

# Northwest Arctic Borough School District

Update on the Community Wellness Taskforce  
February 24, 2026

**COMMUNITY  
WELLNESS  
TASKFORCE**

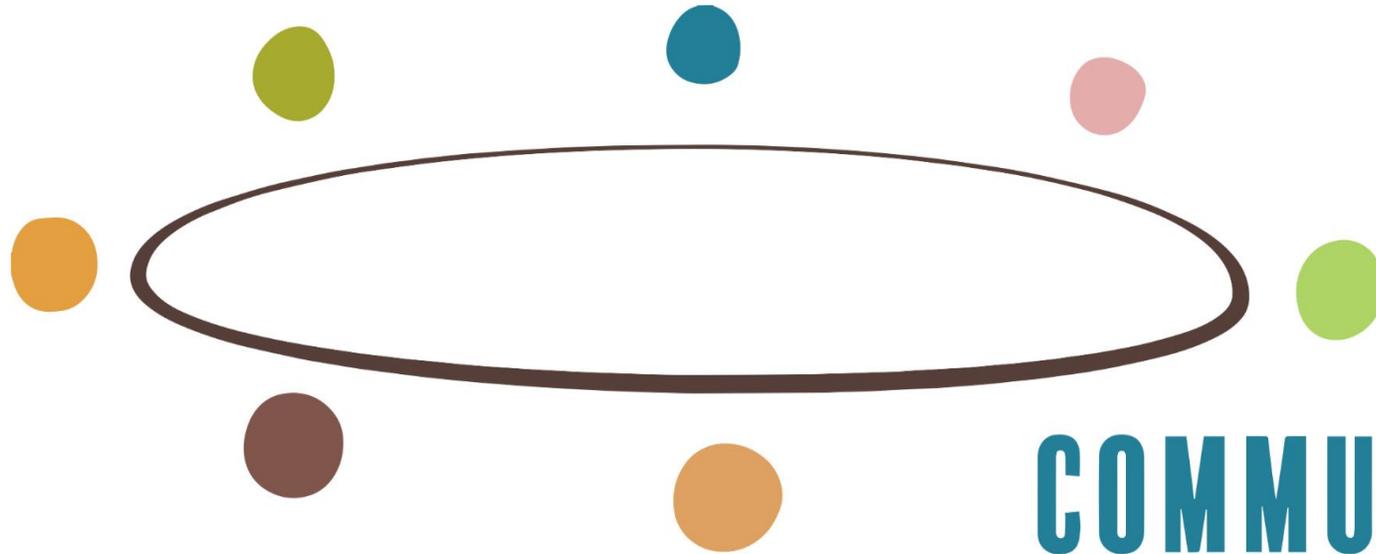
# The Community Wellness Taskforce (CWT)

**Savaaliq Atautchlikun** | *working together*



- We are a grassroots local initiative, supporting our communities.
- We have representatives from the 5 leading organizations.
- We work collaboratively to create space for local solutions.
- All CWT members organizations are equal participants.
- We do not yet have a legal structure at this time.
- We do not yet have dedicated administration and operations staff.

# Savaaliq Atautchlikun | working together



**COMMUNITY  
WELLNESS  
TASKFORCE**

# Taskforce Members

## Current Members

- **Bree Swanson**, Social Services Administrator, **Maniilaq**
- **Roberta Moto**, Wellness Program Manager, **Maniilaq**
- **Tommy Ballot**, Board Member, **NANA**
- **Shayne Pungowiyi**, External Government Affairs Specialist, **NANA**
- **Nelda Swan**, Elder, **Regional Elders Council**, **NANA**
- **Hilda Haas**, Elder, **Regional Elders Council**, **NANA**
- **Derek Haviland Lie**, Assembly Member, **NWAB**, Mayor, Kotzebue
- **Raven Sheldon**, Assembly Member, **NWAB**, Vice Mayor of Selawik
- **Margaret Hansen**, President, **NWABSD**
- **Verna Westlake**, Community Investment Coordinator, **Teck**

