

Application Detail

Application ID	2466425
Submitted	May 15, 2026
Status	Awaiting review
Applicant(s)	Chelsea Burke (chelsea.burke@alaska.gov)
Organization	Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education 92-6001185 550 W 7th Ave Suite 1220, Anchorage, AK (ANC-Anchorage Intl.), AK, 99501, US
Program and cycle	FY28 Request for Recommendations FY28 Request for Recommendations
Tags	No tags
Forms	FY28 Request for Recommendations Template

General Information

Proposed Program/Initiative Title*

Project SEARCH Adult Expansion Initiative

Total Request Amount (All Sources)*

Total FY28 requested amount from all sources (MHTAAR, GF/MH, Other)

\$150,000.00 USD

Primary Beneficiary Population Served by this Project*

Developmental Disabilities

Board Priority*

Priority ranking of this request for your board (1st, 2nd, 3rd.) A maximum of three (3) requests may be submitted per advisory board for consideration.

1

Geographical Area Served by Project*

Please select "Statewide" option if there is not a distinct area served by this request

Statewide

Request Funding Details

FY28 MHTAAR Amount*

Amount of FY28 MHTAAR requested for project

\$150,000.00 USD

FY28 GF/MH**Recommendation Amount**

Amount of FY28 GF/MH Recommendation requested for project.

No answer

*** FY28 Other Amount***

Amount of FY28 other funding requested for project

No answer

FY28 Other Description

If there are funds requested in the "other" box above, please identify the source of the other funding anticipated for this project.

No answer

Project Budget

Estimated Personnel Services Amount for Project*

\$50,000.00 USD

Narrative Description for Projected Personnel Costs*

Personnel costs support partial statewide coordination staffing necessary to administer and expand Project SEARCH programming across Alaska. This includes coordination with host business partners, technical assistance activities, fidelity monitoring, implementation support, interagency collaboration, expansion planning, reporting requirements, and statewide partner engagement. Beginning in FY28, funding would support approximately 25% of salary and benefits for the statewide Project SEARCH coordination role currently supported through federal DIF grant funding.

Estimated Travel Amount for Project*

\$25,000.00 USD

Narrative Description for Estimated Travel Costs*

Travel costs support statewide coordination and technical assistance activities associated with Project SEARCH expansion and implementation. This may include travel for onsite planning meetings, fidelity reviews, partner coordination, training activities, and technical assistance with current and future host business sites, including Juneau and other potential expansion communities.

Estimated Other Costs for Project*

\$75,000.00 USD

Narrative Description for Estimated Other Costs*

Other costs may include Project SEARCH licensing fees, technical assistance contracts with the national Project SEARCH office, training materials, implementation resources, fidelity monitoring supports, partner development activities, and startup expenses associated with launching and stabilizing new adult Project SEARCH sites with regional DD partners.

Request Description

Project description*

Narrative description of requested program/initiative. This description must include relevant data that supports the need for this recommended project. If partners are involved, describe key stakeholders relevant to the success of the project.

The Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (GCDSE) requests \$150,000 in FY28 Mental Health Trust Authority Authorized Receipts (MHTAAR) funding to expand adult Project SEARCH programming in Alaska and continue statewide coordination and technical assistance activities.

Project SEARCH is an internationally recognized employment training model designed to support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) in obtaining competitive integrated employment. The program uses a host-business internship model where participants receive intensive workplace training, classroom instruction, career exploration, and individualized employment supports in real-world employment settings.

Alaska currently operates three successful youth-focused Project SEARCH sites located in Anchorage, Mat-Su, and Fairbanks. These sites have consistently demonstrated strong employment outcomes and long-term success for transition-age youth with disabilities. However, Alaska currently lacks a dedicated adult Project SEARCH program for individuals who have already exited the K-12 school system.

This request would support continued development of Alaska's first adult-focused Project SEARCH model. GCDSE is currently in negotiations with Bartlett Regional Hospital in Juneau as a potential host business partner for the next adult site. Funding would support startup costs, licensing fees, technical assistance, staff training, fidelity monitoring, partner coordination, and statewide expansion activities necessary to launch and stabilize the site.

The request also supports the Council's role as statewide coordinator for Project SEARCH Alaska. GCDSE has served in this role for over 14 years and is responsible for statewide fidelity oversight, partner coordination, technical assistance, training, licensing management, and expansion support for all Alaska Project SEARCH sites.

A portion of the funding beginning in FY28 would also help support statewide coordination staffing currently funded primarily through a federal Disability Innovation Fund (DIF) grant. This includes approximately 25% of statewide coordinator staffing and benefits to ensure continuity of statewide technical assistance and expansion support as federal grant funding phases down in future years.

The additional funding requested in FY28 would also position Alaska to begin planning and development activities for a second future adult Project SEARCH site anticipated in FY29.

Name of state department and division that would receive the FY28 funds. A signed letter from the Department/Division receiving the funds that they have reviewed the request and support the funding request must be included as an attachment *

Department of Health, Division of Senior and Disabilities Services

In this section, please confirm that this recommendation has been authorized by the department and/or division that would require receipt authority to receive the funding. *

Yes

Connection to the Comprehensive Integrated Mental Health Plan*

Area of Focus 3: Economic and Social Well-being/Objective 3.2: Ensure that competitive and integrated employment at part-time or full-time jobs pays minimum wage or above in integrated, typical work settings

Sustainability Plan*

Sustainability plan for this project in future fiscal years

This request is intended to provide multi-year stabilization and expansion support for Alaska's adult Project SEARCH model while long-term partnerships and funding structures are established.

Startup and implementation costs for new Project SEARCH sites are highest during the first years of development due to licensing, technical assistance, staff training, and fidelity support requirements. Over time, sites become more sustainable as host businesses, vocational rehabilitation partnerships, Medicaid supported employment services, and community rehabilitation providers integrate the model into ongoing operations.

Funding in FY28 would support continued development of the Juneau adult site while also supporting statewide coordination infrastructure necessary to maintain program fidelity and expansion efforts across Alaska. The Council anticipates future sustainability through a combination of Division of Vocational Rehabilitation support, Medicaid waiver-supported employment services, host business partnerships, and ongoing interagency collaboration.

Additionally, this request helps begin transitioning a portion of statewide coordination activities currently supported through federal DIF grant funding into a more sustainable long-term structure as federal grant funding sunsets.

Beneficiary Impacts*

Description of how the proposed program/initiative will serve Trust beneficiaries and the intended outcomes.

This initiative will improve competitive integrated employment opportunities for Trust beneficiaries experiencing intellectual and developmental disabilities, particularly young adults and adults who have exited the K-12 education system and continue to face significant barriers to employment.

Project SEARCH participants gain real-world work experience, career exploration opportunities, soft skill development, increased independence, and individualized employment supports that lead to long-term employment outcomes. The model also supports increased confidence, community inclusion, economic self-sufficiency, and reduced reliance on long-term public systems.

The project also creates systems-level impact by strengthening employer partnerships, increasing community capacity for inclusive employment, and improving statewide coordination and expansion of evidence-based employment practices for Alaskans with disabilities.

Long-term intended outcomes include:

- increased competitive integrated employment outcomes for Trust beneficiaries
- increased employer engagement and inclusive hiring practices
- expanded adult employment supports statewide
- increased independence and economic stability for participants
- stronger statewide coordination and sustainability of Project SEARCH Alaska