

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

April 26, 2001

8:13 a.m.

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

OVERVIEW OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

TAPES

01-24, SIDE A

CALL TO ORDER

REPRESENTATIVE KEVIN MEYER, CO-CHAIR, convened the House Community and Regional Affairs Committee at 8:13 a.m.

PRESENT

Committee members present were Representatives Meyer, Morgan, Halcro, Scalzi, and Guess.

SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

JO E. COOPER, Coordinator, Block Grant Manager, Division of Community and Business Development, Department of Community & Economic Development, testified by teleconference from Fairbanks. She thanked the committee for holding the hearing and stated that the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) program is a federal pass-through program where money is received by the State of Alaska from the federal Department of Health and Human Services. By law, 95 percent of these funds are passed to an organization in Anchorage, the Rural Alaska Community Action Program (RurAL CAP) who is the only eligible recipient of block grant funds in Alaska by virtue of them being the only community action agency in Alaska.

The purpose of the CSBG program is to reduce or alleviate the conditions of poverty through a variety of activities. The program is fairly flexible in allowing states to design programs that meet the needs of the clients they serve. The law requires there be a legislative public hearing at least once every three years so there is an opportunity to look at the proposed state plan and the uses identified for

the funds. The current plan is for federal fiscal year 2002 funds, available to RurAL CAP in April 2002.

RurAL CAP is proposing to use the funds in five general areas: administrative services, child development, community development, community planning and housing, and public policy and advocacy.

DAVID HARDENBERGH, Deputy Director of RurAL CAP, testified by teleconference from Anchorage and thanked the members of the committee and committee staff for conducting and arranging the hearing.

MR. HARDENBERGH said the program's goal is reducing poverty through community-based activities, which lead to a greater degree of self-sufficiency on the part of low-income people. The funding comes to the municipal and regional assistance division of the Department of Community & Economic Development, and it is administered by the state block grant program manager, Ms. Jo Cooper. Mr. Hardenbergh said Ms. Cooper does an excellent job of handling the day-to-day responsibilities of the CSBG program, which includes preparing and monitoring the plan before the committee. RurAL CAP is the only eligible recipient for 95 percent of the state's CSBG funds. For federal fiscal year 2002, he expects Alaska will receive approximately \$2.3 million in CSBG funds to support programs and activities for low-income people. RurAL CAP, one of more than 900 community action agencies in the nation, is a private statewide nonprofit organization with 501(c)3 tax-exempt status. RurAL CAP is governed by a 24-member board of directors representing every region of the state. This board is a balance of target area village representatives, elected public officials, and private sector organizations. The board meets quarterly, identifies major issues, and sets agency policy. The executive director implements board policy through an implied strategic plan and oversight of agency programs. RurAL CAP uses agency funding to leverage approximately \$12 million in other public and private sector funds to benefit low-income Alaskans. The agency employs some 300 people annually in rural communities through Head Start, Early Head Start, AmeriCorps, and weatherization programs. RurAL CAP applies the majority of its resources to rural communities where poverty rates are typically three times higher than in urban Alaska. RurAL CAP also provides services to Ketchikan, Juneau, Anchorage, and Fairbanks.

RurAL CAP supports the Homeward Bound program in Mountain View that serves Anchorage's public inebriate homeless population. Seed money from CSBG was used for partnerships with Housing and Urban Development, the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, and the Cook Inlet Housing Authority.

MR. HARDENBERGH informed the committee that the plan contains detailed examples of outcome measures for each of RurAL CAP's CSBG supported programs. He further stated that there are many measurable results and gave some specific examples.

REPRESENTATIVE SCALZI asked about the tobacco smoke grant applications and asked why that material was in the plan.

MS. COOPER answered that the state is required to include federal assurances prior to accepting the funding.

REPRESENTATIVE SCALZI asked if there was a match requirement.

MS. COOPER replied there is no match requirement.

REPRESENTATIVE HALCRO asked if the Head Start program is growing to meet needs or in a holding pattern.

MR. HARDENBERGH answered that statewide funding is holding steady, but because of inflation over time, fewer and fewer children are able to be served with state funding alone. There is a separate channel of federal funding that has slowly increased over the years, which allows RurAL CAP to keep services constant.

REPRESENTATIVE HALCRO asked about the need in rural Alaska and how the services are being delivered in areas not able to be reached.

MR. HARDENBERGH answered that he doesn't have exact figures but believes only 30 or 40 percent of eligible children and families in rural Alaska are served by Head Start programs. This means that more than half the communities in Alaska that would like to have Head Start don't have any kind of center-based or home visitor program at all. The needs and desires outweigh the available funding and the majority of low-income children don't have Head Start services.

CO-CHAIR MORGAN asked Mr. Hardenbergh about regional nonprofit native corporations and Head Start federal funding.

MR. HARDENBERGH replied there are two streams of Head Start funding. One is to the regional Head Start federal grantees such as AVCP or TCC and this is matched with state money. The other is Rural CAP providing Head Start services to the regions with its own money.

CO-CHAIR MORGAN stated that he was hoping for a different answer, one that addressed those villages where there is a need for Head Start, and how they would go through the process of getting federal money.

MR. HARDENBERGH said that villages have the option for both from the regional nonprofit or directly to Rural CAP. Unless there are expansion funds available, from the regional nonprofits, Rural CAP is not able to open new centers and programs in villages not served because their priority is to maintain the programs already established.

CO-CHAIR MORGAN then asked if villages needing to expand must go through the regional nonprofit [which can say no].

MR. HARDENBERGH agreed that there aren't enough funds to provide Head Start programs in every village.

CO-CHAIR MORGAN said his point is that if the feds aren't asked for an expansion, then how is it obtained.

MR. HARDENBERGH said that Rural CAP applies for expansion funds every year.

CO-CHAIR MEYER thanked Ms. Cooper and Mr. Hardenbergh for the overview.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CO-CHAIR MEYER stated that the committee will be meeting on 5/1/01 on Senate Bill 88.

COMMITTEE ACTION

The committee took no action.

ADJOURNMENT

The House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 8:30 a.m.

NOTE: The meeting was recorded and handwritten log notes were taken. A copy of the tape(s) and log notes may be obtained by contacting the House Records Office at State Capitol, Room 3, Juneau, Alaska 99801 (mailing address), (907) 465-2214, and after adjournment of the second session of the Twenty-Second Alaska State Legislature this information may be obtained by contacting the Legislative Reference Library at (907) 465-3808.