Building Economic Independence: Employment Services in Tribal TANF

Session 3 of the Programming to Build Strong Families and Promote Economic Independence Webinar Series

November 4, 2026

As you join, please share in the chat:

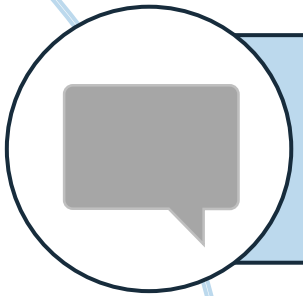
Your name, Tribe, and title

Check-in question:

What are 1-2 things that you believe are important to help families become economically independent?



KEY FEATURES OF ZOOM: REMINDERS



Use chat to ask questions



Stay muted during presentation



Use ‘Raise Hand’ before coming off mute

AGENDA

- Welcome and overview of session *(5 min)*
- Presentation on work activities *(25 min)*
- Group discussion *(25 min)*
- Closeout and next steps *(5 min)*



SESSION OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Understand how Tribal communities define economic independence
- ✓ Identify workforce readiness and employment services that Tribes may be well-positioned to offer based on resources and context
- ✓ Increase practical knowledge of how Tribal programs might strengthen existing work activities





OVERVIEW OF WORK ACTIVITIES

ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE

“Economic independence” may look different for different Tribal communities. For example:

- Being able to sustain yourself and your family through cultural self-sufficiency practices and traditions
- Gaining skills and experience to bring back to your community and local economy
- Creating local employment opportunities for training and empowering youth

What does economic independence look like in the communities your program serves?

TRIBAL TANF WORK PARTICIPATION

- Tribes negotiate their Work Participation Rates (WPRs) with HHS
- Rates range from **20%-58%** of all work-eligible families
- Nearly all Tribal TANF Programs met their goal WPRs in 2020



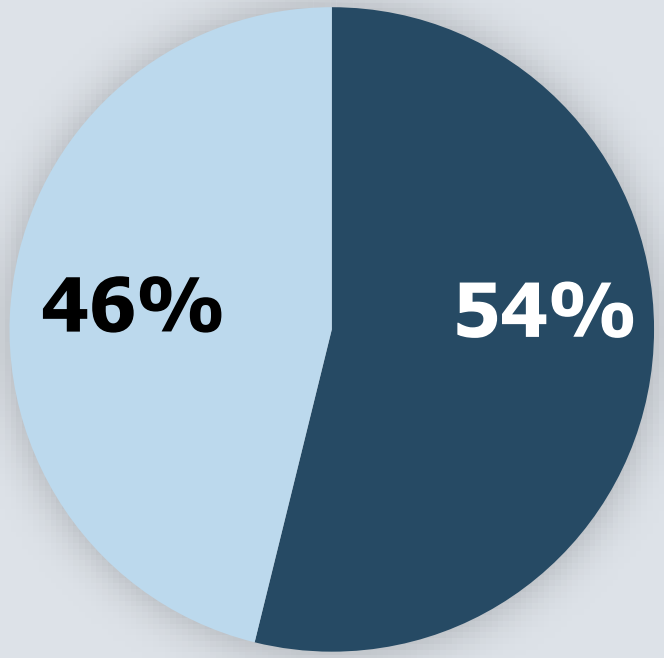
34%

Average Tribal TANF negotiated WPR (2020)

WORK ACTIVITIES

- Federal law identifies 13 activities that count towards work participation
- Tribal programs can negotiate to count additional work activities, defined as “Other” activities
  - Examples include:
    - Farming
    - Hunting
    - Fishing
    - Other culturally-relevant work and subsistence activities

Tribal TANF Work Participation (2023)



MOST COMMON TRIBAL TANF ACTIVITIES

- Other activities
- Unsubsidized employment
- Job search
- Community service
- Vocational training





Presented by: Katheryn Nenneman, *AVCP Benefits Division*

11/4/2026

What Does Self Sufficiency Look Like For Families Living a Cultural Based/Traditional Lifestyle In Rural Western Alaska?

ASSOCIATION OF VILLAGE COUNCIL PRESIDENTS

- The YK Delta covers approximately 60,000 square miles.
- Is roughly 18 million acres
- Also the size of the state of Oregon or Louisiana.
- Bethel is the main hub city located approximately 60 miles inland, up the Kuskokwim River from the Bering Sea
- We live a traditional lifestyle of hunting and gathering as a way of life.



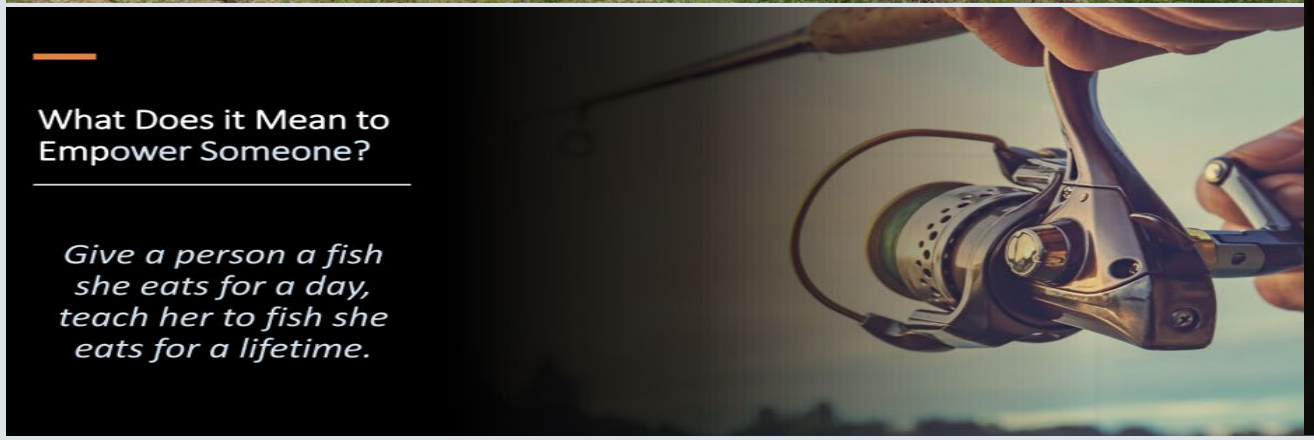
ASSOCIATION OF VILLAGE COUNCIL PRESIDENTS

