

**Agency: Commerce, Community and Economic Development****Grants to Named Recipients (AS 37.05.316)****Grant Recipient: The Alaska Veterans Foundation, Inc.****Federal Tax ID: 59-3778680****Project Title:****Project Type: Planning and Research****Alaska Veterans Foundation, Inc. - Veteran Village****State Funding Requested: \$300,000****House District: Anchorage Areawide (16-32)**

Future Funding May Be Requested

**Brief Project Description:**

Ending Veteran Homelessness in Anchorage using small cabins in a secluded area when all residents must work or attend some training/educational program.

**Funding Plan:**

Total Project Cost:	\$10,000,000
Funding Already Secured:	(\$10,000)
FY2013 State Funding Request:	(\$300,000)
Project Deficit:	\$9,690,000

*Funding Details:*

*It is unknown what level if any the state may wish to contribute over time. One of the items acquired with this initial funding is a 5 year financial plan that identifies all funding sources available to this type of project. VA Grants and Per Diem for example pays up to 65% of construction. We have lots of in kind support.*

**Detailed Project Description and Justification:**

Veteran Village has been in study/development for 3 years. It is consistent w/the national effort to end veteran homelessness. It is a private initiative by veterans and friends to purchase, complete, and place 20 small cabins the first year, then build/place 50 cabins with support services. In addition, a 25 single living unit facility will be eventually constructed using the Housing First model with the result of housing 75 homeless veterans.

Residents must contribute 30% of their income toward the cost of their units/services. They must also be in school (vocational, college, etc) or work to retain residency.

We have selected a site that is just 7 minutes from the VA Clinic/Hospital yet away and out of sight of the community.

A complete presentation is available and sent to all state legislators. The Senate State Affairs Cmte held hearings on this in 2011 and this proposal is in direct response to this and other initiatives to begin ending veteran homelessness.

The objective is, once built, to be operational using federal and private support. We do not anticipate the State having any long term financial responsibility for this project.

**Project Timeline:**

Predevelopment has already begun with site selection and in-kind donation organization. Consultation with VA consultant and others is also continuing. The entire predevelopment work can be accomplished in 10 months upon receipt of funding. Includes grant initiation. This predevelopment work is essential to qualify for most of the grants that this project qualifies for.

**Entity Responsible for the Ongoing Operation and Maintenance of this Project:**

The Alaska Veterans Foundation, Inc. &amp; VVA Chapter 904

**Grant Recipient Contact Information:**

Name:	Ric Davidge
Title:	Chairman
Address:	3705 Arctic Blvd #415 Anchorage, Alaska 99503
Phone Number:	(907)229-5328
Email:	pm@cylaska.com

Has this project been through a public review process at the local level and is it a community priority? ☒ Yes ☐ No



## Ending Chronic Veteran Homelessness in Alaska in Five Years Anchorage Project (to be a pilot project/model for Alaska)

Amid all the customary rhetoric honouring military veterans on Veterans Day, we would like to contribute a sobering statistic. According to a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs estimate, cited by the [National Coalition for Homeless Veterans](#), a mere 8% of all Americans are military veterans, but nationally nearly 20% of the estimated U.S. homeless population has served our nation's armed forces. In Alaska veterans are 23% of the homeless and of the 20 homeless who have died on the streets in Anchorage these past two years, 5 were veterans.

*If we are really serious about ending veteran homelessness in five years, we cannot just do more of what we have been doing for decades. Existing programs and approaches, as good as they are, have not solved this problem. No one disagrees with that. We need new ideas, new approaches, and new partners willing to push the boundaries - allowing the full inclusion of our homeless veterans "as they are" not as we wish they would be. First we must get them off the streets, and then we can start to help them find a new path.* Ric Davidge, Senate Testimony 2011 on ending veteran homelessness in Alaska.

### What: New Projects:

We are requesting a one year predevelopment planning grant to support the Alaska Veterans Foundation, Inc. and its partners in creating two scalable and realistic model project plans in order to develop up to 70 single living units of permanent supportive housing in Anchorage for homeless veterans. This predevelopment package is designed to be scalable for other areas of the state such as Fairbanks, the Mat-Su Valley, and large rural communities with sufficient homeless veteran populations to warrant such a facility/program.

**a) Vet Village Phase I** A **DRY** project based on the classic Honor Farm/long term supportive housing concept where residents work (are in training/schooling for work or working) no less than 5 days a week, and are then provided housing (up to 50 small family cabins). No alcohol allowed. We provide direct integration into all of the trades through a relationship with Helmets to Hard Hats and other VA and state/federal DOL programs and all Trade/labor organizations through an agreement with the Alaska Labor Council, King Career Center, and the University of Alaska, Anchorage. The objective is to provide an alcohol free, warm, safe environment that they contribute to (1/3 of their income-whatever that is up to a ceiling) for as long as it may take to get them fully reintegrated into the work community anywhere in Alaska. Location is likely under a long-term lease with the Department of Defense at JBER in Anchorage. We continue to search for other alternatives, but local zoning has caused most possibilities not to be acceptable.

**b) Housing First Phase II** A **WET** harm reduction facility for chronic homeless/disabled veterans in Anchorage with application to other Alaskan communities. This is a 25 single living unit structure with offices and meetings rooms modeled on the very successful Housing First concepts found in many communities across America. Possible location is also on base JEBR and close to VA facilities but out of sight from the road. The co-location with Vet Village would enable staff cost savings as well as other program, facility, and transportation efficiencies.

**Why it this needed?** Within the full spectrum of the homeless there are really two groups. The majority (about 80%) are now well served with the transitional housing and services that our community has developed over the past decades. For the most part this 80% of the homeless become homeless due to an event or series of events - loss of job, loss of breadwinning spouse, death of spouse, etc. They are generally homeless only once – go through proven established transitional services/housing, and rarely come back. This group is, for the most part, invisible to the general community. You don't see them on the streets asking for handouts.

