HFA: Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC)
Entry Name: No Community Left Behind
Category: Combating Homelessness

Pandemic-Era Funding is Over… Now What?

The days of COVID-19 funding are over, but the need for innovative programs is not. The pandemic-era programs were deeply impactful to Alaskan communities. Over 7,000 Alaskans escaped homelessness through one-time COVID funding sources. Many of these Alaskans were in small communities that had not previously received funding from us. Which leads to the question: How do we address the new gaps in the service model from the funds that just expired?

Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC) applied the lessons from successful interventions in pandemic-era programs to develop a flexible, immediate, and successful streets-to-housed program for our small community neighbors called Next Generation Stabilization (NGS).

Effective Use of Resources

The NGS program is successor to the ERA-funded Stabilization program, which over three years helped 930 Alaskans in communities off the road system exit homelessness and / or violent living environments (336 were children). Since NGS funds are decidedly more modest that the COVID funding levels, the NGS was reserved for small communities off the road system that have not historically operated similar programs. NGS provides short-term rental assistance and wrap-around services to Alaska's homeless population. The goal is to help people escape the street, shelters or unsafe environments, and get them into stabilized housing. The NGS budget is $1.5 million dollars in state funds to house Alaskans experiencing homelessness, domestic violence, and human trafficking. NGS program partners work with clients to provide supportive services, moving expenses, and 6-12 months of rental assistance.

Clients' needs vary. Some require intensive case management to address complex trauma, while others need minimal assistance to get back on their feet. The NGS model accommodates this through flexible supports and housing options. Clients can be enrolled in a six or a twelve-month program, depending on their individual needs. NGS assistance is based on their time in the program and the total amount per household is capped at $8,000 for six months of assistance, or $14,000 for twelve months. The cap applies to rental assistance and supportive services. If a household has funds remaining at exit, those funds return to the partner's overall allocation to help more people.

Partnerships

In October 2025, AHFC and the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority held a summit to discuss lessons and sustainability as the unprecedented pandemic funding levels wound down. This event was open to statewide tribal and service providers to strengthening our partnerships, share stories and apply lessons learned from pandemic-era to develop new goals for lasting innovations. The event, *ERA of Unity: Going the Distance*, had over 70 attendees representing 13 Alaskan communities. The feedback received at this summit directly influenced the NGS service model.

NGS operates in rural communities off of the road system with populations fewer than 10,000 to prioritize geographic distribution of resources. NGS funding was made available through a competitive funding round, and awarded seven nonprofits that represent four out of the five regions in the state: Bethel Winter House (Bethel), Cordova Family Resource Center (Cordova), Helping Ourselves Prevent Emergencies (Prince of Wales Island), Hope Holders Ketchikan (Ketchikan), Kodiak Brother Francis Shelter (Kodiak), Nome Community Center (Nome), and Sitkans Against Family Violence (Sitka). For context, the distance from Nome to Ketchikan exceeds the length of the entire continental West Coast. Each region in Alaska has unique climates, cultures, and geography. These all require culturally appropriate and flexible approaches to statewide programs.

An Important State Housing Need

"The Stabilization programs have been some of the most impactful grants we've worked with in Sitka by directly helping people secure stable housing and meeting critical needs. It's unique in how quickly and effectively funds reach the individuals who need them most." – Natalie Wojcik, Executive Director of Sitkans Against Family Violence

The NGS program was intentionally made available to uplift and support historically underserved communities. A majority of the 229 federally recognized Alaskan Tribes are not connected to the road system. In the seven NGS communities, an average of 30 percent of the populations are Alaska Native (some over 60 percent).

Many parts of the state rely on transportation and heating fuels to stay warm through harsh Alaskan winters. In Nome (the Northernmost NGS community), the average low in January is -2 degrees Fahrenheit, compared to Ketchikan (the Southernmost NGS community), which has an average low of 31 [see visual aid]. This imposes massive cost burdens that threaten housing stability for families when much of their income is consumed by fuel costs. Heating fuel prices can reach up to $14.00 per gallon and gasoline prices can reach up to $10 per gallon in many remote villages. Additional cost burdens include exorbitant shipping costs for essential goods. All NGS participating communities are only accessible by plane or boat, so shipping is a necessity.

