

NARRATIVE (a) Need for Project:

The recent influx of television shows about Alaska paint an idyllic and romantic picture of the state by focusing primarily on the magical lure of the land: majestic mountains, clean water, abundant natural resources, intense weather, and Alaska's sheer size. Often missing from the storylines, however, are the harsh social and economic realities faced by individuals trying to survive in remote Alaskan villages. The population in most rural communities is predominately Alaskan Native. Many of these communities have no economic activity and residents struggle to balance a subsistence lifestyle with the Western cash economy.

Alaska Native students often experience overwhelming challenges in making a successful passage from high school to life with skills to thrive beyond graduation in postsecondary education or full-time employment. The *Voyage To Excellence (VTE)* Partnership is acutely aware of the needs of Alaska Native students for academic support and school-to-life transition skills. This partnership consists of twenty-five organizations including Chugachmiut, an Alaska Native regional non-profit organization; two Alaska Native Regional Corporations: Chugach Alaska Corporation and Kuskokwim Corporation; two Alaska Native Village Corporations: Tatitlek Corporation and Chenega Corporation; the Alaska State School Board; Alaska Pacific University; and six school districts in Alaska with a total of forty-seven participating schools: Chugach School District (Tatitlek, Chenega Bay, Whittier, Chugach Extension), Bering Strait School District (Brevig Mission, Little Diomed, Elim, Gambell, Golovin, Koyuk, Savoonga, Shaktoolik, Shishmaref, St. Michael, Stebbins, Teller, Unalakleet, Wales, White Mountain), Kenai Peninsula Borough School District (Port Graham and Nanwalek are the only schools participating from this district), Kuspuk School District (Lower Kalskag, Upper Kalskag, Aniak, Chuathbaluk, Crooked Creek, Red Devil, Sleetmute, Stony River), Lake and Peninsula Borough

School District (Chignik Bay, Chignik Lagoon, Chignik Lake, Egigik, Igiugig, Ivanof Bay, Kokhanok, Levelock, Newhalen, Nondalton, Pedro Bay, Perryville, Pilot Point, Port Alsworth, Port Heiden), and Yupiit School District (Akiachak, Akiak, Tuluksak). The consortium schools serve over 3,300 K-12 students in rural Alaska.

The rural students in these districts often have limited access to academic support, enrichment activities, and school-to-life planning as they transition into adulthood. Four of the partner school districts are Regional Educational Attendance Areas (REAs) that serve unincorporated regions of the state where there is no local taxation to support schools. Most of the students in the six partner districts are Alaska Native (see Table 1). A large number of students in partner districts have limited English proficiency. These students may learn English as a second language and speak an Alaska Native language at home.

Table 1: 2010-11 Partner District Demographics

Partner District	# of Project Schools	Grades 7-12 Population	% Grades 7-12 Alaska Native/ American Indian	Dropout Rate	% Title 1 Students	Graduation Rate
State of Alaska	NA	59,372	21.4%	4.7%	41.8%	68%
Bering Strait	15	706	98.2%	7.93%	87.2%	55.0%
Chugach	4	113	36.3%*	2.65%	83.3%	40.0%
Kenai (Port Graham and Nanwalek only)	2	44	97%	12.5% & 0%	42.2% (Kenai SD)	50% & 60%
Kuspuk	9	157	95.5%	8.92%	75.9%	56.52%
Lake and Peninsula	14	173	89.0%	5.39%	68.4%	50.0%

Yupiit	3	172	96.5%	4	90.6%	33.33%
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*Note: Two schools in Chugach School District are 88-100% Alaska Native in grades 7-12.

Three school sites served in this project are identified by the State of Alaska as persistently low achieving schools. These schools are Elim (Aniguiin School), Shishmaref, and Stebbins (Tukurngailnguq School). Together, the project partners have 1365 junior high and high school students enrolled; 14% of them are attending persistently low achieving schools.

Alaska Native students perform lower than other demographic groups on standardized student achievement tests in all academic areas. State Standards Based Assessment results for ninth grade students (Spring 2011) show that the percentage of students in partner districts who achieved proficiency was lower than the state average. These low results were consistent across all grade levels in all partner districts.

