

Our Annual Letter to Alaska

Published June 2022



TRANSITIONS

Honoring Ed Rasmuson

AUGUST 27, 1940 - JANUARY 4, 2022

The Foundation received an outpouring of love, support and shared memories of Chairman Emeritus Ed Rasmuson. Thank you, everyone. Here are just a few.

"I have been lucky to know Ed for most of my life. I saw him make a fortune in business and then use it to make a difference in the lives of Alaskans through philanthropy. That was Ed: always creating value for our state and recognizing that Alaska's real wealth is in the spirit of our people and the land itself."

U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski

"We are so sorry for the loss of our great community leader."

Key Getty
*President, Korean American
Community of Anchorage*

"On behalf of the Native Village of Napaskiak we send our condolences for the loss of Ed. Under his leadership we have seen positive changes. You are all in our thoughts and prayers."

Stephen Maxie
Chief of the Napaskiak Tribal Council

"Ed has been a tremendous friend, mentor and role model for many Alaskans, including myself, my father and father-in-law. I wish you all well as you grieve his passing but also celebrate his life and contributions to our great state."

Jason Metrokin
*President and CEO
Bristol Bay Native Corporation
Former Rasmuson Foundation
board member*

"Ed was a passionate man who cared deeply for his family, friends, and more broadly, for the state of Alaska. Through his kindness and generosity, he had a remarkable impact on the state and his legacy will endure for generations. When I first arrived in Alaska, Ed was instrumental in teaching me about the state, its people and the challenges faced. Thanks to him, the Economics Department at the University of Alaska Anchorage is now a program of distinction and attracts scholars from around the world who are interested in Alaska. Ed will be dearly missed."

Jim Murphy
*Rasmuson Chair of Economics
University of Alaska Anchorage*

"Ed Rasmuson will be well remembered as a brilliant business leader, a statesman and an Alaskan visionary with an enormous heart for others."

U.S. Sen. Dan Sullivan

"He connected people and created collaboratives to make progress on huge issues, from domestic violence to homelessness to Alaska's fiscal state to libraries. The last time I saw Ed, in November 2019, he spoke about how he was aging and how he was making investments for future generations of Alaskans. He helped show me what a foundation could be and what it could mean to a community."

Elizabeth Ripley
President and CEO
Mat-Su Health Foundation

"He dedicated himself to building a better future for our state and contributed immensely to the cause of helping our unhoused neighbors here in Anchorage. In this way he touched the lives of all of us."

**Anchorage Coalition to
End Homelessness**

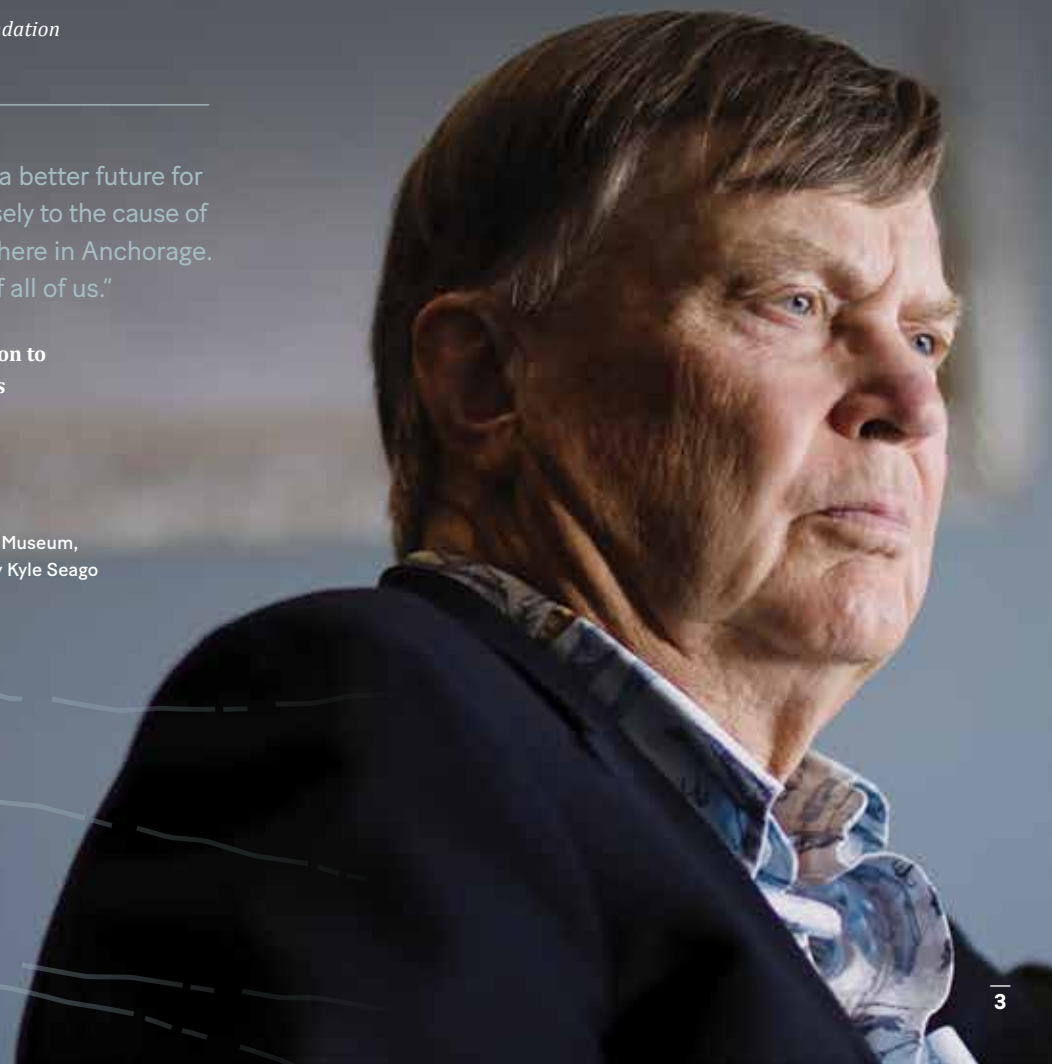
Ed Rasmuson reflects in July 2020 at the Anchorage Museum, Rasmuson Wing, Art of the North Galleries. (Photo by Kyle Seago for "Magnetic North: The Alaskan Character")

