

Project Abstract

Project Title: Prince of Wales Health Network
Applicant Name: PeaceHealth – Ketchikan Medical Center
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Description of the community: Prince of Wales Island (POW) is a remote island in Southeast Alaska. The third largest island in the US, POW encompasses 2500 square miles, and twelve distinct communities ranging in size from 15 to 1200 residents. Travel in this part of Alaska is challenging due to large distances, lack of roads, and inclement weather. It is time consuming and financially unrealistic for most residents to travel off-island for higher levels of care. Travel off-island is by small plane or boat only, as there is no commercial jet service and no roads connecting to the island to the mainland. Monthly unemployment ranges from 10.5 – 20.2%. The population is decreasing due to declines in the Island’s main economic industries, logging and commercial fishing, and healthcare worker shortages are ongoing.

Applicant: PeaceHealth-Ketchikan Medical Center is one of 5 key participating members of the Prince of Wales Health Network and is the applicant agency.

Primary problems, circumstances, and/or opportunities to be addressed by the Network:

There are several different but interrelated realities that contribute to the unmet health care and behavioral health needs of POW residents. These include:

- High rates of chronic disease on POW Island are related to the high levels of behavioral risk factors, including sedentary lifestyle, overweight/obesity, and poor diet.
- Health promotion and preventive services in the areas of BMI measurements, healthy eating, physical activity, and vaccinations are limited and do not reach the outlying communities on POW Island;
- Telemedicine connectivity is currently limited to a handful of communities on the island. Unfortunately, it’s many of the most isolated POW communities that lack tele-health education and tele-behavioral health services.

These issues cannot be solved by a single entity alone, but must include a collaborative effort and a commitment by existing providers to work together in a meaningful way. The POW Health Network has facilitated existing health providers to work more effectively together to find solutions.

How the local community (region) to be served will benefit from and be involved in the activities carried out by the Network: The community will have increased access to a full continuum of prevention and health education services; youth will be involved in activities focusing on healthy eating and increasing physical activity levels to BMI measurements; Network partners will collaborate with Public Health staff to improve vaccination rates; school administrators and nutritionists will collaborate to improve the nutrition of school menus; local businesses, Tribes and service groups will work together to ensure Network sustainability and improved access to a wide array of quality health services for all residents.

Funding Preference Request: Funding preferences that apply to the project and its proposed activities include:

1. Prince of Wales has Federally designated status as a “Health Professional Shortage Area”
2. Prince of Wales has Federally designated status as a “Medically Underserved Area”