The second group is the 20% who are disabled - mentally, emotionally, and/or physically disabled. Very often these citizens self medicate with drugs or alcohol to num their mental or physical pain and suffering and over time are further disabled as chronic addicts. With few exceptions, **these folks are simply not capable of caring for themselves**, let alone successfully live in our western construct of home, family, and job. We, as a nation, have always prided ourselves in taking care of the less fortunate – the disabled. But most disabled Americans live at home or in some care facility they qualify for or with family and some program that can assist them. But a few are not that fortunate – they are the chronic homeless and often the chronic inebriate. This is the ugly iconic face of homelessness and one most visible in our community. Again, this is only about 20% of the homeless community but they represent a significant real cost to local tax payers who must underwrite their care at emergency shelters, hospitals, jails, etc. Two separate unrelated studies of this group (Reno, NV; Sidney, Australia) have revealed that the cost to the community for the time these individuals are homeless is over \$1,000,000.00 each.

Since the litigation in the mid '60s that rightfully ended the terrible abuses of these disabled citizens in retched mental institutions, we as a culture have faced an ever increasing number of homeless with mental, emotional, and physical disabilities. The wars since Korea and Vietnam have also greatly contributed to this 20% with the number of veterans with PTSD, TBI which may not present itself for years, and with physical injuries. Remember the percentage of survivors in these wars was greatly increased from WWII – resulting in less death but more disabled veterans coming home. For the most part, transitional housing and treatment programs do not “solve” the needs of this component of the homeless including some veterans (23%) who are an overrepresented group. **In fact when you research the on-the-street deaths in Anchorage of our homeless over the past two years – 25% of those who died, were veterans.** And yet veterans represent only about 7% of the population of the United States. Alaska, of course, has the highest per capita number of veterans in the nation.

**The Need:** Although the annual VA Community Homelessness Assessment and Local Education Networking Groups (CHALENG) report to Congress (discontinued in 2011) has stated for some time that there are 600 homeless veterans in the area, after three years of real effort by the Foundation, in partnership with the Anchorage Homeless Coalition, we have not been able to independently confirm this number “on the street” in Anchorage. We have since been advised that the 600 number is based on a VA formula. We have, however, confirmed, through the twice yearly Anchorage Homeless Connect and Stand Down events, about 80 to 100 unsheltered homeless veterans in need at the time of these counts (one in summer and one in winter). Of this group we believe there are fewer than 50 chronic homeless veterans in serious need of long term supportive housing. Other communities across Alaska report homeless veterans, but no serious studies have been provided, by community, that provides an understanding of the demand for permanent supportive housing for homeless veterans. This project will work with the Municipality of Anchorage, the University of Alaska statewide, and the Alaska Homeless Coalition and others to better profile these needs by community.

The Anchorage Mayor's Homeless Leadership Team (HLT) has also released (May 2010) its recommendations to the Mayor after 8 months of series concentrated study by the most knowledgeable leaders on this issue in Anchorage. **Both of the projects proposed by the Foundation in this request**

are directly consistent with the recommendations of the HLT to the Mayor. The predevelopment funds/work will provide essential critical planning for appropriate Housing First and Vet Village site selections, physical and program project designs, a sustainable 5 year financial plan based on a minimum 25 living units. Why 25? What is magic about 25? That is what the experts in Housing First and Long Term Sustainable Housing suggests is the threshold for financial success. This proposal was a part of HLT recommendation of 200 single living units for the chronic homeless in Anchorage.

### **Why segregate Veterans?**

Most veterans come with a shopping cart of services and benefits earned through service and sacrifice that are not available to nonveterans. This includes grants, per diem, and other services that **require no less than 75% veteran occupation**, so it makes sense to bring veterans together pooling these programs. Neither of these facilities will be exclusive for veterans, but they must have a minimum of **75% veterans** to qualify for most of the VA, HUD, and DOL funding sources applicable. Furthermore, there is a long standing and well understood benefit to sitting veterans down together, men and women who have shared common experiences (combat and service) to work through their individual issues toward the goal of being a fully functional and appropriate member of our community.

### **VA National 5 year Program to end Veteran Homelessness**

These two projects are within the scope and purpose of the new US Dept of Veteran Affairs national five year plans to end veteran homelessness. The VA Secretary is fully committed to meeting veterans **“as they are and as they come to us”** which is a significant change in the approach of the VA to this challenge. The Foundation and our Chairman are members of the **National Committee to End Veteran Homelessness** through the Vietnam Veterans of America and the **National Coalition for Homeless Veterans** and therefore have ongoing direct access to the highest levels of the VA in Washington D.C. including the White House and the key Members of Congress and their staff - all who are supportive of this national initiative. We meet with and brief these offices and Members of Congress quarterly when in Wash DC.

**Existing VA Programs/facilities:** Although the Anchorage VA provides an excellent statewide 50 bed Domiciliary (at C & Benson, Anchorage) for recovering (alcohol/drug) homeless veterans which has had generally good success, their barriers to entry, waiting list, failure rate, and recidivism clearly indicate the need for additional beds and a different approach for some vets. In our direct interviews with chronic homeless veterans we find them often unwilling to enter or return to the Domiciliary for a host of reasons. The development of a Housing First facility and Vet Village under a working partnership of the VA, Veterans Industries, the Municipality of Anchorage, some Veteran Service Organizations, Trade Union apprenticeship programs, the Alaska Department of Labor, the University of Alaska, etc addresses those concerns.

Given the obvious relationships between this proposal and the existing VA Domiciliary program, we believe that **adding these two new models to our community** will actually allow the VA Domiciliary to be even more successful with those veterans that choose the VA Domiciliary model while allowing veterans unwilling to accept the Domiciliary concept to find success in our Housing First or Vet Village models. The overarching goal of eliminating veteran homelessness is the same, the process and philosophy just a little different with these two additional approaches. Again, it's about meeting veterans “as they are” and then providing them with a warm and safe environment from which we can help them make appropriate choices that will enable them to be successful in the community.

