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Grantee: Alaska Association on Developmental Disabilities
Request Amount: \$146,126.00
Project Title: Building a System to Achieve Employment First For All - Year Two
Grant Term: 7/1/2026 to 6/30/2027
Trust Staff: Kelda Barstad

Staff Analysis:

- **What does this project do?**
Trust funds will support the second year of the Alaska Association on Developmental Disabilities (AADD) work to strengthen Alaska's Employment First system. Funding covers project leadership and coordination, student stipends and travel for the Leadership Education in Employment for People with Disabilities (LEEDD) program, and continued national technical assistance from the State Employment Leadership Network (SELN). These investments will help build a skilled network of employment leaders and support system-level changes needed to expand competitive, integrated employment opportunities for beneficiaries with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- **Who is receiving the funds?**
The Alaska Association on Developmental Disabilities (AADD) is a statewide network of organizations and care coordinators dedicated to advancing high-quality, individualized, community-based services for Alaskans with developmental disabilities. Founded more than 30 years ago, AADD was created to unify the voice of providers—to share expertise, develop best practices, and advocate for a strong, person-centered service system that supports individuals to live the lives they choose in their home communities. It incorporated as a 501(c)3 nonprofit in October 2003 and has 86 members and 20 formal partner organizations.
- **Why is staff recommending this project?**
The project funds the second year of an employment services leadership pathway and uses national expertise to guide a working group to remove barriers to Employment First in the State of Alaska so that beneficiaries with an intellectual or developmental disability have opportunities for long-term, meaningful employment. The first year of the project has shown meaningful results to date, with a curriculum developed, the first student cohort engaged and assigned to mentors, and progress made with State of Alaska agencies to better coordinate Employment First services in Alaska. This project aligns with the goals of the Housing and Home and Community-Based Services focus area, allowing beneficiaries to remain in the home and community of their choice and with Workforce Development, increasing capacity, training and competencies of Alaska's workforce.
- **Will this be a multi-year project?**
This is expected to be the last year of funding for this project. This is a transition year, with future years to be administered by the Center for Human Development (CHD), who has identified future funding options.

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Trust Five Year Funding History

Fiscal Year	Project Title	Amount	Status	Final Expended
2026	IDD System Capacity Development	\$45,000	Active	Grant ends 6/30/2026
2026	Complex Care - Providers United to Create Options	\$25,000	Active	Grant ends 2/28/2026, final report due 3/31/2026
2025	IDD System Capacity Development	\$65,000	Closed	\$65,000
2025	Building a System to Achieve Employment First for All	\$135,000	Active	Grant ends 6/30/2026
2025	Cost of Care: Collaborating on Solutions	\$8,250	Closed	\$8,250
2025	Strengthening Services by Sharing Stories of Lived Experience	\$25,000	Closed	\$25,000
2024	IDD System Capacity Development	\$65,000	Closed	\$65,000
2024	Reigniting Alaska's Employment First Movement	\$5,000	Closed	\$5,000
2024	Alaska Alliance of Direct Support Professionals Organizational Development	\$11,050	Closed	\$11,050
2023	DD System Capacity Development	\$65,000	Closed	\$65,000
2022	DD System Capacity Development	\$65,000	Closed	\$65,000
2022	Study on Care Coordination Services in Alaska	\$90,000	Closed	\$90,000

Comp Plan Identification

Area of Focus	Objective	Comments
Area of Focus 3: Economic & Social Well-being	3.3 Expand resources that promote successful, long-term employment for Trust beneficiaries	

Trust Focus Area Connection

Budget Area	Strategy	Comments
Workforce Development	Workforce - Increased Capacity, Training and Competencies	

Project Description (from grant application)

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This is a request to continue AADD's work on elevating Alaska's capacity to embrace our commitment as an Employment First state. The project's overall goal is to increase the number of Trust beneficiaries with I/DD who are employed. This project has two focus areas: Focus Area One is piloting a leadership development program with the goal of building leaders who can drive innovation and expansion within provider organizations. Focus Area Two supports Alaska's access to expertise via the State Employment Leadership Network which will assist with essential regulatory and policy changes to enhance employment services.

Problem being addressed: Alaska's publicly funded employment supports are challenging for both beneficiaries and providers seeking to support them. According to the 2020 Alaska National Core Indicators In-Person Survey, 60% of the respondents answered yes when asked if they wanted paid employment in the community. Yet care coordinators and DVR counselors state it is difficult to find DD service providers with the capacity to provide employment services. Providers state this service is difficult to provide for many reasons - extensive non-billable time, lengthy DVR timelines, lack of workforce (like job coaches), regulatory barriers, and partnership difficulties. Several organizations discontinued providing employment services and many experienced providers have left the field. According to FY24 data from SDS, 336 waiver recipients received employment services. This is less than 14% of the working age adults receiving these services. In August 2022, AADD started hosting employment discussions in response to concerns over regulatory changes. This project is an outcome from those discussions.

