



ONE SEALASKA PLAZA, SUITE 200 • JUNEAU, ALASKA 99801
TEL (907) 586-1325 • FAX (907) 463-5480 • WWW.AKML.ORG

Member of the National League of Cities and the National Association of Counties

The Alaska Municipal League (AML) has paid close attention to the State's efforts to address the opioids crisis, and its impacts on families and communities. We know that our members are wrestling with how best to approach such a complex and critical public health emergency.

AML commends the work of the Governor's Council on Opioid Remediation, and the participation of the local government representatives that worked closely with others who deeply care about next steps. The product of that work provides a pathway for Alaska to move forward, and to utilize incoming national settlement funds in the best and public interests of Alaskans.

Our focus should turn to implementation, then, and to making sure that we work through questions and incorporate best practices as part of next steps.

For local governments, we know that there are a variety of roles and responsibilities that emerge in relation to the issue. There's not uniformity in a local approach, as we know that home rule governments have greater flexibility, there are 40 local governments with police powers, and very few with public health responsibilities. The ability for the State to partner with local governments will shape a statewide approach.

There are nine political subdivisions named in the settlement, receiving 15% of the total amount of funding coming into Alaska. It's important to know that while that sounds like a lot, and that expectations will be high, but the reality will be that for most of those direct recipients it is a very small amount with which to try to address the challenge. That really affects how well they can respond to the crisis. Our work last year with these nine pointed toward part of the statewide approach being to address scale in these more populous communities. There will remain policy questions to wrestle with.

- To what extent can the State, with its management of 85% of the remaining funds, match what is available to local governments that experience the greatest impact and/or have some clear responsibilities for public safety or health?
- How will the State incentivize inter-jurisdictional collaboration? Are there regional solutions that the State can consider investing in?
- How will the State consider multi-year investments? If an endowment is established, how will it respond to an infrastructure proposal, to address treatment or recovery?

Essentially, these are questions that we believe will need to be addressed as part of the legislative process and finalization of the Advisory Council's recommendations by the Administration. These are opportunities for partnership and collaboration that will ensure Alaska can put its best foot forward.

Maybe there are other questions to consider, as well:

- While a statewide competitive process is one way to approach an equitable distribution, our experience has shown that those with the capacity are often the most successful. Formula funding or similar ensure that a statewide approach can be structured to respond to regional diversity, population, and opioids prevalence, as well as treatment, care, and recovery facilities.



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- AML recognizes the role of Tribal health and governance, and encourages the State to ensure that its structure for partnership encompasses direct and meaningful engagement and cooperation with Alaska's Tribal governments and health nonprofits.
- While an endowment and POMV structure enables the state to allocate a base level of funds to programs each year, there may remain questions about how to provide for initial investments or initiatives, and mechanisms especially on the front end to be able to get ahead of and dramatically reduce the harm being experienced in our communities.

AML is committed to bringing to the table additional awareness of local government authority and capacity, to work with our members on outreach and engagement, and share the resources we have available to be a good partner in this effort. That partnership encompasses the State's comprehensive approach to opioid misuse disorder remediation, including related crime and safety initiatives, such as that of Governor Dunleavy related to fentanyl.

At the heart of our community are residents – families, business owners, seniors, youth, employees – who depend on these efforts to be successful. Local governments are on the front lines of the opioids crisis and will need to be active participants in implementation of the State's approach to its remediation.