There is a 25% unemployment for our region. However, all villages have unemployment rates of over 50%. If you do not work for the: Local schools, health clinic, tribal/city office, small grocery store, you don't have a job. So how do people survive?

OUR LAND IS FULL OF ABUNDANCE & SUSTINANCE… THIS KEEPS US ALIVE AND WELL









WE PRACTICE OUR TRADITIONAL WAYS OF LIFE AS A MEANS FOR SURVIVAL

WHAT ARE ALLOWABLE WORK ACTIVITIES FOR TANF FAMILIES WHO ARE UNEMPLOYED?

- Acceptable forms of work activities.
- Hunting: moose, caribou, bear, ducks, geese, swans, whales, seals or walrus.
- Fishing: Salmon in the summers, white fish in the spring/fall/winter, pike, tomcods.
- Trapping: wolves, fox, mink, (used to make traditional clothing)
- Gathering of: berries, greens, traditional foods and wood year round to keep homes warm.
- Sewing: traditional garments, knitting or beading crafts to sell
- Elder Care: (not in own home, but the home of others)
- Volunteering in school classrooms, providing unpaid childcare.
- Attending Healthy Families/Caliriaq workshops
- Completion or GED hours or attending trainings for certification
- Fall/Spring/Summer- wilderness family retreats/camping
- Search and Rescue Operations/Winter Trail Marking
- Assisting other families with preparations for upcoming seasons: winterizing homes, shutting down summer camps, pulling up and securing boats, servicing 4 wheelers/snowmachines as main forms transportation.



WHAT IS HEALTHY FAMILIES, AND WHY IS IMPORTANT AT AVCP AND IN OUR REGION?

Our FAMILY is where our world begins. It is where we learn how to be a human being. It is where we learn to talk, to think, to feel, to behave and how to treat others and the world around us, in the ways of our people and our culture. Our deepest values and beliefs, our sense of right and wrong, begin in our families. Our childhood experiences with our grandparents, our parents, brothers and sisters, our relatives and other people in our family are the foundations for our life, for our relationships, and our identity.



Inerquutet Aturluki Yuukumta, Utumaurluta Yuuciqukut.

When we respect others and follow the traditional teachings, our lives will be in harmony.

- The *Elluarrluteng Ilakutellriit* model was put together by a group of Yup'ik professionals under the guidance of Elders from the Y-K Delta. The teachings have been used for thousands of years by the Yup'ik people. Although some may not realize this, everyone who is raised in a Yup'ik home continue to use many of the teachings today.
- *Elluarrluteng Ilakutellriit* is a three-day Workshop where participants are reminded by our Elders that all the wisdom, knowledge, cultural practices, beliefs, and values that have been passed on for generations are possessed by each person. These are strengths that maintain whole health. In finding and using these strengths we can overcome trauma, learn healthy behavior and maintain a balanced lifestyle to be good role models.

SERVICES:
WORKSHOPS, COMMUNITY GATHERINGS, VIRTUAL 'MINI-SESSIONS', RESOURCE FOR YOUTH





"Strive not to be a success, but rather to be of value."

Albert Einstein











Quyana-

Thank You in Yupik

Question and Answers allowed

DISCUSSION

- Thinking about the work activities your program currently offers:
  - What activities would you like to offer but currently don’t?
    - For programs with these activities: What advice do you have for setting this activity up?
  - What lessons have you learned about placing participants in the right activity for them?
  - In terms of helping participants become more economically independent, what work activities have been most effective?
  - What are other family strengthening or stability services and supports does your program offer families to help them become economically independent?

NEXT STEPS

CHECK-OUT QUESTION:
What is one idea you have for building out a new activity or strengthening an existing work activity?

COMPANION PRODUCT AND RECORDING
These will be made available on the *Programming to Build Strong Families and Promote Economic Independence series* webpage!

CONTACT & RESOURCES

- **Email:** STARinfo@blhtech.com
- **STAR Website:** peerta.acf.hhs.gov

  Thousands of resources for TANF programs!
- **Programming to Build Strong Families and Promote Economic Independence Webinar Series webpage:** peerta.acf.hhs.gov/strong-families-LAN

  Recordings, slides, and products from this series
- **State & Tribal TANF Resource Repository:** peerta.acf.hhs.gov/repository

  A central place to share your program materials with other practitioners
- **Need 1:1 technical assistance or support?**

  Request it here: peerta.acf.hhs.gov/form/request-technical-assistance