

# Grant Approval Memo



**Grantee:** RECOVER ALASKA  
**Request Amount:** \$300,000.00  
**Project Title:** AURORA - Alaska's Unified Response on Reducing Alcohol-Harm  
**Grant Term:** 7/1/2026 to 6/30/2029  
**Fund Source:** FY27 Trust Focus Area Strategy Implementation  
**Trust Staff:** Samantha Ponts

## **Requested Motion:**

*The Program and Planning Committee recommends that the Board of Trustees approve a \$300,000 authority grant to Recover Alaska for the AURORA - Alaska's Unified Response on Reducing Alcohol-Harm grant. These funds will come from the Trust Focus Area Strategy Implementation line of the FY27 budget.*

## **Staff Analysis:**

- What does this project do?  
Trust funds will support the planning, coordination, and early implementation of AURORA (Alaska's Unified Response on Reducing Alcohol Harms), a multi-year, statewide initiative led by Recovery Alaska to build Alaska's first coordinated strategy for preventing and reducing alcohol-related harms. Funding will support a phased approach that include:
  - phase 1: statewide data gathering and mapping;
  - phase 2: community-led engagement and prioritization in three communities; and
  - phase 3: development of a co-created statewide alcohol harm prevention strategy, including community-led pilot actions, training and support for local Community Champions, and coordination of a cross-sector AURORA Task Force.

Trust funds will specifically support staffing, data analysis, community engagement activities, facilitation, stipends for community champions, development of planning tools and materials, and coordination across systems and regions.

- Who is receiving the funds?  
Recover Alaska is a statewide nonprofit organization based in Alaska with more than a decade of experience partnering with local coalitions, tribes, service providers, and prevention networks to reduce alcohol harms across the state.
- Why is staff recommending this project?  
Alaska currently lacks a coordinated, statewide strategy for preventing and reducing alcohol-related harms. AURORA addresses this gap by creating Alaska's first unified, community-informed approach to understanding where and how alcohol harms occur and translating that information into locally driven solutions and statewide system improvements. The project advances the Trust's catalytic role by bringing together state agencies, tribal organizations, community leaders, people with lived experience, and data partners to strengthen systems of care and support long-term solutions to alcohol-related harms.
- Will this be a multi-year project?

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Yes, this is a multi-year project designed to unfold in three interconnected phases over three years and include: (1) data gathering and mapping, (2) community engagement, planning, and local prioritization and (3) statewide coordination, strategy development, and community-led pilots. Each year of funding will require Board of Trustee approval.

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## Trust Five Year Funding History

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Project Title</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Final Expended</b>
FY25	Recover Alaska	\$100,000	Closed	\$100,000
FY24*	Recover Alaska	\$100,000	Closed	\$100,000
FY23*	Recover Alaska	\$100,000	Closed	\$100,000
FY22*	Recover Alaska	\$100,000	Closed	\$100,000
FY21*	Recover Alaska	\$100,000	Closed	\$100,000

\* FY24 and earlier grants for Recover Alaska were passed through Sultana New Ventures LLC dba The Foraker Group. Starting in FY25, Recover Alaska became the direct recipient of Trust grants.

## Comp Plan Identification

Area of Focus	Objective	Comments
Area of Focus 4: Substance Use Disorder Prevention	4.1 Increase awareness, improve knowledge, and change behaviors to prevent misuse of drug, alcohol, and other substances	

## Trust Focus Area Connection

Budget Area	Strategy	Comments
Mental Health & Addiction Intervention	MHAI - Improve Treatment & Recovery Support Services	

## Project Description (from grant application)

Alcohol remains Alaska's most persistent and costly public health challenge. It contributes to more deaths than opioids, methamphetamines, and all other illicit substances combined and costs the state an estimated \$2.4 billion annually. Rates of binge drinking continue to rise, from 15.9% in 2019 to 17.9% in 2022, with Alaskans consuming an average of 5.5 drinks per binge occasion—well above CDC guidelines.

Youth are also significantly impacted: 22–41% of high school students report drinking in the past 30 days, a pattern strongly linked to future substance misuse. Alcohol-related death rates in Alaska are over twice the national average, and nearly ten times higher for Alaska Native people.

Alcohol is one of the greatest barriers to Trust beneficiaries living with dignity, stability, and self-determination. Alcohol-related injury, trauma, and crisis affect EVERY Trust beneficiary group — and their caregivers — not only those experiencing chronic alcoholism or substance misuse. Alcohol

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contributes to mental illness and crisis episodes, traumatic brain injury, cognitive decline, developmental challenges, and family system strain.