Table 2: Spring 2011 Grade 9 Standard Based Assessment % Below Proficient Results

Partner District	Reading	Writing	Math
Bering Strait	49.0%	65.3%	65.3%
Chugach	27.3%	27.3%	40.9%
Kenai*	0.0%*	11.1%*	33.3%*
Kuspuk	55.0%	57.9%	68.4%
Lake and Peninsula	43.5%	31.9%	56.5%
Yupiit	62.5%	75.0%	72.0%
Statewide	19.2%	25.8%	39.9%

* Port Graham and Nanwalek only

The majority of 10th grade students in the partnership districts do not pass all three sections (reading, writing, and math) of the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam (HSGQE). The

gap between the percentages of Caucasian and Alaska Native students who pass the exam remains significant. The percentage of students in partner districts who achieved proficiency on the HSGQE in 2011 was also typically lower than the state average (Table 3).

Table 3: Partner District 2011 Grade 10 HSGQE % Below Proficient Results

Partner District	Reading	Writing	Math
Bering Strait	48.2%	61.2%	57.1%
Chugach	13.6%	47.8%	21.7%
Kenai *	0.0% *	40.0% *	40.0% *
Kuspuk	33.3%	50.0%	50.0%
Lake and Peninsula	32.1%	46.4%	10 ^v %++
Yupitit	70.0%	80.0 [^] %++	63.2%
Statewide	16.6%	28.9%	23.1%

* Port Graham and Nanwalek only

++Specific results cannot be published without releasing personally identifiable information.

Communities in rural Alaska also wrestle with a host of significant social concerns including alcoholism, poor health and living conditions, educational challenges, and poverty with limited or no social support services available. The Cultural Heritage and Education Institute (2011) asserts, “Substance abuse is the single most important debilitating force among Alaska Natives: the suicide rate is four times greater than the national average and nearly 80% of all Native deaths are alcohol related.” 13% of Native Alaskans reside in housing without complete plumbing. 22% are living below poverty level as compared to 13% of all Americans (Martin, Hill 2009). The Institute for Social and Economic Research estimates that Alaska’s Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD) reduces the number of families on public assistance, and that without the

annual PFD, the number of Alaska Natives at poverty level would double (2005).

Heating fuel and other necessities are overwhelmingly expensive in rural Alaska. In an article for CNN, Mallory Simon (2009) states, “Some residents pay over \$1500 a month to heat their home. In Western Alaska, two pounds of cheese costs between \$15 and \$18, milk costs \$10 a gallon, a five-pound bag of apples costs \$15, and a dozen eggs costs \$22.”

The lack of jobs in rural Alaska compounds the extremely high cost of living. Unemployment rates in villages are staggering “The overall unemployment rate for Alaska Native men is 27.3% and 16% for Alaska Native women. In one out of every eight villages, unemployment among Native men is in excess of 50%. In 1/3 of all Native villages, male unemployment rates (32%) nearly quadruple statewide average unemployment rates” (AAA Native Arts, 2011). Alaska Natives with jobs are substantially less likely than non-Natives to work full-time, year-round. Full-time, year-round jobs are scarce in remote, rural areas of Alaska. Many of the rural jobs that do exist are seasonal jobs in construction or fishing.

Most of the communities served by this partnership are off the road system and accessible only by air or seasonally by river. Transportation is very expensive. As a result, students are rarely exposed to an urban environment. In the words of one educator on a needs survey (2010), “Students in our rural schools have very limited opportunity to discover and experience the very basic everyday interaction that urban students enjoy. Their villages are hundreds of miles from an urban setting, they are only access by plane or boat and they are limited to short trips that are guided by their parents and are usually for the sole purpose of medical or shopping.”

Alaskan employers have worked together with schools and communities to identify the critical skills, values, and attitudes they expect and need from employees, such as willingness to learn, pride in doing a good job, being a good team member, showing a positive outlook,

dependability, and showing initiative. The lack of employment opportunities for rural Alaska Native students equates to a lack of opportunities to see these career development skills in action in their own communities. Students have virtually no access to summer jobs, college and career fairs, job shadowing opportunities, or internships. When there are jobs in the community, they are often low paying and highly competitive. Alaska Native students need career guidance, and job shadow and internship prospects that will increase their possibilities for future employment. These types of experiences are not available in the rural villages served by this project.