## Past Members

- **Tanya Kirk**, Maniilaq
- **Elizabeth Niqsik Ferguson**, NANA
- **Lori Henry**, NANA
- **Chuck Greene**, NANA
- **Walter Sampson**, NWAB
- **Hans Nelson**, NWAB
- **Tessa Baldwin**, NWAB
- **Aucha Kameroff**, NWAB
- **Tracey Shaeffer**, NWABSD
- **Alice Melton-Barr**, NWABSD
- **Marleanna Hall**, Teck
- **Kally Perry**, Teck

# Our mission and values

Our vision is a region where *suicide does not happen*.

*“How might we as a community ensure that suicide does not happen”*

The **Community Wellness Taskforce** is on a mission to work with our communities to help to prevent suicide in our region.

We use our experience to work side-by-side with our communities to think up and create solutions to prevent suicide **together with our people**, rather than **for** our people.

## Our values

→ **Participation**

*We work with our local communities and invite community participation in all our work.*

→ **Respect for our people’s knowledge**

*We put our people’s unique knowledge and experiences at the center of our work.*

→ **Respect for community timelines**

*We recognize our communities deal with many challenges. We work with our communities at the pace they are able to proceed.*

→ **Connection**

*We focus our solutions design process on filling gaps and making connections. We don’t want to replace what’s already helping, but we want to help to enhance, connect, and build on these positive impacts.*

# Co-creating solutions with our communities

## What are solutions workshops?

- There is a structured process that communities and groups around the world use to tackle complex challenges:  
**Social innovation.**
- Often these challenges are complex and deeply-rooted. Solutions need to **go the root of the challenge** too.
- To tackle a challenge effectively, we work together to create a clear challenge question: **How might we .... [challenge]?**

# “How might we?” Our focus

The taskforce settled on a description of what challenge we want to tackle together with our communities.

How might we as a community ensure that suicide does not happen?

# Taskforce Vision Workshops





**Collaborating with our  
communities**

# Collaborating with our communities on a pilot

Participatory development is a key guiding principle.

This means we don't show up with all the answers.  
Instead, we:

- Take a grassroots, **people-centered** approach.
- Use '**social innovation**' processes to create solutions.
- Collaborate with our people in **solutions workshops**.
- Will **pilot this approach** one community at a time.

- ♥ **We believe in the strength of our people** and our ability to create positive change.
- ♥ **We are working together** with our communities and organizations to make a difference.
- ♥ **We value your well-being** and are committed to supporting greater wellness in our communities.