The VA Community Homelessness Assessment and Local Education Networking Groups (CHALENG) report annually confirms that the VA needs additional facilities for this hard to serve population. We believe, consistent with the Mayor's Homeless Leadership Teams recommendations, that we need new beds in both a Housing First harm reduction model and a longer term supportive housing model like Vet Village. These are both a little different than the domiciliary model, because they are designed to meet veterans “as they come to use” many of whom will not use VA programs for a range of reasons. In

addition, Mayor Sullivan has expressed strong support for the old “Honor Farm” concept. Vet Village is based on that specific approach, but with much more intense job integration.

**The VA Grants and Per Diem program will cover up to 65% of the cost of construction, but it does not fund any planning** for projects like this. We have contacted the Technical Assistance partnership in Boston referred to us by the Washington, D.C. office of the VA Grants and Per Diem Assistant Director. This group has provided important assistance in the development of this proposal and we anticipate them having a very active and appropriately critical role in the predevelopment work to be funded by the grant we are requesting. The Foundation is not able to fund this predevelopment planning internally; however we are actively working our way through the matrix of issues such as site selection and facility design options under our existing budget and programs. We believe that in partnerships with other nonprofits and for-profits and the Trades, our attempt to identify other funding sources for the project will assist in the financial sustainability of both of these ventures. **But we want to get started now, and this predevelopment grant will facilitate that better than any other option we have discovered.**

**Site:** We continue to explore site options. Two sites we believed would work in Eagle River, had serious zoning conflicts and the upfront cost and likely local opposition to these has required us to drop these site alternatives. Recently the Department of Defense received much broader discretion on leases within their land base and we have requested consideration of such a lease on JBER. We will continue to seek alternative sites, but they must be within 15 minutes of the VA Clinic & Hospital in East Anchorage and be close enough to trade schools and the University campus in Anchorage to allow attendance. We continue discussions with the Director of the Alaska Mental Health Trust Lands Division for a site on their lands that might work. Any site must not adversely impact any adjacent neighbors. We hope to subordinate the cost of the any property until cash flow can adequately cover the payments or a separate grant is approved that will cover the lease/purchase of this land. We are also asking the Alaska Mental Health Trust to consider partnering on this project as its purpose is to provide long-term supportive housing for Alaskans who are, for the most part, mentally disabled. We are confident that with the predevelopment appropriation and the products developed during that work, we can leverage this commitment to secure the land.

**Why outside of Downtown Anchorage?** Given the community concerns raised with the municipal discussion around the “Red Roof Inn” now known as Karluk Manor - Housing First project – although eventually approved, we decided to locate away from Anchorage neighborhoods. This was not just in consideration of the NIMBY problem but also in the best interest of the veterans in our program as it keeps them from reconnecting with negative influences. We believe it critical that we provide a significant space/time barrier between our location and the “4<sup>th</sup> Ave subculture” that so often draws recovering veterans back to the street. A location outside of downtown Anchorage but within 15 minutes of the VA Clinic/Hospital is perfect. Out of sight and out of mind, but only a 15 or less minute van ride to the VA Clinic/Hospital in east Anchorage just off the Glenn Highway and Muldoon Road.

Consistent with our statewide approach, we have a representative from Fairbanks participating in our planning team as the Housing First concept/design is to be scalable for possible development in other communities across Alaska. This will allow other locations across Alaska to trailer on our work and not have to start from zero. Because we have designed this project to be scalable, starting at 25 living units for both the Housing First and the Veteran Village components, other communities should be able to take all of the predevelopment work we do and replicate it in their own area without needing additional large grants to get started. We believe this is imperative if we are to meet the five year target for ending veteran homelessness in Alaska.

**Occupants:** Although communities talk about ending homelessness in a generic form, there is a significant difference between the “homeless” and the “chronic homeless.” We know that the chronic homeless use a disproportionate amount of our community services and are generally regarded as “the homeless” in general conversation. They are the visible homeless. But we also know that the majority of

homeless persons and families are being adequately served with the existing transitional systems, programs, and facilities in Anchorage and in some other communities. These are the invisible homeless. Honestly addressing the “chronic” homeless veteran problem, most all with substance abuse combined with serious mental challenges and in some cases physical disabilities, is much more difficult. We believe it requires new approaches. The Housing First harm reduction model has now been proven in a number of communities across America. We think it’s time we offered this proven program here in Anchorage and then across Alaska targeted toward veterans. Furthermore, the honor farm concept was a proven program for decades across America. We believe it can still work and our discussions with homeless veterans, the Anchorage Police Department, the Anchorage Fire Department and with lots of other providers gives us great hope that by combining these two programs outside of Anchorage we can realize the goal of ending homelessness for our Alaska veterans in 5 years. We also believe Vet Village embraces the new “Healing Camp” programs developed by the Alaska Mental Health Trust and now in operation in some rural communities. The Healing Camp program allows Vet Village to directly meet cultural issues within our homeless veteran community.