Former Alaska Commissioner of Education (2011) writes, “Teachers in small rural high schools are spread thin just to teach the minimal requirements for graduation and have little time and fewer resources at their disposal to deliver much needed advanced academic, enrichment, and career and technical education courses... Although Alaska’s rural high-school system meets legal muster, it is presently stretched beyond its capacity to deliver programs and services that meet the academic and career and technical education needs of its students” (p. 2-4).

Students are often unaware of the breadth of career options available or how to enter such industries. Opportunities like the *VTE* project make a strong impression on rural students’ personal development, future focus, and worldview. Career awareness and training connects students to a goal for the future. Long-term goals increase student motivation and makes current schoolwork seem relevant and meaningful. Students develop confidence and responsibility when they can envision a successful future for themselves. As one educator in a needs survey (2010) affirmed, “We give students the best in academic instruction we can, but if students do not have a basic understanding of why what they learn is important, we face high dropout rates, suicide rates, etc. We need to give students a future dream to connect their current learning to, in order that it is relevant and meaningful. Too many of our students lack this hope in the future.”

Additionally, Alaska Natives continue to be under-represented in professional, managerial, technical, and sales occupations, but over-represented in labor, operator, and service occupations. 8% of Alaska Native people over twenty-five hold a four-year college degree compared to 27% of all other Americans. (Martin & Hill, 2009) The for-profit regional and village Native corporations, like those in the VTE partnership, are some of the most prominent Alaska-owned businesses in the state and some of Alaska's biggest employers. Only 25% of their employees, however, are Alaska Native. Alaska Native students need exposure and encouragement to pursue education and training opportunities that will lead to high-paying jobs. They also need training in leadership skills and opportunities to practice leadership.

Personal and life skill development has a significant effect upon Alaska Native student achievement and success in post-secondary education. Homesickness, substance abuse, money management, and lack of a support network are challenges often encountered by young people who leave their villages for urban work. Most educators who responded to a needs survey expressed deep concern that their students would be unable to succeed at an urban college or job because they lack the independent living skills to use public transportation, shop for groceries, rent an apartment, etc. As one educator on the survey (2010) responded, "One of the major challenges our students have when they leave their villages to go to school or training is the unknown. They are often overwhelmed with the options this new environment provides and end up back at home because they are homesick. They are not sure of how to manage their time and finances. This all contributes to the desire to go back home where it is easy and known."

NARRATIVE (b) Quality of the Project Design:

The **purpose** of the *Voyage To Excellence – School To Life* project is to ensure Alaska Native students graduate high school with the skills and knowledge to transition from school to

employment or further training and the character, resiliency, and leadership skills necessary to be successful in pursuing post-secondary education and meeting life's challenges. As Jerry Covey, former Alaska Commissioner of Education, wrote in 2011, "Among the most important learning opportunities are those that can only be delivered in person and require resources, infrastructure, and learning opportunities not available in small rural high schools." The *VTE* project provides the resources, infrastructure, and learning opportunities not available in small rural high schools. It is guided by three goals, subsequent objectives, and measurable outcomes evaluating the success of the project. A discussion of each goal follows the objectives.

The *VTE* project provides a variety of phases and camps throughout the school year and summer. Four phases are sequential with each having specific curriculum for career planning; goal setting; and academic, personal and life skill development. The project also includes several specialty phases specific to student needs and interests, including High School Graduation Qualifying Exam (HSGQE) Intensives, Northwest Alaska Career & Technical Center (NACTEC), and Camp Kick Ash opportunities. The curriculum syllabus for each phase contains a matrix showing the alignment of the *VTE* curriculum with Alaska GLEs for reading, writing, and math. Each phase has a scoring rubric that includes the academic, personal skills, life skills, and career development skills targeted by the phase. Scoring guides are reviewed with students before activities, discussed in debriefing, and used to provide students feedback. A sample matrix showing alignment to Alaska math GLEs is included in the appendix.

