

Division of Community and Regional Affairs (DCRA) Overview and History of Municipalities in Alaska

**House Community and Regional Affairs
Committee**



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Division of Community and Regional Affairs

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, COMMUNITY, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

January 23, 2025

The Constitution of the State of Alaska

Article 10, Section 14:

“An agency shall be established by law in the executive branch of state government to advise and assist local governments. It shall review their activities, collect and publish local government information, and perform other duties prescribed by law.”

That’s DCRA!

Article 10, Section 1:

“... maximum local self-government with a minimum of local government units... A liberal construction shall be given to the powers of local government units.”



Mission

DCCED Mission

Promote a healthy economy, strong communities, and protect consumers in Alaska.

DCRA Mission

Helping Alaska's communities build sustainable economies and a means of self-governance.



Program Groups

Mapping Analytics, and Data Resources

- Community Database Online (CDO)
- Mapping & GIS
- Made in Alaska
- Alaska Product Preference

Grants and Funding

- 22 programs (\$1.2 Billion)
- Addition of 6 new programs (\$1 Billion)

Local Government Assistance

- Rural Utility Business Advisor (RUBA)
- Community Resilience (Risk MAP and NFIP)
- Office of the State Assessor
- ANCSA Municipal Land Trust (MLT)
- Local Boundary Commission (LBC)

Commissions

- Local Boundary Commission
- Alaska Minerals Commission
- Serve Alaska



Alaskan Local Government

Local Government Units

- Boroughs
- Cities
- The unorganized borough

Classifications

- Home Rule
- First Class
- Second Class

- Tribal governments
- ANCSA Corporations
 - Nonprofits
 - For profits
 - Regional
 - Local
- Health Consortia

- School Districts
 - (run by local governments)
- REAAS
 - (school districts run by the state)



Municipalities in Alaska :

Cities:

First Class	17
Second Class	117
Home Rule	11
<hr/>	
Total	145

Boroughs:

Unified Home Rule	4
Non-unified Home Rule	7
First Class	1
Second Class	7
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Total	19



Powers and Duties of City Government

POWERS AND DUTIES	HOME RULE CITY	FIRST CLASS CITY	SECOND CLASS CITY
Public Education	If the city is in the unorganized borough it must provide the service in accordance with AS 14. A home rule city is not permitted to do so within organized boroughs.	Same as for a home rule city.	The city is not allowed to provide the service under any circumstance.
Planning, Platting & Land Use Regulation	If the city is in the unorganized borough, it must exercise the powers. If it is in an organized borough, it may be permitted by borough to exercise the powers.	Same as for a home rule city, except the power must be exercised in accordance with AS 29.40.	The city is not required to exercise the powers in any circumstance, but may be permitted in all cases in the manner described for first class cities.
Property Tax	The city may tax up to 30 mills, except where a higher levy is necessary to avoid default on debt. Some home rule charters require voter approval to authorize the levy property taxes.	The city may tax up to 30 mills except where a higher levy is necessary to avoid default on debt. Voter approval is not required by statute, however, some general law municipal governments have more restrictive limitations imposed at the local level.	The city may tax up to 20 mills, except where a higher levy is required to avoid default. Voter approval is required.
Sales Tax	The rate of levy may be limited by charter. Requirements for voter approval may also be set by charter	There is no limit on the rate of levy of sales taxes; however, voter approval is required.	Same as for a first class city.
Other Powers	Possess all legislative powers not prohibited by law or charter	May exercise other powers not prohibited by law	May exercise other powers not prohibited by law