# Collaboration with Selawik - January 2023

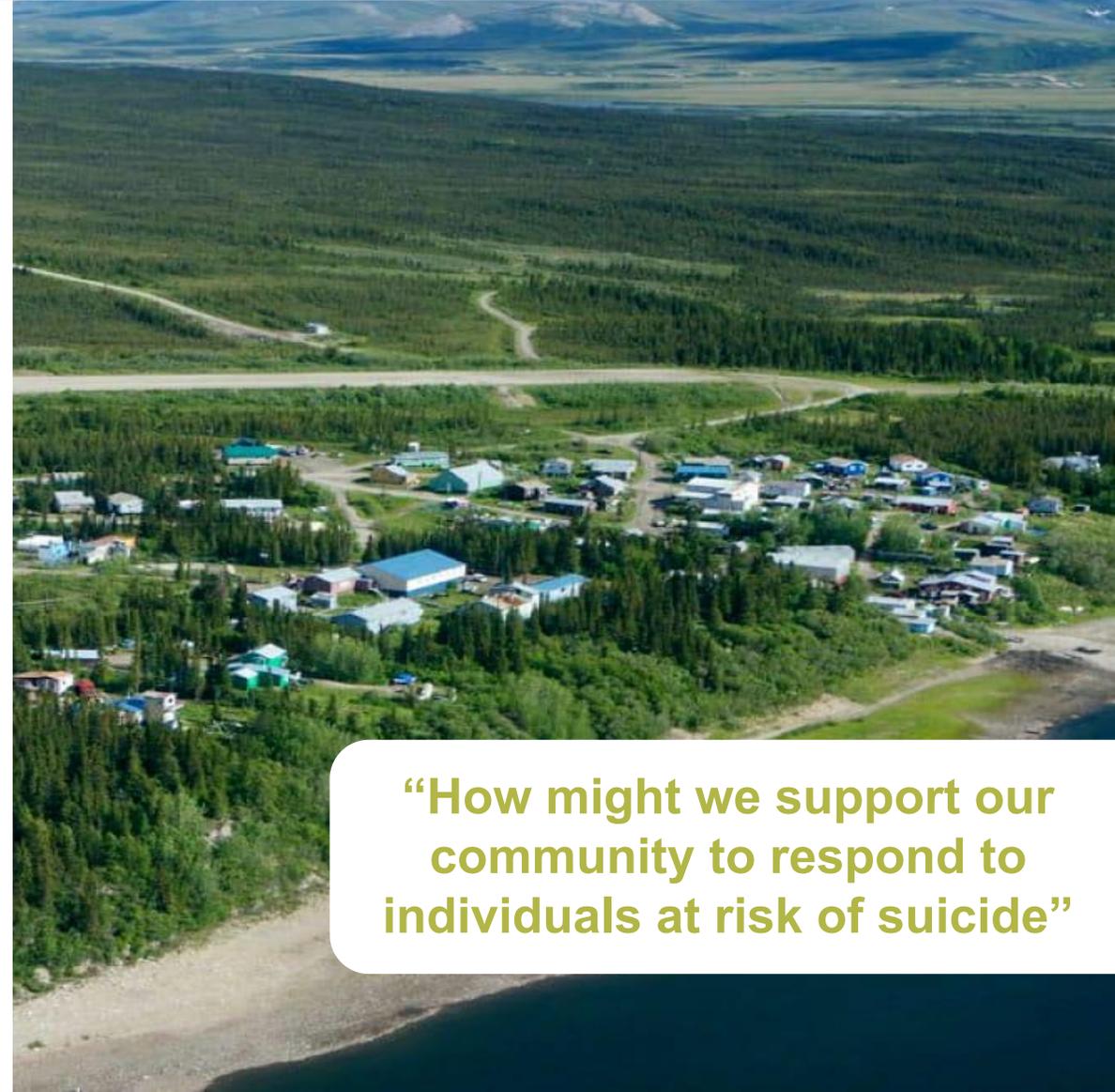
- **Tanya Ballot, Administrator of Selawik Tribe** leads Selawik's work with the Taskforce.
- **Raven Sheldon, Vice Mayor of City of Selawik and Northwest Arctic Borough Assembly Taskforce member** joined in August 2025; works closely with Tanya on community matters
- **Half-day in person workshop** to plan for the learning sessions and the solutions workshops
- **Three online learning sessions** to learn key topics needed to be prepared for the solutions workshops
- **Three-day in-person solutions workshop** to develop collaborative community solutions for Selawik



**“How might we in Selawik prevent suicide”**

# Collaboration with Kiana - January 2025

- **Tessa Baldwin**, Tribe Director and **Eisa Smith**, Executive Director, OPT-IN Kiana lead Kiana's work with the Taskforce.
- **Two 60-minute onboarding meeting** to introduce the work of the Taskforce in more detail and orient the Kiana team: **February 19, and April 10, 2025.**
- **Planning workshop** to discuss solutions, iceberg, actor mapping; scheduling and content of learning sessions: **April 17, 2025.**
- **Three online learning sessions** to learn key topics to prepare for the solutions workshops: **This Summer.**
- **Three half-day in-person solutions workshops** to come up with solutions for Kiana: **This Summer.**



“How might we support our community to respond to individuals at risk of suicide”

# Collaborating with Kotzebue:

## What are the different steps?

### Planning



The Taskforce and organizers plan the process, define the challenge, set dates, and invite participants.