Goal 1: Increase the percentage of Alaska Native students who graduate from high school by increasing the percentage of Alaska Native students who pass the HSGQE in reading, writing, and math.

Objective 1.1: Provide focused, intensive academic assistance and remediation.

Objective 1.2: Provide opportunities to apply technical mathematics, literacy, and science in real life situations.

HSGQE Intensive: The High School Graduation Qualifying Exam (HSGQE) Intensives are designed to assist students in preparing for the HSGQE Exam. These phases will take place immediately prior to the HSGQE Fall and Spring test week. The first 4 days will be set aside for a reading, writing, and math intensives and to learn and employ test-taking strategies for each part of the exam. Students will remain with the *VTE* Program during test week. This will afford students a controlled test environment, focused study groups, a proper nights rest, exercise each morning, and a well-balanced diet.

Excellence, Courage, Enthusiasm & Leadership (EXCEL) Camp: EXCEL Camp will also be an opportunity for students who need extra preparation for the HSGQE. EXCEL Camp will be a month long summer intensive remediation program held at Alaska Pacific University for tenth – twelfth grade students. During the first two weeks of camp, the academic focus will be on reading and writing, and the second two weeks the focus will shift to math and science. Students will have the choice of different training strands as contextual, project-based activities. Work projects in each area will vary from year to year. Successful completion in strands will allow students to gain national certificates and/or dual college credit. Learning during EXCEL Camp will continue on the weekends, with outdoor educational opportunities that are focused and structured to further develop character and leadership skills.

Real Life Application: The power of using real life connections to make learning meaningful and relevant is often minimized in traditional education, yet is a focus of the *VTE* project. Research quoted by Susan McAlonan indicates 75% – 90% of what is learned is forgotten within 24 hours. To increase retention, the *VTE* project is based on Learning Theory which indicates

most people learn best through personal participation and interaction, hands-on activities, and applying content across environments - all of which are cornerstones of the *VTE* instructional model (McAlonan et al., 1999).

Academic instruction in *VTE* phases will be contextual and relevant to accomplishing tasks using technical reading, writing, math, and science. Students will routinely analyze, synthesize, evaluate, and apply skills and knowledge in new, unpredictable, real-life situations outside the four walls of the classroom. *VTE* participants will write cover letters and resumes for real career portfolios. They will create tangible budgets based on career earnings. They will compute taxes, calculate interest, and balance actual personal checkbooks. They will plan nutritious meals on a budget and select affordable, healthy free time activities.

Goal 2: Increase the percentage of Alaska Native students with the skills and knowledge to successfully transition from school to postsecondary education and life by providing career development guidance and opportunities.

Objective 2.1: Provide sequential work readiness training and increase employability skills.

Objective 2.2: Assist students in career exploration/job shadowing and in developing an individualized school-to-life transition plan.

Objective 2.3: Facilitate occupational endorsements and certifications and provide opportunities to gain dual college credits.

Students will explore a wide array of career options during four *VTE* sequential phases. These phases will address the need to provide vocational development opportunities to students beyond those available in local villages through personal planning and hands-on experience. Every student will develop a career plan in the Alaska Career Ready system and create a Life Skills Portfolio. These tools will be used in every phase as students set and develop goals. By staging

the *VTE* program in Anchorage, students will have access to the largest employers in Alaska who are eager to make a favorable impression on the future workforce as well as a career guidance counselor. Students will benefit from a wealth of stable business partnerships, including forty-five employers who will provide tours, job shadowing, and career awareness activities.

New Beginnings: New Beginnings phases will be offered during the school year for three days each. During these introductory phases for junior high students, many of the activities will focus on trust, teambuilding, problem solving, goal setting and communication. Students will become familiar with the Anchorage House setting and expectations and will be introduced to possible career opportunities.

