ALASKA MENTAL HEALTH TRUST AUTHORITY
PROGRAM & PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING
July 29, 2026
8:30 a.m.

Hybrid/Zoom Meeting:
Originating at:
Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority
3745 Community Park Loop, Suite 200
Anchorage, Alaska 99508

Trustees Present:
Kevin Fimon, Temporary Chair
Agnes Moran (virtual)
Corri Feige (virtual)
Brent Fisher, Ex-officio (virtual)

Other Trustees Present:
Anita Halterman
John Morris

Trust Staff Present:
Mary Wilson
Allison Biastock
Katie Baldwin-Johnson
Shannon Cochran
Valette Keller
Julee Farley
Luke Lind
Carrie Predeger
Michael Baldwin
Eric Boyer
Kat Roch
Kelda Barstad
Tina Voelker-Ross
Eliza Muse
Debbie DeLong
Heather Phelps
Samantha Ponts

Department of Law:
Gene Hickey

Also participating:
Chelsea Burke; Tony Newman; Tiffany Hall; Iris Matthews; Christine Hundley; Sean Gilbert; Joy Stein; Paul Cornils; Matthew Kozak; Jane Beck; Meryl Connelly-Chew; Lisa Sauder; Rob Lemano; Maggie Winston; Lisa Liason; Carrie Poplinson; Rich Saville; Polly Cart; Randi Breager; Charity Carmody; Samantha Vetter; Captain Scott Hartlett; Karen White; Crystal Smith; Jennifer Carson; Alli Pohl; Larry LeDoux.

PROCEEDINGS

CALL TO ORDER
CHAIR FIMON called the meeting to order. He explained that Trustee Moran was present virtually, and he would chair the meeting. He began with a roll call, and asked for any announcements. There being none, he asked for a motion to approve the agenda.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION: A motion to approve the agenda was made by TRUSTEE FEIGE; seconded by TRUSTEE MORAN.

After a roll-call vote, the MOTION was APPROVED. (Trustee Feige, yes; Trustee Moran, yes; Chair Fimon, yes.)

ETHICS DISCLOSURE
CHAIR FIMON asked for any ethics disclosures. There being none, he moved to the minutes of April 22, 2026.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: A motion to approve the minutes of April 22, 2026, was made by TRUSTEE FEIGE; seconded by TRUSTEE MORAN.

After a roll-call vote, the MOTION was APPROVED. (Trustee Feige, yes; Trustee Moran, yes; Chair Fimon, yes.)

COO UPDATE
CHAIR FIMON moved to the COO update.

COO BALDWIN-JOHNSON thanked the trustees and staff for an incredibly productive quarter of hard work leading up to the FY28 and FY29 preliminary budget recommendations that will be discussed today. She stated that this committee has an opportunity to dive deeper into those, and to have good dialogue around the recommendations, and to hear the trustees' thoughts to provide staff an opportunity to reflect on the discussion in moving forward and preparing for the August Board meeting. That meeting is the culmination of this effort, with the trustees taking action and approving the budget. She talked about the moonshot concept and looked forward to working on the framework for how that initiative may move forward in the coming year.

CEO WILSON thanked the staff for the months and months of work that culminated with trustees working hard and long. She stated that the moonshot landed in the area of prevention and early intervention, and is a work in progress, with more to come in August.

COO BALDWIN-JOHNSON stated that they would continue to work with the partners in fleshing out the plan and moving it forward. She continued that many of the concepts will form the FY27 deployment of recommendations for the budgets. There are funds in the budget that trustees approved that would enable doing the get-ready work needed to be done over the next year. She highlighted appreciation for CEO Wilson's leadership, the trustees' engagement, and thanked Chair Fisher for his leadership. She moved to the Rural Health Transformation project, stating that the Department is doing a good job of pushing out the communications so the stakeholders that are engaged in the work are aware of the changes in timelines. The grant agreements are expected to begin distributions in early August. Also related to the RHTP implementation, the Department has been hosting regional convening sessions with the objective of working directly with the regions to hear from the communities about the needs, strengths, and the common themes around the opportunities. She suggested putting energy and minds together to see if they can partner and bring forward solid projects that are aligned with the perspectives of those that live in those communities, with the hopeful result of strong applications going forward.

CCO BIASTOCK provided an update on the third Improving Lives Conference. This is an IBF line with the Board of Trustees to hold a convening around beneficiary issues every other year. The event is slated for September 17th and 18th at the Dena'ina Anchorage. She shared the conference themes in May and announced that recently added to the agenda were three pre-conference sessions on September 16th. She added there was information about them on the conference web page, ImprovingLivesAlaska.org. Currently, there are 87 registrations; and 400 folks attended in 2024. She stated that it is all coming together, and urged folks online to look at the website and to consider attending.

COO BALDWIN-JOHNSON talked about the status of the Mini-Grant Program, with updates on modernized workflows, streamlined documentation requirements, and clear guidance for agencies. The next step is public communication to ensure applicants understand the revised process ahead of the relaunch. The updates will make the program more accessible, responsive, and beneficiary-centered. She commented on the competitive RFP for beneficiaries and programs earlier this year, and continued to a grant spotlight on the UAA School Psychology Program project that trustees supported for FY24 through FY26. She continued through her PowerPoint presentation, explaining and commenting as she went along. She acknowledged Kelda Barstad for 20 years with the State of Alaska, and nine years with the Trust.

(Applause.)

COO BALDWIN-JOHNSON also recognized a milestone for Mike Baldwin, who will be celebrating 18 years with the Trust.

(Applause.)

COO BALDWIN-JOHNSON continued that the work this quarter reflects excellent progress: Advancement of the strategic planning; moonshot innovations; partner collaborations; modernization of the behavioral health and ID Mini-Grant Programs; and expanding services engaged in peer support as a primary, effective approach in engaging beneficiaries and supporting the communities.

CONTRACT APPROVAL: MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS IN SCHOOLS COMMUNITY

CHAIR FIMON stated that the next item on the agenda was a contract approval for the Mental Health Supports in Schools Community. He asked for the motion.

> **MOTION:** <u>The Program & Planning Committee recommends that the Board of Trustees approve a $60,000 Authority Grant to The Stellar Group, LLC, for the Mental Health Supports in Schools Community of Practice Facilitator contract. These funds will come from the FY27 budget. The motion was made by TRUSTEE FEIGE; seconded by</u>

TRUSTEE MORAN.

