

Department partnership with Rasmuson Foundation to streamline grant process and provide guide for improvement

Streamlining the grant process is the goal of a partnership between the Department of Health and Social Services and the Rasmuson Foundation, according to a recently released report.

"Having good, strong working relationships with our grantees is key to serving the people of Alaska," Commissioner Karleen K. Jackson said.

As part of the follow-up to the report, a cross-divisional department team will identify administrative and communication strategies that need to be implemented, Jackson added.

"If this initiative is successful in streamlining the state grant process, this may very well be one of the most significant investments in Rasmuson Foundation history," foundation president Diane Kaplan said.

PROCESS

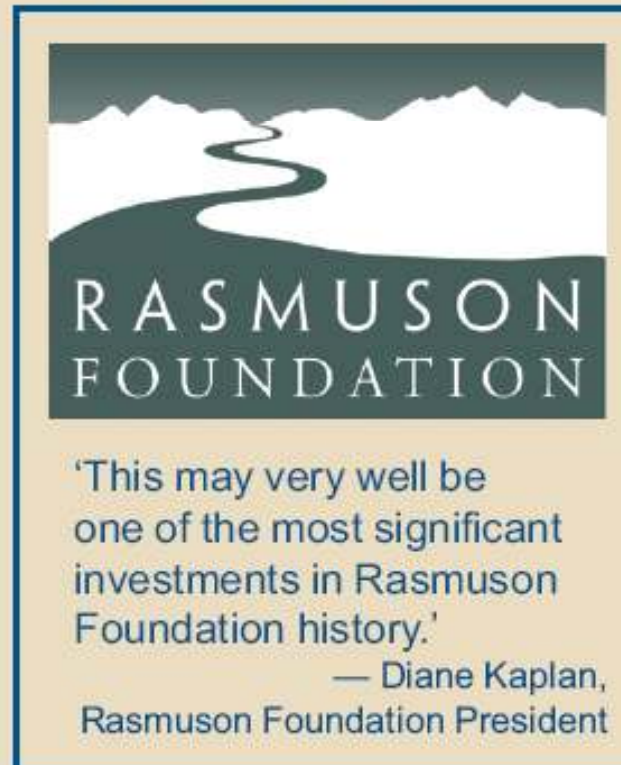
Starting in March 2006, the department and the Rasmuson Foundation contracted with Cliff Consulting to interview 125 grantees and 30 department staff. As a result, the report identifies existing strengths and weaknesses in the grant-making process.

EXISTING STRENGTHS

Strengths include:

- reports by some grantees that department staff is cooperative, responsive and helpful;
- recent improvements in standardization, especially movement toward a common RFP format and standardized cumulative fiscal reporting;

- changing to longer grant periods with continuation grants;
- increased coverage due to centralization of Grants and Contracts; and
- some reduction in paperwork.



NEEDED IMPROVEMENTS

Areas that need improvement include:

- inconsistent levels and quality of communications;
- lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities within the department;

- inconsistent policies and procedures from program to program and division to division;
- frequent staff turnover in department and grantee organizations;
- current requirements for extensive documentation for RFPs and reporting; and
- inconsistencies in documents, software platforms and lack of easy-to-use templates for response.

IMPLEMENTING RECOMMENDATIONS

Deputy Commissioner Bill Hogan will lead a department team, across divisions, to assess and implement suggestions for improvement.

The report recommends four main steps that require immediate action, including:

- naming a department representative to oversee the continuation of the improvement process;
- convening a cross-divisional team to further assess the report's recommendations and develop a plan for implementation;
- communicating the study's results to grantees, with reports on actions and planned improvements; and
- communicating the study's results to department staff, with reports on actions and planned improvements.

The 40-page report from Cliff Consulting, Inc. is available at www.hss.state.ak.us/commissioner/Rasmuson/Rasreport.pdf.