

HB 192: AK REG ECON ASSIST. PROGRAM; EXTEND

House Bill 192 extends the termination date of the Alaska Regional Economic Assistance Program ([AS 44.33.896](#)) from July 1, 2021 to July 1, 2031, enabling the creation and continued operation of the Alaska Regional Development Organizations (ARDORs).

The ARDOR program's mission has remained consistent throughout the years: to encourage the formation of regional development organizations to prepare and implement regional development strategies. Through regional development strategies, local knowledge, and coordinated implementation, **ARDORs champion economic development planning for Alaska's regions and communities.**

As partners of the State of Alaska and the Alaska Small Business Development Center, and as leaders of regional economic development efforts, ARDORs serve as conduits to a network of economic development programs and support services for their regions, communities, and businesses. Although ARDORs have much in common and implement similar scopes of work, the form and function of each ARDOR is customized to the region.

There are nine ARDORs across the State:

- Anchorage Economic Development Corporation (AEDC)
- Bering Strait Development Council (BSDC)
- Copper Valley Development Association (CVDA)
- Fairbanks North Star Borough Economic Development Commission (FNSB-EDC)
- Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District (KPEDD)
- Northwest Arctic Borough Economic Development Council (NWABOR)
- Prince William Sound Economic Development District (PWSEDD)
- Southeast Conference (SEC)
- Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference (SWAMC)

ARDORs enable local officials, tribal organizations, and businesses to pool their limited resources to work together on economic infrastructure and workforce development projects, develop public and private partnerships, and provide technical assistance to rural communities that lack broadband service and financial resource availability. They are non-partisan entities that prepare and implement regional development strategies which incorporate local knowledge to foster responsible and sustainable economic growth.

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the ARDORs were essential to keeping businesses open. They assisted business owners across the State in identifying which local, state, and/or federal relief programs they could qualify for, assisted businesses in applying for relief funds, and acted as a point of contact between the business owner and the relief programs. They also acted as a partner with the State of Alaska's AK CARES grant program.

The ARDOR program was reauthorized for five years in the 2016 legislative session, but funding for the annual ARDOR grants was removed from the FY2017 budget. The ARDORs now received their funding through other sources, including EDA grants and membership fees. As a result, **there is no cost associated with the passage of HB 192.**

HB 192 is sponsored by Representative Kreiss-Tomkins. However, if you have any questions or concerns on HB 192 or in regard to the ARDORs, please feel free to also contact your local ARDOR or the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development Legislative Liaison, Glenn Hoskinson. Glenn can put you in contact with the ARDOR in your region, answer questions on the ARDOR program, and/or provide you a copy of the latest ARDOR Annual Report as needed: Glenn.Hoskinson@Alaska.gov or (907) 465-6466.

Please support the continuation of the vital work done by the ARDORs through a "yes" vote on HB 192.