MS. VOELKER-ROSS explained that this request is for a contract renewal for The Stellar Group to facilitate a community of practice during the FY26/'27 school year to improve mental health supports in schools. The target is school staff, school districts, and community behavioral health partners, with an emphasis on rural school districts. This contract was established through a request for proposals that was originally completed in January 2024, and The Stellar Group was selected. This is the second renewal of this contract to provide this service. She added that Iris Matthews, president of The Stellar Group, was online for any questions.

CHAIR FIMON asked for any questions.

TRUSTEE MORAN commented that one of the things found when mental health services are provided in the schools is that a lot of the stigma associated with getting mental health supports is removed. The parents seem to buy into it better when it is integrated into a school setting, which makes it easier for the parents to get their children there because they are already in school. It also builds an internal support system. She stated that this is a very strong approach.

CHAIR FIMON asked if there was any kind of information from prior years available.

MS. VOELKER-ROSS replied that the first year there was contact with nine districts. In FY25/'26, that bumped up to 25 districts, community partners and State agencies. She asked Ms. Matthews to comment on the progress.

MS. MATTHEWS stated that it was really exciting last year to see the second year of the community of practice. The first year we were slow in taking up some of the resources and were trying to understand what the districts wanted to learn and how to learn to be a community of practice together. The second year, the membership was opened up and really expanded the number of people and districts that were participating. That approach really facilitated the process that had the districts speaking to each other and learning. They appreciated the space to talk to their peers. She continued that they learned a lot and were able to take lessons from the first year and build a stronger community of practice in the second, and they are looking forward to having a third year. They have some ideas for how to help facilitate more goal-setting and work that some of the members are requesting.

CHAIR FIMON thanked Ms. Matthews and appreciated hearing of the cooperation and collaboration there. He asked for any further questions or comments.

TRUSTEE FEIGE applauded the success of the programs and was excited about the trajectory it appears to be on.

CHAIR FIMON called the vote.

After a roll-call vote, the MOTION was APPROVED. (Trustee Feige, yes; Trustee Moran, yes; Chair Fimon, yes.)

COMPETITIVE PEER SERVICES GRANT

COO BALDWIN-JOHNSON moved to the Competitive Peer Services Grant. She stated that there were seven projects that came through.

CHAIR FIMON asked for a motion.

> **MOTION:** The Program & Planning Committee recommends that the Board of Trustees approve the following seven competitive grant recommendations:
> 1. Anchorage Community Mental Health Services DBA Alaska Behavioral Health Anchorage for $426,420.50;
> 2. LINKS Resource Center Mat-Su for $343,000;
> 3. Alaska Youth and Family Network Anchorage for $300.000;
> 4. Kodiak Area Native Association Gulf Coast for $188,416.95;
> 5. Kachemak Bay Recovery Connection Gulf Coast for $122,291.60;
> 6. Set Free Alaska Mat-Su for $117,647;
> 7. NAMI Juneau Southeast for 115,000.
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> These recommended grants, selected through a competitive process outlined in 20 AAC 40.220, total $1,612,776.05 in FY27 Authority Grant Funds. The motion was made by TRUSTEE FEIGE; seconded by TRUSTEE MORAN.

COO BALDWIN-JOHNSON stated that Samantha Ponts will provide a little context and also talk about each project.

MS. PONTS stated that last August the Board of Trustees directed leadership and staff to explore the current landscape of peer-based services across Alaska and Trust-supported, peer-based services through assistance in early 2000. The purpose of exploring the services was to gather a better understanding of today's peer support landscape. In December of 2025, the Trust issued a request for information. Received were 16 responses representing organizations from across Alaska, including peer-run organizations, peer programs embedded within the clinical setting, and organizations that were more focused on statewide initiations or peer workforce development. She continued that three things stood out from the RFP which she highlighted. First, innovations that responded were not necessarily looking to create new programs. They were describing established peer services and looking for opportunities to expand those. Second, there was no single model for peer services support in Alaska. The responses further supported the understanding that communities develop different approaches to meet local needs. Many organizations were thinking about Medicaid reimbursement. Some were exploring workforce development, strengthening the existing infrastructure, and were entering the conversation from different places. She talked about the findings that directly shaped the RFP and the request for proposals. The RFP had two primary objectives: first, to expand or enhance the existing adult peer-based services; secondly was to encourage organizations to sustain long-term sustainability by identifying their stated pathways toward Medicaid reimbursement and other funding sources where appropriate. She stated that the RFP opened on May 5th and closed on May 26th. The Trust received 12 proposals, representing four of Alaska's nine Behavioral Health Demonstration Waiver Regions, and one statewide applicant. Following the review process, which she explained, seven organizations were recommended for funding, which are listed in the memo. She added that representations from the organizations are available both in person and online for any questions.

TRUSTEE HALTERMAN asked which agency had the statewide impact, which was not indicated on the agenda.

MS. PONTS replied that it was NAMI Alaska.

TRUSTEE FEIGE asked about indirect rates and if that was the overhead that was assessed on the grant. She asked about the standard for a direct rate.

MR. LIND replied that they did not have a standard rate and take it more on a case-by-case basis. The goal has always been 20 percent, and between 15 and 20 percent is the target. He continued that something they always looked at for in discussion is should there be more of a target.

TRUSTEE MORAN stated the need to consider that a lot of the larger organizations will negotiate with the Federal Government an indirect rate. By law, they cannot charge a different indirect rate to other grants other than what they charge the Federal Government.

CHAIR FIMON stated that, in looking through the seven, there is a high percentage of money spent on personnel. He asked if there is any distinction in the grant reports.

MR. LIND replied that the grant reporting will be identical, getting the same information. He added that since these are operating grants, they will be higher on the personnel side.

MS. PONT stated that Alaska Behavioral Health plans to expand its existing peer lounge in Anchorage by increasing peer-led groups and peer leadership opportunities for adults with mental health conditions. Their sustainability strategy focuses on expanding the peer group services that align with Medicaid reimbursement. The LINKS Resource Center is going to establish a peer support program and expand its current existing recovery, coaching and navigation services for adults with complex behavioral health needs in the Mat-Su region.

CHAIR FIMON asked to hear from someone with Alaska Behavioral Health.