The Trust's new strategic plan identifies its catalytic role in Alaska's systems — mobilizing partnerships, investing in collaboration, amplifying innovation, and removing barriers to progress. Recover Alaska's proposed AURORA initiative is designed in direct alignment with that vision. AURORA operationalizes the Trust's approach by bringing together state agencies, tribal organizations, community leaders, people with lived experience, and data partners to build a unified, statewide strategy that strengthens Alaska's systems of care and supports communities in developing long-term, upstream solutions to alcohol-related harm.

This project also directly supports Priority 1: Prevention & Early Intervention, by working to ensure that every child grows up in a home and community with decreased alcohol exposure, lower levels of violence and trauma, and increased protective factors rooted in culture, connection, and belonging. And it aligns with Priority 4: Ongoing Support and Wellbeing, ensuring that Trust beneficiaries have the stability, purpose, and support needed across the lifespan — especially in moments where alcohol misuse worsens mental illness, injury, caregiving stress, or cognitive decline.

Despite the scale of harm, Alaska does not currently have a coordinated statewide strategy to prevent alcohol misuse, support local policy solutions, or strengthen community-level systems of care in a unified way. Recover Alaska proposes to change that through AURORA: Alaska's Unified Response on Reducing Alcohol Harms—a statewide initiative that aligns directly with the Trust's new strategic plan and its commitment to strengthening systems of care, supporting families early, and improving wellbeing across the lifespan.

### The Trust's Impact on Recover Alaska's Success

Recover Alaska's accomplishments over the past decade have been possible because of longstanding, stable funding from the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority. Trust support has enabled Recover to:

- Build and sustain the statewide Alaska Alcohol Misuse Prevention Alliance, now with 40+ active members
- Lead the development of social norms campaigns that reached tens of thousands of Alaskans
- Support Anchorage's alcohol tax coalition that brought more than 200 community members together to design an equity-oriented strategy
- Conduct policy analysis on Local Option laws, including community engagement in Bethel
- Respond to community needs during COVID-19 with statewide virtual resources
- Hire and retain skilled prevention staff
- Develop and maintain strong partnerships with ANTHC, state agencies, local governments, and coalitions
- Serve as the statewide voice on alcohol policy, ensuring community-centered perspectives guide decisions
- Build a foundation for the AURORA movement

Trust funding has allowed Recover to remain stable, responsive, and community-driven — and to build the credibility and partnerships necessary to launch the AURORA statewide strategy today. The Trust's leadership has created the momentum and infrastructure on which this proposal stands.

### What We Will Be Doing

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Recover Alaska proposes AURORA: Alaska's Unified Response on Reducing Alcohol Harms, a multi-year initiative designed to build Alaska's first coordinated statewide strategy for preventing and reducing alcohol-related harms. The project reflects the Trust's catalytic role—strengthening systems of care, mobilizing partnerships, connecting efforts across sectors, and removing barriers that impede progress.

AURORA is structured into three interconnected phases:

## PHASE 1: Data Gathering & Mapping

Building shared, actionable understanding of where and how alcohol harms occur

Recover Alaska will conduct a statewide “settings-of-harm” assessment that integrates:

- Emergency and hospital data
- Trooper, police, and VPSO reports
- Community surveys
- Interviews with service providers, caregivers, and people with lived experience
- Input from local governments, tribal partners, and coalitions
- Existing Local Option considerations
- Environmental factors such as access, availability, and protective community assets

This phase will identify gaps in existing data, strengthen relationships with data-holding partners, and produce Community Alcohol Harm Profiles that give each region clear, usable information to guide decision-making. This aligns directly with the Trust's commitment to connecting efforts, strengthening systems, and providing actionable data.

## PHASE 2: Community Engagement, Planning, and Local Prioritization

Ensuring local leadership and tailoring strategies to each area's needs

Building on the data foundation from Phase 1, Phase 2 brings the work into communities in meaningful and locally grounded ways. Recover Alaska will select three diverse communities (urban, rural road system, and a hub community off the road system) for deep engagement.

Each community process will include:

- Listening Sessions & Conversations

Facilitated community dialogues that include local leaders, families, service providers, people with lived experience, school staff, tribal organizations, first responders, and youth representatives.

- Data Translation & Sharing

Presenting findings in clear, accessible formats so community members can determine what matters most for their context—what harms are occurring, where, and what factors contribute to them.

- Identifying Community Priorities & Solutions

Each community will shape its own next steps, which may include:

- school or organizational policy improvements
- increasing sober activities and youth engagement
- strengthening recovery support
- stigma reduction efforts
- improving information about services
- aligning local ordinances or practices with harm-reduction goals
- Training & Supporting Community Champions

Recover Alaska will identify and support local “Champions”—trusted residents (including lived-experience leaders) who can mobilize neighbors, coordinate activities, and help guide next steps. These Champions will receive training, mentorship, and stipends for their leadership.