What will we be doing: This project has two parts – 1) an employment-specific leadership development program and 2) national technical assistance. Part One is focused on building a network of experienced DD employment leaders by piloting a program that will provide graduate-level training to the next generation of employment leaders. This program, called LEEDD (Leadership Education in Employment for People with Developmental Disabilities), is modeled after the well-established best practice LEND program. While LEND's goal is to improve health outcomes for beneficiaries with neurodevelopmental disabilities, LEEDD improves employment outcomes. This year there are 13 LEEDD participants from five different regions in Alaska. The curriculum has covered a broad range of employment-related as well as leadership topics. In addition, the current participants are assigned a mentor who is providing guidance on a leadership development plan and project to be shared with their fellow participants at the end of the program. They are also reading a leadership book with facilitated discussions every seminar. A current participant shared: "My LEEDD experience has been so rewarding. I have learned so much about navigating the employment process. I have enjoyed hearing the processes other agencies use and have implemented some of the strategies shared by peers." Another LEEDD participant, whose organization is just preparing to provide employment services for the first time, states: "Although Family Disability Services at Catholic Social Services is new to providing supported employment services and has not yet fully implemented the service, the LEEDD experience has been instrumental in helping us build a strong foundation. It has guided us in structuring our supported employment model, clarifying best practices, and understanding how to align our services with state and community expectations. Through LEEDD, we have developed valuable connections with DVR and other partner agencies, which has helped us better understand referral processes, funding streams, and collaborative roles. These relationships are essential as we launch the service and ensure individuals receive coordinated, high-quality support." Year Two of LEEDD will focus on the transition of the program from AADD to the Center for Human Development. While CHD has been a partner in the program this year, it's been very much behind the

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scenes in a support role. In Year Two, AADD will step back and CHD will step into the lead role with the program.

Part Two connects Alaska's employment system partners with technical expertise available through the State Employment Leadership Network (SELN). The SELN brings nearly 20 years of experience in working with states to better integrate Medicaid waivers and vocational rehabilitation systems. While the SELN is housed within the National Association of State DD Directors (NASDDDS), TA is typically provided to coalitions organized by community entities such as DD councils or provider associations. AADD, SDS and DVR have been meeting at least monthly, typically more frequently, with the SELN subject matter experts. The work this year has focused on more deeply understanding where the barriers are in the system and seeking consensus on the best way to address these barriers. The value of having a national perspective in this discussion cannot be overstated. We have benefitted from examples from other states as well as different ways to interpret federal regulations which has exposed our state system leaders to new ways of thinking about how services are managed in Alaska. While this work has gained momentum and is moving forward, it is clear the team is going to continue to need the support of SELN to actualize true system change. A part of this request is to fund another year of SELN technical assistance.

Target Population: Beneficiaries of working age with intellectual and developmental disabilities statewide.

Expected Outcomes:

1. Thirty highly-qualified I/DD employment leaders (Year One plus Year Two) actively working to operationalize Employment First across Alaska's provider system
2. Successful transition of LEEDD program management to CHD, establishing foundation for long-term sustainability
3. Implementation of at least three policy/regulatory improvements identified in Year One
4. Continued increase in percentage of working-age adults receiving employment services through I/DD waiver
5. Documented improvements in beneficiary experience with employment services (reduced wait times, better service coordination, increased job placements)

Community Support for the Project

Beneficiaries and providers have been vigorously voicing their frustration with navigating employment services for several years; this project is a response to that advocacy. In addition, current participants shared their support for a second year.

The current LEEDD participants enthusiastically support continuation of this program. One comment: "I would absolutely recommend this experience to others. The opportunity to network with other employment professionals has been such a refreshing benefit. I think having so many people discuss the challenges, share ideas, and work toward solutions, strengthens our community as a whole and will result in meaningful community connections as well as opportunity for the people we serve. I believe that the program will result in more people being employed and our projects play a huge role in that success." Another comment: "We absolutely believe this program will result in more people with disabilities obtaining employment. By equipping agencies like ours with the tools, knowledge, and partnerships needed to implement supported employment effectively, LEEDD strengthens the overall

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employment system." And a third: "We would highly recommend this experience to others, especially agencies developing or expanding supported employment services. It provides both practical guidance and meaningful collaboration that directly supports long-term success."