MS. PONTS introduced Christine Hundley from LINKS Resource Center.

MS. HUNDLEY stated that she is the program director for the high-utilizer program for the LINKS Resource Center. They currently employ two peer staff that work as community-health workers. They noticed the engagement with the individuals coming through the agency being more forthcoming with their substance-use disorder, which resulted in the ability to get them connected to services. The desire is to expand on that. We have been fortunate to have the University of Alaska School of Social Work in a practicum program through LINKS. A BFW practicum student was hired who received her master’s degree and has a Capstone project to draw a peer support specialist professional development tool that we are excited to deploy with this program. This kind of formalizes and standardizes the peer support program, and then to be able to share that out with other agencies to see a standard approach.

MS. PONTS stated that Set Free Alaska is going to expand its existing recovery community center and peer support services in the Mat-Su Borough. Online was Sean Gilbert or Alli Pohl.

MR. GILBERT stated that Joy Stein, CFO, from Set Free Alaska was also online to answer questions. He continued that what makes this project unique it that it expands the existing peer support services to beneficiaries in the community. It specifically targets individuals who are not formally engaged in treatment yet. He explained that this is an unbillable activity, and the grant would enable hiring three staff - community engagement coordinator and two peer support - to help expand the drop-in model and clubhouse. He added that they piloted this model over the summer, and are currently doing monthly outreach events. Through this grant, they will be able to increase that to biweekly and weekly events, anticipating serving approximately 100 beneficiaries handedly.

TRUSTEE FEIGE asked if there is a pathway or some thoughts around how these can become billable services, and how to build out the program so that it supports that.

MS. STEIN stated that currently peer support is a Medicaid billable service; but the clubhouse model is not a billable event. So community events such as a sober movie night or a session building gratitude journal services are not billable yet. She added that they are working on that. People can come to the events, engage in services, and then we advocate and work with the other community members collaboratively to get these types of functions paid for to have that blending funding source to be able to bring about the goal. We have the connection for them, and we will continue advocating for more and more peer services paid for in other ways.

TRUSTEE FEIGE thanked her because it has been proven that these programs really work and are very effective. It is ridiculous that they are not billable.

TRUSTEE HALTERMAN stated that she has worked with this organization in a couple of capacities over her tenure in Alaska, and what they do is fantastic and phenomenal. She was excited to see this grant request. It is innovative, and it is an organization the Trust should support. She added that she will support this when it comes to the Full Board.

MS. PONTS explained that the Alaska Youth and Family Network is going to expand peer recovery coaching, family navigation, and drop-in peer support services for adults and families in Anchorage and Wasilla. She asked Paul Cornils to talk about the project.

MR. CORNILS stated that he is the executive director of Alaska Youth and Family Network, and he is excited for the first time in a long time because they tried for many years to get the support needed to begin expanding the services and billing Medicaid. This year they were able to work very closely with the Mat-Su Health Foundation and will begin formally transitioning and doing work that they need to do to start billing Medicaid. We have hired Bill Hogan to help start that process. We serve families from across the state and partner with those parents to help them move through the system and encourage them to engage in the mental health supports and recovery supports they need. He explained that the population they serve is very mistrustful of engaging with the system because the State has their children, and they are afraid that exposing any weakness will be used against them, preventing family unification. He stated that this grant will allow them to hire four staff that will expand the direct services provided to the community, and also to help stabilize and increase the internal capacity. He added that their other big expense is transportation.

MS. PONTS stated that next is Kodiak Area Native Association, and they are proposing to expand their existing peer support services, and to include culturally responsive recovery activities. She recognized Matthew Kozak.

MR. KOZAK stated he is the wellness programs director with Kodiak Area Native Association. The peer support program was initiated in the spring of 2023 and has grown quite a bit since then. They started with a single person working remotely from the Anchorage area, and now there is a team of five; four who are local on the island. In the fall of 2025, they made some major overhauls to increase the long-term sustainability to the program. The goal with this application is to continue expanding and building out the program a bit more as they move toward long-term financial sustainability. They are currently billing for all eligible services. The other goal is to send staff out to the rural village communities to build face-to-face personal relationships with community members so that they have the level of comfort and familiarity with staff and the program. The long-term goal is to demonstrate to organizations within the community and to other funders the value and the impact that those short-term stabilization resources will have to make the justification for that future sustainable funding.

TRUSTEE HALTERMAN stated support for the request and asked if they are primarily focused on tribal beneficiaries. She asked about the process for folks to access services, and if there is a need to expand their outreach to reach out to non-tribal folks that might not know about the services.

MR. KOZAK replied that their behavioral health department and the peer support team will work with anyone in the community. It is not limited to tribal beneficiaries and tribal members. As far as routes to access, they take referrals from internal organizations, walk-ins, drop-ins, and maintain a peer-connect hotline for people to call. Another goal with the program is to minimize barriers to access through whatever means, allowing anyone in the community over the age of 18 to engage with the program.

MS. PONTS moved to the Kachemak Bay Recovery Connection, which is to expand peer support services in the Southern Kenai Peninsula. She recognized Jane Beck, who is online.

MS. BECK stated that she is the operations manager for Kachemak Bay Recovery Connection in Homer. The main goals are to expand their peer support services. Currently, they have 1.5 peer supporters, each are part-time with certifications. Expanding the peer support staff will keep the doors open for more hours, and will allow transporting people to treatment or detox without having to close the doors. The closest detox is 75 miles away in Soldotna. Currently, personal cars are being used for transport. The second goal is to purchase a van to be able to get out into the communities more directly. Third is to establish the systems for billing Medicaid, and we are looking to work with South Peninsula Behavioral Health, and also to do some third-party billing.

TRUSTEE FEIGE asked about the travel and the van being part of the equipment costs.

MS. BECK replied that travel would be rolled into the supplies, and there is vehicle maintenance and repairs.

TRUSTEE FEIGE applauded her and her staff for their dedication, and encouraged her not to be shy about showing the granularity in putting the budgets together. She stated that it is incredibly important and a much-realized part of living and of trying to help to support each other in a place like Alaska.

MS. PONTS recognized NAMI Alaska which has developed a sustainability strategy. They are receiving some technical assistance from Agnew::Beck to learn all types of things in Medicaid billing. She recognized Meryl Connelly-Chew.