POWERS AND DUTIES	HOME RULE CITY	FIRST CLASS CITY	SECOND CLASS CITY
City Council composition and apportionment	Determined by charter or ordinance.	6 members elected at-large, except the council may provide for election other than at-large.	7 members elected at-large, except the council may provide for election other than at-large.
Election and Term of Mayor	Determined by charter or ordinance.	Elected at large for a 3-year term, unless a different term not to exceed 4 years is provided by ordinance.	Elected from the city council for a 1-year term, unless a longer term is provided by ordinance. Mayor is selected by council (or by voters upon adoption of ordinance)
Vote by Mayor	Determined by charter or ordinance.	May vote to break a tie vote on the city council.	Votes on all matters.
Veto Power of the Mayor	Determined by charter or ordinance, except veto is not permitted of ordinance prohibiting possession of alcohol.	Has veto power with the same exception noted for home rule cities.	Has no veto power.
Power of Eminent Domain	Permitted by statute.	Permitted by statute.	Permitted, but requires voter approval.
Ability to Attain Home Rule Status	Already has home rule status.	Voters may adopt home rule charter.	May not adopt home rule charter without first reclassifying to a first class city.



Powers and Duties of Borough Government

POWER	UNIFIED MUNICIPALITY AND HOME RULE BOROUGH	FIRST CLASS BOROUGH	SECOND CLASS BOROUGH	POWER	UNIFIED MUNICIPALITY AND HOME RULE BOROUGH	FIRST CLASS BOROUGH	SECOND CLASS BOROUGH
Public Education (education powers have been broadly interpreted by the Ak Dept of Law)	The borough or unified municipality must provide the service areawide in accordance with AS 14.	Same as for a home rule borough.	Same as for a home rule borough.	Regulate Fireworks, Provide Solid & Septic Waste Disposal, Housing Rehabilitation, Economic Development, Roads & Trails, EMS Communications, Regulate Motor Vehicles and Development Projects	Determined by charter or ordinance	May be exercised areawide upon approval of areawide voters or by transfer of powers from all cities; may be exercised by ordinance on a nonareawide or service area basis.	May be exercised areawide upon approval of areawide voters; or by transfer of powers from all cities; may be exercised by ordinance on a nonareawide basis; may be exercised on a service area basis with voter approval
Planning, Platting & Land Use Regulation	The borough or unified municipality must exercise the powers areawide, but not necessarily in accordance with AS 29.40.	The borough must exercise the powers areawide; in accordance with AS 29.40; the borough may allow cities to assume such powers within their boundaries	Same as for a first class borough.	Hazardous Substance Control	Determined by charter or ordinance	Same as above.	Same as above.
Provide Transportation Systems, Water & Air Pollution Control, Animal Regulation	Determined by charter or ordinance.	May be exercised on an areawide, nonareawide or service area basis by ordinance.	May be exercised on an areawide or nonareawide basis by ordinance; approval from voters or property owners required for service area powers.	Other Powers Not Prohibited	Determined by charter or ordinance	Same as above.	May be exercised areawide upon approval of areawide voters; or by transfer of powers from all cities and approval of nonareawide voters; may be exercised nonareawide upon approval of nonareawide voters; may be exercised on a service area basis with voter approval
Licensed Day Care Facilities	Determined by charter or ordinance.	May be exercised on an areawide, nonareawide or service area basis by ordinance.	May be exercised on an areawide basis by ordinance; voter approval required for exercise on a nonareawide or service area basis.				



Powers and Duties of Borough Government Cont'd

POWER	UNIFIED MUNICIPALITY AND HOME RULE BOROUGH	FIRST CLASS BOROUGH	SECOND CLASS BOROUGH	POWER	UNIFIED MUNICIPALITY AND HOME RULE BOROUGH	FIRST CLASS BOROUGH	SECOND CLASS BOROUGH
Property Tax	Limited to 30 mills except where a higher levy is necessary to avoid default on debt; voter approval to levy property taxes is required by some charters	Same as home rule except there is no charter. Still some general law boroughs have more limited taxing authority established by local action.	Same as for a first class borough.	Election and Term of Mayor	Established by charter or ordinance.	Elected at large for a 3 year term, unless a different term not to exceed 4 years is provided by ordinance.	Same as for a first class borough.
Sales Tax	The rate of levy may be limited by charter and voter approval to levy sales taxes may be required by charter.	No limit exists on the rate of levy; however, voter approval is required to levy sales taxes.	Same as for a first class borough.	Vote by Mayor	Established by charter or ordinance.	may vote to break a tie vote only if the borough has a manager form of government	Same as for a first class borough.
Assembly composition and apportionment	Flexible; determined according to AS 29.20.060 - 29.20.120	Same as for a home rule borough.	Same as for a home rule borough.	Veto Power of the Mayor	Generally determined by charter, except veto not permitted of ordinance prohibiting possession of alcohol.	generally has veto power, except veto not permitted of ordinance prohibiting possession of alcohol.	Same as for a first class borough.
				Ability to Attain Home Rule Status	Already has home rule status.	Voters may adopt home rule charter.	Same as for a first class borough.