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This phase ensures that statewide work is built on local expertise, community identity, and the priorities of those most directly affected by alcohol harms. It advances the Trust's priorities by supporting strong, resilient families and ensuring that Trust beneficiaries and caregivers guide the solutions that impact them.

## PHASE 3: Statewide Coordination, Strategy Development, and Community-Led Pilots

Turning local insights into a statewide strategy, with pilot projects that demonstrate early impact. Phase 3 weaves together community priorities and statewide systems leadership to create Alaska's first coordinated, long-term strategy for preventing and reducing alcohol harms.

This phase includes three major components:

### 1. Developing Alaska's First Statewide Alcohol Harm Prevention Strategy

Recover Alaska will convene the AURORA Task Force, a cross-sector group including:

- Tribal and regional health organizations
- Public health and behavioral health partners
- Education representatives
- Community coalitions
- Treatment and recovery providers
- Local government leaders
- People with lived experience and caregivers

Guided by local information from Phase 2, the Task Force will create a coordinated statewide strategy with:

- A clear purpose and scope
- Priority areas supported by community data
- Evidence-based statewide policy opportunities
- Community-level pathways for action
- Sustainability and funding recommendations
- Measurable system-level outcomes

This unified strategy aligns directly with the Trust's role of connecting efforts, removing barriers, strengthening systems of care, and catalyzing collaboration.

### 2. Launching Community-Led Pilot Efforts

Each of the three communities engaged in Phase 2 will select one or more concrete actions to begin implementing. Recover Alaska will provide:

- Micro-grant funding
- Champion support
- Materials, templates, and communication tools
- Coaching and connection to statewide partners

Potential pilot actions include:

- a school district strengthening alcohol-education policies
- a community launching sober youth activities
- a nonprofit adopting alcohol-free workplace wellness policies
- a local government examining strategies that reduce harm in public settings
- a community coalition launching a stigma-reduction campaign

These pilots demonstrate early progress, build momentum, and ensure that communities see immediate benefits from the process.

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### 3. Regional Champion Network

Recover Alaska will expand the Community Champion model into a regional statewide network. These paid Champions will:

- Facilitate conversations and trainings in their region
- Provide culturally and locally grounded leadership
- Help communities interpret data and plan actions
- Lead advocacy education appropriate to their region
- Connect local partners into the statewide movement

This creates a sustainable structure so community-driven work can continue beyond the initial communities and beyond the grant period.

### Target Population & Geographic Area Served

This project serves the entire state of Alaska, with intensive work in three communities during FY27.

Primary beneficiaries include:

- Individuals experiencing alcohol misuse
- Trust beneficiaries experiencing chronic alcoholism, mental illness, TBI, developmental disabilities, Alzheimer's/dementia
- Children and youth affected by alcohol in the home
- Caregivers and family members
- People seeking recovery supports
- Behavioral health and medical providers
- Local coalitions, schools, tribes, and service systems

Because alcohol harms touch so many systems—health care, emergency response, child welfare, criminal justice, education—this project benefits multiple sectors and strengthens supports for families statewide. Over time, AURORA will expand to additional regions using the toolkits and frameworks developed in these initial communities.

### Expected Outcomes by the End of FY27

- Completion of statewide settings-of-harm assessment
- Creation of three Community Alcohol Harm Profiles
- Three community engagement processes led in partnership with local champions
- Launch of the cross-sector AURORA Task Force
- Development of a co-created Statewide Alcohol Harm Prevention Strategy for statewide policy and community-level action
- Creation of community action tools (planning templates, data summaries, and policy options)
- Strengthened partnerships across public health, education, tribal organizations, and behavioral health systems
- A clear roadmap for scaling the process statewide

Over three years:

- Increased collaboration across systems and sectors
- Strengthened community leadership and capacity
- Measurable increases in prevention and early intervention activities
- Policy wins at local, tribal, and state levels
- Clear, actionable tools for families, caregivers, and providers
- More Alaskans experiencing hope, agency, and safety

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AURORA embodies the Trust's own strategic goals: systems transformation through partnership, community leadership, and long-term wellbeing

## Community Support

Recover Alaska has a decade-long record of trusted partnership with local coalitions, tribes, service organizations, and statewide prevention networks. Through The Alliance alone, we collaborate with more than 40 organizations representing every region of Alaska. Our mini-grant program, stigma-reduction work, and partnership-based approach have built strong symbiotic relationships in every region of the state, with communities who consistently ask for:

- more localized data
- culturally appropriate prevention
- support for locally driven solutions
- coordination across agencies and systems
- statewide leadership to reduce alcohol harms

AURORA is built to meet those needs.

