

Grant Approval Memo



Grantee: Recover Alaska
Request Amount: \$200,000.00
Project Title: AURORA - Alaska's Unified Response on Reducing Alcohol-Harm
Grant Term: 7/1/2026 to 6/30/2028
Trust Staff: Samantha Ponts

Staff Analysis:

- **What does this project do?**
Trust funds will support Recover Alaska in carrying out a two-year effort to understand alcohol-related harms across Alaska and help communities develop prevention strategies based on that information. In Year 1, Trust funds will support staff time, statewide and regional data collection, community engagement, and training for local volunteers to produce six regional alcohol impact assessments. In Year 2, Trust funds will help up to three communities use their assessment results to identify priorities and create evidence-based, culturally relevant prevention plans, which will ultimately inform a statewide alcohol harm prevention strategy.
- **Who is receiving the funds?**
Recover Alaska is a statewide nonprofit focus on reducing alcohol misuse and its impacts across Alaska. This organization works in partnership with local coalitions, Tribes, service providers, and state agencies to advance prevention strategies. Recover Alaska brings experience convening diverse stakeholders and translating data into action.
- **Why is staff recommending this project?**
Staff recommend this project because alcohol misuse is one of the most significant and costly barriers to Trust beneficiaries achieving stability, health, and long-term wellbeing. The AURORA initiative fills a major statewide gap by creating the first coordinated understanding of alcohol harms and supporting communities to implement evidence-based, culturally relevant prevention approaches. A statewide alcohol harm prevention strategy will give all Alaska communities a shared, reliable picture of alcohol impacts and clear tools to understand their own community's needs and opportunities. It also helps communities learn from each other by identifying effective approaches that can be adapted locally, strengthening prevention efforts statewide. Overall, the project aligns with the Trust's focus on substance use disorder prevention and advances long-term, systems-level change that will benefit Trust beneficiaries across Alaska.
- **Will this be a multi-year project?**
This is a two-year (24 month) funding request. Year 1 focuses on statewide and regional data collection and analysis, while Year 2 focuses on helping up to three communities develop prevention plans based on their assessment results, ultimately informing a statewide alcohol harm prevention strategy.

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Trust Five Year Funding History

Fiscal Year	Project Title	Amount	Status	Final Expended
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	4.5 Support statewide alignment in planning, implementation, evaluation, and resource allocation across health promotion, prevention, treatment, and recovery efforts	

Trust Focus Area Connection

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

Project Description (from grant application)

Background

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 — including 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.

Problem to be addressed

Alaska lacks a coordinated, statewide strategy for preventing alcohol misuse and related harms, leaving communities, agencies, and policymakers to work from fragmented data and disconnected efforts. Without a unified understanding of alcohol's impacts—such as public safety involvement, healthcare use, and community-level concerns—regions cannot effectively identify trends or choose appropriate prevention strategies. Addressing this gap requires sustained coordination among state agencies, Tribes, service providers, and local coalitions to align data, decision-making, and prevention work statewide.

Project description

The goal of the AURORA initiative is to use data and outcomes to 1. increase statewide understanding of excessive alcohol use and related harms; 2. expand the use of community identified and led prevention efforts, and 3. create statewide strategies for preventing and reducing alcohol related harms that will ultimately inform a statewide plan.

Year 1 objectives are to increase coordination among partners through conversations about data and shared interest in outcomes related to preventing and reducing alcohol related harms. This includes establishing data-sharing agreements, creating regulatory review templates, interview guides, survey tools, utilizing workplans to track data collection implementation, establishing a process for communication with regions/providers and utilizing training to build local capacity to gather and share data. The expected outcome is the development of the AURORA data team, a statewide alcohol impact assessment with regional breakdowns, regulatory and enforcement maps (statutes, regulations and enforcement), in addition to interview and survey reports.

State level data will be collected and analyzed by an Alcohol Data Epidemiologist, Dr. Alicia Sparks. The regional assessments will include healthcare utilization data (emergency visits and hospitalizations), public safety data, VPSO reports, and Local Option considerations (licensing, compliance, and retail access).

