

2021 Northern Virginia

Akiak Technology

 [Elysia](#) / December 9, 2021

The SBDC joins Akiak Technology to aid Alaska's tribal communities.

Created three new businesses; increased revenue from \$4,000 in 2020 to \$1.5 million halfway through 2021.

www.akiaktechnology.com



When Kevin and Sharon Hamer went to visit family in remote Akiak, Alaska, in 2018, they hadn't planned to come back with a business. But two years later, they launched Akiak Technology, LLC, and they had a business and a purpose.

“We went to visit my wife’s Tribe in Akiak, Alaska,” says Akiak Technology President and CEO Kevin Hamer. “While we were there talking about our government careers and pending retirement plans, Sharon’s cousins in the Tribe asked us what we could do to bring much-needed revenue back to the village. We agreed to help but didn’t know how to start.”

To figure that out, Kevin and Sharon set up a meeting with Senior Business Counselors George Siragusa and Bernard Ferret at the Mason SBDC. Over the next year, George and Bernard regularly met with the Hamers to establish a solid business framework. “George and Bernard were invaluable to us and helped us take years off of the new business learning curve,” Sharon says. “They guided us through the steps of turning our business purpose into a successful business plan of action.”

After 34 years of federal service, Kevin retired in January 2020 to work full time on Akiak Technology. They had some success in 2020, ending the year with 8(a) certification as a tribal-owned business. Their business model was centered around providing IT services to government customers. Due to the pandemic, that model dramatically expanded in 2021 to include tribal broadband services in rural Alaska.

“We expected to help our Tribe through revenue generation in the Washington metro area, but in 2021 our Tribe needed help getting broadband internet in Akiak,” said Kevin. “Our Tribe is one of 56 ‘unserved’ by broadband.”

The Hamers again turned to Mason SBDC’s George and Bernard to help them through the pivot to broadband. “We needed to find a way to offer our wireless broadband solution to the other unserved tribes and use grant money to fund the infrastructure builds,” Kevin said. Creating a new 501(c)3 nonprofit Tribal Consortium was the answer. “We didn’t know how to create a nonprofit, but George and Bernard did!” Sharon notes. “George and Bernard have been with us every step of the way.”

The results have been fantastic. In just four months, Akiak Technology has the wireless satellite system ready to deliver broadband services to 100 percent of Akiak homes and businesses.

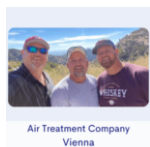
But they didn’t stop there. With the help of George and Bernard from the SBDC, the Hamers set up the Yukon-Kuskokwim Tribal Broadband Consortium, which has 17 tribes representing 9,000 people. In September 2021, they submitted a proposal to bring affordable broadband to all 17 tribes.

The for-profit side of the business has been booming as well. The services Akiak Technology offers include digital transformation, agile software development, DevSecOps, IT management support, hybrid cloud services, and, of course, broadband. “Our first year in 2020, we had several small contracts that brought in around \$4,000 in revenue,” Kevin relates. “This year, our revenue is about \$1.5 million through a combination of contracts and grants.”



Kevin believes an important first step for his business was a visit to the SBDC.

“The SBDC accelerated our business startup and helped us pivot quickly when we faced new challenges/opportunities,” he concludes. “The SBDC is amazing — it’s been one of the major keys to our success.”



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