

Grant Approval Memo



Grantee: Choosing Our Roots
Request Amount: \$125,000.00
Project Title: Choosing Our Roots Rapid Rehousing Assistance Program
Grant Term: 7/1/2026 to 6/30/2027
Fund Source: FY26 Housing & Home and Community Based Services: Beneficiary Housing Project & Related Services
Trust Staff: Kelda Barstad

Requested Motion:

The Program and Planning Committee recommends that the Board of Trustees approve a \$125,000 authority grant to Choosing Our Roots for the Choosing Our Roots Rapid Rehousing Assistance Program grant. These funds will come from the Beneficiary Housing Project & Related Services line of the FY26 budget.

Staff Analysis:

- What does this project do?
Trust funds will support a transitional housing program for twelve Trust beneficiaries ages 18-24.
- Who is receiving the funds?
Choosing Our Roots is a 501c3 non-profit organization with a mission to ensure all LGBTQ+ Alaskan youth and young adults have access to safe homes, supportive communities, and opportunities to thrive. The transitional housing program, SafeRoot Anchorage, is meant to serve as a temporary bridge to permanent housing. Participants partner with staff to build life skills, attend case management, and follow all program guidelines.
- Why is staff recommending this project?
There is an intersection of people who are LGBTQ+ who are Trust beneficiaries. LGBTQ+ youth have disproportionately high suicidality with studies identifying 39-47% of this population seriously considering suicide in the past year and are four times as likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers. Youth who have housing instability and are Trust beneficiaries often lack social supports and the financial resources to maintain stable housing. The funding will provide twelve Trust beneficiaries transitional housing with case management, life skills development, and support to move in to more permanent housing. Beneficiaries will receive transitional housing paired with case management services focused on obtaining a long-term solution to housing needs, including income maximization, access to mainstream housing resources, and maintained access to medical, behavioral, and mental health care. Trust beneficiaries served by this program will be LGBTQ+ youth ages 18-24 with unstable housing living in Anchorage.
- Will this be a multi-year project?
This is a one-time funding request.

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Trust Five Year Funding History

No previous Trust grants in past five years.

Comp Plan Identification

Area of Focus	Objective	Comments
Area of Focus 3: Economic & Social Well-being	3.1 Alaskans have stable, safe housing with appropriate, community-based social supports to maintain tenancy	

Trust Focus Area Connection

Budget Area	Strategy	Comments
Housing & Home & Community Based Services	HHCBS - Beneficiaries have safe, stable housing with tenancy supports	

Project Description (from grant application)

Choosing Our Roots (COR) requests \$125,000 from the Alaska Mental Health Trust to support our Saferoot Anchorage Transitional Housing Program, which serves LGBTQ+ youth and young adults ages 18-24 experiencing housing insecurity. Housing instability is a major risk factor for the Trust's priority populations, including those experiencing mental illness, chronic alcoholism, and substance-related disorders. Our transitional housing program provides this vulnerable population with safe, stable housing while delivering integrated supportive services that address mental health and substance abuse challenges.

The Saferoot Transitional Housing Program operates in three integrated stages:

Stage 1: Transitional Housing with Case Management

Participants enter our Saferoot facility, where they receive safe housing and individualized case management services. During their stay of 6-12 months, case managers work with each participant to develop personalized success plans that address their specific needs, including mental health services, substance abuse treatment, and connection to community resources. Each participant receives a mattress, basic necessities, and ongoing support to stabilize during crisis.

Stage 2: Life Skills Development and Supportive Services

Throughout their program participation, residents engage in life skills training that prepares them for independent living. This includes evidence-based programming in kitchen skills and nutrition, interpersonal effectiveness, financial literacy and budgeting, tenant rights education, and resource navigation. We also host community events connecting participants with local mental health and substance abuse resources, building the support networks essential for long-term stability. Educational supplies, workforce development training, and transportation support enable participants to pursue education and employment goals.

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Stage 3: Transition to Independent Housing

As participants demonstrate readiness, the program supports their transition into permanent, independent housing. Trust funding will enable us to cover critical move-in costs including application fees, security deposits, first month's rent, utility deposits, and moving expenses. Participants also receive apartment starter kits with essential household items, ensuring they can redirect their limited resources toward continued mental health treatment, recovery services, and long-term stability. Our housing-first model, affirmed as best practice by the National Low Income Housing Coalition, recognizes that stable housing is the foundation upon which individuals can successfully address mental health and substance abuse challenges.

Program Participants and Length of Stay:

The Saferoot Transitional Housing Program serves young adults ages 18-24. Participants typically remain in the transitional housing program for 6-12 months, depending on their individual needs and progress toward housing readiness. During the 12-month grant period, we will serve 12 participants through the complete program, from initial intake through successful transition to independent housing.