MS. CONNELLY-CHEW stated that she is the program coordinator at NAMI Juneau. Currently, they are not billing for Medicaid for these services, and are not billing anything. The hope is to contract with Agnew::Beck to look at the peer services currently offered, and to see the viability of billing Medicaid and to explore that with them. They are also hoping to offer two in-person classes and a refresher course in the peer support associate class, with the goal of making them more sustainable to move forward through this application process. She added that they have started working with SERRC, The Learning Connection in Juneau, one of their main partners on the peer support associate classes, to discuss some more long-term funding and viability options for the class.

TRUSTEE MORAN complimented staff on the overall way they approached this grant process. By going with this RFP, it broke away from the mold of funding those who showed up, and instead opened up the opportunity to organizations across the state. She thanked staff for putting this together, and she is excited about what has been brought forward.

CHAIR FIMON agreed, and liked the fact that the RFP process opened up to some new things.

TRUSTEE HALTERMAN stated that this was not an easy change to adopt, and it has taken many years to get us where we are. She gave some kudos to the Trustee Moran for pushing forward on this change. It was a heavy load and a constructive outcome of feedback, a lot of persistence, and good effort on behalf of the staff and the board.

CHAIR FIMON thanked Trustee Halterman, and also commented on being happy with the process. He asked for any other questions or comments. There being none, he called the vote.

After a roll-call vote, the MOTION was APPROVED. (Trustee Feige, yes; Trustee Moran, yes; Chair Fimon, yes.)

CHAIR FIMON called a ten-minute break.

(Break.)

CHAIR FIMON called the meeting back to order, and moved to the Consent Agenda.

CONSENT AGENDA – AUTHORITY GRANT REQUESTS OF LESS THAN $250K WITH A GRANT TERM OF 12 MONTHS OR LESS.

MOTION: The Program & Planning Committee recommends that the Board of Trustees approve the following Authority Grants as outlined below, to include:

1. Alzheimer's Disease Resource Agency of Alaska, ADRD, Rural Outreach and Prevention for $188,000;
2. Kin Support Program Haa Yaitxu, Building the Evidence Base for a Culturally Grounded Kinship Navigator model for $150,000;
3. University of Alaska Anchorage, Replication of Trust Beneficiaries in Alaska's Department of Corrections for $148,000;
4. Independent Living Center Homer, Gulf Coast TABI Expansion Project, FY27, for $120,000;
5. Alaska Safety Alliance, A Successful Start: AHWC Year II Continuation Request, $120,000;
6. Special Education Service Agency, SESA's Low Incidence Disability Outreach Program Evaluation for $110,000;

7. <u>NAMI Fairbanks Strengthening Early Intervention and Crisis Response in the Fairbanks Community, $45,949;</u>
8. <u>Alaska Humanities Forum, Strengthening Protective Factors for Bristol Bay Youth through Classroom Storytelling, $75,000;</u>
9. <u>Catholic Social Services, CSS Substance Use Disorder Treatment Startup, for $44,000.</u>

<u>The motion was made by TRUSTEE FEIGE; seconded by TRUSTEE MORAN.</u>

CHAIR FIMON stated that there were some members of staff to guide the trustees through these.

MS. BARSTAD talked about Alzheimer's Resource Alaska project for the Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementia Rural Outreach and Prevention Project. This is the second year of a multi-year program to put in place a staff member in rural Alaska. This particular staff member was hired last year and is placed in Southeast Alaska. They are providing outreach, which includes population model education and prevention in that area, to get more information about Alzheimer's disease and related dementias out to the communities, a hugely underserved area for the state of Alaska. This education process can serve this population of beneficiaries with a great degree of confidence. As soon as people are connected into services, people can be connected to the long-term services and supports vital to help continuation of care and to keep people in their home and community as long as possible, which is what a majority of people want as they age.

TRUSTEE FEIGE asked about the geographic distribution for this grant.

MS. BARSTAD replied that they found a great staff member in Southeast, which is why Southeast was selected. Looking at how this can potentially be implemented into other areas, the agency is in pursuit of RHDP funding. She stated that available online were Lisa Sauder, CEO, and Rob Lamano, COO.

MS. SAUDER stated that they are primarily focused on Southeast because that is where the staffperson has her connections, and she knows the region extremely well. They are looking at other regions, with a goal of building out a model of services and connections with the Southeast communities, and to take that to other regions and replicate it in terms of what they want.

CHAIR FIMON asked if the travel was for beneficiaries or for the person from the Valley to Southeast.

MS. SAUDER replied that the travel would be for the staff member to conduct the outreach and education into the communities.

TRUSTEE MORAN stated that she was very pleased to see the focus on an area outside of the Mat-Su and Anchorage Bowl area. It is very encouraging to see this starting with Southeast, and she appreciated that. She continued that one of her issues with the one-year grants is that they do not really allow for the amount of groundwork needed to go on. She was also a little confused on the interaction between this grant and the Dementia Live grant. They look as though they are complementary grants, and she asked for a better explanation of the distinction.

MS. SAUDER explained that this is a continuation which started last year. The staff was fully onboarded and has spent almost eight months working in Southeast. As far as the Dementia Live, that is a new immersive experience that we will bring through the outreach specialist to the communities so that general public caregivers, providers, can understand firsthand what it may feel like to have Alzheimer's, dementia or some of the symptoms. It is meant to inspire empathy and eliminate stigma. It is something that the outreach specialist with another community volunteer can implement for up to about 16 people an hour. She continued that it is a much more mobile version of what they used in the past, which is called Virtual Dementia Tour, but it is smaller and more updated.

TRUSTEE MORAN complemented them on leveraging other grant funding to increase their impact.

TRUSTEE FEIGE noted that in the equipment narrative there is a mini mobile Starlink hardware and one-year subscription. She asked if there is a program through Starlink where groups can get discounts or donations to help the groups out in rural Alaska.

MS. BARSTAD replied that she was not familiar with that.

MS. SAUDER stated it is a concern, and added that she has a connection with someone who sells Starlink to businesses on the secondary kind of market. They are allowing them to tap into their bucket of data to keep costs down.

CHAIR FIMON moved on to No. 2.