Dr. Sparks will also train community stakeholders (volunteers) to collect data. The training will cover ethics, data collection techniques, and data entry. Stakeholders may be trained to collect data across domains like alcohol availability (environmental scanning) and mapping and surveys. A recent survey of Recover Alaska's Prevention Alliance members (February–March 2026) demonstrated strong interest in serving as local data collectors across urban, rural, and hub communities. Fifty-five percent of respondents indicated willingness to participate in grassroots data collection, highlighting readiness for participatory approaches when adequate training and support are available.

There is no unified source for alcohol statistics in Alaska, resulting in a fragmented understanding of the issue. The assessments will include six data categories:

1. Regulatory Mapping: Document the wet, damp, or dry status of communities; enforcement provisions; licensing patterns; and cross-boundary dynamics between hubs and villages. In Alaska,

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many communities use a “local option” to regulate alcohol as wet, dry, or damp. These designations reflect different levels of allowed alcohol sales and possession under state law (Title 4, Alaska Statutes).

2. *Administrative Data*: Collect data on alcohol-related calls for service, EMS runs, protective custody events, and related public safety indicators.
3. *Licensing & Compliance Review*: Review license types, violations, and renewal trends.
4. *Retail/Access Documentation*: Conduct structured outlet scans in permitted areas and document importation and enforcement processes in restricted villages.
5. *Key Informant Interviews*: Interview tribal leaders, health providers, law enforcement officials, educators, advocates, and residents.
6. *Community Survey*: Assess motivations for local option decisions, perceived safety impacts, observed unintended consequences, and specific data needs.

Stakeholders will be invited to discuss findings through regional convenings. The final phase includes analysis and reporting, including thematic coding, descriptive and spatial analysis (e.g. mapping retailers to public safety response), and synthesis of community-identified strategies.

Year 1 deliverables include the development of the AURORA Data Team, six regional alcohol impact assessments, regulatory and enforcement maps (statutes, regulations and enforcement), in addition to interview and survey reports (including participant satisfaction data). These assessments will identify data and policy gaps and recommendations for engaging decision-makers on approaches to reduce harms.

Trust funds in Year 1 support a portion of staff time for data coordination, community engagement, and partnership development, including partial support for the Director of Operations and CEO. Funds also support travel for in-person engagement in up to 3 regions. Additional support includes stipends and training for community data collectors, data evaluation and management, facilitation of statewide data teams, space for community listening sessions, and supplies such as printed materials, accessibility accommodations, and translation or interpretation, if applicable.

Year 2 focuses on selecting up to 3 communities in separate regions for focused community-level work based on findings from the regional assessments. In these communities, AURORA will build on Year 1 data to further assess local conditions and support development of community identified prevention approaches. Recover Alaska will use a criteria-driven process to identify communities based upon readiness.

Year 2 will be the planning phase for each community, outlining clear goals (what are the alcohol prevention goals in this community?), objectives, and strategies that are both evidence-based and culturally appropriate. Each participating community will shape its own next steps.

For example, if alcohol-related harm is concentrated between 2 a.m. and 5 a.m., a community may pursue policy changes such as adjusting hours of retail operations (bar hours). If there are many people who have completed treatment but struggle to maintain sobriety, the focus may shift to

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establishing recovery communities and spaces. If youth are most impacted, communities may engage local youth to lead prevention efforts. Year 2 builds upon the regional alcohol impact assessments to develop local prevention strategy toolkits.

Trust funds in Year 2 continue to support data coordination, community engagement, and partnership development, including staff time, travel for in-person engagement, and ongoing support for community participation. Funds also support continued data analysis, facilitation, and development of deliverables, including community profiles and data summaries.

Recover intends to continue supporting community-level implementation after Trust funding ends.

Partnerships

The AURORA initiative will coordinate with the Divisions of Behavioral Health and Public Health, and key partners in the community, such as non-profit organizations, tribal partners, and public safety. AURORA will partner with 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline and the Center for Alcohol and Addiction Studies at UAA (CAAS trust funding to be received in FY27).

Grantee Proposed Evaluation Measures (from grant application)

Recover Alaska will track measurable outcomes aligned with Trust evaluation expectations:

1. HOW MUCH DID WE DO?

Examples:

- Number of data partners engaged
- Number of community listening sessions conducted
- Number of participants (including people with lived experience)
- Number of data team meetings held

2. HOW WELL DID WE DO IT?

Examples:

- % of participants who feel their voice was included in the planning
- % of local champions reporting increased capacity to make data informed decisions
- % of partners satisfied with clarity, accessibility, and usefulness of data tools
- % of data team members reporting improved coordination

3. IS ANYONE BETTER OFF?

Examples:

- Examples of how communities are using alcohol impact assessments to inform planning, funding, or policy decisions

Recover Alaska will submit narrative and quantitative evaluation reporting consistent with Trust expectations.