"What a titan, I'm saddened by his passing but inspired by his life."

Kay Clements
General Manager
Public radio station KHNS

"All of us at Anchorage Opera mourn Ed's passing. A great philanthropist, a great man & a GREAT friend of the arts."

Judy Berry
Marketing & Development Director
Anchorage Opera



A MESSAGE FROM
CHAIR ADAM GIBBONS

We owe everything to Alaska

Dear Alaskans,

I am delighted, excited and humbled to serve in my new role as Rasmuson Foundation board chair. This is a time of change for Alaska and the Foundation. We are starting to look past the pandemic, but in our case, without the leader who guided us since 2001. During his 21 years as chairman, my uncle, Ed Rasmuson, grew the Foundation from a small nonprofit into one that gives away over a half million dollars every week. Moreover, Ed possessed the rare combination of visionary and tactician. He could identify Alaska's most pressing issues and then skillfully assemble the right people to address them. No problem was ever too big for "Big Ed." I already miss his guidance.

I so appreciate the counsel of my aunt Cathy, in addition to that of my aunt Judy and mother Lile, or "Mom." The "three sisters," my cousin Natasha, my brother, Jay, and six more dedicated board members from around Alaska will keep Ed's spirit alive. Meanwhile, as a "bonus challenge," our other long-time leader, President and CEO Diane Kaplan, has announced that she will be departing, too, next year. We're grateful for her commitment to lead us into 2023 for stability and continuity. Ed and Diane were an amazing team, and they left an indelible mark on Alaska.

My great-grandmother, Jenny, and grandfather, Elmer, created the Foundation in 1955 to honor my great-grandfather and give back to the place that gave our family so much. Now Natasha has taken her mom's role as vice chair, and Jay has stepped up as secretary/treasurer. Our generation isn't starting from the same place as Ed — we didn't learn at the heels of Elmer. But we did learn at Ed's.



Photos of the Foundation's founders, Jenny Olson Rasmuson and her son, Elmer Rasmuson, are seen behind the new board chair, Adam Gibbons, in September 2021. (Photo by John Norris)

Even as we ponder the family question, "What would Elmer do?" we hear Ed's voice, "See? Do it this way." Ultimately, however, we must take responsibility for our turn. As Elmer and Ed did, our generation must engage in Alaska's communities and maintain our family values of hard work and giving back if we are to make our own mark.

Ed instilled in us his love for wild Alaska, and you can expect to see more projects that help Alaskans and visitors alike enjoy the great outdoors. We want to do more to support our youth, whether through early literacy or projects like our Camps Initiative, featured in this report. Organizations like Seacoast Trust in Southeast Alaska and Anchorage Community Land Trust are working to support creative individuals and small businesses. We will continue to tackle homelessness even as we look at new areas, such as accessible and affordable broadband for all. We will continue to embrace the diversity that is Alaska, another core value. Through it all, we are blessed with the stability of our gifted staff to advise us.