### Learning Sessions (~90 mins each)



October 28

**Session 1:**  
All participants learn about the solutions process.



October 30

**Session 2:**  
All participants learn about opioids, addiction, and the challenge in Kotzebue.



November 5

**Session 3:**  
All participants learn about opioids, addiction, and the challenge in Kotzebue.

### Solutions Workshops (~3 half-day workshops)



February 26



Date: TBD



Date: TBD

**Workshops 1-2:**  
All participants explore the challenge and decide where they want to focus. In groups, they consider root causes and connected issues.

**Workshops 2-3:**  
All participants explore possible changes, a vision for the future, and come up with ideas for possible solutions to the challenge.

### Refining/Pitching



We refine the ideas with most potential and present them to possible supporters.

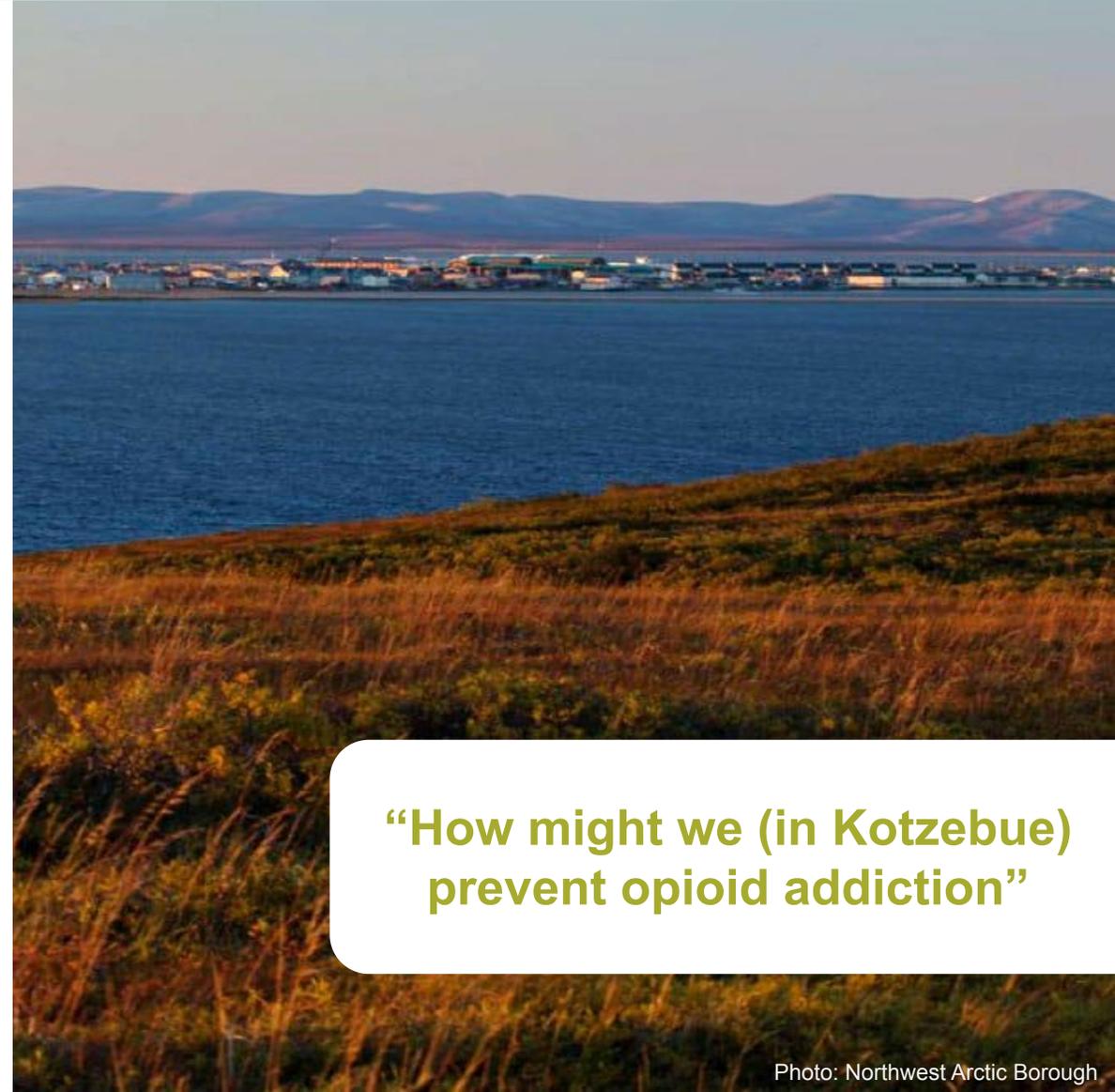
INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THESE PHASES