In rural Alaska, many of the existing rental units would not pass NSPIRE inspections, despite being otherwise safe housing options in the community. There are parts of the US where sleeping outside at night is survivable, in many of Alaska's small communities off the road system, that can be deadly. The disconnect between federal inspection protocols and our rural housing stock creates massive barriers in services for some of our rural communities, and especially native villages. The NGS program recognizes this challenge and empowers our partners to help homeless Alaskans with the housing that they can find. NGS meets communities where they are with the housing stock they have, and bridges the gap between immediate needs and long-term stability.

In every region, the needs of Alaskans vary and present unique challenges. In Bethel, there is an incredible shortage of housing as a direct impact of the 2025 natural disaster, Typhoon Halong, which displaced more than 1,000 people. As Bethel is the closest hub community to the impacted regions, many families have relocated there, straining the already taxed rental market. Partners in these communities need to be able to move quickly to help their neighbors when housing opportunities appear in these cases, the NGS resource empowers them to do just that!

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Strategic Objectives

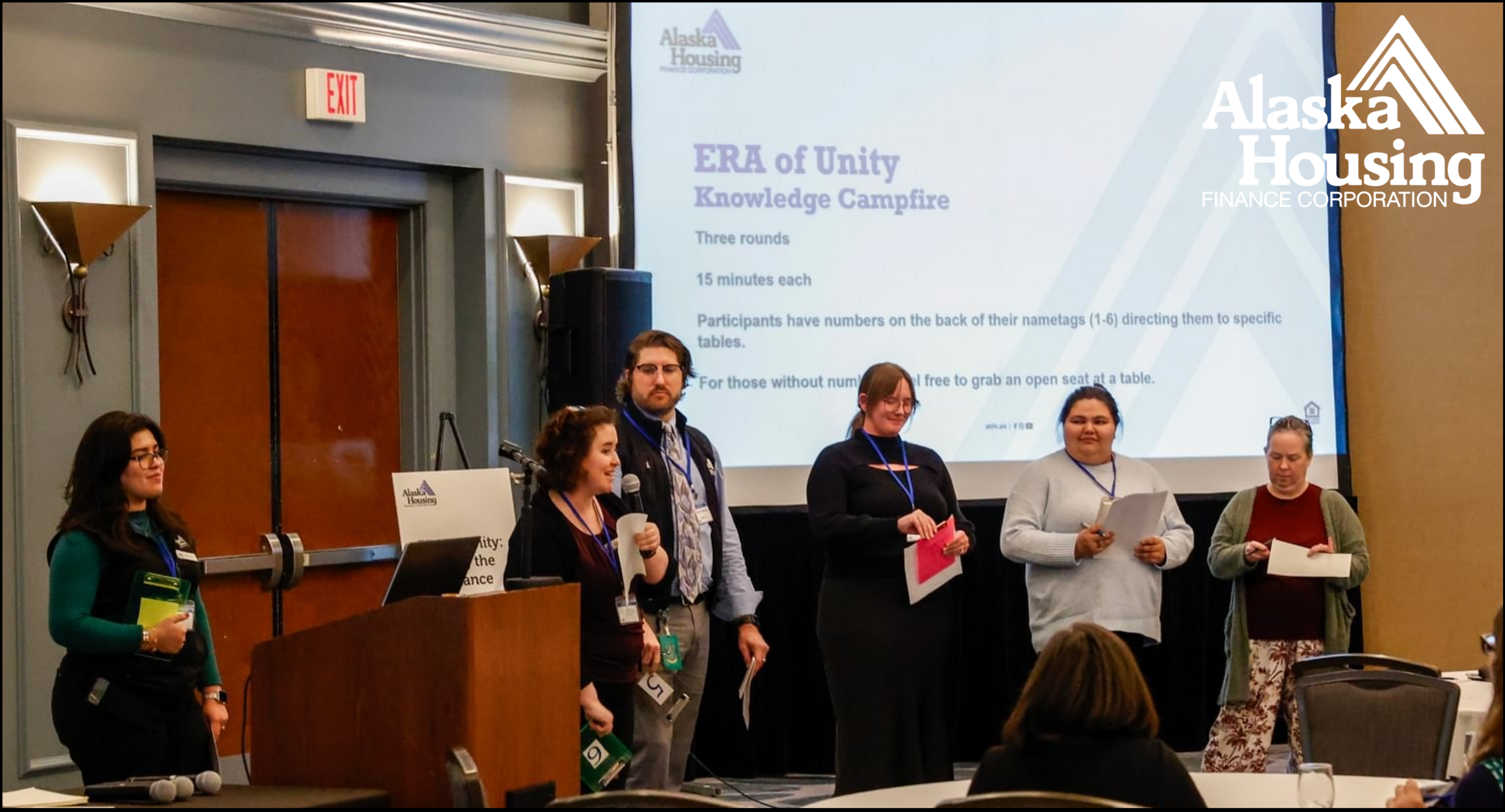
The NGS awarded resources to serve 200 Alaskan households with flexible rent and support service assistance to 7 small communities that are off the road system. To put Alaska's number in context, our $1.5M investment serving 200 Alaskans would represent $40M being used to serve 5,390 people in New York State (there are 26.95 New Yorkers for every Alaskan). The NGS program combines autonomy in housing interventions with flexible supportive services that meets the needs of an individual and a community and not a one-size-fits-all approach.