Transitions are hard, but the next generation of Foundation leaders will find its way forward. I can't promise we will not make mistakes. I've already made plenty. But by keeping an open mind, listening hard to partners and communities we serve, and refining our work to incorporate their voices, I'm confident we can continue to help solve Alaska's greatest challenges. Our family owes Alaska everything. Ed, Alaska, we will not let you down.

RASMUSON FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Adam Gibbons, *Chair*

Natasha von Imhof, *Vice Chair*

Jay Gibbons, *Secretary/Treasurer*

Lile R. Gibbons

Rebecca Brice Henderson

Kathy Hurlburt, MD

Curtis McQueen

Mike Navarre

Cathryn Rasmuson

Judy Rasmuson

Marilyn Romano

Angela Salazar

Looking inward and onward

Last year, I received the extraordinary gift of dedicated time for reflection on more than 26 years of projects and initiatives, relationships and friendships, trials and successes. All about Rasmuson Foundation. In a series of recorded conversations, a former colleague prodded me with sharp questions from staff, board members and the public to download memories of the Foundation's early days, inner workings and key decisions since 1995, when I started as the Foundation's first employee.

The setting could not have been more inspirational. I was among the participants in The Rockefeller Foundation's month-long Bellagio Center residency program in northern Italy. Academics and artists, policy makers and top thinkers of our time gathered in a villa overlooking Lake Como. I worked hard to produce hundreds of pages of recollections that should provide the basis for a history of Rasmuson Foundation's development into Alaska's largest philanthropy.

The world is changing and so is the Foundation. I always said I would stay with the Foundation as long as our longtime Chairman Ed Rasmuson needed me. We lost Ed early in 2022 to a vicious brain cancer. He pushed us to address the big things: homelessness, the State of Alaska budget and many others. He left the Foundation in its best shape financially and programmatically. For me, there's never a good time to leave work you love but the time seems right. I will be departing early in 2023 as president and CEO. The search is on for my replacement. Already the next generation of Rasmuson family members is leading the board, including Ed's nephew, our new Chair Adam Gibbons. I hope you'll get to meet him. He is a smart, capable investment guy, but also a compassionate, caring human being. Adam loves Alaska,

loves music and the arts, and loves all things outdoors. He's got great political instincts, a gracious manner and a strong, ethical voice. We are lucky to have him at the helm.

Early in the pandemic, when financial markets were in a freefall, we paused routine spending. Then our assets not only rebounded but grew to an all-time high. We are considering new priorities driven by Alaska's biggest needs. The pandemic underscored the importance of being strong but flexible and exposed gaps and inequities that were always there. The Foundation has met with partners and Alaska leaders and identified universal, affordable broadband as a new area where we can help. We believe Alaska needs strategic solutions for closing the digital divide and a fair system of distributing a once-in-a-generation technology windfall of federal dollars. We are also exploring areas such as behavioral health and childcare, looking to leaders in both areas for how we might make a difference. We will keep you posted about these opportunities as they develop.

After nearly 27 incredible years with the Foundation, I am ready for one more. As Ed Rasmuson used to say, "There are all kinds of ways of giving back." I'm looking forward to my next iteration of making that statement true. For now, the work continues. There's much to do.

Diane Kaplan

Diane Kaplan welcomes guests attending a dinner in August 2021 for Alaska nonprofit leaders and visitors on the 2021 Grantmakers Tour of Alaska. (Photo by Amber Johnson)





Steps forward in solving homelessness

We've all been heartbroken to see people living in tents and makeshift shelters on the streets, in city parks, wherever there's a spot in urban woods. In Anchorage, all-too-visible struggles of people experiencing homelessness weighed heavily on our chairman, Ed Rasmuson. Do something, he told Foundation staff.

So we are doing some things. We've long supported developments across Alaska to add affordable housing for working people, seniors, teachers, health aides and more. This time, we were trying to align funding and partners for something far more complex: a solution to homelessness.

Four years after the first concrete steps, significant progress has been made. The Foundation so far has designated more than \$6 million for housing, shelters, planning, and demonstration projects. An improved system collects solid data on who is experiencing homelessness. Business leaders and public officials are engaged. Expect to see additional support in the coming year for rural housing serving those who have been homeless.