Examples of Local Government

First Class City

Second Class City

Home Rule City

Unified Home Rule Borough

Non-Unified Home Rule Borough

First Class Borough

Second Class Borough

City of Dillingham

City of Bethel

City of Cordova

Municipality of Anchorage

Northwest Arctic Borough

Municipality of Skagway

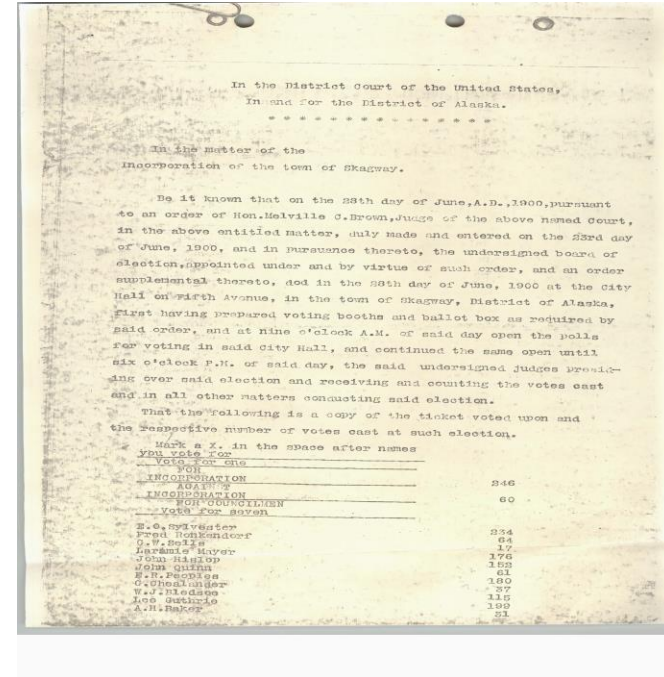
Matanuska-Susitna Borough



History of City Formation in Alaska

1900- Skagway (First)

2017- Whale Pass (most recent)



History of Borough formation in Alaska

1961-	Bristol Bay Borough
1963-	Mandatory Boroughs Act (Ketchikan Gateway, City and Borough of Juneau, City and Borough of Sitka, Kodiak Island Borough, Kenai Peninsula Borough, Municipality of Anchorage, Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Fairbanks North Star Borough)*
1968-	Haines Borough
1971-	North Slope Borough
1986-	Northwest Arctic Borough
1987-	Aleutians East Borough
1989-	Lake and Peninsula Borough
1990-	Denali Borough
1992-	City and Borough of Yakutat
2007-	Municipality of Skagway
2010-	City and Borough of Wrangell
2013-	Petersburg Borough

