Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Inc. (CITC), a tribal organization with child welfare and substance use disorder (SUD) treatment programs operating in Anchorage Alaska, proposes Team Decision Making (TDM) Enhancement for Strong Native Families, a regional interagency collaboration to provide coordinated service to increase well-being, improve permanency, and enhance the safety of Alaska Native children in Anchorage Alaska who are in, or at risk of, out-of-home placement in state custody due to a parent or caregiver’s substance use. CITC has worked intensively with the State Office of Children’s Services (OCS) to identify service gaps for OCS engaged Alaska Native and American Indian children and youth whose families experience substance abuse.

Our planning efforts have determined significant unmet need exists in the intersections of substance abuse, child welfare, and Anchorage’s Native community –

- Meaningful family engagement in the Team Decision Making (TDM) process;
- Immediate, relevant service linkage with supportive follow up for families following TDM processes;
- SUD treatment that includes family support elements specifically designed for parents who are engaged with OCS; and
- Trauma-informed, culturally informed parenting skills development opportunities.

TDM Enhancement for Strong Native Families will enhance Alaska Team Decision Making process through provision of a TDM Navigator to assist families, provide linkages to supportive services, expedite substance use assessment and treatments services, and provide needed trauma-informed, culturally informed parent skills and peer supports.

**TARGET POPULATION AND PROJECTED NUMBERS SERVED**

The target population for these interventions will be Alaska Native and American Indian children and youth in Anchorage who experience or are at risk of out-of-home placement in which caregiver substance use is a factor.

The project proposes to provide services to 70 parents and family members, from 40 discrete families, per year.
MAJOR PROGRAM GOALS

GOAL 1: Improve wellbeing and reduce re-traumatizing experiences among children and youth removed from their homes or at risk of out-of-home placement related to caregiver substance use.

GOAL 2: Increase knowledge about, and capacity to engage meaningfully in, child welfare team-decision making (TDM) processes among the parents and families of children and youth removed from their homes or at risk of out-of-home placement related to family substance use.

GOAL 3: Support parenting skill development, recovery from SUD, and connection to needed resources and social supports among the parents and families of children and youth removed from their homes or at risk of out-of-home placement related to family substance use.

KEY MAJOR PROGRAM SERVICES

- Case Management and Case Conferencing
  - Team Decision Making
- Parenting/Family Strengthening
  - Positive Indian Parenting
- Substance Use Disorder Treatment for Adults
  - Peer Recovery Coaching
- Specialized Outreach, Engagement and Retention
  - Team Decision Making Navigator
- Cross-Systems/Interagency Collaboration
  - Delivery and development of culturally appropriate services

PARTNER AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

- Tribal Organization
- State Child Welfare Agency
- Evaluator/Data Collection and Analysis – Other (non University-based or affiliated)

EVALUATION DESIGN

OUTCOME STUDY DESIGN: QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN (QED)
EVALUABILITY ASSESSMENT

The Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC) local evaluation will have both an impact study and a process and collaboration study. The grantee is also participating in the RPG cross-site evaluation studies of family and child outcomes, program implementation, and collaboration among RPG grantees and partners.

Impact study design

The grantee will use a quasi-experimental design to examine the impact of its RPG services. Members of both the program and comparison groups will come from the pool of families receiving the Team Decision Making (TDM) model. Members of the comparison group will receive the existing, standard TDM model. Members of the program group will receive an enhanced version of TDM—the Team Decision Making Enhancements for Strong Native Families (TESNF)—which adds to TDM a family navigator and evidence-informed parenting classes for up to 15 months. In the program group, the family navigator will help support the family through pre- and post-TDM meetings to increase engagement in the process, provide support during child placement changes and reunification, and help the family navigate referrals and service linkages. The impact study will include 320 families, with 160 in the program group and 160 in the comparison group. The grantee will examine impacts in the following domains: permanency, safety, and child well-being. The grantee will also examine how outcomes change for families in the program group over the course of their time in the RPG program in two additional domains: family functioning and recovery.

Data sources include administrative data (for both the program and comparison groups) and information collected by data collectors using standardized instruments (for only the program group). Evaluation staff will collect data from the program group, including participant surveys, routine assessments, parenting and substance use scales, a pre-post-test of participant skills and knowledge, and other standardized instruments. Data will be collected three times for each family: (1) when they begin services (baseline); (2) 6 months following baseline, when families will likely have completed the parenting course sequences; and (3) 15 months following baseline (the end of services for the program group). The impact evaluation will rely only on administrative data.

Process and collaboration study design

In the process and collaboration study, the grantee will examine elements of the project’s implementation that might influence the study outcomes, whether project milestones were met, and barriers and challenges to program implementation. Specifically, the study will address what services are provided by the program and the quality of those services; who the program participants are; the extent to which the grantee collaborates with key program and community partners; and the barriers and facilitators to implementation of the enhanced TDM intervention. Components of the study will focus on specific aspects of the program logic model such as target population, fidelity to or changes in service delivery model, dosage, intensity, access, partnerships, and external context, including the social climate. Data sources include program documents, administrative data, staff interviews and surveys, case-level program operations data, and participant surveys.
SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

The partners anticipate that TESNF will produce outcomes worthy of continuation within the period of federal funding, and their sustainability will be possible when combined with ongoing data collection and review practices to demonstrate efficacy. The partners have an informed belief that sufficient resources to sustain the project’s essential activities exist and will be available following the sixty months of grant services implementation, evaluation, and study. The project budget includes long-term investments, including development of both agencies’ MIS in alignment with outcomes that support ongoing services. Further, if and when the project proves efficacious, sharing of outcomes and opportunities to tribal governments and providers around Alaska through the dissemination plan will support understanding and potential interest, with an anticipated interest from some tribal entities in piloting a similar approach in other regions and communities.