**Concept:** Using the **Housing First - harm reduction model**, this project will likely be a loose **partnership** which we hope to have codified by a formal MOU between the VA/Anchorage/Alaska, The Alaska Mental Health Trust, and the Alaska Veterans Foundation, Inc. as well as some National Veteran Service Organizations – if they choose to participate - and other partners. The Foundation and the Anchorage Chapter (904) of the Vietnam Veterans of America have already committed to support this venture. You will note a strong letter of support from the National President of Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) and from the Chairman of the National Committee on Veteran Homelessness for VVA. We will continue to invite other National Veteran Service Organizations (NVSO) into this effort, but frankly their participation is not likely unless we show substantive commitments and real on-the-ground progress. Approval of this grant will help us leverage much wider participation. The Alaska Veterans Foundation will play the role of developer and owner/manager of this Housing First Project and Vet Village. The project will provide permanent supportive housing designed specifically for chronically homeless veterans. We believe that other national veteran service organizations should provide and collectively support a nationally accredited Veteran Service Officer (VSO) on site no less than part-time and hold regular individual and group meetings to help reintegrate these veteran tenants back into, at least, the veteran community. As pointed out, the Vietnam Veterans of America, Anchorage Chapter 904 (Alaska’s largest) and its state council and supportive national offices have also made this commitment. Additionally, the Veteran Support Foundation, Inc. which is attached to VVA national has grant funds (up to \$20,000 a year) that can assist especially in the provision of the Veteran Service Office. We also think it important, consistent with their means and ability, that each veteran service organization in the community makes some annual financial commitment to the ongoing support of this project. We do not wish to in any way imply this commitment to be anything other than voluntary. This strategy will then, for the first time, actually reintegrate our chronic homeless veterans with their brother/sister veterans in our community. **This is an important part of this strategy.** That through our collective effort, as national veteran service organizations; we stand as a family of veterans in support of our brothers/sisters. The reason VVA has already made this commitment is their motto: ***“Never Again will One Generation of Veterans Abandon Another.”*** Both the Housing First and Vet Village concepts continue that commitment.

Based on existing successful models in other states/communities, the Alaska Veterans Foundation, Inc. and VVA 904 proposes to develop and operate one veteran-specific purpose built village of 50 cabins and a Housing First project comprised of 25 single living units (15 doubles, 10 singles). Included in this structure would be a common area space for the resident manager, small group room, and NVSO office. The Alaska Veterans Foundation, Inc. and VVA 904 plan to develop this project as a scalable operating example that can be replicated in other communities in whole or in part across Alaska, therefore the design and financing of these facilities is scalable, starting at minimum density of 25 living units, for application in other communities such as Fairbanks. The Anchorage facility/program should function as a

working model to assist other communities in understanding and developing their own facilities/programs given sufficient needs and partnerships.

Furnishings will be provided under a contract with VA/Veteran Industries (VI) located at the Anchorage VA Domiciliary based on the *All-A-Board Solid Pine Furniture* designs or something comparable. Veteran's Industries in Anchorage is more than capable of building this furniture in their existing wood shop at the Domiciliary and this work would provide appropriate training and critical income to veterans in recovery within the VI program.

Once completed, these two projects should provide 75 permanent supportive housing units (25 in housing first, and 50 in Vet Village) in either a supportive, harm reduction, housing first strategy or long term supportive housing/cabins based on proven need and the successful Housing First models in Seattle, New York, Denver, and Boston or the classic Honor Farms of old. We believe both provide a place and service not now available to veterans in our community or in Alaska.

**How would this be built?** Initially the site will be developed by the Foundation and its supporters using a professional engineer and surveyor – both have agreed to offer their services at a significant discount. We want to locate at least 50 cabin sites for placement, starting with 20 cabins the first year and then add 10 cabins a year for the next 3 years or as needed.

**Cabins:** [Phase I/20 cabins] These cabins are now being built by the Carpenter's Union School in Anchorage and are currently sold to help fund their training programs. We have met with this group and suggested that we negotiate a price on 20 cabins at about \$5,000 per cabin. These cabins are only shells (walls, roof, floor), so we need to set a foundation, add plumbing, electrical wiring, insulation, drywall, appliances, etc. We are currently working with the labor unions in Alaska to find a way for them to be a part of this project. We have also started discussions with materials providers who have national programs that donate materials for just these purposes. Our intention is to have 20 cabins completed and in place within the first construction summer of the project. Since we will be using onsite water and septic and the cabins will be located in small groupings, we believe this can be accomplished at a very reasonable cost – with the assistance of the Veterans Support Foundation, Inc., the Alaska Veterans Foundation, Inc. and Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 904, The Alaska State Council of Vietnam Veterans of America and hopefully other veterans service organizations. We also have offers of assistance from the Alaska National Guard and active duty Army and Air Force units in Anchorage. We will also be using, as previously discussed, veterans in recovery at the VA Domiciliary who have craft skills and want to help.

**Parking:** For each of the cabin clusters there will be a common parking site that is covered. Most homeless veterans, even those with families, do not have a vehicle, but some do and we need to plan sites for just this purpose. Additionally there will be a larger parking area next to the larger 25 single unit facility.

**Housing First Facility:** Once we have the first 20 cabins on site, we will start the larger far more expensive facility as illustrated in the attached designs. We are working with a prefab builder who has developed similar facilities for the North Slope and can prefab this facility in Wasilla for delivery and construction on our site. By installing this facility after the cabins are in, we will have already established the community/village and those living in these cabins will be offered jobs to help build this larger structure. All construction will be under the supervision of an Alaskan licensed general contractor familiar with such structures and our Project Engineer. Funding for this Housing First facility will be through Anchorage wide community fundraising and public grants such as the VA Grant and Per Diem program which has funded up to 65% of such structures in other communities. We also hope to secure the assistance of the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, the Alaska Mental Health Trust, and others. The budget for this

facility is a part of the predevelopment work that will be funded by the grant now being requested.

**Services:** The medical, mental health, and other “services” needed by the veteran tenants of these projects will be immediately available at the VA clinic/hospital in Anchorage through van transport. Facility and Case managers will be located on site or in coordination with the VA programs in Anchorage.

**Transportation:** There will be a need for ongoing van transportation in and around Anchorage. The driver for this van or small bus will initially be provided under contract with Veterans Industries located at the Domiciliary in Anchorage. Once operational and with experience, a resident(s) of Vet Village will be the driver(s). Grants are available to cover the purchase and operation/insurance of this vehicle. In advance of receiving such grants, VVA904 and the Foundation are appealing to local car dealers for a donation and to USAA for car insurance as required by state law. Optionally, residents who can qualify in Vet Village can provide this service through work contacts.