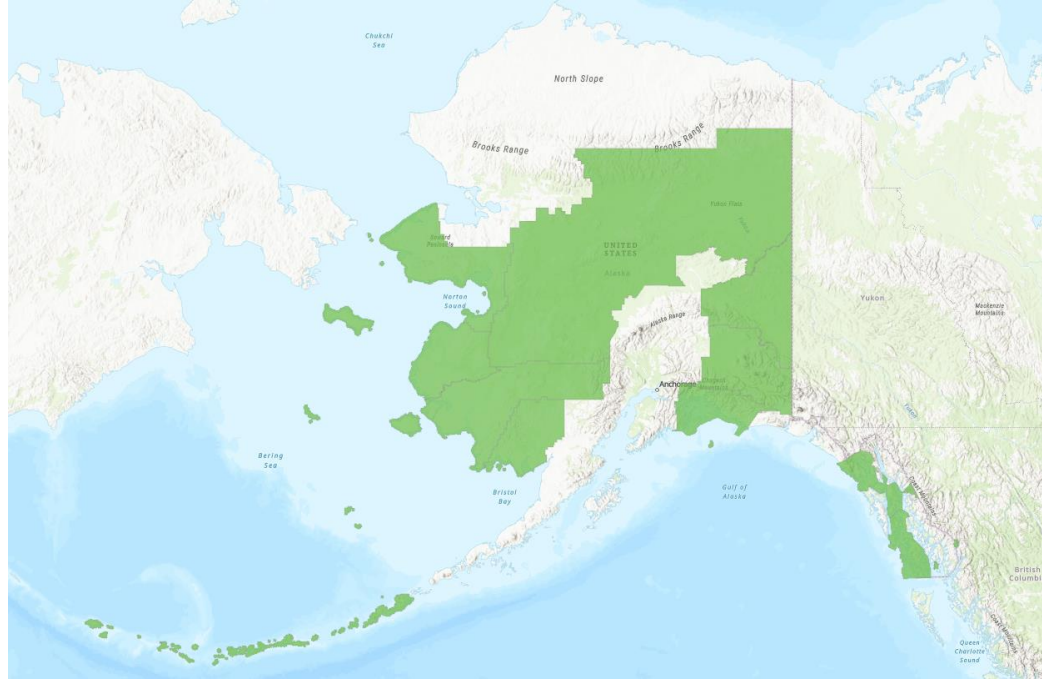
* Legislatively mandated



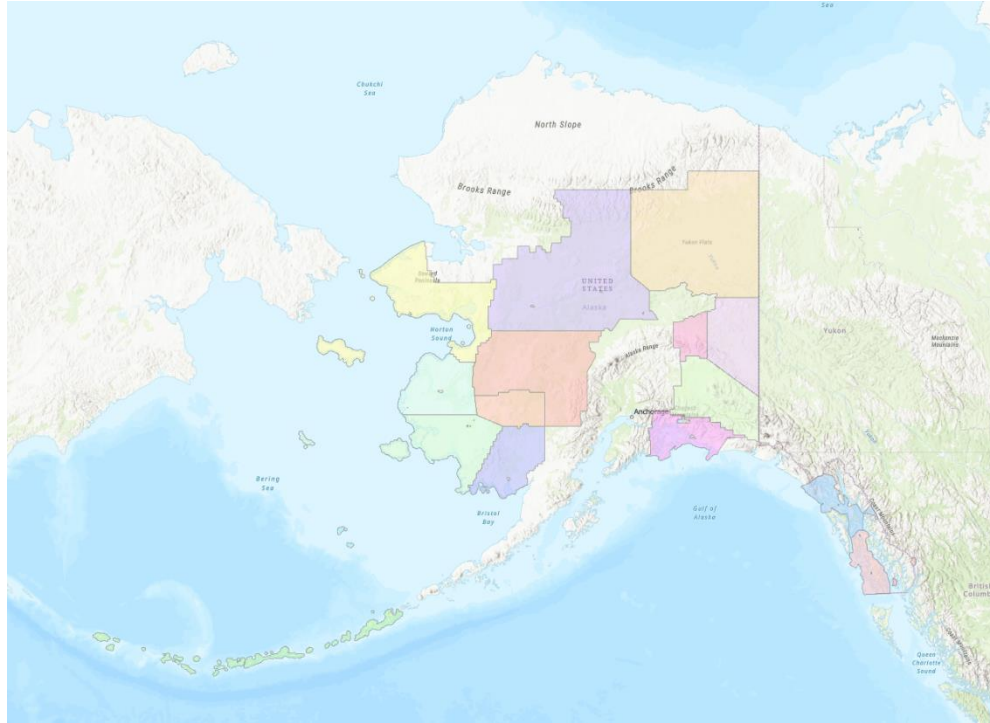
The Unorganized Borough

“The entire State shall be divided into boroughs, organized and unorganized.”