MS. VOELKER-ROSS stated that the Trust funds will support the first year of a formal program evaluation for the Kin Support Program, as well as assist its sustained core program operations during the evaluation period. This is the first step in pursuit of becoming a culturally based kinship support model. This investment allows the program to continue serving kinship families while building the evidence needed to pursue long-term funding and improve the quality of services provided. She continued that this project is recommended because it directly supports Trust beneficiaries and strengthens an indigenous community-led prevention model that keeps children safely with family and out of the formal foster care system. Every participating kinship family includes at least one Trust beneficiary. The program has demonstrated exceptional early outcomes, with 99 percent of families avoiding foster care involvement, and strong community support across Southeast Alaska.

TRUSTEE MORAN stated that this is the first foster care grant she has seen come before the Board that she can get 100 percent behind. It is innovative and risky, but it has a high potential outcome. It does have the potential to stop the intergenerational cycle that has been seen with foster care.

CHAIR FIMON asked for any other questions or comments. Hearing none, he moved to No. 3.

MS. PHELPS stated that this project is Replication of Trust Beneficiaries in Alaska's Department of Corrections. This project was approved for an MHTAAR grant for FY26, and is an update to a 2014 project. It has been a while since they have had accurate up-to-date data on Trust beneficiaries in DOC. She continued that this is an unusual request to do an Authority Grant instead of an MHTAAR grant to AJC to complete this study successfully so the information can be used to improve Trust beneficiary treatment while in DOC custody.

CHAIR FIMON asked about the time period.

MS. PHELPS replied that it would be one fiscal year.

TRUSTEE MORAN asked for clarification that this is not new or additional funding and a continuation of their unexpended funding, and it is rolling over from MHTAAR into this format.

MR. LIND explained that it is separate funding just due to the fact that the MHTAAR and the Authority Grant are separate types of funding. MHTAAR cannot be reprogrammed into FY27. That has to go through as appropriated, and let it expire. Additional funding will be used, but the unused MHTAAR will come back to the Trust and will not be used for the project.

CHAIR FIMON moved to No. 4.

MS. BARSTAD brought forward the Independent Living Center's application for the Gulf Coast TABI Expansion Project. This is the fifth year of funding, and the project is winding down. It was in response to a gap in State grant funding. Senior and Disabilities Services does have grant opportunities to provide brain injury support services, a vastly underserved population. The program provides brain injury screening, service navigation, peer mentorship, support services and individualized independent living skills training. It has been a huge boost to individuals with brain injury in this region. Independent Living Center serves the Kenai Peninsula, Kodiak Island, and the Valdez Cordova Census Area; a large area. She continued that there has been some really good engagement with individuals with a brain injury, not just people new to engaging into the service system, but also people who had a brain injury for many years and did not know that it was a brain injury. They can still engage in rehabilitation and in support services needed to live as independent a life as possible.

TRUSTEE FEIGE asked about $500 requested for 5 percent of 401(k) match.

MS. BARSTAD replied that it usually is not in that much detail. It typically identifies staff benefits.

TRUSTEE FEIGE added that it seemed like a very small number.

MS. BARSTAD stated that online is Maggie Winston and Lisa Liason, who are co-executive directors, as well as Carrie Poplinons, the admin manager for the organization.

MS. WINSTON explained that this is a gap funding, noting that the populations have been vastly underserved. The sustainability piece was also a challenge for them to address.

TRUSTEE MORAN asked what happens after this year of funding, if the gap goes away.

MS. WINSTON replied that, as it is now, the grant funding is helping to assist dozens and dozens of people to get these consultations, especially highlighted the partnership with Dr. Grove and the Brain Bus. This traveling consultation brings all of those services to people that traditionally would not get it because of location.

TRUSTEE MORAN apologized and added that she was not criticizing the program. She sees the value in the program and is concerned. She encouraged staff to work with this organization and see if there are other partners or other fiscal agencies that might be able to assist them so that this valuable resource is not lost after next year.

MS. BARSTAD agreed.

CHAIR FIMON skipped No. 5 because it is a second year and a continuation, and moved to No. 6.

MS. VOELKER-ROSS stated that Trust funds will support OPEN to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of SESA's Low Incident Disability Outreach Program, including a program effectiveness review and economic impact analysis and multi-state sustainability planning. The work will directly inform updates to SESA's business plan and plan of operation. She explained that SESA is a statewide public organization, though it was established in Alaska statutes to provide specialized consultive services to rural and rural remote school districts serving children aged 3 to 22 with low-incidence disabilities. Those are things such as autism, emotional disabilities, deaf, blindness and multiple other disabilities. It affects roughly 1 percent of school-age children in our population. A full evaluation is needed to help SESA determine how to maintain a sustainable system of care and really look at options for sustainability, strengthen their operations, and meet the growing needs of Trust beneficiaries with developmental disabilities, mental illness, traumatic brain injuries and complex low-incident conditions in communities where services are very limited. It is for one year.

TRUSTEE MORAN asked why it is not MHTAAR funding.

MS. VOELKER-ROSS replied that even though it is paid for by State allocations, it is a public organization and does not qualify for MHTAAR funds.

TRUSTEE HALTERMAN stated that it would be beneficial to have a bit of background about the fact this is an advisory group of mandates to do this kind of research. SESA obligations fall on the Governor's Council for Disabilities and Special Education, and it is one of their mandates to look at SESA funding requests and make recommendations, or get advice from the advisors about requests like this.

MR. SAVILLE stated that he is program coordinator for the Governor's Council. He continued that SESA is a nonprofit organization with a board made up of a majority of Council members. He sits on the board as an ex officio member; the other members are school professionals in rural districts across Alaska, district commissioners, and such. He added that he is not sure how to answer the question. He did not know that he would agree with the characterization, but is not sure how to counter it.

TRUSTEE HALTERMAN paused the thought, and added that she could be wrong. She asked if they would come back with answers and to educate the Board about SESA so they could understand the role of our advisors on these kinds of things. She asked for clarity.

MR. LEDOUX replied that he would be happy to do that. To the Federal funding question, he stated that SESA does receive some Federal funding, but not for the low-incidence disabilities program, which is fully State funded.

CHAIR FIMON thanked him for coming forward. He asked for any other questions on this one. He moved past No. 7, and asked for a short description of No. 8.