## **Funding Request:**

### **A. One Year Money (Predevelopment Planning Funds)**

#### **• Predevelopment Budget**

○ Site plan/design/appraisal	\$ 75,000
○ Architectural and Engineering	\$100,000
○ Legal, Accounting	\$ 30,000
○ Environmental Assessment	\$ 15,000
○ Financial feasibility/underwriting (5 yr)	\$ 20,000 (Boston consultant, VA)
○ Project Management	\$ 60,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$300,000</b>

#### **Property Acquisition**

We continue to explore site options including a Dept of Defense long-term lease on JBER. Other sites are being explored in Eagle River, owned by the Alaska Mental Health Trust. It may also be possible, given that this is in fact a mental health facility/program to have the Trust join as a partner in this effort. As these negotiations move forward we will update this section of the request.

The final project design, budget, etc will be completed within one year for submission to the project’s various partners and the Alaska State Legislature, the US House/Senate Veteran’s Affairs Committees and the VA (at all levels), the State of Alaska, the Municipality of Anchorage, and all Alaskan represented NVSO’s and prospective partners for physical plant and operational funding. Once funded, the project will be contracted out for construction to a Service Disabled Veteran Owned Business (SDVOB) under federal/state programs and/or Veteran Owned Businesses who must then work with VA Veteran’s Industries in all hiring. Veteran’s Industries very often have experienced crafts persons in recovery.

### **B. Development Budget - One Year (planning) Two Year (build, initiate operations)**

We wish we could give you an amount so we could get the project funded up front, do the planning and project development, then build both and open them, but **there are just too many variables** and the property acquisition, facility design, cost of materials, labor, site cleanup and development will take some time to develop a detailed development and operating Proforma budget. We think this is a much more responsible approach. In addition, the Alaska Veterans Foundation, Inc. will need to asses and develop a five year financing sustainable model/plan, working with the Boston office suggested by the VA, incorporating a range of public and private resources to develop and operate these innovative permanent supportive housing projects for homeless veterans. Further is the time needed for coordination with the national, regional, and local VA management and programs, and the leadership of the various National Veteran Service Organizations through formal MOU’s as well as all trade unions, the University of

Alaska, the King Career Center, State of Alaska Dept of Labor, HUD, US DOL, and other job training companies.

**Our experience, however, is that unless there is a project and money committed to at least its planning with specific pre-development activities, it's very difficult to get this moving forward just as a concept. We believe these planning funds help give credibility to these two projects sufficient to leverage VA, NVSO, and other provider (private and public) commitments in cooperation.**

These projects must be coordinated with the Municipality of Anchorage Coalition on Homelessness, RuralCAP/Karluk Manor, and others who support this request and the MOA Military and Veterans Affairs Commission, the Veterans Administration Homeless Programs, the Municipality of Anchorage including APD and AFD, the Vet Center, the VA Domiciliary, the VA Clinic and joint hospital as well as other local and statewide groups working in the homeless community to ensure appropriate coordination and identification of potential veteran tenants. We therefore believe it very appropriate that these funds be appropriated through the Municipality of Anchorage, Homeless project or the Alaska Mental Health Trust as a grant to the Alaska Veterans Foundation, Inc. We have discussed this option with the MOA Director and the City Manager and find them more than willing to oversee these funds at very reasonable cost to ensure all funds are appropriately spent consistent with the direction of the State of Alaska.

After years of study and struggle to understand the failures of our transitional systems, both nationally and in Alaska, for our homeless veterans, we believe it is now time to offer these two programmatic additions/alternatives - proven in other communities, to help end veteran homelessness in Anchorage and then across Alaska. This is the start, this is the opportunity, and the Alaska Veterans Foundation and Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 904 on behalf of their Boards are pleased to submit this request in an effort to get these concepts moving forward for all of us and our homeless veterans.

**It is time to end veteran homelessness in Alaska,**

Ric Davidge, Chairman  
Alaska Veterans Foundation, Inc.  
President, VVA 904

Attached: Letters of support



## **Vietnam Veterans of America**

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*A Not-For-Profit Veterans Service Organization  
Chartered by the United States Congress*

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January 23, 2011

Mr. Ric Davidge, Chairman  
Alaska Veterans Foundation  
3705 Arctic Boulevard Pmb 415  
Anchorage, AK 99503-5774

Dear Mr. Davidge,

It is without hesitation that Vietnam Veterans of America and our National Homeless Veterans Committee supports your most innovative and creative project addressing homelessness among Alaska's veterans. This committee looks forward to working with you in this most challenging endeavor.

The concept of creating a full "in house" continuum of care is one which, hopefully, would be able to be replicated across the county. Creating a project of this magnitude is nothing short of monumental. The task you have laid before yourself is one that will do more than provide housing, it will provide structure and support. Without this structure and support many of our homeless veterans will not succeed.

Providing housing with comprehensive support systems built in to the project will prove to be the key component in the success of the veterans you will serve.

I look forward to seeing update reports on your project and wish you luck in the project.

Respectfully,

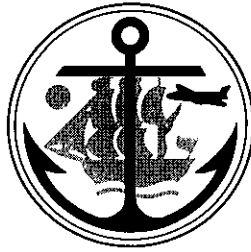
A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "John Rowan".

John Rowan, President  
Vietnam Veterans of America

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sandra A. Miller".

Sandra A. Miller, Chair  
Homeless Veterans Committee  
Vietnam Veterans of America

# Municipality of Anchorage



ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY

P.O. BOX 196650  
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99519-6650  
TELEPHONE: (907) 343-4311

Sheila Selkregg, PhD  
Assembly Member  
Municipality of Anchorage  
6843 Tudor Road  
Anchorage, AK 99507

February 22, 2010

Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
United States Senate  
709 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20501

Dear Senator Murkowski:

I am writing to request your support for the Alaska Veterans Foundation's proposal to end homelessness for Alaska's veterans through their participation in the Housing First, harm reduction model. I have reviewed the proposed project with Alaska Veterans Foundation Chairman, Ric Davidge.