In addition, despite hours of difficult conversations, SDS and DVR leaders remain committed for another year of working with the SELN. From SDS Director Tony Newman: "The State Employment Leadership Network technical assistance has created the space for the Division of Senior and Disabilities Services and its partners to come together and do the kind of visioning and planning that gets left behind in the day-to-day work, but is so important if we are going to reduce barriers and improve employment and employability for those we serve." And DVR Director Kate Duder states: "The facilitation provided through SELN has been helpful as we move from ideas to towards implementation. Their structured approach keeps us focused around addressing barriers, achieving common goals, and working collaboratively to assist Alaskans in their pursuit of employment." In addition, Amanda Elder, leader of an organization providing employment services as well as in a leadership role with AADD, states: "As a provider committed to ensuring meaningful employment for individuals receiving vocational supports through the Medicaid Waiver—and as a contractor working directly with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) to provide job coaching and individualized employment supports—I have seen firsthand both the opportunities and the systemic barriers individuals face when entering the workforce. The collaborative work happening at the state level with SELN is beginning to open meaningful conversations between DVR, providers and Senior and Disabilities Services. Their expert guidance is helping Alaska move beyond identifying barriers and toward thoughtful, solution-focused dialogue. For the first time, we are collectively examining what truly impacts the ease—or difficulty—of individuals with disabilities accessing competitive, integrated employment. As a state, we identify as an "Employment First" state. However, our actions, structures, and measurable outcomes in gainful employment do not consistently reflect that commitment. If we are going to uphold the principles of Employment First, we must ensure that policy, funding streams, interagency collaboration, and performance expectations align with that vision. Meaningful employment is not simply a goal—it is an outcome that requires intentional systems design, accountability, and shared responsibility."

Grantee Proposed Evaluation Measures (from grant application)

This project will result in an increase in the number of working age adults with I/DD who are employed. This outcome will be achieved through multiple projects and phases to expand access to supported employment services. The following performance measures are proposed to be achieved by June 30, 2027:

1. The percentage of working age adults receiving employment services through the I/DD waiver will increase from 13.9% to 20%.
2. A total of 25-30 (over two years) of DD service providers will complete the nine-month LEEDD fellowship program.
3. Participants in the LEEDD pilot program will represent at least five different regions in Alaska.
4. The Employment First report, produced by state partners engaged in employment-related systems, will include at least three references to improvements directly related to this project.

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Proposed Project Performance Measures (developed by the Trust)

How much did you do?

- a. Number (#) of developmental disabilities service providers enrolled in the nine-month Leadership Education in Employment for People with Developmental Disabilities (LEEDD) fellowship program during the grant reporting period.
- b. Number (#) of working-age Trust beneficiaries who received employment services through the I/DD waiver during the grant reporting period.

How well did you do it?

- a. Provide a narrative describing the timeline, activities, successes, challenges, and any lessons learned during the grant reporting period. Be sure to address both objectives of the project in the narrative: 1) the LEEDD fellowship program and 2) continued technical assistance received through the State Employment Leadership Network (SELN). Additionally, please include details on the continued partnership activities between AADD, SDS and DVR throughout the project reporting period.
- b. Pre/Post data:
 - i. Number (#) and percentage (%) of working-age Trust beneficiaries receiving employment services through the I/DD waiver on June 30, 2026.
 - ii. Number (#) and percentage (%) of working-age Trust beneficiaries receiving employment services through the I/DD waiver on June 30, 2027.
 - iii. Overall percent (%) increase in the number (#) of working-age Trust beneficiaries receiving employment services through the I/DD waiver from June 30, 2026, to June 30, 2027.
- c. Number (#) and percentage (%) of developmental disabilities service providers completing the 9-month LEEDD fellowship program.

Is anyone better off?

- a. Provide a summary of references to system-wide employment improvements directly related to the project mentioned in the Employment First report.
- b. Provide four statements, two (2) from I/DD providers and two (2) from Trust beneficiaries receiving employment services through the I/DD waiver, describing how the project has impacted the I/DD community.

Sustainability (from grant application)

As described above, this project has two parts. For Part One related to the LEEDD pilot, UAA's Center for Human Development has committed to partnering with AADD to seek funding to embed LEEDD long-term within CHD if the pilot is successful and service providers see value in continuing this leadership development program. CHD has housed the LEND program for nearly 14 years; it is now a well-established program with ongoing funding. The goal will be to create a similar "home" for LEEDD, dependent on the outcome of the pilot. In Year Two CHD will take the lead in coordinating

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this project with AADD fading back. In addition, the impact of nearly 30 skilled employment leaders, committed to innovation and Employment First, will have a lasting impact on the system.