The NGS subgrantees work with their clients to develop holistic, person-first care plans including:

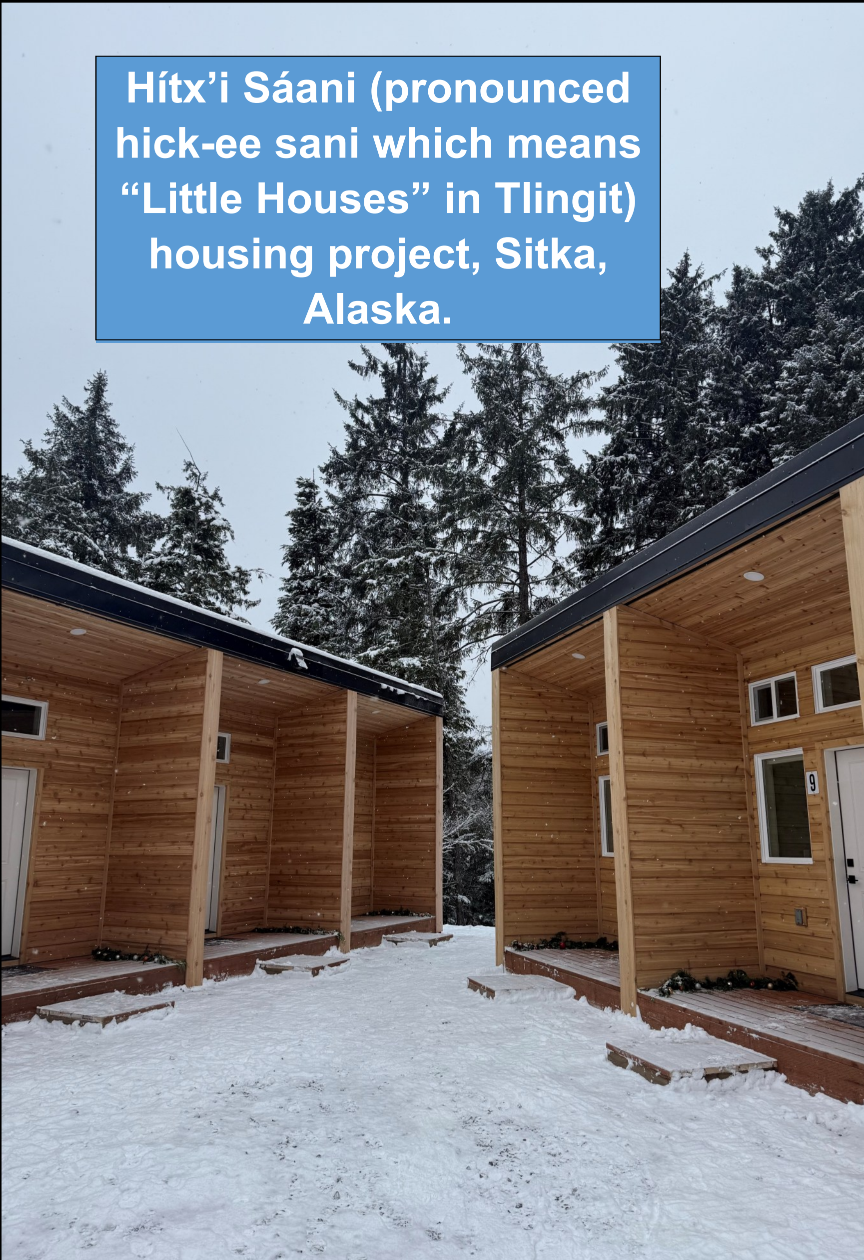
- basic clothing and workwear
- bedding
- cold weather gear
- food
- culturally appropriate interventions such as talking circles
- case management
- basic furniture
- heating and gas fuel
- medication
- replacement of documents such as licenses
- employment assistance
- work equipment