The reintegration of our homeless veterans with the overall veteran community is an important component to the strategy with Housing First, harm reduction models. For decades the Veteran Centers have used peer groups as a means for veterans in trouble to reconnect and reestablish the esprit-de-corps they experienced in their time in service. This approach has been found to be a valuable tool in the process of healing and reconstructing lives devastated by post-traumatic stress.

I have long been concerned with the plight of our homeless. I remember serving as a member of Anchorage Catholic Social services in the late 1980's and seeing the successful demonstration models in Portland, Seattle, and New York that were providing stable housing and wrap-around services. Our Anchorage transitional housing and services are working for many of our homeless, but there is consistently 15 to 20% of the homeless population that are chronically homeless and unable to be accepted to or stay in safe and warm housing.

Setting up a Housing First, harm reduction model for our veterans in Anchorage will serve as a step forward. As a member of the Anchorage Assembly and a long time advocate for ending homelessness, I strongly support this effort as presented by the Alaska Veterans Foundation, Inc. (AVF). I believe that AVF has the organizational strength and leadership to successfully address this important problem.

I've asked Ric Davidge to keep me informed as this project moves forward. Please do your best to bring the resources needed to support his project.

Sincerely,

Sheila Selkregg, PhD, Anchorage Assembly Member



P.O. Box 196650 | Anchorage, AK 99519-6650  
ph (907) 343-4182 | fx (907) 343-6831

*A community network dedicated to preventing and eliminating homelessness.*

18 February 2010

Alaska Veteran's Foundation  
3705 – Arctic Blvd, #415  
Anchorage, AK 99503

Dear Ms. Davige:

The Anchorage Coalition on Homelessness (ACH) is a strong supporter of the Alaska Veteran's Foundation's (AVF) application for funding for one year planning grant to develop housing for Veterans who experience homelessness.

ACH is a network of over 50 organizations from the business, non-profit and government sectors that provide a continuum of support to prevent homelessness and connect the homeless to safe, secure and affordable housing. ACH is charged by the Municipality of Anchorage to implement the city's 10-year plan to address homelessness, and oversight of the Continuum of Care process. A core component of the continuum of care for the homeless is housing. There are approximately 100 veterans who experience homelessness in Anchorage, Alaska and about 65% of them can be classified as chronically homeless. Although the local VA provides a 50 bed domiciliary for recovering homeless veterans, our community has identified a further need for veteran housing, specifically inline with the Housing First philosophy.

AVF is a strong partner in ACH's network in eliminating homelessness from our community. They are active participants in Homeless Project Connect, Stand Down, and the everyday activities of the Coalition. AVF is a strong advocate for veterans. AVF has been a champion in our community in ensuring all veterans get the support they need to reach the highest level of self-sufficiency possible.

I enthusiastically support Alaska Veterans Foundation's request and wish them the best of luck during the appropriations process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'TJ Storrs', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Trevor J. Storrs  
Anchorage Coalition on Homelessness  
Co-Chair

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
**MILITARY & VETERAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**  
**REPRESENTATIVE CARL GATTO, CHAIR**

**Committee Members**

**Rep. John Harris**  
**Rep. Bob Lynn**  
**Rep. Tammie Wilson**  
**Rep. Jay Ramras**  
**Rep. Bob Buch**  
**Rep. Scott Kawasaki**



**State Capitol Building, Room 108**  
**Juneau AK 99801-1182**  
**907-465-3743**  
**907-465-2381 Fax**  
**Rep\_Carl\_Gatto@legis.state.ak.us**

February 23, 2010

Ric Davidge, Chairman  
Alaska Veterans Foundation  
Anchorage AK 99501

Dear Ric,

It is an honor to support the proposed grant request for planning a 50-bed housing unit for homeless veterans in the Anchorage area. A joint venture between the VA/Anchorage and local Veteran Service Organizations through the Alaska Veterans Foundation is an admirable commitment.

As Chair of the House Military and Veterans Affairs Committee, I have the highest regard for our veterans' service and sacrifice. It is essential that those who gave so much to our country are not forgotten when they need help.

Thank you for sharing the details of this plan with me. I wish you success in obtaining the funding for this worthwhile project.

Sincerely,

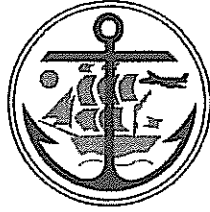
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carl Gatto".

Representative Carl Gatto  
Chair, House Military and Veterans Affairs Committee

# Municipality of Anchorage

Home: 907-278-8462

E-mail: [flynnpp@muni.org](mailto:flynnpp@muni.org)



918 R Street

Anchorage, AK 99501

Anchorage Assemblymember  
**Patrick Flynn**

March 8, 2010

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
United States Senator  
709 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Murkowski:

As you may be aware I'm a member of the Mayor's Leadership Team working to address Anchorage's challenges. The discussion has afforded an opportunity for me to learn about the Alaska Veterans Foundation's recent proposal regarding homeless veterans.

I want you to know that I am very supportive of this concept. It is a smart approach to the problem and it immediately addresses a homeless veteran population who deserve nothing less. I am pleased that we will spend the time to seriously design, locate, and develop a financing plan for this new concept.

As the Chairman of the Anchorage Assembly I look forward to working with you on this project and others. Mayor Sullivan and I are committed to making a difference in this area of our community and to do it as smartly as we can.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patrick Flynn', is written over a horizontal line.

Patrick Flynn

# Alaska State Legislature

## House of Representatives

Session address:  
Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182  
1-888-465-2647 (toll free)  
1-907-465-3518 (fax)



Interim address:  
716 West 4th Avenue  
Anchorage, Alaska 99501-2133  
1-907-269-0106  
1-907-269-0109 (fax)

## Representative Les Gara

February 19, 2010

Ric Davidge  
Chairman, CEO  
Alaska Veterans Foundation  
3705 Arctic Blvd., #415  
Anchorage, AK 99503

Re: Proposed Housing First Initiative for Veterans

Dear Ric:

Thank you for taking the initiative to find a location for a Housing First effort to help Veterans recover from debilitating alcohol problems. I think the effort is evidence based, addresses a real problem in the community, and is desirable given the non-residential location I understand is being proposed next to the new VA Clinic.