## **Performance Measures (developed by the Trust)**

How much did you do?

- a. Number (#) of data partners engaged during the grant reporting period.
- b. Number (#) of settings-of-harm datasets compiled during the grant reporting period.
- c. Number (#) of community listening sessions conducted during the reporting period.  
Please list the community and date of each listening session.
- d. Number (#) of individuals participating during the reporting period, broken down by primary Trust beneficiary category, secondary beneficiaries (caregivers), stakeholders, community providers, etc.
- e. Number (#) of regional champions trained during the reporting period.
- f. Number (#) of task force meetings held during the reporting period. Provide the dates of each task force meeting held during the reporting period.

How well did you do it?

- a. Number (#) and percentage (%) of communities reporting an improved understanding of local alcohol harms.
- b. Number (#) and percentage (%) of participants who felt their voice was included in the planning.
- c. Number (#) and percentage (%) of local champions reporting increased capacity.
- d. Number (#) and percentage (%) of partners who were satisfied with the clarity, accessibility, and usefulness of the data tools.
- e. Number (#) and percentage (%) of task force members reporting improved coordination.

Is anyone better off?

- a. Number (#) and percentage (%) of communities adopting new prevention or policy strategies during the reporting period.

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- b. Number (#) and percentage (%) of champions leading advocacy or training in their region.
- c. Provide a brief narrative detailing improvements in pathways to treatment or support services that community partners identified.
- d. Provide 2-4 measurable examples of reduced stigma or increased recovery-friendly environments that occurred during the grant reporting period.
- e. Number (#) and percentage (%) of Trust beneficiaries reporting improved access to supportive services or resources in their community.

## **Sustainability (from grant application)**

AURORA is intentionally designed as a multi-year systems change initiative. Because meaningful change to public health and behavioral health systems requires stable, consistent leadership, multi-year funding is critical.

Recover Alaska will sustain this project beyond Trust funding through:

- State and federal grants focused on prevention, behavioral health, and systems improvement
- Partnerships with health systems, tribal organizations, and foundations
- Revenue generation through training contracts, events, and sponsorships
- Continued philanthropic support, including individual giving
- Leveraging the AURORA Task Force to secure long-term implementation resources

After the initial three years, the statewide strategy, community toolkits, and Regional Champion network will be firmly established—allowing communities to continue leading their work with less reliance on external funding.

Trust funding will ensure strong, stable launch of a statewide prevention strategy that otherwise would not be possible. We currently have funding from Mat-Su Health Foundation, Southcentral Foundation, Rasmuson Foundation, State of Alaska Department of Health, and University of Alaska. We are preparing to use the data collected in Phase 1 of this plan to apply for federal Building Communities of Recovery funding, as well as seeking other national funding aligned with reducing systemic health inequities and empowering local solutions.

## **Who We Serve (from grant application)**

The primary beneficiary group for this project is Trust beneficiaries experiencing chronic alcoholism or substance misuse, as the initiative directly targets the systems, environments, and community conditions that influence alcohol use, access to support, and long-term wellness. However, because alcohol harms cut across so many aspects of community life, all five Trust beneficiary groups—as well as their family members and caregivers—will experience meaningful benefits from this project.

Recover Alaska's approach is rooted in system-level, population-level change. Rather than focusing only on services for individuals, we focus on improving environments, community conditions, and public policies. Policy change is the most effective, evidence-based strategy for reducing alcohol harms at the population level. By supporting communities to strengthen the systems and environments around Trust beneficiaries, their families, and their entire communities, this initiative will create safer, healthier, and more supportive conditions that reduce risk, increase protective factors, and improve long-term wellbeing.

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## 1. Beneficiaries experiencing chronic alcoholism or substance misuse

### Primary Beneficiary Group

This project directly serves Alaskans experiencing alcohol dependency and related challenges by improving the community and system environments they live in. Through coordinated statewide strategy, improved community policies, and stronger prevention systems, beneficiaries will experience:

- Earlier pathways to support, including prevention, education, and recovery resources identified through the statewide strategy
- Reduced community-level triggers and harms, such as unsafe environments, lack of sober spaces, and limited wellness programming
- Improved access to recovery-supportive environments, through community champions, local pilot projects, and strengthened partnerships
- Reduced social stigma, as communities implement education, awareness, and recovery-friendly actions
- More consistent, supportive environments across communities, making it easier for individuals to maintain recovery

By focusing on environments—not just individual behavior—this project supports long-term stability and improved quality of life for the Trust's primary beneficiary group.