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Proposed Project 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 community listening sessions conducted during the reporting period. Please list the community and date of each listening session.
- c. Number (#) of individuals participating during the reporting period, including people with lived experience.
- d. Number (#) of data team meetings held during the reporting period. Provide the dates of each data team meeting held during the reporting period.

How well did you do it?

- a. Number (#) and percentage (%) of participants who felt their voice was included in the planning.
- b. Number (#) and percentage (%) of local champions reporting increased capacity to make data informed decisions.
- c. Number (#) and percentage (%) of partners who were satisfied with the clarity, accessibility, and usefulness of the data tools.
- d. Number (#) and percentage (%) of data team members reporting improved coordination.

Is anyone better off?

- a. Number (#) and percentage (%) of communities using alcohol impact assessments and/or local prevention strategy toolkits to inform planning, funding, or policy decisions.

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 data team to secure long-term implementation resources

Recover Alaska receives operational funding from the Mat-Su Health Foundation, Southcentral Foundation, Rasmuson Foundation, and the State of Alaska Department of Health. We have applied for additional funding from Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Rural Health Transformation Project, and Congressionally Directed Spending via Senator Murkowski's office. Where possible we will use these funds to supplement this project. We are preparing to use the data collected in Deliverable 1 of this project 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.

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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.

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	10

Project Budget (from grant application)

Personnel Services Costs	\$80,000.00
Personnel Services Costs (Other Sources)	\$500,000.00
Personnel Services Narrative	Trust funding will support a portion of staff time for coordination, convening, community engagement, and partnership development. This will include 0.15 FTE for the Director of Operations (covers wages and fringe) and .1 FTE for the CEO (wages and fringe). Fringe breakdown includes 6.2% SS Tax, 1.45% Medicare, 1.69% ESC, 1% WC, 6% retirement, and individual rate health benefits. FY27 - \$40,000 total personnel FY28 - \$40,000 total personnel <i>Trust funding represents 16% of personnel costs for the AURORA project.</i>
Travel Costs	\$20,000.00
Travel Costs (Other Sources)	\$25,000.00
Travel Costs Narrative	\$10,000 each FY27 & FY28 Travel expenses include:

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	<p>Transportation to three events in 2–3 communities annually Lodging and per diem Local transportation Recover Alaska will leverage videoconferencing where appropriate, but in-person visits are essential to build trust and facilitate meaningful engagement. FY27 - \$10,000 travel FY28 - \$10,000 travel <i>Trust funding represents 44% of travel costs for the AURORA project.</i></p>
Space or Facilities Costs	\$8,000.00
Space or Facilities Costs (Other Sources)	\$72,000.00
Space or Facilities Narrative	<p>\$4,000 per FY27 & FY28 <i>Approximately 9% of Recover's annual rent, utilities, other necessary facilities costs.</i> Location rental for community listening sessions in 3 communities.</p>
Supplies Costs	\$2,000.00
Supplies Costs (Other Sources)	\$2,000.00
Supplies Narrative	<p>Listening session supplies, refreshments; printed materials, visual aids; accessibility accommodations and translation/interpretation if needed.</p>
Equipment Costs	\$0.00
Equipment Costs (Other Sources)	\$10,000.00
Equipment Narrative	iPads for use in community for local data collection.
Other Costs	\$90,000.00
Other Costs (Other Sources)	\$625,000.00
Other Costs Narrative	<p>Community Data Collector Stipends and Training (\$10000 per FY27 & FY28) Evaluation and Data Management Contractor (\$12000 in FY27, \$8000 in FY28) AURORA data team facilitation and plan development contractor (\$25000 per FY27 & FY28) Additional "other costs" are for Year 3 and beyond of the project, largely requested via Congressionally Directed Spending.</p>

Other Funding Sources (from grant application)

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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
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation	\$50,000.00
Rural Health Transformation Project	\$650,000.00
Congressionally Directed Spending	\$582,000.00
Total Leveraged Funds	\$1,832,000.00