Alcohol and substance abuse treatment waiting lists have been a problem in recent years, and far too many people are being turned away from treatment they seek to better their life situation. That makes little sense in a state where alcohol is involved in more than half our crimes. Veterans, who have served for us, deserve to be treated with dignity, and deserve the chance to recover back to the path of success. A treatment effort, in a state where treatment is routinely denied to those who need it, is welcome news, and the non-residential location of this facility will help this project work in a way the community can support.

I support the effort, and hope it moves forward. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Best Regards,

  
Rep. Les Gara

*E-mail: [Representative\\_Les\\_Gara@legis.state.ak.us](mailto:Representative_Les_Gara@legis.state.ak.us)*

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Senate  
Health & Social  
Services  
Committee  
Chair  
•  
Senate  
Education Committee  
Vice - Chair



Legislative Council  
Vice - Chair  
•  
Senate  
Transportation  
Committee  
•  
Senate  
Labor & Commerce  
Committee

Senator\_Bettye\_Davis@legis.state.ak.us  
<http://www.aksenate.org>

February 24, 2010

Ric Davidge  
President  
Alaska Veterans Foundation  
3705 Arctic Blvd #415  
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-5774

Dear Ric,

I support Alaska Veterans Foundation in your efforts to end the chronic veteran homelessness in Alaska. The homelessness situation in our state increasingly involves individuals who have served and protected our country in times past. I appreciate the work of the Alaska Veterans Foundation. It is both necessary and commended.

The project provides important first-year planning for a Housing First facility that creates a safe environment for veterans. In addition to adequate housing, veterans will gain a much higher quality of living through this program. The benefits provided by Alaska Veterans Foundation's Housing First Project will not only serve those veterans currently homeless in Anchorage, but the project will also serve the greater community of Anchorage.

We owe a great deal of gratitude to the sacrifices of these individuals. Homelessness should not be an option for our veterans and this project will provide more support for those who need and deserve it most. I offer my full support for your efforts to address this problem and wish you full success on this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Bettye Davis".

Senator Bettye Davis  
Senate District K  
Alaska State Legislature



## SENATOR FRED DYSON

February 23, 2010

The Honorable Senator Lisa Murkowski  
709 Hart Building  
Washington, DC 20510-0202

Dear Senator:

The issues around Alaska's homeless population are apparently complex and persistent. I have been personally and intensively involved with a few of these people in Anchorage over the last few years, and I have found myself very frustrated with the situation.

I support the Anchorage Project to end chronic Veteran Homelessness in Alaska. Providing a warm, safe living space with a mailing address and a shower is a significant, if not profound, step forward for most of this population. This concept is producing good results in Seattle and I believe we should make it available here.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fred Dyson".

Senator Fred Dyson  
Alaska State Legislature



## SENATOR FRED DYSON

February 23, 2010

The Honorable Senator Mark Begich  
144 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

The issues around Alaska's homeless population are apparently complex and persistent. I have been personally and intensively involved with a few of these people in Anchorage over the last few years, and I have found myself very frustrated with the situation.

I support the Anchorage Project to end chronic Veteran Homelessness in Alaska. Providing a warm, safe living space with a mailing address and a shower is a significant, if not profound, step forward for most of this population. This concept is producing good results in Seattle and I believe we should make it available here.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fred Dyson".



SENATOR FRED DYSON

February 23, 2010

The Honorable Congressman Donald Young  
2111 Rayburn Building  
Washington, DC 20515-0201

Dear Congressman:

The issues around Alaska's homeless population are apparently complex and persistent. I have been personally and intensively involved with a few of these people in Anchorage over the last few years, and I have found myself very frustrated with the situation.

I support the Anchorage Project to end chronic Veteran Homelessness in Alaska. Providing a warm, safe living space with a mailing address and a shower is a significant, if not profound, step forward for most of this population. This concept is producing good results in Seattle and I believe we should make it available here.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fred Dyson".

Senator Fred Dyson  
Alaska State Legislature

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



Rules Committee  
•  
Finance Committee  
•  
Health & Social Services Committee  
•  
Legislative Council  
•  
Committee on Committees

*While in Session*  
State Capitol, Rm. 103  
Juneau, AK 99801  
(907) 465-3704  
Fax: (907) 465-2529  
•  
*While in Anchorage*  
716 W. 4<sup>th</sup> Ave  
Anchorage, AK 99501  
(907) 269-0169  
Fax: (907) 269-0172

## SENATE MAJORITY LEADER JOHNNY ELLIS

February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2010

Alaska Veterans Foundation, Inc.  
3705 Arctic Blvd 415  
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

To whom it may concern:

I'm writing to express my support for a Housing First program for chronic homeless veterans in Anchorage, many of whom are struggling with chronic alcoholism and substance abuse. The twice yearly Anchorage Homeless Connect and Stand Down events have confirmed approximately 80 to 100 unsheltered homeless veterans live in Anchorage and are requesting a one-year planning grant of approximately \$300,000 for a 50 bed Housing First facility adjacent to the new VA Clinic/Hospital in South Anchorage.

With a Housing First approach, the primary focus is on helping homeless individuals quickly access and sustain permanent housing. In addition to housing, supportive services are offered according to the individual needs and can include mental health counseling, financial management skills training, job training, job search assistance and substance abuse treatment. Studies from across the country found that when affordable housing is offered with these services, people stayed housed, even when they had a long history of homelessness. Housing First tenants are more likely to experience decreased symptoms of mental illness, reduce dependence on alcohol and other drugs, work or go to school, increase their income from work, and successfully manage their budgets. This results in significant cost savings for communities.

Although the local VA provides a 50 bed domiciliary for recovering homeless veterans, the barriers to entry, waiting list, failure rate, and recidivism clearly indicate the need for additional beds and a different approach. The VA Challenge report also states that the VA needs additional facilities for this population. I believe these new beds should be in a Housing First model - different than the domiciliary model - to meet this need. Locating this new approach within walking distance to the new VA clinic and hospital allows significant cost savings and access to facilities, services and other veterans.

