastructure development
- Support workforce development for early childhood educators
- Develop or attract new and expanded after-school programs

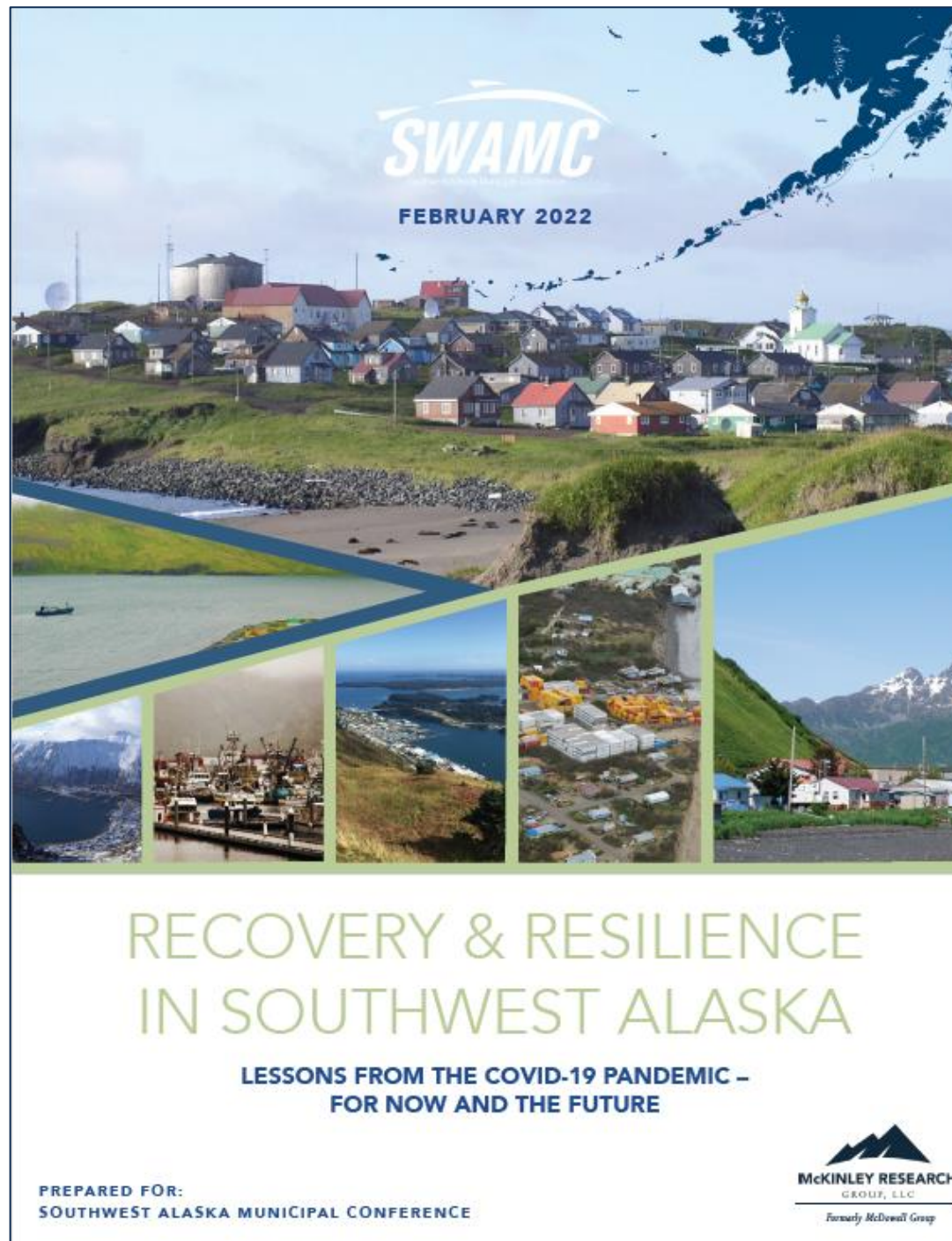
SWAMC Roles

- Elevate childcare workforce as an economic development initiative
- Advocate for additional funding to support childcare sector development
- Connect in-region organizations to childcare training opportunities
- Advocate for state childcare licensure policy review to better understand implications for Southwest Alaska

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Download the
Recovery &
Resiliency Plan:

www.swamc.org



THANK YOU!



Shirley Marquardt
(907) 562-7380
smarquardt@swamc.org

Katie Berry
(907) 339-1460
kberry@mckinleyresearch.com



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McKINLEY RESEARCH GROUP, LLC

3800 Centerpoint Drive, Suite 1100 | Anchorage, AK 99503 | (907) 274-3200

801 W. 10th Street, Suite 100B | Juneau, AK 99801 | (907) 586-6126

info@mckinleyresearch.com | mckinleyresearch.com