MS. VOELKER-ROSS stated that Trust funds will support the expansion of Story Works, which is an evidence-based classroom storytelling program that strengthens protective factors for rural youth. They will expand it into the Bristol Bay region. She continued that this project was recommended because it directly strengthens protected factors for Trust beneficiaries in rural Alaska. Story Works meets youth where they spend a considerable amount of time, in a school setting. It also occupies a distinct position in the landscape of youth mental health programming. It reaches every student through the classroom, through English language arts instruction, eliminating stigma and engaging students who would not self-select into mental health programming. It increases protective factors for youth, such as promoting high self-esteem, emotional regulation skills, connecting them to their teacher and school, increasing school engagement, and increasing the likelihood of seeking support in response to trauma or mental health issues. This program was funded in the Bering Strait region, where it was successfully expanded in six rural communities with really positive results. She added that it is an impressive prevention program that reaches students and is culturally responsive.

CHAIR FIMON stated that he likes the project, but was concerned about the pending larger grantor source.

MS. VOELKER ROSS asked Polly Carr, the vice president, to come forward.

MS. CARR stated that they were asking about the National Endowment for the Humanities fund. Since we first submitted this proposal, we received a notice of funding award for the past year, and are confident about funding in the year ahead. However, it will probably be half of what has been received over the years. She continued that they are also excited about a new funding source that is excited to provide the support of any gap in the National Endowment for the Humanities funding.

CHAIR FIMON thanked Ms. Carr, and added that it looked like the gap would be covered.

TRUSTEE FEIGE asked if this storytelling takes place with the classroom or an after-school Program, or is it integrated into the language arts program.

MS. CARR replied that it is integrated within the language arts program in the school, for all of the kids in the school.

CHAIR FIMON asked for any other questions on No. 8, and there were no questions on No. 9. He asked if anyone else had any questions on the motion at this point. Hearing none, he called the vote.

> *After a roll-call vote, the MOTION was APPROVED. (Trustee Feige, yes; Trustee Moran, yes; Chair Fimon, yes.)*

NON-CONSENT AGENDA – AUTHORITY GRANT REQUESTS OF AT LEAST $250K AND/OR REQUESTS THAT HAVE A TERM OF MORE THAN 12 MONTHS

COO BALDWIN-JOHNSON moved to the nonconsent agenda portion, which are Authority Grants with a request of at least $250,000 and/or a term greater than 12 months. All four of them will be discussed.

CHAIR FIMON stated that there were four motions, and they would be done individually. He began with Motion No. 1.

> **MOTION:** The Program & Planning Committee recommends that the Board of Trustees approve a $300,000 Authority Grant to the Independent Living Center Homer for the self-directed HCBS FY27 grant. The motion was made by TRUSTEE FEIGE; seconded by TRUSTEE MORAN.

MS. BARSTAD presented the Independent Living Center's application for self-directed Home- and Community-Based Services project. The Trust funds will support a second year of a statewide effort to design and prepare for a self-directed home- and community-based services option. She continued that the funding would support personnel and contractual services primarily to explore how to implement self-directed services. It will work on project coordination, stakeholder engagement, technical assistance, and development of the structure components required for the Medicaid waiver amendment that will be necessary in the future to implement this. They had a great start from the first year with good stakeholder feedback. The reason these services are important to the Trust beneficiaries are that the beneficiaries who are using home- and community-based services waiver options right now do not have the option to direct their own budgets or direct their own personnel, aside from personal care services that they can choose to hire and fire. There is not as much flexibility as people want. She explained that the core of it is that it supports Trust beneficiary independence, their autonomy and self-direction for services, and we can offer more flexible home- and community-based services for people that wish to direct their care.

TRUSTEE FEIGE asked if there was any link between this grant request, the Authority Grant request, and the previous Independent Living Center home or consent agenda request just discussed.

MS. BARSTAD replied that there is not a home- and community-based services waiver program designated for people with brain injury. They would need to qualify on other conditions or need a nursing facility level of care. There would be very little overlap with this, and the funding component is very different in that the Independent Living Center works very closely with Senior and Disability Services, which is very interested in implementing this into the waiver program.

CHAIR FIMON asked for some clarity on the $175,000 to some independent contractor third-party people.

MS. BARSTAD replied that more information can be provided on that. It is a national organization that provides technical assistance specific to these topics.

TRUSTEE MORAN supported Trustee Fimon on that clarity. She asked about the performance measures in the grant and if they were for the overall multi-year project or just for the one year of this grant duration. Then, since it is listed as a three- to five-year project, she would like to see a complete outline for what is to be accomplished over the life of the project.

MS. BARSTAD replied that more information can definitely be provided on the project overall.

CHAIR FIMON asked for any other questions. There being none, he called the question.

After a roll-call vote, the MOTION was APPROVED. (Trustee Feige, yes; Trustee Moran, yes; Chair Fimon, yes.)

MOTION: The Program & Planning Committee recommends that the Board of Trustees approve a $260,000 Authority Grant to Abused Women's Aid in Crisis, AWAIC, for the Healing Pathways Project grant. The motion was made by TRUSTEE FEIGE; seconded by TRUSTEE MORAN.

MS. PHELPS stated that Trust funds would support a 90-day-stay domestic violence shelter at AWAIC. This is a one-time funding request for an 18-month period. There is feedback that 18 months is more realistic than a 12-month for this project because it is a higher rate of recruiting staff. AWAIC is like most current shelters, works from 30 days or less, and finds that Trust beneficiaries need long stays that do not have a revolving door. The purpose of this project is to increase it to 90 days, which will allow Trust beneficiaries to receive more services, prioritize trauma-informed stabilization, deeper case management, and strengthen pathways to permanent safety and housing. Most of the funds are to fund two new positions. Anticipated outcomes of the project are increasing Trust beneficiary wellness and stabilization, strengthening connections to care, and increasing the likelihood of leading to safe, stable housing.

TRUSTEE HALTERMAN asked if there is any landscape with regard to how many of the clients are doing 60 days and turning right back around, and how long do they have to be out of the facility before they come back. She also asked if they are seeing beneficiaries going through two or three stops for a 30-day period.

MS. PHELPS introduced Randi Breager, the executive director.

MS. BREAGER replied that breaking down by percentages would be difficult, but they see many of their participants more than once, which is very indicative of the typical dynamics of domestic violence. It is going to take an average of seven to ten times for a victim to leave and stay out of the relationship. The hope to accomplish with a 90-day stay is to not inadvertently perpetuate that cycle by creating additional stress and trauma and having the survivors choose between ongoing safety and housing stabilization, which is what they fear is happening now.