Using the Housing First model, this project would be a joint venture between the VA/Anchorage and the local Veteran Service Organizations through the Alaska Veterans Foundation. This project would immediately provide 50 beds in a supportive housing facility and would be coordinated by the Municipality of Anchorage Homeless Coalition and the MOA Military and Veterans Affairs

Commission as well as other local groups working in the homeless community to ensure appropriate coordination. I strongly support the Alaska Veterans Association in this venture and believe it would improve the lives of many deserving homeless Alaska veterans.

Sincerely,

  
Senator Johnny Ellis

CC: Ric Davidge, Chairman of the Alaska Veterans Foundation, Inc.  
United States Senator Mark Begich  
United States Senator Lisa Murkowski  
United States Representative Don Young



## ALASKA STATE COUNCIL

February 16, 2010

Ric Davidge, Chairman  
Alaska Veterans Foundation, Inc.  
3705 Arctic Blvd #415, Anch, AK 99503

On behalf of the Alaska State Council I wish to express our strongest support for the proposal you have submitted to Congress for funding of pre-development work essential towards the development of a Housing First, harm reduction model facility for 50 chronic homeless veterans.

We agree with you that the old approach to homelessness just doesn't work for the chronic homeless due to the combination of mental, physical, and addiction disabilities that do not allow them to be successful in the standard transitional approach.

Placing this facility adjacent to the new VA Clinic and Hospital is also a very good idea as it takes it out of neighborhoods while at the same time placing it next to the services they will need. We think this site makes solid sense.

We also want to encourage the notion of Veteran Service Organizations being a partner in this project. It is time we as a community of veterans came together in an effort to address this chronic social and cultural problem.

Housing First has been shown to be an affective alternative to the old model of transitional housing/services for our chronic homeless. We believe it essential we start now in the design, financial planning, and organizational formation so that we can secure funding towards this 50 bed facility.

The Vietnam Veterans of America's motto is, "Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another." We believe this effort by the Foundation and our brother Veteran Service Organizations is directly consistent with that motto.

We stand with you in this effort and ask our Congressional Delegation to do whatever they need to get this request funded and in process. We have lost over a dozen homeless this last summer. This is not just about money; it is about the lives of our veterans who continue to face serious challenges in life.

With respect,

A blue ink signature of Al Baffone, consisting of a stylized 'A' and 'B'.

Al Baffone  
Vice President



## Rural Alaska Community Action Program, Inc.

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P.O. Box 200908, Anchorage, AK 99520-0908  
(907) 279-2511 ♦ Fax: (907) 278-2309  
[www.ruralcap.com](http://www.ruralcap.com)

January 30, 2012

Senator Bill Wielechowski  
Armed Services Co-Chair  
716 W. 4<sup>th</sup> Ave Suite 540  
Anchorage, AK 99501-2133

Dear Senator Wielechowski:

I am writing in support of the Alaska Veterans Foundation predevelopment planning grant to support the Alaska Veterans Foundation's Vet Village Phase I and the Housing First Phase II Projects. The plight of Alaska's homeless and chronic homeless veterans is well documented. Although military veterans are 8% of the population, 23% of the homeless in Alaska are veterans. As a nation, as a state and as a city, we need to do more to support homeless veterans to find permanent supportive housing in our community.

The proposed Anchorage Project addresses the complex service needs of both homeless veterans and chronic homeless veterans. The two populations require different types of housing and wrap around services. For those able to and interested in working, the Vet Village concept incorporates the honor farm model in which program participants are actively engaged in work or trade school five days per week. This begins to rebuild self-esteem, fosters a sense of purpose and encourages veterans to become reintegrated into the community.

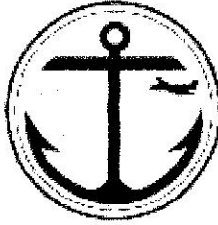
Phase II of the project, the Housing First facility, provides permanent supportive housing for the hardest to serve in our community. The harm reduction model, upon which Housing First is based, recognizes that some individuals improve their health problems by simply having a place to live that they can call home. Without preconditions of participating in mental health and substance abuse treatment, veterans living in the Housing First facility would have access to treatment and case management to assist them in retaining their housing. Research has confirmed that providing housing first and offering supportive services along with the housing results in improved health and a significant reduction in costs to the community.

I urge you to consider the Anchorage Project proposed by the Alaska Veterans Foundation. The project could become a vital part of ending homelessness in Anchorage for those who have valiantly and selflessly served our country.

Sincerely,

Melinda Freemon  
Director, Supportive Housing Division

Municipality  
of  
Anchorage



ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY

P.O. Box 196050  
Anchorage, Alaska 99519-6050  
Telephone: (907) 343-4311

February 2, 2012

Mr. Ric Davidge, Chair  
Alaska Veterans Foundation  
3705 Arctic Blvd. PMB 415  
Anchorage, AK 99503-5774


Dear Ric:

We are and always have been strong advocates who applaud and deeply respect our Veterans. It is our privilege to do whatever we can to help improve the lives of these deserving homeless Anchorage residents. A constituent said, "If we are going to solve homelessness, why not start with those who served us in hell."

There is no question that we encourage the Alaska Veterans Foundation & partners request for a one year development package to support creation of two realistic model project plans. Funding a one year pre-development plan would enable them to secure information and materials essential to leverage a good number of federal programs, not only programs targeted to Vets but also those which focus on homeless Vets.

The statement included in the Anchorage Project Description is a great reason and explanation for our support: "It's about meeting Veterans "as they are" and then providing them with a warm and safe environment from which we can help them make appropriate choices that will enable them to be successful in the community."

Sincerely,

  
Elvi Gray-Jackson  
District 4 – Seat G

  
Harriet Drummond  
District 3 – Seat E