[OPTIONAL]

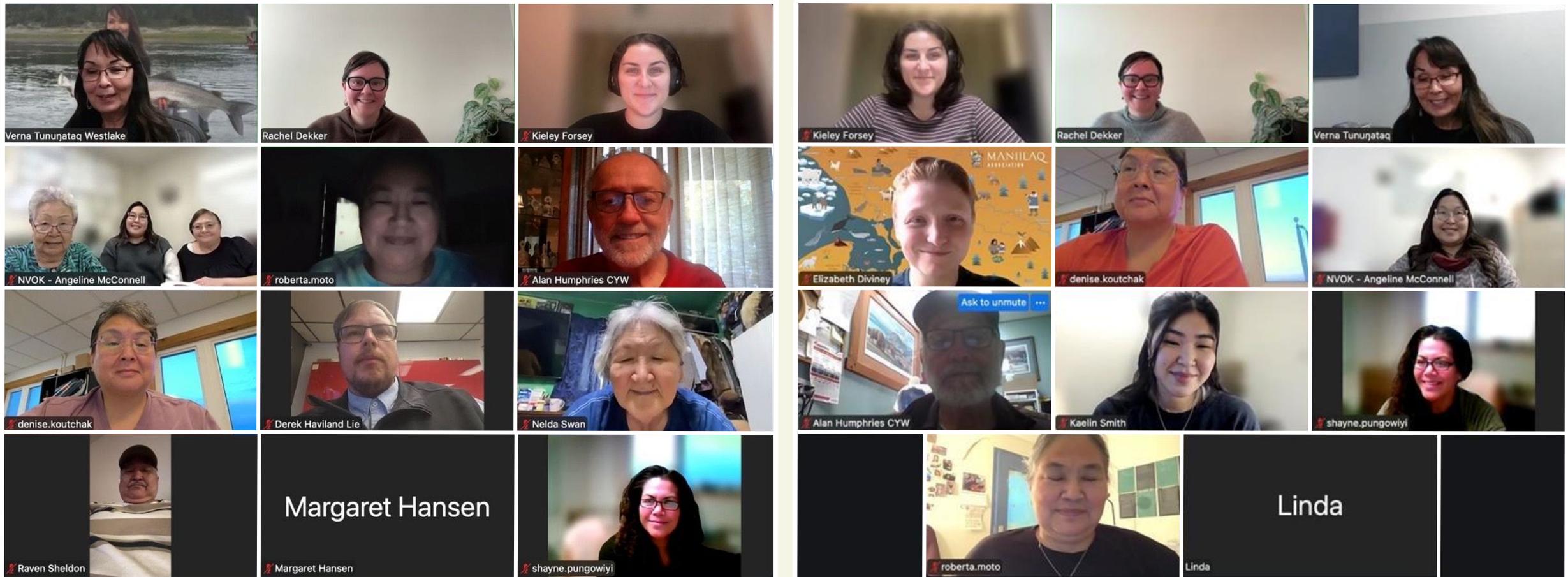
# Collaboration with Kotzebue – November 2023

