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Report to the Alaska State Legislature and State of Alaska

Supporting Community-Focused Projects Through Grant Application Development

This report provides an overview of the outcomes from a state-funded initiative to develop grant applications and advance community-focused projects across Alaska. AML, with support from the State of Alaska and the Denali Commission, has worked collaboratively with local governments, state agencies, tribal governments, nonprofit organizations, and utilities to address critical needs and secure funding to enhance resilience, infrastructure, and quality of life for Alaskans and to maximize the benefits to Alaska from federal infrastructure investment.

Background: The Legislature included in its budgets, which were signed into law by the Governor, the following grants to AML:

- FY23 - \$1.5 million for supporting infrastructure planning and coordination. AML has budgeted this out over five years to provide operational support for maximizing the benefits to Alaska from IIJA, including by hosting the akfederalfunding.org site and the annual infrastructure symposium.
- FY24 - \$500,000 for grant writing in support of especially rural and disadvantaged communities. AML has budgeted this to be spent over two years, with funding running out in July 2025. This funding has been matched by Denali Commission grants.

In FY25, AML requested an additional \$1 million to support reporting and compliance for awardees, which was included in the Legislature's budget but vetoed due to the State's fiscal position. AML has also been contracted by state agencies and local governments to support some of these applications, in addition to grant-funded work. AML has included in our collaborative approach the Office of the Governor, Alaska Federation of Natives, ANTHC, University of Alaska, and other partners.

Statewide Impacts of the Initiative

1. Addressing Community Needs - The applications focused on essential areas:

- **Transportation (84 projects):** Including road improvements, rural connectivity, and port upgrades.
- **Resilience (55 projects):** Spanning adaptation, emergency preparedness, and community resilience.
- **Energy (34 projects):** Targeting energy efficiency, renewable energy deployment, and grid modernization.
- Other categories included **Workforce Development, Housing, Public Safety, Public Health, and Water and Sewer Infrastructure.**
- Applications addressed needs across 14 sectors, fostering cross-sector collaboration to meet Alaska's most pressing issues.

2. Supporting Underserved Communities

- Outreach emphasized rural and disadvantaged communities, often facing geographic, economic, and hazard-related challenges.
- Supported regions include rural hubs and remote villages with limited infrastructure.
- A total of **86 unique applicants** were served by AML's support, highlighting statewide interest and engagement.

3. Aligning with State priorities.

- Projects were driven by state and local priorities, and reflect department and municipal/tribal capital improvement program needs.
- The majority of projects either reduce costs for Alaskans or increase economic development.
- One of AML's goals was to address current State and local obligations as much as possible, including prioritizing deferred maintenance lists or projects that had been submitted to the capital budget.

Funding Outcomes

- AML has helped applicants apply for more than \$3.6 billion in federal funds requested across all applications, in two and a half years.
- Status of Applications: 214 Total Applications
 - 33 projects submitted and currently under federal consideration.
 - 103 projects deemed unsuccessful, providing valuable lessons to improve future submissions.
 - The program often submitted numerous applications to a single opportunity, knowing they wouldn't all be funded but demonstrating need and understanding the iterative nature of this effort.
 - More than 70 applications have been successful.
- AML supported applications in response to 96 different funding opportunities.
- By leveraging state funding, the initiative amplified Alaska's ability to access significant federal resources, aligning with federal priorities and competitive grant programs.
- \$1.3 billion in funding acquired
- Of the total funding sought, AML has been successful in 35%
- The majority of grants did not require a match, but the average of all applications was 17%, ranging from 10-50%.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

1. Capacity Building: Sustained funding for technical assistance programs is essential for improving the quality and competitiveness of applications.
2. Regional Collaboration: Shared services models like AML's newly launched Planning Center enhance efficiency and reduce costs for rural municipalities.
3. Federal Alignment: Projects had to be aligned with federal priorities, increasing their chances of funding. Continued support for grant training and preparation is recommended.
4. Data-Driven Advocacy: Future initiatives can incorporate better tracking of project outcomes and broader benefits, providing a clear picture of community impact, but which requires a different level of resourcing.

This state-funded initiative demonstrates the value of strategic investments in grant preparation and community capacity building. Alaska's many and unique communities, particularly those in disadvantaged or rural regions, depend on continued support to access federal resources and implement transformative projects.

AML encourages the Legislature and Governor's Office to:

1. Expand funding for grant writing and technical assistance programs.
2. Support regional partnerships to address infrastructure and climate resilience.
3. Leverage state-federal alignment to maximize funding opportunities.

Emerging Needs and Future Focus Areas for AML

As federal funding opportunities have expanded, communities across Alaska are increasingly reliant on support to manage not just grant applications but also the lifecycle of awarded projects. To address these needs, AML will focus on reporting and compliance, project management and implementation, maintenance and operations, and asset management to ensure long-term success and sustainability of funded projects.

1. Reporting and Compliance

Emerging Needs:

- Increased federal oversight requires detailed compliance with environmental, financial, and operational regulations. Many communities lack the technical expertise to meet complex reporting requirements, putting projects at risk of delays or penalties.

Future Focus:

- Grant Compliance Training: AML has been delivering training and resources to local governments on federal compliance, including Build America, Buy America (BABA) provisions, wage rate requirements, and performance reporting.
- Compliance Support Services: AML is establishing a shared-service model to help municipalities submit timely and accurate reports, reducing administrative burdens and risk of non-compliance.