Connection to Trust Beneficiaries:

100% of COR participants are Trust beneficiaries. According to the National Institute of Health, people with unstable housing are 2-4 times more likely to use drugs (Pan, Y, et al 2020). Our integrated model addresses this by combining stable housing with case management and supportive services, helping participants avoid harmful outcomes and, when needed, access treatment. The transitional housing model provides the stability necessary for participants to successfully engage with mental health treatment and substance abuse recovery services, reducing the risk of crisis and relapse.

Goals:

Provide stable transitional housing for LGBTQ+ youth and young adults ages 18-24 experiencing homelessness, creating the foundation for mental health stability and recovery.

Deliver integrated life skills development and supportive services that prepare participants for independent living while addressing mental health and substance abuse challenges.

Successfully transition participants to independent housing with the support and resources needed for long-term stability.

Objectives:

Serve 12 participants ages 18-24 through the complete transitional housing program during the 12-month grant period.

Assist 12 participants with moving into their own apartments, covering security deposits, first month's rent, and move-in costs.

Provide 12 participants with new apartment starter kits to reduce move-in barriers.

Educate 12 participants about landlord/tenant rights and self-advocacy skills.

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Host 6 life skills training sessions for program participants, creating recorded materials for ongoing use.

Host 2 community events connecting participants with mental health and substance abuse resources.

Connect participants with community partners providing mental health, substance abuse, and traumatic brain injury services tailored to their individual needs.

Outcomes:

60% of participants report improved quality of life, as measured by survey and case management reports.

60% of participants maintain stable housing at 3-, 6-, and 12-months post-exit, measured through HMIS data, surveys, and case management follow-up.

80% of participants report improved awareness, understanding, and confidence in their ability to connect to mental health and substance abuse resources, measured by exit survey data and case management reports.

80% of participants report learning something new from life skills development programming, measured through post-training surveys.

Organizational Background:

Since 2022, Choosing Our Roots has helped over 150 Alaskan households, most of which are LGBTQ+, obtain and maintain housing following a housing-first model that provides participants with housing while connecting them with ongoing, active case management. COR has extensive experience delivering programs designed to assist housing-insecure young people. Our direct service team works closely with our participants to develop individualized service plans that address their unique needs, including mental health services, substance-disorder treatment, and permanent housing solutions, as well as education and employment. We prioritize working collaboratively with participants who have lived experience of homelessness and mental illness. Their insights and feedback are integral in our program design and delivery, ensuring that our services are relevant and effective. Additionally, we work closely with multiple community partner organizations to meet the unique needs of participants, providing community-based healing. COR actively engages with local communities, schools, and service providers to raise awareness about youth homelessness and advocate for policy changes that benefit at-risk young people.

Choosing Our Roots follows a housing-first model that is widely affirmed as best practice in housing non-profits nationwide (National Low Income Housing Coalition). We place youth at the center of our service delivery, ensuring their voices are heard and their needs are prioritized. Our staff are trained in trauma-informed care practices to provide sensitive and effective support. We are committed to cultural competency, particularly understanding and addressing the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ+ youth. Ensuring marginalized young people receive targeted case management, supportive services, and life-skill development will benefit the Anchorage community through increasing resilience, community connection, and awareness.

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Choosing Our Roots helps participants exit homelessness and gather the tools they need to escape the cycle of homelessness that could become chronic, while also helping them develop strategies to address mental health and substance abuse challenges. 100% of our participants are Trust beneficiaries, having a diagnosis of mental illness, TBI, and/or substance misuse. LGBTQ+ young people today are experiencing additional marginalization and mental health impacts (Gonzalez et al. 2020). As an organization, we are dedicated to supporting TAY, RHY, and marginalized, at-risk homeless youth and young adults in the Mat-Su Valley and Anchorage, Alaska. Since our founding in 2019, we have established a comprehensive, youth-centered service model aimed at addressing the multifaceted needs of young people experiencing housing insecurity. Our mission is to provide safe, supportive, and affirming environments for LGBTQ+ youth and other vulnerable populations.

Performance Measures

How much did you do?

- a. Number (#) of unduplicated Trust beneficiaries served during the reporting period, broken down by primary Trust beneficiary category.
- b. Number (#) of unduplicated Trust beneficiaries who were housed during the reporting period.
- c. Number (#) of life skills trainings conducted during the reporting period. For each training, please list the title of the training, the date on which it was held, and the number (#) of individuals attending.
- d. Average length of stay in the transitional housing program for participants (overall) during the reporting period.
- e. Number (#) of community events held during the reporting period. For each event held, please list the title/topic of the event, the date on which it was held, and the total number (#) of individuals in attendance.