CHAIR FIMON asked if the program was traditionally set up in 30-day increments.

MS. BREAGER replied that traditionally with emergency 30-day stays and recently shifting into a 90-day stay with 30-day extensions. The funding is to make those 90 days meaningful and provide a deeper level of services through the positions they are asking for. It is a pilot project informed by research, and we would like to track the data over the course of the 18 months to see if the additional services are having an impact.

TRUSTEE HALTERMAN asked if they had any current data and what the average stay for a typical beneficiary is.

MS. BREAGER replied that the average stay is 17 days now, but the hope is that this pilot project will increase that.

TRUSTEE MORAN stated that, traditionally, Anchorage was a 30-day shelter because of the volume of people. She asked if they saw a decrease in the need in Anchorage.

MS. BREAGER replied that they are running at or over capacity. The need has increased. This is about pivoting and trying something different to see if long-term can reduce those rates. She added that they do coordinate with other shelters around the state. Our shelter is a secure lockdown facility.

CHAIR FIMON asked for any other questions. There being none, he called the vote.

> *After a roll-call vote, the MOTION was APPROVED. (Trustee Feige, yes; Trustee Moran, yes; Chair Fimon, yes.)*

> **MOTION:** <u>The Program & Planning Committee recommends that the Board of Trustees approve a $254,757 Authority Grant to the Anchorage Neighborhood Housing Services for the NWAK Housing Intervention Program, HIP, grant. The motion was made by TRUSTEE FEIGE; seconded by TRUSTEE MORAN.</u>

MS. BARSTAD presented the Anchorage Neighborhood Housing Services, and doing business as Neighbor Works Alaska. NWAK is the same agency. It is an application for their Housing Intervention Program. This program provides case management services for two of the properties. Neighbor Works Alaska provides affordable housing to individuals. They have multiple properties across the Anchorage area. These two properties are projects that work specifically with getting homeless individuals off the street. The population they serve is 100 percent Trust beneficiaries and 100 percent documented disabilities with difficulty maintaining housing stability and the need for additional assistance in order to achieve those goals or to move forward in their housing facility goals. One uniqueness of it is having the housing provider provide the case management. They are looking into sustainability through Medicaid, potentially, and many of the participants would qualify for intensive case management through 1115.

CHAIR FIMON asked for any questions. There being none, he called the vote.

> *After a roll-call vote, the MOTION was APPROVED. (Trustee Feige, yes; Trustee Moran, yes; Chair Fimon, yes.)*

> **MOTION:** <u>The Program & Planning Committee recommends that the Board of Trustees approve a $250,000 Authority Grant to the Alaska Impact Alliance for the UReCares Stipend and Respite program 2026 grant. The motion was made by TRUSTEE FEIGE; seconded by TRUSTEE FIMON for discussion.</u>

MS. VOELKER-ROSS stated that this is the final year of a four-year initiative launched in 2024 to support children and families across Alaska. It concludes with a focus Trust investment in UReCares Stipend program for kinship caregivers. Over the life of the project, funding has supported major efforts, such as 100 Percent communities of Alaska, Family Resource Centers and the Family Resource Center Network, the 907 Navigation App, and the UReCares Stipend and Respite Program. AIA has been a strong statewide partner in child and family prevention work, and received funding for some of their programming through the People First Initiative. The stipends help caregivers meet essential needs such as housing, food, transportation, and child-related expenses, as well as respite services that provide temporary care so caregivers can attend to health, employment or personal needs.

CHAIR FIMON asked Trustee Moran for some input.

TRUSTEE MORAN stated that she has been trying to distinguish this grant since its inception and has never been supportive of it. She continued that she views it as a Band-Aid. Funding this type of grant over and over prevents us from looking at the really hard work that needs to be done with foster care and kinship care. She added that she thinks it is very expensive, and has never supported it.

CHAIR FIMON appreciated the candor. He asked for some more information on how it is monitored.

MS. CARMODY stated that she is executive director of the Alaska Impact Alliance. She continued that this program is the direct result of the need for keeping kids out of formal foster care. This is when relatives or next of kin come in and say they are willing to take in the kids outside of the OCS system. It is direct prevention. All of these kids would be in a foster care system if their relatives had not stepped up. The program was started because there were a lot of relative caregivers in Alaska not receiving any supports, which they needed. It was designed so people from all over the state could apply. They had to be Alaska residents and have proof of their relationship to the child and be over the age of 18. She gave a brief synopsis of the three-year growth of the program and tracked using the Protective Factors Survey, an evidence-based model for gauging the wellbeing of the family, and they found improvement across the board for each of the families from year to year. The recipients range from over 35 different communities; 30 percent are off the road system. She added that they track everything meticulously about how the funds are distributed and all of that.

A question-and-answer discussion ensued.

CHAIR FIMON asked for any more questions or comments. There being none, he called the vote.

> *After a roll-call vote, the MOTION was APPROVED. (Trustee Feige, yes; Trustee Moran, no; Chair Fimon, yes.)*

STATUTORY ADVISORS/RFR – MHTAAR

COO BALDWIN-JOHNSON stated that the next part of the agenda is the statutory advisors. She introduced Chelsea Burke, executive director for the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education, who will talk about the RFR.

MS. BURKE provided a quick update on the Council's FY28 RFR projects. The proposals were submitted; two had similar portions in FY27 budgets approved, and started implementation. Project SEARCH adult site and universal changing assistance fund are very early in implementation, and it is recognized that they may not be considered for additional funding in this cycle. This is Alaska's first adult Project SEARCH study, and they are continuing discussions with Bartlett Regional Hospital in Juneau as a potential host partner. Those conversations remain very positive. The Council has coordinated Project SEARCH statewide program in 14 years and are building the program on an established successful model rather than starting from scratch. This will be the first adult site in the state. There are three new sites already operating, and the adult model fills a current gap. She continued that they are focusing on building carefully instead of rushing implementation, which is why time and additional funding is imperative. The focus is on long-term sustainability, which is the biggest barrier. She shared some good feedback, good statistics, and outcomes. She added that the next priority is a universal changing spaces assistance fund. She continued that one of the Council's core responsibilities under the Developmental Disabilities Act is to support self-advocacy; a Federal requirement. This proposal helps ensure that people with intellectual development disabilities are not simply represented, but are leading. This funding will help to develop future disability leaders, remove current financial barriers, increase rural participation, support peer leadership, and ensure that Alaska has a voice nationally. This will create opportunities for self-advocates to develop leadership skills through statewide and national training.