Article 10, Section 3, Constitution of the State of Alaska



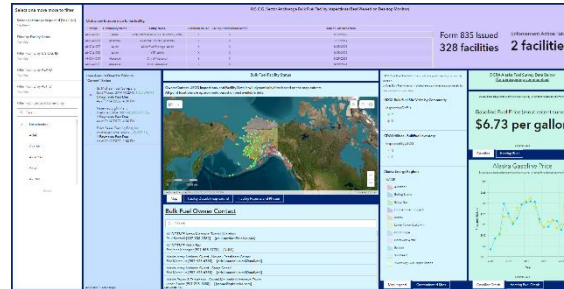
Regional Education Attendance Areas



Community Database Online



- Digital Datasets
- Maps
- Interactive Reports
- Dashboards
- Community Profiles



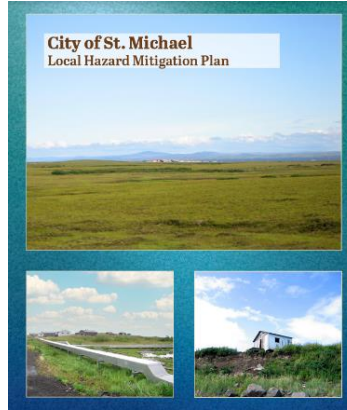
Community	Population Type	Area Type	Population	Population Rate	Date Issued
Barrow	Barrow	Barrow	1,000	100%	2022-08-01
Barrow	Barrow	Barrow	1,000	100%	2022-08-01
Barrow	Barrow	Barrow	1,000	100%	2022-08-01
Barrow	Barrow	Barrow	1,000	100%	2022-08-01
Barrow	Barrow	Barrow	1,000	100%	2022-08-01
Barrow	Barrow	Barrow	1,000	100%	2022-08-01
Barrow	Barrow	Barrow	1,000	100%	2022-08-01
Barrow	Barrow	Barrow	1,000	100%	2022-08-01
Barrow	Barrow	Barrow	1,000	100%	2022-08-01
Barrow	Barrow	Barrow	1,000	100%	2022-08-01



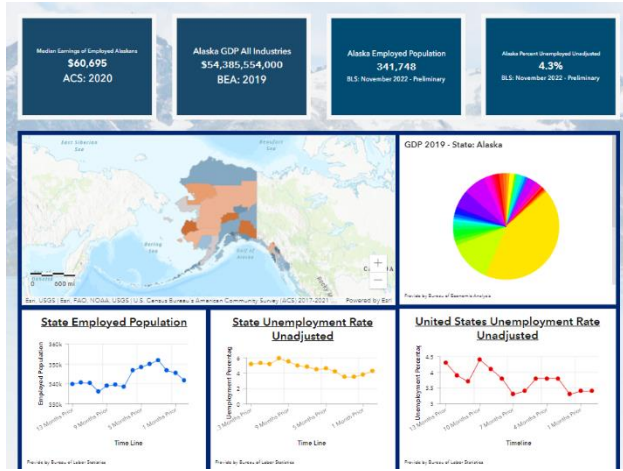
Community Database Online Cont'd

Community-Driven Data

- Detailed StoryMaps for over 400 communities in Alaska
- Community Profile maps with parcel, infrastructure, and utility data
- Community Photo Library
- Community Plans Library