How well did you do it?

- a. Provide a narrative that describes the timeline, activities, challenges, successes, and any lessons learned during the reporting period. Provide a synopsis of the case management and supportive services offered through the program, and a list of items included in the new apartment starter kits.
- b. Number (#) and percentage (%) of participants who remained housed in the transitional housing program through Saferoot during the reporting period.
- c. Number (#) and percentage (%) of participants who felt safe and supported during their time in the Saferoot program.
- d. Number (#) and percentage (%) of participants who felt they increased their knowledge on topics offered through the life skills trainings.

Is anyone better off?

- a. Number (#) and percentage (%) of participants who successfully transitioned to independent housing during the grant reporting period.

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- b. Number (#) and percentage (%) of participants who reported increased awareness, understanding, and confidence in their ability to connect to resources in the community for support.
- c. Two statements from participants that describe how participation in the program has impacted their quality of life.

Sustainability (from grant application)

Choosing Our Roots is working to develop a diverse and sustainable funding mix to support youth experiencing homelessness in Anchorage. We have a well-established partnership with the Municipality of Anchorage. We intend to maintain that partnership and to build upon it over the next few years to cover the full cost of our Anchorage case manager. We have a dedicated donor base of 60 sustaining (monthly) supporters who provide us with \$28,000 per year. Additionally, Choosing Our Roots sets an annual fundraising goal for the whole of the organization. Each year, we challenge ourselves to grow and to raise more money to help increase the long-term sustainability of the non-profit.

We continue to seek grant funding from a range of government and foundation funders for the crucial work of housing LGBTQ+ youth at risk of or directly experiencing homelessness. In addition to our application for support from the Mental Health Trust, we have received funding from the Municipality of Anchorage, the Pride Foundation, and WayOUT LA. We have obtained capital project funding for the renovation of our Saferoot building from the Rasmuson Foundation. We continue to seek funding for building improvements to ensure that we can operate Saferoot in the most cost-effective, efficient manner. We are completing energy-efficiency remodels on the building this fall that will help decrease our long-term maintenance costs. Our building is fully owned, has a new roof and boiler, and many of the bathrooms have been updated. As of December, 2025, all the windows in the building have been replaced.

Realistically, there will always be unhoused neighbors, and the cost of helping folks transition into their own apartments/houses will always exist. While COR can work to increase our fundraising, energy efficiency, and continue to nurture our partnerships, we recognize that addressing this problem will require ongoing support from dedicated community partners, including grant funders.

Who We Serve (from grant application)

100% of Choosing Our Roots Participants are Trust beneficiaries. Typically, Participants meet criteria due to diagnosed mental illness, substance misuse, and/or Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). Choosing Our Roots works with program participants to help them define what success looks like based on their individual needs and goals. With the creation of Individualized service plans, our staff can help empower Participants dream big, work hard, and realize their own goals. This can look like independently living without supports, or it can look like an empowered young person who knows how to navigate their resources effectively. Choosing Our Roots strives to connect participants with all the necessary resources needed for success.

Estimated Numbers of Beneficiaries Served Experiencing (from grant application)

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Mental Illness:	8
Developmental Disabilities:	6
Substance Abuse	4
Traumatic Brain Injuries:	2
Number of people to be trained	5

Project Budget (from grant application)