And we have the tangible result that Chairman Ed wished for. Just days before his death early this year, we let him know a building for the most vulnerable was becoming reality. A deal to purchase the Sockeye Inn in Midtown Anchorage closed March 30. The building on Fireweed Lane will provide 61 rooms for individuals who need a place to rest, recover and address ongoing or unmet medical needs. Some are in wheelchairs. Some are blind. The facility and support services will help individuals move toward permanent housing and gets them out of the Sullivan Arena mass shelter, which was not only crowded but relied on outdoor porta potties for restrooms, even in Alaska winter.

Left With the help of her case manager at Catholic Social Services, Leonila moved from Brother Francis Shelter into her own apartment on her 70th birthday. (Photo courtesy of Catholic Social Services)

Right Foundation CEO Diane Kaplan was among the speakers at an April 2022 news conference on the public-private partnership supporting a comprehensive plan to house individuals who have experienced homelessness.



OTHER RECENT DEVELOPMENTS:

- Agreement by the Bronson administration and the Anchorage Assembly on a comprehensive path to move people from the Sullivan Arena. Private funders and the Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness are partners in the plan framed around specialized facilities to address individual needs. Besides 303 Fireweed Lane, the plan includes a hotel that will become workforce and supportive housing, a Salvation Army treatment facility, and a purpose-built shelter in East Anchorage for up to 150 single adults with surge capacity for 50 more. The shelter will include a navigation center to connect clients to housing and services.
- A public awareness campaign by the Anchorage Homelessness Leadership Council on housing and homelessness. The group brings together business, health care and community leaders and urges collaboration, advocacy and financial supports to solve homelessness.
- The new Providence Alaska House will create supportive housing for 51 elders with significant health issues who are experiencing homelessness. Construction begins this summer. The Foundation committed \$2 million for that project.
- The former Bean's Café is being renovated to serve as a welcoming daytime navigation center for individuals experiencing homelessness. People will be able to meet immediate needs and take advantage of services to find housing and address issues.

FUNDING PARTNERSHIP FOR NEW SHELTERS, ENGAGEMENT CENTERS AND SERVICES

Public and private dollars seeded a fund at The Alaska Community Foundation that now totals \$13 million and growing.

Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority
 Calista Corp.
 Chugach Alaska Corp.
 Doyon Ltd.
 Municipality of Anchorage
 Premera Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alaska
 Providence Alaska
 Rasmuson Foundation
 Weidner Apartment Homes

ANCHORAGE HOMELESSNESS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL MEMBERS

Anchorage Mayor Dave Bronson (*co-chair*)
 Bryan Butcher, *CEO, Alaska Housing Finance Corp.*
 Greg Cerbana, *vice president, Weidner Apartment Homes*
 Greg Deal, *regional president, Wells Fargo Bank*
 Erec Isaacson, *president, ConocoPhillips Alaska*
 Diane Kaplan, *president and CEO, Rasmuson Foundation*
 Paul Landes, *vice president, GCI*
 Sophie Minich, *president and CEO, Cook Inlet Region Inc., (co-chair in 2022)*
 Bill Popp, *president and CEO, Anchorage Economic Development Corp.*
 Aaron Schutt, *president and CEO, Doyon Ltd.*
 Matt Schultz, *pastor, First Presbyterian Church*
 Preston Simmons, *CEO, Providence Alaska, (co-chair in 2021)*
 Steve Williams, *CEO, Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority*



Who doesn't love camp!

Youth learned fish cutting skills from elders in 2021 at Camp Sivunniigvik, run by Aqqaluk Trust near Noorvik. (Photo courtesy of Aqqaluk Trust)

A well-run summer camp experience can be life-changing. Yet even in Alaska, not all kids have opportunities to hike and swim, fish and canoe, scramble up boulders and build a roaring campfire.

Our President and CEO Diane Kaplan, raised by a single mom in New York City, still appreciates how philanthropy provided means for her and her brothers to get to camp. We want Alaska kids to have that opportunity, so launched a Camps Initiative in 2020, just in time to help camps go virtual early in the pandemic. By 2021, camps were back in real life. With the help of our partners — The Alaska Community Foundation, the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services and the Municipality of Anchorage — more than 14,400 children attended camps in 2021 run by 83 organizations in 36 Alaska communities, from Shishmaref to Skagway.

The initiative expands access through scholarships and also enhances the quality of the experience. Culture camps, music camps and theater camps, language camps and science camps, camps for Girl Scouts and for Boy Scouts, camps for young children and for older teens. The breadth of experiences is as vast as Alaska. The Foundation has invested more than \$550,000 so far and has committed another \$3 million over three years.