TRUSTEE FEIGE asked how many people are currently or are anticipated to be engaged in this program.

MS. BURKE replied that depends on what funding is available. It is something the Council already currently supports. Due to funding constraints, they have not been able to do as much.

TRUSTEE HALTERMAN stated that she has been engaged with the Key Campaign from a number of different angles. It is critical for the board to understand the value of the legislative partnership that is created there, as well as the development of the ideas that need to be brought back for policy discussion to advisors for consideration for projects. She added that it is critically important for the Trust to continue to support these efforts. She appreciated what they were doing with those Key Campaign efforts, and the policy development things brought forward.

MS. BURKE stated appreciation, and added that federally the Council is required to be 50 percent made up of individuals with developmental disabilities or their family members, and we believe in the power that no decision be made about us without us. She believes that self-advocacy and leadership support initiatives represent just another opportunity to build long-term capacity and investing directly in Alaska's future disability leaders.

CHAIR FIMON called a lunch break.

(Lunch Break.)

CHAIR FIMON asked Ms. Baldwin-Johnson to introduce the next item on the agenda.

FY28/FY29 BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

COO BALDWIN-JOHNSON clicked through some of the introductory slides which provided some context on how the budget process progressed, and then went through the budget format. She stated that the presentation would cover a discretion of the area of work, the total amounts proposed by allocation types, the MHTAAR projects specifically in the budget. Those are grants that go to State agencies and go through the legislative process. The Authority Grant-funded items are grants that trustees award directly to nonprofit organizations that are outside of the State system. They will also highlight any new or changed items from the FY27 budget with some opportunity for dialogue.

MS. BIASTOCK stated that these recommendations will go with the budget on September 15th to the Governor and the Office of Management and Budget for consideration. She added that there are times when recommendations are not included in the Governor's budget, but get added by the Legislature throughout the session.

COO BALDWIN-JOHNSON moved onto the staff overview of the presentation and started with the priority area of Prevention and Early Intervention.

MS. VOELKER-ROSS stated that for FY28, the budget includes $2,226,000 in MHTAAR funding and no Authority Grant funds. The priority area is centered on reaching children, families, and communities as early as possible, before challenges grow more serious. By focusing on prevention, early screening, and timely intervention, the Trust supports efforts that can significantly impact the Trust beneficiaries across the life span, such as developmental issues, mental health struggles, suicide, traumatic brain injury, dementia, overdose, and substance-use disorder. She went through this priority area presentation, explaining and answering questions as she went through. She also talked about two new projects: Building Bridges is a parents-as-teachers project, which will embed parents as teachers home-visiting programs, which is an evidence-based program within four infant learning program sites. The need is significant, with an estimated 42,600 Alaska families that could benefit from home visiting. Current programs serve only 715 families; 1.7 percent of those eligible. The other project, Integrated Multi-Tier Systems of Support, strengthens and expands Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, PBIS, and school-based mental health efforts across Alaska. It will provide competitive grants to schools and districts to enhance existing PBIS frameworks, develop integrated multi-tier systems of support, and deliver Tier 2 and 3 interventions for students with higher behavioral health and mental health needs.

COO BALDWIN-JOHNSON stated the next priority area, Crisis Response.

MS. PONTS stated that this priority area is focused on making sure that beneficiaries can access the right mental health care during a behavioral health crisis, whether that is through a crisis line or mobile crisis team responding to the community, or a crisis stabilization program, suicide prevention services, or emergency shelter. The goal is to provide timely intervention or the necessary emergency department visits and law enforcement involvement. She moved to the FY28 MHTAAR grants within the crisis response priority area and highlighted a couple of them. The only Authority request in this priority area is the Crisis Now Initiative project management, which she described.

COO BALDWIN-JOHNSON stated that the next priority area is Treatment and Recovery.

MS. PHELPS stated that this focus area was presented at the May board meeting and refreshed some of the information shared. There were a lot of prevention projects for Authority Grants and also a lot for MHTAAR. She shared some of the details of each.

COO BALDWIN-JOHNSON transitioned to the priority area of Ongoing Support and Wellness.

MS. BARSTAD talked about the priority area of Ongoing Support and Wellbeing, which is fairly large and where they are spending the most time with the Trust beneficiaries. Ongoing support and wellbeing covers things like health-related social needs, housing, food, clothing, utilities, healthcare access, transportation, legal services, decision-making support, digital connectivity, interpersonal safety, social connection - a wide variety of things that help people live in the world. She, along with Ms. Phelps, went through a number of the different areas in their presentation, explaining them and answering questions as they went through.

MR. BOYER addressed the cross-priority budget recommendations, breaking down the MHTAAR and the Authority Grants, continuing through the slide presentation, explaining and answering questions as he went along.

CHAIR FIMON asked for any other questions, additions, or discussions on the budget.

TRUSTEE FEIGE stated that this is the most easily digestible presentation on the budget in her time on the board and is a huge improvement. She applauded staff and everyone for the time and effort it took to create this presentation. She stated that it was well done, really good work.

TRUSTEE HALTERMAN echoed those comments. She stated that she absorbed everything. Staff did a fantastic job of singling the process, and she appreciated the amount of work put into it.

CHAIR FIMON stated that it helps to make more sense of it, easier and in a shorter period of time.

CEO WILSON stated that it helped her as a leader. It was clear and easy. She added that the trustees wanted a sense of clarity and flexibility, and that was what this process did.

TRUSTEE MORAN also appreciated the new format and added that it took a long time to get here. There is much more transparency in this budget, and she is very happy with it. She added that the structured discussion as it is now should facilitate getting the money out the door in a better format so that there are not those large unexpended funds that are allocated but cannot be utilized in the timing. She also appreciated staff working on this. It is really set up for going forward.

CHAIR FIMON agreed and thanked her for those comments. He asked for a motion to adjourn.

> **MOTION:** <u>A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by TRUSTEE MORAN; seconded by TRUSTEE FEIGE.</u>
>
> *There being no objection, the MOTION was APPROVED. (Trustee Feige, yes; Trustee Moran, yes; Chair Fimon, yes.)*

(The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority Program & Planning Committee meeting adjourned at 1:47 p.m.)