Phase 1: Search Week: Freshmen and sophomores in one of the six day Search Week offerings will be taught to exhibit appropriate manners and display respect for authority and diversity. They will be faced with employing strategies to deal with shyness, embarrassment, boredom, and peer pressure. Many of the activities will focus on personal growth, teamwork, problem solving, and decision-making. Students will also have exposure to a variety of career choices and secondary education options through interactive field trips. They will practice skills for presenting, including enunciation, volume, eye contact, and self-expression.

Phase 2: Earn to Return: Phase 2 opportunities will be offered yearly to sophomores and juniors for ten days each. Students will be exposed to a menu of career options. They will participate in work based learning opportunities including field trips, job shadows, and career explorations. Students will learn the structures of business, apply, and be hired for a position in the simulated Anchorage House Corporation. The career planning process will continue as students gain a deeper in understanding of themselves. They will research and evaluate a variety of career options, set goals, and make plans for life after high school. Students will create a

simulated budget including housing costs, utilities, transportation, food, and clothing based on possible career selections. Once students successfully complete Earn to Return, many new *VTE* opportunities will be available, such as attending sessions at Northwest Alaska Career & Technical Center (NACTEC) and Kuspuk School District's popular Camp Kick Ash.

Phase 3: Pathways: Phase 3 will be geared for students who are in their last year of high school. It will be self-directed and designed for students to participate in extended career explorations in their particular field of interest. The career planning process will include self-actualization, researching and evaluating options, revising goals, and making action plans. Students in this phase will have the opportunity to obtain their First Aid/CPR certification. They will set up a monthly budget and learn how to rent an apartment, purchase a vehicle, and use public transportation. They will establish a personal health and nutrition plan, establish credit, set up savings and checking accounts, and apply for student scholarships. Students will begin each day with aerobic exercise and strength training and learn to manage time between work and leisure. Finally, they will learn how to access community organizations and their support services. Students may choose to attend more than one Pathways phase.

Northwestern Alaska Career and Technical Center (NACTEC): Fourteen students who attend the *VTE* program and successfully complete Phase 2 will be eligible to apply for a session at NACTEC. Sessions which *VTE* students may participate in include: Art, Aviation, Business, Building Trades, Careers in the Legal System, Certified Nursing Assistant, Driver's Education, Early Childhood Education, Emergency Trauma Technician, Entrepreneurship, Field Biology, Financial Leadership (Money Management), Fishing Industry/Outboard Motors, Food Service, Guiding: Outdoor Leadership, Health Career Exploration, Machine Shop, Marketing, Metal Fabrication, Small Engine Repair, Video Technology, and Welding. Certification and college

credit are available in a variety of areas.

Camp Kick Ash: Ten high school students from the *VTE* program will also have the opportunity to participate in Camp Kick Ash, a 23-day session offered twice a year focusing on the medical field and its many career options. Students will receive training in fire-fighting, CPR, winter survival and emergency first aid. They will learn and practice high ropes rescue as well as fire, water and ice rescue techniques. Students will also attend a 40-hour Emergency Trauma Training course and become certified.

Goal 3: Increase the percentage of Alaska Native students who display the personal and life skills necessary to be successful in transitioning to post-secondary education and in meeting life's challenges including character, resiliency, and leadership skills.

Objective 3.1: Foster positive personal responsibility and skill development including time management, scheduling, goal setting, problem solving, money management, budgeting, self-directed task completion, decision making, stress management, leadership, and critical thinking.

Objective 3.2: Foster positive social skill development in group and professional settings.

Objective 3.3: Develop cultural awareness and the capacity to live and work independently in rural and urban environments.

Personal/Social Skill Development: *VTE* enrichment activities are designed to develop students' capacity to live and work independently. Rural students have a high need for personal, social, and life skill development because they often have no exposure to urban norms of professionalism and independence. Staying at the Anchorage House will be many students' first trip outside their local area. Field trips and enrichment activities expose students to urban life. Each phase standards focus on specific social and emotional skills and provide experience with employed adult living. Student progress towards Personal/Social and Career Awareness targets

will be measured and monitored via electronic pre- and post-assessments and perception surveys. Followup preventative and system support will be provided at site by the VTE counselor.

