

# One Alaska Resource Model

**Alaska Housing Finance Corporation**

Management Innovation: Internal Operations

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### Organism or Ecosystem

Alaska is the 3<sup>rd</sup> least populated State in the country. Over 80% of our communities have fewer than 1,000 people and several are only accessible by plane or boat. And even though Alaska's omitted from several maps of the United States, we're more than twice as big as Texas. Bears try to eat us every so often, too many vendors refuse to ship packages to us (#happyholidays), and one of our community's actually has a [cat for its Mayor](#).

This might all sound like a bad country song, but the upside is that we tend to work well together as neighbors because of our shared challenges. It's not just the right thing to do, it's essential.

Over the past year, Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC) has repositioned its people and platforms to serve our partners as part of a larger ecosystem of housing resources. These efforts have grown into what we affectionately refer to as the One Alaska Resource Model (OARM).

#### **Innovative**

Implementing the pandemic era programs supercharged our statewide partnerships and fundamentally transformed our systems. Post-pandemic, the goodwill and systems capacity have stayed leveled-up and are keeping AHFC and its partners charging forward, farther and together as one-team in a way that would have been unthinkable years ago.

The OARM is simple: Our resources are available to partners; our team and contractors are available to partners, and our partners can help other partners by crossing traditional service lines with our blessing using our systems. AHFC created the OARM as an ecosystem for housing partners to collectively do more together, and better, than if we operated in isolation.

In practice, this is how the OARM has worked and what it has delivered:

- 1) AHFC offered its online systems (including processing partners) for accepting applications, processing and recordkeeping to four organizations representing 59 federally recognized tribes for free. We are providing system and program support at no cost so these partners can efficiently serve their tribal members with federal homeowner assistance funds they received.
- 2) AHFC is providing direct staff support to five remote communities without construction / development capacity to utilize \$24M of development resources. These historically underserved communities are struggling to hire essential workers because of the housing shortage. AHFC is boots on the ground in these communities as a partner, not just as a funder.
- 3) AHFC created an interconnected platform for homeless navigators at no-cost for the Department of Corrections to stand up / implement a new re-entry program in 6 communities. This system has already been used to prompt data sharing conversations with state partners and is being reconfigured to support our legacy programs and make life easier for housing partners.

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### **Replicable**

AHFC's mission is to provide Alaskan's access to safe, quality, affordable housing. The OARM is 100% replicable when "not in my job description" is replaced by a mission-focused "yes for our neighbors." Our Information Technology (IT) department is helping our tribal partners access safe, quality, affordable housing through our systems. Our development team is actively helping local government partners navigate development options as part of our Last Frontier Housing Initiative where our staff literally shepherd communities (in addition to funding them) through the development process. The list goes on, but most things on the list could technically be filed under (or outside of) another agency's purview.

If AHFC can help, we help; and if our help is already covered in our budgets, we do it for free.

### **Respond to Management Challenge or Opportunity**

Even large employers in Alaska struggle to recruit and retain workers. But our nonprofit partners and those in places with less than 1,000 people off the road system face a heavier lift. The staffing challenges have fundamentally shifted the necessary composition of people and technology in the workplace. Alaska simply doesn't have enough people to go around. We have to pool resources and get our technology and systems to lift the weight when we lack the human hands to carry it.

Our partners need the help, and we need them. AHFC is blessed with broader resources (staff and tech) than many of our housing partners have to develop and scale programs and technology solutions. We are leveraging these resources to not just benefit our agency, but to help boost the efforts of our partners whose efforts also advance AHFC's mission.

### **Achieve Measurable Improvements in Agency Operations**

In simplest terms, 8 people on a team can lift a 200 pound log easier than a single individual. It's also safer and builds a sense of comradery where the team looks out for one another.

It's much easier and cost effective to help others as a part of their team than to try doing the work in isolation. When it makes sense to lead, we lead; but oftentimes there is benefit to stepping back and supporting our partners with resources we have that we know they can use. The shared service and resource model had been a definite shift in thought but welcome as well.

The partnerships and shared resources underpinning the OARM eliminate redundant systems and staffing. They also ensure AHFC and its partners are in constant contact, maintain situational awareness of joint issues and continue to cultivate relationships based shared success for Alaskans.

Initially, the three OARM activities on p.1 have supported over \$30M in resource deployment across 3 programs, 16 partners, 59 federally recognized tribes and dozens of communities. All activities share this in common: AHFC staff are providing direct support to our partners' programs.

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### **Provide Benefits that Outweigh Costs**

Systems and staff are largely fixed costs. We could prorate payroll and system costs and invoice partners, but why? Without partners these are systems and staff AHFC would otherwise maintain. The primary costs to AHFC are risk and time.