The magic of local response to local needs

Alaska's community foundations are proving to be one of the best ways to encourage communities to invest in themselves. They are fundraisers and grantmakers, partners and conveners.

Since 2008, we have joined with The Alaska Community Foundation to launch and support its Affiliate Program. From Kodiak to Ketchikan, Fairbanks to Haines, 11 affiliated foundations are up and running, with more in the pipeline. Local people are identifying highest needs — and solutions. When a new nonprofit, Humanity in Progress, formed in Petersburg to help those with unstable housing, its first grant came from the local community foundation for a food pantry and rent and utility assistance. After mudslides in December 2020 led to loss of life, property and infrastructure in Haines, the Chilkat Valley Community Foundation created an emergency fund. Kodiak student athletes are assured of travel off the island for competition through a community foundation endowed fund.

Some of the affiliates already have endowments topping \$1 million or even double that, ensuring sustainable grantmaking far into the future. In 2021, another milestone was reached when the Seward Community Foundation became the first to hit the \$1 million mark in grantmaking.

In 2019, a community weed pull project in Seward was supported by a \$850 grant from Seward Community Foundation to Kenai Watershed Forum.



RASMUSON FOUNDATION 2021 AT A GLANCE

GRANTMAKING BY REGION

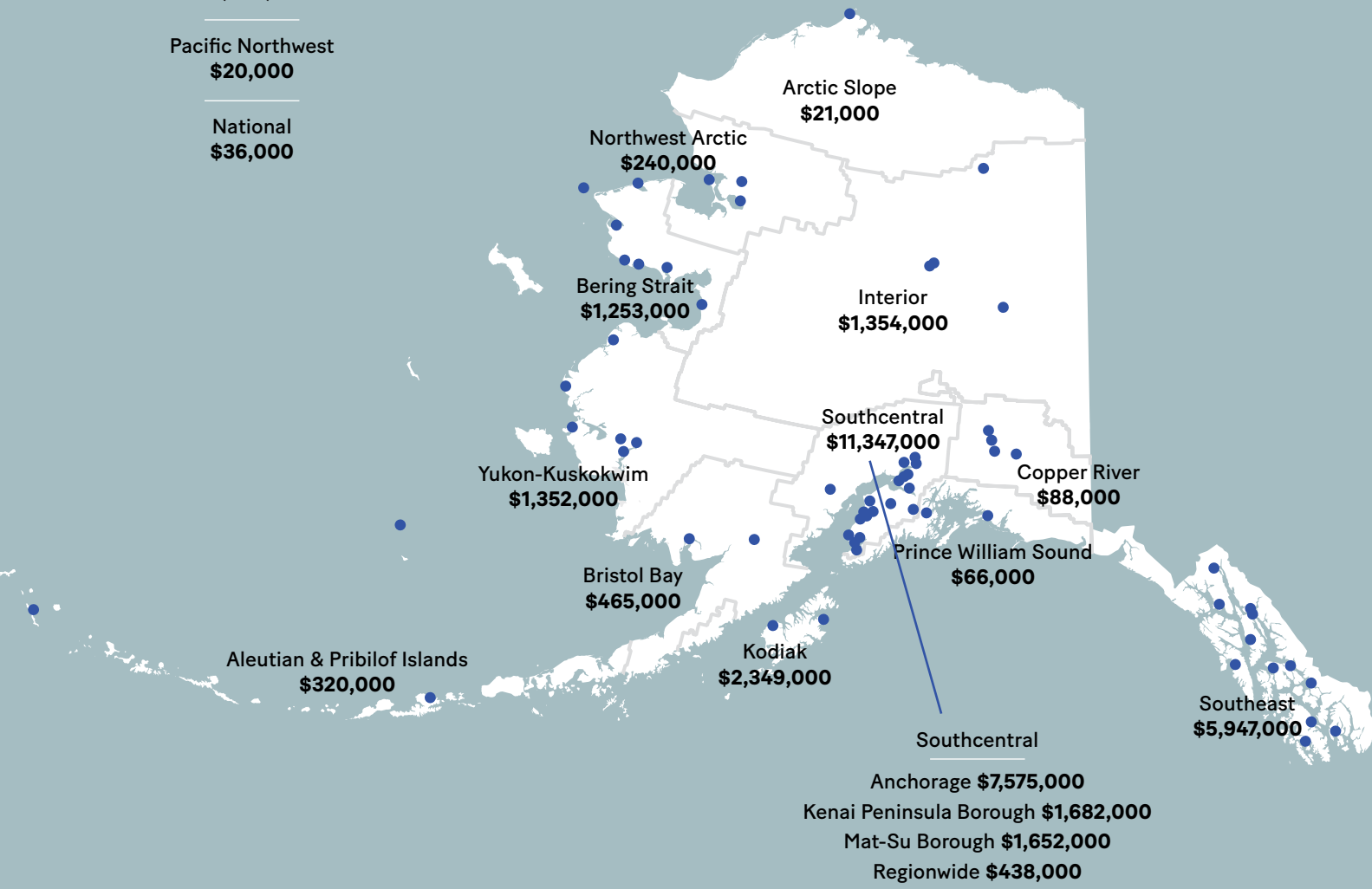
Our 2021 awards supported local projects, organizations and artists in 66 Alaska communities, identified by dots on the map.