- **Angeline McConnell**, Executive Manager, **Christina Hensley**, Executive Director, and **Carl Weisner**, Deputy Director with the **Tribe** lead Kotzebue’s work with the Taskforce.
- **Two 90-minute onboarding meetings** to introduce the work of the Taskforce in more detail and orient the Kotzebue team. **March 26, 2025, and April 11, 2025.**
- **One 4-hour workshop** to plan for the learning sessions and the solutions workshops. **April 24, 2025**
- **Three online learning sessions** to learn key topics needed to be prepared for the solutions workshops. **October 28, 30, and November 5, 2025.**
- **Three half-day in-person solutions workshops** to come up with solutions for Kotzebue. **February 2026.**

“How might we (in Kotzebue) prevent opioid addiction”



# Kotzebue Learning Sessions, Fall 2025





# **Taskforce Progress and Next Steps**

# Taskforce Operational Updates

## Milestones we achieved

- ✓ Learned together and designed our vision and approach.
- ✓ Recruited an Elder advisor: **Nelda Swan** from Kivalina.
- ✓ Designed logo and developed communications materials.
- ✓ Developed fundraising materials.
- ✓ Provided regular updates to member organizations and the Regional Elders Council.
- ✓ Invited and selected pilot communities.
- ✓ Initiated pilot solution workshops with 3 communities.
- ✓ Received GCI Suicide Prevention grant.
- ✓ Held 3 Learning Sessions in Kotzebue.

## Taskforce Goals

- ➔ **Raise funding** to implement the pilots.
- ➔ Recruit new taskforce members to have a **primary** and **alternate** for each participating organization.
- ➔ Recruit a paid **Taskforce Administrator** to take on operations and fundraising.
- ➔ **Engage** with our people.
- ➔ **Secure funders** to help implement the solutions we will design together.

# Contributions & Fundraising

Source	Contribution Commitment	2023 Contribution	2024 Contribution	2025 Contribution	2026 Commitment	Multiyear Total
Member Contributions	\$125,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$50,000	\$60,000
Donations	-	\$5,000	-	-	-	\$5,000
Grants	-	-	-	\$10,000	-	\$10,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$125,000</b>	<b>\$25,000</b>	<b>\$20,000</b>	<b>\$30,000</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$75,000</b>

# Response to our Taskforce work

## From our people

“I really **believe in the work** this Taskforce is doing. My background is in Social work, and I think the solutions lab model will fit perfectly for our region.”

“This initiative is **something that our region needs badly**. We need to take part in the Community Wellness Taskforce. You are just starting, but it’s not going to happen unless we all take ownership.”

“We have to do it ourselves and it includes us all. We need to work together. [...] Nobody else is coming in to fix this for us. **We’re the only ones that can fix this.**”

## From our members

“Our system and our beliefs **within our people** is there, it’s within us, we just have to figure out a way to **wake that up** and get it to a place that it’s practiced again.”

“I really like where this is going, it’s exciting, and it’s just a **good thing**. I hope we all continue to work with each other.”

“We’re just the very beginning, a small, but core group that’s kicking this off, and hopefully this will grow to those groups that will pick this up and keep it going [...]. This has to be **owned by our people** and our communities.”

# What the taskforce is doing next

In the coming months, we will continue to:

- **Work with Kotzebue** to implement the Solutions Workshops process
- **Connect** with our other community partners to continue the pilot projects
- **Learn** from each other and from our local knowledge experts about the challenge
- **Design possible solutions** together that help address the challenges at their root
- **Help find resources** to roll out the most promising solutions and ideas
- **Share about this journey** with our people



# Immediate Support is Available

**Maniilaq Association** is a member of the Taskforce.

Maniilaq provides **health, tribal and social services** to support healthy people and thriving communities in our region.

**Emergency Support:** Call 907-442-7202 or 1-800-478-3321.

**Suicide and Crisis Lifeline:** Call or text 988.

**Counseling and Recovery:** Call 907-442-7640.

Visit [www.maniilaq.org](http://www.maniilaq.org) for more information.

