

**Yuut Elitnaurviat People's Learning Center - Phase 1
Construction**

**FY2003 Request: \$900,000
Reference No: 36594**

AP/AL: Appropriation
Category: Education
Location: Bethel
House District: Bethel, Dillingham (HD 39)
Estimated Project Dates: 07/01/2002 - 06/30/2007

Project Type: Construction
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Brief Summary and Statement of Need:

The Yuut Elitnaurviat, People's Learning Center, in Bethel is requesting state support for construction of a vocational training center to serve the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Region. Phase I construction is estimated to cost \$8.9 million. Various funding partners, include the Department of Interior (\$1.0 million) and the USDA-Rural Development (\$3.0 million).

Funding:	FY2003	FY2004	FY2005	FY2006	FY2007	FY2008	Total
Gen Fund	\$900,000						\$900,000
Total:	\$900,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$900,000

<input type="checkbox"/> State Match Required	<input type="checkbox"/> One-Time Project	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Phased Project	<input type="checkbox"/> On-Going
0% = Minimum State Match % Required		<input type="checkbox"/> Amendment	<input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Bill

Operating & Maintenance Costs:

	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Staff</u>
Project Development:	0	0
Ongoing Operating:	0	0
One-Time Startup:	0	
Totals:	0	0

Additional Information / Prior Funding History:

Project Description/Justification:

The Yukon Kuskokwim Delta region is characterized by a struggling economy, yet the region's current and potential job market holds tremendous promise. Regional partners are working to tap this potential through an innovative vocational learning center which will help residents fill the high wage jobs in the region. The education at Yuut Elitnaurviat, or the People's Learning Center, will meet both academic and industry standards in the area's most in-demand industries. The purpose of the multi-agency facility will be to train and place local bilingual people in local high wage jobs.

Partners:

- Association of Village Council Presidents- Inc.
- Association of Village Council Presidents- Regional Housing Authority
- Bethel Native Corporation
- City of Bethel
- Coastal Villages Region Fund
- Lower Kuskokwim School District
- University of Alaska Fairbanks- Kuskokwim Campus
- Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation
- Alaska National Guard

Need:

The Yukon Kuskokwim Delta region has the state's lowest per capita income. Households receive public assistance at 2 1/2 times the state rate, and transfer payments make up nearly 40% of the personal income. This is in great contrast to the opportunities available in the region. On April 25, 2001, 365 jobs were advertised for the region on State of Alaska Capital Project Summary Department of Education and Early Development

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the Alaska Job Bank, the Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation had 126 job openings posted on their web site, virtually all area school districts were recruiting for a large number of openings, and the regional housing authority was gearing up to recruit 300 workers for maintenance and repair. The paradox is a result of the education and training gap between the available workforce and the requirements of the high wage jobs. Alaskan Natives are over 85% of the population, yet they fill only 15% of the highest wage jobs in the region's two largest employers.

Forty two percent of the region's residents are under the age of 20. Drop out rates are the highest in the state and have been steadily increasing. Recently, the annual high school drop out rate for the Lower Kuskokwim School District reached 18%. An estimated 500-800 school-aged drop outs reside in the region. Without innovative alternatives such as The People's Learning Center, the reliance on transfer payments will likely continue.

Program Design:

The People's Learning Center will provide tech-prep opportunities to high school students and career ladder options for adults in a culturally relevant and supportive environment. The initial focused career areas will include: Health Careers, Early Childhood/Education, Construction, and Aviation through a link with the existing tribal aviation program.

Proven practices are being relied upon for program design. The existing successful Bethel Alternative Boarding School (BABS) will serve as a cornerstone for the center. BABS has successfully placed high risk students in regional jobs and raised state test score significantly. Other contributors to the overall program design include the Learning Center @ YKHC (Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation), Workplace Basics, Project Renew Hope, and Emerging Scholars.

Many students may earn an industry specific certification concurrently with a high school diploma or GED. In addition to academics and employment training, the center will provide needed social supports to address critical needs that have plagued the people of the region and often serve as barriers to education and training.

Facility Construction and Operation:

The envisioned facility for Yuut Elitnaurviat will maximize the ability of the partners to combine resources and provide a comprehensive program. The full facility plan has three construction phases. This first phase will have a capacity of 80 - 125 students, including boarding facilities, and a total construction cost of \$12.2 million. Of that amount, \$3.3 million is being covered by the participating partners, USDA-Rural Development has set aside \$3 million and an earmark for \$1 million is in the Department of Interior federal budget. This request for \$900,000 in state funds will help leverage the remaining \$4 million from other sources.

Operational costs have been projected and revenues identified from existing funds available to the current partners. A preliminary feasibility study indicates that once built, the People's Learning Center can be operated with existing funding sources.