A searchable list of all Foundation grants can be found at www.rasmuson.org.

Statewide*
\$11,344,000

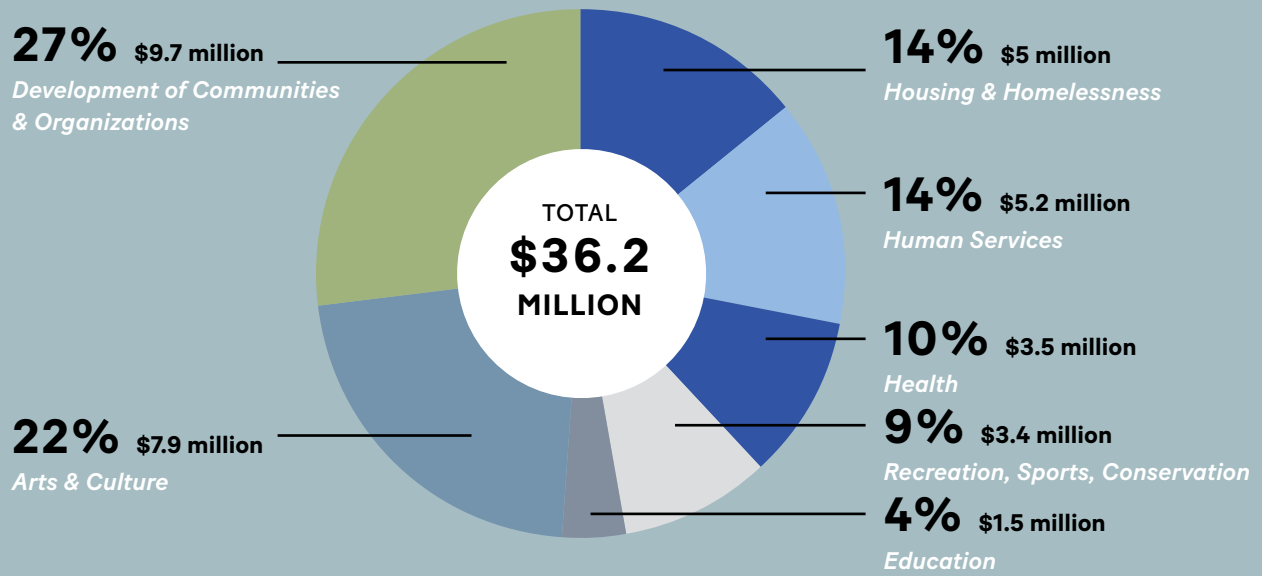
Pacific Northwest
\$20,000

National
\$36,000



*All matching grants are in statewide
Investments include grants, initiatives and program-related investments
and include communities that were part of a multi-site award.

GRANTMAKING BY PROGRAM AREA



FOUNDATION BY THE NUMBERS

\$36.2 MILLION
IN GRANT AWARDS
AND INVESTMENTS

\$832 MILLION
TOTAL ASSETS
AS OF DEC. 31, 2021

\$28 MILLION
GRANTS PAID OUT

28
EMPLOYEES

HOW TO CONTACT US

301 W. Northern Lights Blvd.
Suite 601
Anchorage, AK 99503

Tel (907) 297-2700
info@rasmuson.org

www.rasmuson.org



Find more of our Annual Letter to Alaska on our special web feature including a downloadable version.

Cover photo: A father and son share a moment of joy during summer 2021 at Ankau Saltchucks, a brackish waterway in Yakutat, the Southeast Alaska community where the Rasmuson family first settled in Alaska. (Photo by Violet Sensmeier)