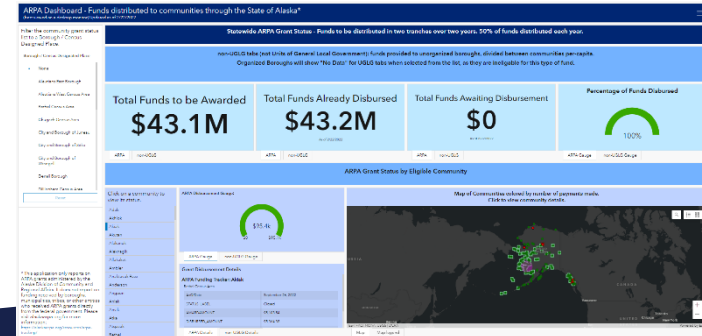
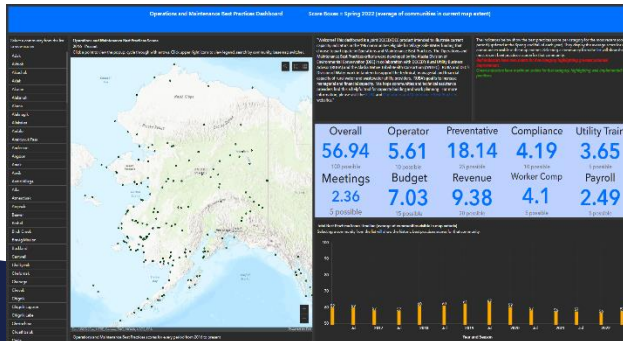


Community Database Online Cont'd



Data-Driven Solutions

- Topical webpages and StoryMaps
- Longitudinal datasets presented for yearly comparison
- Detailed dashboards to track key metrics



Local Government Assistance

The generalists
of DCRA

- Elections
- Title 29 Compliance
- Financial Management
- Utility Management
- Personnel Management
- Power Cost Equalization
- Local Alcohol Availability Laws (Title 4)
- Regional Training Workshops
- Ordinances, Resolutions, Codes
- Disaster Response
- ... whatever crosses their desk ...



DCRA Grants and Funding

AS Title 37 Public Finance, Chapter 5 Fiscal Procedures Act

AS 44.33.020 (18) & (20)

2 CFR 200

Provide oversight and implementation of federal and state funded financial assistance programs & grants. Monitor and ensure statutory and regulatory compliance of recipient entities including:

Municipalities

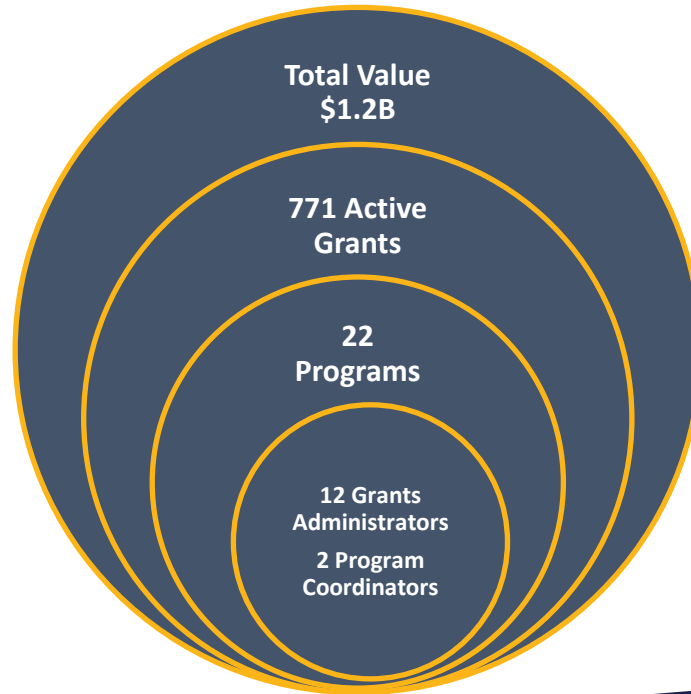
Tribes

Non-profit
Community
Associations

State Agencies &
Other Entities



DCRA Grants 2025 Fast Facts



Thank you!

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