For Part Two, the SELN requires an annual fee to participate in its technical assistance program. If ongoing participation in SELN will be beneficial, AADD will work with SDS to secure additional funding.

Who We Serve (from grant application)

Both the Shared Vision and Alaska’s Comprehensive Plan explicitly identify employment as key to economic and social well-being. As the NCI data validated, people with I/DD are interested in working; they often need more creative and longer-term supports than people with other types of disabilities. One of DVR’s challenges is that they are mandated to meet the needs of all Alaskans with disabilities. Only 3% of DVR clients have a primary diagnosis of I/DD. Another challenge is that DVR services are time-limited and they are not able to provide long-term supports. So the connection between the DVR and Medicaid Waiver system is critical. AADD has collected multiple testimonies from beneficiaries who share their frustrations; wanting a job but then having to wait for an extended period of time until they are working and receiving a paycheck. Many beneficiaries give up on looking for work. This project is intended to significantly advance Alaska’s commitment to Employment First, which is that the most preferred outcome of publicly funded services is employment in the general workforce. Some of the ways beneficiaries will directly benefit from this project: 1) Easier access to employment services because there will be more employment service providers, 2) more success with finding jobs and increased independence on the job because of greater skills and knowledge within the provider network, 3) more consistent employment support because waiver and DVR funding will be braided, 4) faster timeline for getting a job (and a paycheck) because of process and partnership improvements, 5) earlier and better employment planning – one of the system changes identified is making employment services more prevalent in the waiver support plan as well as creating a separate but required youth employment planning process, and 5) increased understanding of how work impacts benefits, another challenge that providers and partners have identified. This project will greatly improve beneficiaries’ experience with the supported employment system and lead to more success and independence.

Estimated Numbers of Beneficiaries Served Experiencing (from grant application)

Mental Illness:	500
Developmental Disabilities:	2,000
Substance Abuse	0
Traumatic Brain Injuries:	100
Secondary Beneficiaries (family members or caregivers providing support to primary beneficiaries):	3,500
Number of people to be trained	40

Project Budget (from grant application)

Personnel Services Costs	\$53,182.00
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Personnel Services Costs (Other Sources)	\$5,000.00
Personnel Services Narrative	<p>Contract with CHD for Project Leadership, Coordination, Subject Matter Expert Contracts: Total \$44,682 Breakdown of CHD Contract: CHD Project Director for LEEDD: 160 hours CHD Project Coordinator for LEEDD: 300 hours Consultant Trainers (subject matter experts to teach six of the seminars) for LEEDD: Six sessions @ \$350 flat rate per session</p> <p>In addition to CHD contract: AADD Project Management for LEEDD and SELN: \$8,500 (4.7 hours/month X 12 months @ \$150/hour)</p> <p>Other Personnel Costs: SDS, DVR staff time - a minimum of 50 hours over 12 months @ \$100/hour of staff time = \$5,000</p>
Travel Costs	\$3,400.00
Travel Costs (Other Sources)	\$0.00
Travel Costs Narrative	<p>2 participants from Kodiak - \$500 (RT \$250 X 2) 2 participants from Juneau - \$900 (RT \$450 X 2) 2 participants from Fairbanks: \$500 (RT \$250 X 2) 2 participants from Rural (Kotz/Nome): \$900 (RT \$450 X 2) Hotel (1 night X 4 people): \$600</p>
Space or Facilities Costs	\$0.00
Space or Facilities Costs (Other Sources)	\$0.00
Space or Facilities Narrative	Most of the program is online - one in-person meeting, space to be provided by CHD
Supplies Costs	\$1,651.00
Supplies Costs (Other Sources)	\$0.00
Supplies Narrative	<p>15 Leadership Books: \$450 (\$30 X 15 books) Strengthfinder assessment: \$900 (\$60 X 15) Food for in-person orientation: \$301</p>
Other Costs	\$87,893.00
Other Costs (Other Sources)	\$0.00
Other Costs Narrative	<p>SELN Membership: \$48,893 for 12 months Stipends for LEEDD Fellows: \$37,500 (\$2,500/fellow for 15 fellows) Strengthfinder Facilitation for LEEDD Orientation: \$1,500</p>

Other Funding Sources (from grant application)

State of Alaska Secured	\$5,000.00
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Total Leveraged Funds	\$5,000.00
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