2. Project Management and Implementation

Emerging Needs:

- Many local governments lack the internal capacity to manage multi-million-dollar projects, including procurement, contracting, and construction oversight. Effective stakeholder engagement is essential to secure community buy-in and address local concerns during implementation.

Future Focus:

- Project Management Assistance: AML could provide professional project managers to guide municipalities through procurement, contractor audits, and risk mitigation strategies.
- Stakeholder Engagement Plans: AML could help local governments design and execute tailored outreach to engage communities in decision-making and build support for projects.

3. Maintenance and Operations (M&O)

Emerging Needs:

- Newly funded infrastructure requires ongoing maintenance and operational planning to avoid rapid deterioration and ensure functional longevity. Many small communities struggle to sustain maintenance budgets or access skilled labor for routine and emergency repairs.

Future Focus:

- M&O Training Programs: AML could develop or support a training curriculum for local governments focused on preventative maintenance, cost forecasting, and repair prioritization.
- Sustainability Planning: AML could assist municipalities in creating long-term maintenance funding strategies, including user fees and leveraging tax credits.

4. Asset Management

Emerging Needs:

- As infrastructure portfolios expand, communities need better tools to inventory, track, and manage their assets efficiently. Aging infrastructure, combined with risk impacts, increases the urgency for proactive asset management.

Future Focus:

- Statewide Asset Management Platform: AML is working toward a GIS-based platform to help municipalities map and manage assets, schedule maintenance, and plan for future upgrades.
- Capacity Building for Rural Communities: AML is providing technical assistance to help rural governments assess critical assets and integrate resilience planning into asset management strategies.

Strategic Priorities for AML's Future Work

To address these emerging needs, AML will focus on the following strategic priorities:

1. Developing Comprehensive Support Services: AML plans to expand its shared-service model to include end-to-end project lifecycle management, ensuring communities receive sustained support from application to completion.
2. Building Local Capacity: Through targeted training and mentorship, AML's goal is to empower local governments to independently manage projects while offering backstop services where needed.
3. Advocating for State and Federal Alignment: AML will continue to advocate for streamlined funding processes and better alignment between state and federal requirements to ease the burden on local governments.
4. Integrating Resilience and Sustainability: AML can work to embed resilience and sustainable practices into all facets of infrastructure development, ensuring long-term benefits for communities.

Conclusion: Strengthening and Improving the Conditions of our Communities

The increasing complexity of federally funded projects demands a proactive approach to compliance, management, and sustainability. AML is uniquely positioned to address these needs, leveraging its expertise and statewide reach to support Alaska's communities. By focusing on these emerging priorities, AML will ensure that every dollar invested delivers lasting benefits for Alaskans, strengthening infrastructure, resilience, and community well-being.

Representative list of Grant Opportunities

- Charging and Fueling Infrastructure
- Advanced Digital Construction Management
- NOAA Climate Resilience Challenge
- FHWA PROTECT
- FHWA SMART
- National Coastal Resilience Fund
- DOE Rural and Municipal Utility Cybersecurity
- DOE Water Power Innovation Network
- MPDG Rural
- Denali Commission
- ATIIP
- DHHS Community Level Innovation
- Rail Crossing Elimination
- FEMA 165A
- FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance - BRIC
- USDA Community Facilities TAT - Housing
- NTIA Digital Equity Competitive
- Reconnecting Communities
- Good Jobs Challenge
- State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program
- DOE Tribal Grid Resilience
- DOE Vehicle Technologies Office
- ATTAIN
- DOE C-SITE
- DOE Energy Futures
- DOE 247
- FTA CRISI
- FTA Low-No Emission
- EDA Disaster Supplemental
- AOP Culverts
- FTA Areas of Persistent Poverty
- BLM Recreation Visitor Services
- DOE Transmission Siting and Development
- Sustainable Aviation Fuels
- Thriving Communities
- EDA PWEAA
- EPA Solar for All
- EPA Community Change
- DOJ COPS
- EPA DERA
- DHHS Community Level Innovations
- HUD Community Compass
- NOAA Coastal Resilience
- EPA Clean Ports
- NOAA mini grants
- Regional Infrastructure Accelerator
- USDA REAP TAG
- EPA PREPARED
- Safe Streets for All
- USDA Rural Business Development
- HUD Imminent Threat
- EPA CPRG
- EPA Water Infrastructure Workforce
- USDA TAT Disaster Relief
- DOE Building Codes
- MPDG Mega
- DOE Indoor Air Quality for Schools
- MARAD PIDP
- TREC Competitive
- DOL Building Pathways
- USFWS Fish Passage
- NOAA Fish Passage
- HUD Thriving Communities
- DOE R-STEP
- DOE EERR Solar Energy (SEEDS)
- HUD Pathways to Removing Obstacles
- DOE ERA
- DOE GRIP 40301b
- EPA TAT
- DOE Weatherization Assistance
- Wildlife Crossings
- TREC Formula
- Bridge Improvement Program
- DOE Energizing Rural Communities

Community Beneficiaries

This map represents all communities that applications worked to support, directly, but doesn't reflect all regional or statewide efforts.