Joining systems and pooling staffing resources with communities and partners across traditional programs and increases the profile of shared successes and risks. It's also time-intensive. The upside is that more gets done for Alaskans because our scarce resources are synergistic instead of redundant. The uniformity of administration and enhanced situational awareness from collaborating across agencies helps mitigate confusion across partners (and our shared customers) about service delivery issues and trends. We collectively know more when we work together and can focus on unique gaps in service coverage.

### **Demonstrate Effective Use of Resources**

We have the capacity to help people with systems and staff they cannot afford.

Money and staff that our partners would otherwise devote to systems and functions AHFC can perform at-no cost stays focused on our partners' mission. When that work advances AHFC's mission, that's a win.

The flip side is that segments of AHFC's team are increasingly becoming part of our partners' ecosystem rather than being isolated within the confines of a single organization. It's a shift in mind-set, skill-set and impact. It's also a shift borne out of necessity. It just so happens to also be a lot of fun, and it's helping form relationships throughout our increasingly digitized world.



*AHFC staff in Ketchikan working with our development partners on program options*

### **Achieve Strategic Objectives**

So far, the 16 partners utilizing the OARM have served over 1,200 Alaskans with housing solutions. Our AHFC team has played a supporting role utilizing our IT staff, technical vendors, and housing development program staff to boost the efforts of our partners who are doing work that advances AHFC's mission. These initiatives have tested the model of multi-purpose staff that advance AHFC's mission through AHFC's programs **and** through those of our partners that also advance our mission.

The OARM is fundamental shift in approach borne out of necessity. But it's also working!

# One Alaska Resource Model

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## Partner Levels

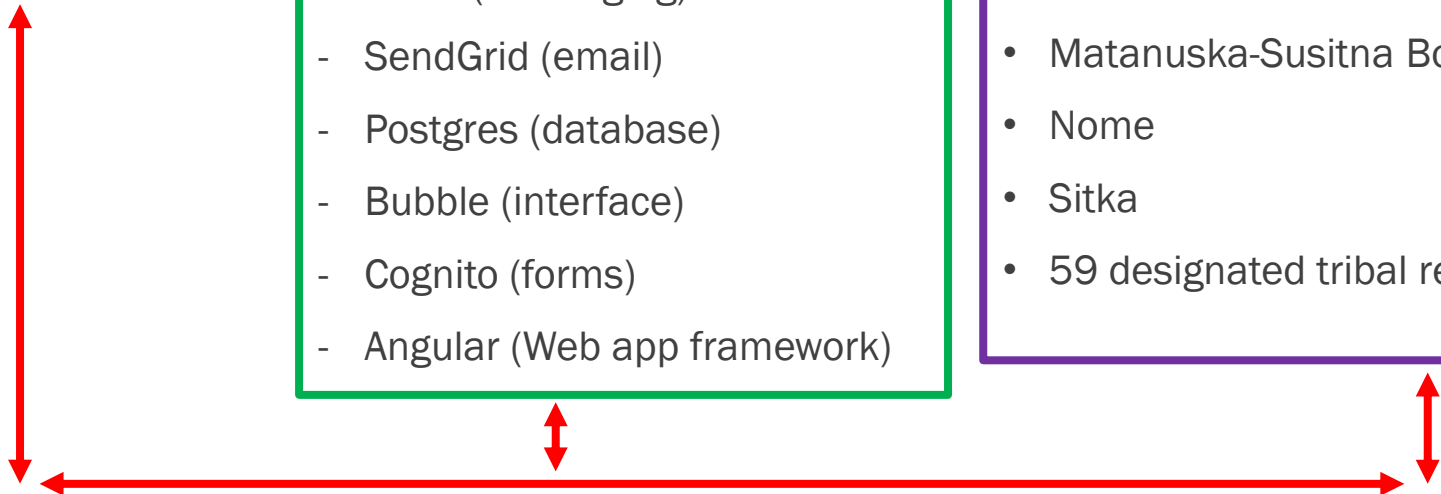
- Tribal Partners
- Nonprofit Partners
- Government Partners
- AHFC Contractors
- AHFC Staff

## Connective Systems

- AHFC IT Staff & Contractors
- AHFC Program Staff
- AHFC Nonprofit processors
- Systems:
  - Airtable (interface)
  - Twilio (messaging)
  - SendGrid (email)
  - Postgres (database)
  - Bubble (interface)
  - Cognito (forms)
  - Angular (Web app framework)

## Service Area

- Bethel
- Bristol Bay
- Fairbanks
- Juneau
- Ketchikan
- Kotzebue
- Matanuska-Susitna Borough
- Nome
- Sitka
- 59 designated tribal regions



# One Alaska Resource Model Geographic Coverage

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\$30M+ is being deployed to 50 unique zip codes and 59 federally recognized tribes through our partnership with 16 entities