Personnel Services Costs	\$16,500.00																																							
Personnel Services Costs (Other Sources)	\$61,000.00																																							
Personnel Services Narrative	<p>We are requesting \$16,500 from the Trust to support a portion of the Anchorage Navigator position. The Anchorage Navigator connects participants to direct services, leads life skills programming, and coordinates supportive services within the transitional housing program.</p> <p>The Anchorage Navigator will dedicate 21.3% of their time to life skills development programming and supportive services coordination within the transitional housing program, with the remaining 78.7% supporting direct housing services coordination funded by the Municipality of Anchorage. The Alaska Mental Health Trust grant of \$16,500 covers a proportional share of all personnel costs including salary and benefits.</p> <table><thead><tr><th>Category</th><th>Total Cost</th><th>Trust(21.3%)</th><th>Other (78.7%)</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Base Salary</td><td>\$56,000</td><td>\$11,928</td><td>\$44,072</td></tr><tr><td>Health Insurance</td><td>\$10,000</td><td>\$2,130</td><td>\$7,870</td></tr><tr><td>Wellness Benefit</td><td>\$2,000</td><td>\$426</td><td>\$1,574</td></tr><tr><td>Income Tax</td><td>\$4,740</td><td>\$1,010</td><td>\$3,730</td></tr><tr><td>Social Security</td><td>\$3,500</td><td>\$746</td><td>\$2,754</td></tr><tr><td>Medicare</td><td>\$910</td><td>\$194</td><td>\$716</td></tr><tr><td>AK SUI</td><td>\$350</td><td>\$66</td><td>\$284</td></tr><tr><td>TOTAL</td><td>\$77,500</td><td>\$16,500</td><td>\$61,000</td></tr></tbody></table> <p>The Anchorage Navigator will dedicate 21.3% of their time to life skills development programming and supportive services coordination within the transitional housing program, with the remaining 78.7% supporting direct housing services coordination funded by the Municipality of Anchorage. The Alaska Mental Health Trust grant of \$16,500 covers a proportional share of all personnel costs including salary and benefits.</p>				Category	Total Cost	Trust(21.3%)	Other (78.7%)	Base Salary	\$56,000	\$11,928	\$44,072	Health Insurance	\$10,000	\$2,130	\$7,870	Wellness Benefit	\$2,000	\$426	\$1,574	Income Tax	\$4,740	\$1,010	\$3,730	Social Security	\$3,500	\$746	\$2,754	Medicare	\$910	\$194	\$716	AK SUI	\$350	\$66	\$284	TOTAL	\$77,500	\$16,500	\$61,000
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Travel Costs	\$1,000.00
Travel Costs (Other Sources)	\$500.00
Travel Costs Narrative	<p>We are requesting \$1,000 for local travel within Anchorage to support Prevention Program 2: Life Skills Development Programming. The Anchorage Navigator will travel to recruit volunteers, coordinate training sessions, and create recorded educational materials at community locations.</p> <p>Estimated 1428 miles annually @ \$0.70/mile = \$1,000</p> <p>Travel supports:</p> <p>Recruiting volunteers with expertise in mental health, addiction recovery, and LGBTQ+ youth support.</p> <p>Recording life skills training at authentic community settings (kitchens, workplaces, resource centers).</p> <p>Coordinating with community partners to connect participants to mental health and substance abuse services.</p> <p>Building a sustainable library of recorded training materials for future use.</p> <p>Travel supports:</p> <p>Recruiting volunteers with expertise in mental health, addiction recovery, and LGBTQIA+ youth support.</p> <p>Recording life skills training at authentic community settings (kitchens, workplaces, resource centers).</p> <p>Coordinating with community partners to connect participants to mental health and substance abuse services.</p> <p>Building a sustainable library of recorded training materials for future use.</p> <p>Meeting volunteers at their locations will enable us to create high-quality, relatable content and expand our network of community experts who understand the unique needs of Trust beneficiaries.</p>

Space or Facilities Costs	\$5,000.00
Space or Facilities Costs (Other Sources)	\$4,000.00
Space or Facilities Narrative	We request \$5000 from the Mental Health Trust for indirect cost support for the project, which we will apply to rent for our office space, where staff will work as they oversee all aspects of the project.

Supplies Costs	\$102,500.00
Supplies Costs (Other Sources)	\$43,500.00
Supplies Narrative	We are requesting \$102,500 to support 12 participants through the Saferoot Transitional Housing Program. This equates to \$8,542 per participant, covering essential program supports from intake through successful transition to independent

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housing. All estimates are based on previous program years and current market pricing.

Per-Participant Cost Category

Per Person	Total (12)
Mattress & Bedding (twin mattress, box spring)	
\$667	\$8,000
Kitchen Starter Kit (cookware, dishes, utensils)	
\$292	\$3,500
Transportation Support (bus passes, gas cards)	
\$625	\$7,500
Educational Supplies (textbooks, materials, fees)	
\$375	\$4,500
Workforce Development (training, certifications, interview clothing)	
\$750	\$9,000
Basic Needs Support (groceries, clothing, hygiene)	
\$1,500	\$18,000
Emergency/Flexible Needs (medical co-pays, IDs, crisis supplies)	
\$791	\$9,500
Transition to Independent Housing (deposits, first month rent, utilities, moving costs)	
\$3,542	\$42,500
TOTAL PER-PARTICIPANT COSTS	
\$8,542	\$102,500

Transition to Independent Housing Details:

Per-participant transition costs based on current Anchorage rental market:

Application fees and background checks: \$150

Security deposit (one month's rent): \$1,200

First month's rent: \$1,200

Utility deposits and turn-ons (electric, gas, water, internet): \$500

Moving costs and immediate needs: \$492

These per-participant costs support the complete program journey from intake through successful transition to independent housing, enabling participants to redirect their limited resources toward mental health treatment, substance abuse recovery, and long-term stability.

Other Funding Sources (from grant application)

Municipality of Anchorage - Secured	\$71,000.00
Individual Donors	\$28,000.00

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Annual Fundraising Event	\$10,000.00
Total Leveraged Funds	\$109,000.00