NGS was created in a collaborative spirit with service providers as a direct result of their feedback and success with the COVID era funds. The goal for AHFC is to improve outcomes for both vulnerable Alaskans and our program partners. *ERA of Unity* asked anonymous survey questions via barcode mid-event, which provided AHFC with direct partner feedback on their capacity levels and specifically the amount of staff time spent on reporting. Just under half of the survey responses show that the service providers in the room report to ten or more funding partners. To reduce administrative burdens for program partners, AHFC created an online reporting system, called Unity, that updates NGS client enrollment status, demographic data, and expenses in real time. This reduces the number of reports required by AHFC and allows our partners more time spent on the most important aspect of the program: helping people.

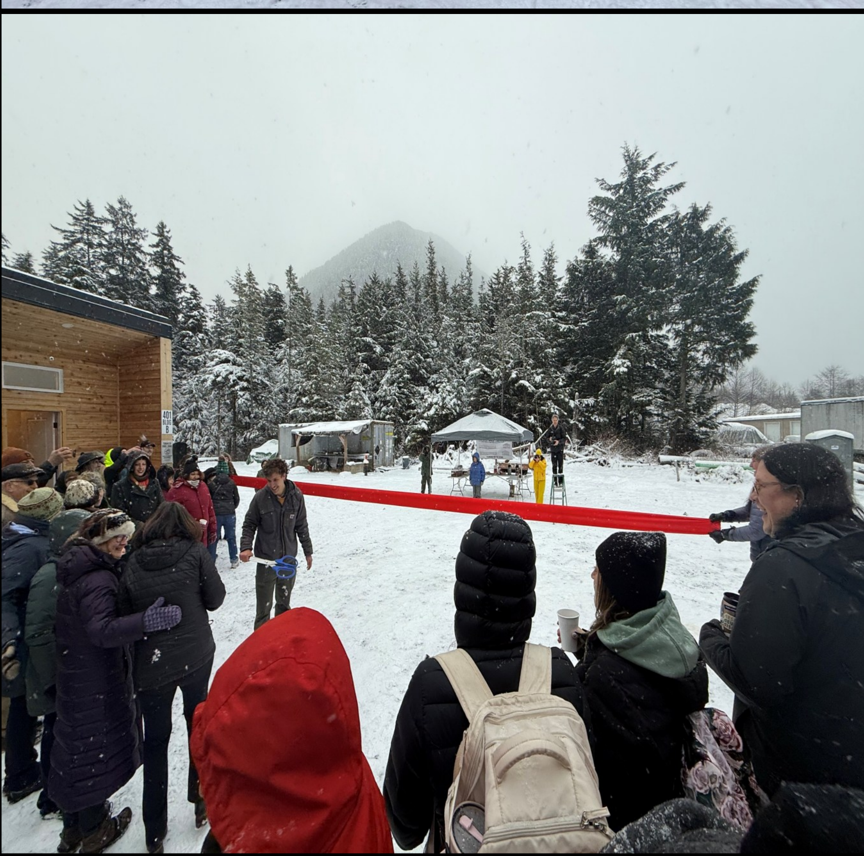
At *ERA of Unity,* AHFC staff polled the attendees and found that most partners had clients re-enter homelessness as a result of paperwork mishaps or long waits for services. The first client enrolled in the NGS program was an individual escaping violence and homelessness in their community, all before graduating high school. Meanwhile, in a different part of the state, another program partner enrolled a family with children sleeping outside in below freezing temperatures. The needs for both program participants are equally important as they are different. When a person or family approaches a service provider for help, it is not realistic or best for the client for providers to dot their i's and cross their t's before providing assistance. That is the cornerstone of the NGS program: make the best choice for the client. NGS removes unnecessary bureaucratic barriers and empowers direct service providers with the funding and flexibility to enroll eligible clients in the program immediately and place them into appropriate housing for their situation and their individual needs. Paperwork can wait; people cannot.



AHFC staff facilitated round table discussions, October 2025.



Hítx'i Sáani (pronounced hick-ee sani which means "Little Houses" in Tlingit) housing project, Sitka, Alaska.



Ribbon cutting ceremony, late 2025.