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## 2. Beneficiaries experiencing mental illness

Alcohol misuse and mental health conditions frequently co-occur. Communities with high alcohol harm experience increased risk of crisis, instability, and stress for those with mental illness. This project will create:

- Healthier, more structured community environments with clearer prevention strategies
- Better coordination between local partners, improving identification of supports for those with co-occurring needs
- Reduced alcohol-related crisis events, easing the burden on emergency responders and behavioral health systems
- More recovery-friendly community spaces, reducing isolation and improving social connection
- More informed local policies, which can reduce violence, trauma, and instability

By building community systems that reduce alcohol harms, the project strengthens the environments needed for beneficiaries with mental illness to live with dignity and self-determination.

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## 3. Beneficiaries experiencing traumatic brain injury (TBI)

Alcohol use increases the risk of accidents, falls, and injuries that can lead to TBIs. People living with TBI also face challenges when alcohol is prevalent in their environment. This project will support this group by:

- Reducing alcohol-related injuries through evidence-based policy and prevention strategies
- Creating communities with fewer alcohol-related trauma events, lowering risk for initial or repeat TBIs
- Improving access to supportive community spaces, decreasing isolation and dependence
- Strengthening systems of care, making it easier for individuals with TBI to navigate needed services

Population-level prevention is one of the clearest ways to reduce TBI incidence connected to alcohol misuse.

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4. Beneficiaries experiencing developmental disabilities and Alzheimer's disease or related dementias will also benefit from safer environments, policies that reduce community-level harms, and stronger local systems.

## 5. Secondary Beneficiaries: Families and Caregivers

Families and caregivers across Alaska carry the emotional, financial, and practical impacts of alcohol harms. Through community-driven prevention strategies, access to local champions, and clearer systems of support, caregivers will experience:

- Reduced family-level instability caused by alcohol harms
- Fewer crisis events and reduced involvement with emergency or protective systems
- More access to community resources, sober events, and supportive environments
- Less stigma and isolation as communities adopt recovery-friendly messaging and action
- Clearer pathways to services, identified through the statewide strategy

Supporting caregivers strengthens the wellbeing of all Trust beneficiaries.

## Estimated Numbers of Beneficiaries Served Experiencing (from grant application)

Mental Illness:	100
Substance Abuse	500
Secondary Beneficiaries (family members or caregivers providing support to primary beneficiaries):	1,500
Number of people to be trained	15

## Project Budget (from grant application)

Personnel Services Costs	\$40,000.00
Personnel Services Costs (Other Sources)	\$250,000.00
Personnel Services Narrative	Trust funding will support a portion of staff time for coordination, convening, community engagement, and partnership development. Activities include: Leading statewide data collection and settings-of-harm analysis Organizing and facilitating community listening sessions Training and supporting Community Champions Coordinating the AURORA statewide task force Developing community toolkits and strategy documents Managing evaluation and reporting requirements

Travel Costs	\$5,000.00
Travel Costs (Other Sources)	\$10,000.00
Travel Costs Narrative	Travel expenses include: Transportation to 2–3 communities annually (including at least one off-the-road-system location) Lodging and per diem Local transportation

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	Recover Alaska will leverage videoconferencing where appropriate, but in-person visits are essential to build trust and facilitate meaningful engagement.
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Space or Facilities Costs	\$4,000.00
Space or Facilities Costs (Other Sources)	\$25,000.00
Space or Facilities Narrative	Approximately 7% of Recover's annual rent, utilities, other necessary facilities costs. Location rental for community listening sessions.

Supplies Costs	\$1,000.00
Supplies Costs (Other Sources)	\$1,000.00
Supplies Narrative	Listening session supplies, refreshments; printed materials, visual aids; accessibility accommodations and translation/interpretation if needed.

Other Costs	\$50,000.00
Other Costs (Other Sources)	\$200,000.00
Other Costs Narrative	Community Champion Stipends and Training (\$5000 x 3) Evaluation and Data Management Contractor (\$5000) Statewide Task Force Facilitation and Plan Development Contractor (\$10000) Community-Led Pilot Actions (\$5000 x 3)

### Other Funding Sources (from grant application)

Mat-Su Health Foundation - SECURED	\$200,000.00
Rasmuson Foundation - SECURED	\$200,000.00
Southcentral Foundation - SECURED	\$100,000.00
Providence Alaska Foundation - PENDING	\$50,000.00
<b>Total Leveraged Funds</b>	<b>\$550,000.00</b>