Teachers and the VTE counselor will help students develop external assets (support systems, boundaries, expectations, empowerment, etc.) and internal assets (commitment to learning, positive values, social skills, positive identity, etc.) as an integrated part of the curriculum. The *Developmental Assets Framework*, developed by the Minnesota-based Search Institute, and supported by the Alaska Association of School Boards, is designed to promote positive behaviors and attitudes, reduce high-risk behaviors, and build resiliency—the ability to withstand hardship, and rebound from stressful events. The assets approach will support students as they walk in both the western and traditional worlds now and into the future.

Cultural Awareness: The VTE curriculum recognizes cultural knowledge as part of a living and constantly adapting system that is grounded in the past, but continues to grow through the present and into the future. Students will gain an understanding of the dynamics of cultural systems as they change over time and are impacted by external forces. The curriculum is sensitive to traditional cultural protocol, including the role of spirituality. Students will be encouraged to consider the inter-relationship between their local circumstances and the global community and to “think globally, act locally.”

Staff will be trained on best practices for implementing contextual learning, career and technical instruction, employability skills and post-secondary transitions. VTE staff evaluation and performance pay will include components in transition planning, thematic planning, instructional delivery, and student growth data.

Outcomes: *Voyage To Excellence* will achieve the following outcomes that support and measure the overall goal and specific project objectives:

- 90% of students who complete all *VTE* phases (New Beginnings through Pathways) will graduate from high school in four years. (GPRA measure)
- The percentage of project participants who graduate from high school with a regular diploma in four years will increase over baseline. (GPRA measure)
- 90% of students who attend EXCEL camp or the HSGQE phases will pass the HSGQE prior to high school completion. (Goal 1 and GPRA measure)
- The percentage of project participants who complete all *VTE* phases and attend post-secondary training after graduation will increase year-to-year over baseline. (Goal 2)
- The percentage of project participants who complete all *VTE* phases and who remain enrolled in post-secondary training at least one year will increase over baseline. (Goal 2)
- 100% of students completing *VTE* Phase 3 will have a proficient electronic career portfolio and plan. (Goal 2)
- 100% of students completing *VTE* Phase 3 will have two or more job shadow/internship experiences. (Goal 2)
- 90% of project participants will report personal growth in responsibility, personal and social skill development, and the ability to live and work independently. (Goal 3)
- 100% of students completing *VTE* Phase 3 will have a realistic, proficient health and nutrition plan. (Goal 3)

Past *VTE* efforts show improvement in academic achievement of some of the lowest-performing students in Alaska. The mean gains for reading, writing, and math subtest areas made by students who had taken one or more section of the HSGQE before *VTE* attendance and then retook the test within eight months were all statistically significant. From 2004-2010 the average HSGQE point gain for these students was 57.5 for reading, 53.5 for writing, and 68.38 for math.

In addition, while overall graduation rates in the partner districts are lower than the state average (see Table 1), the graduation rate for students who completed all *VTE* phases is 98%, averaged over the last five years. These results indicate that the program holds promise as a successful innovation for increasing high school graduation. *VTE* activities engage students in learning and encourage academic motivation while simultaneously developing other skills related to personal growth.

Student progress towards Personal/Social, Career Awareness, and Leadership standards have been measured. The self-reported pre- to post- activity gains in perception of skills were also measured. For almost every phase, the pre- to post- gains were statistically significant.

NARRATIVE (c) Quality of Management Plan:

The strengths of the *VTE* management team are: 1) statewide and national reputations for leadership, educational innovations and excellence; 2) established records of successful grant and collaborative agreement management; and 3) in-depth experience with developing and implementing the *Voyage To Excellence* program. The *Voyage To Excellence* project will rely on key individuals who have specific responsibilities related to the project and for carrying out the work plan/timeline that follows. Key responsibilities for management of the project include:

- **Project Administrator:** (in kind by CSD) 0.1 FTE. Dr. Robert Crumley will serve as the Project Administrator and will oversee federal finance and reporting requirements; serve as authorized representative for the project; communicate regularly with the *VTE* Consortium members, the *VTE* Advisory Council, and the Alaska Commissioner of Education; and provide staffing and performance evaluations. Dr. Crumley holds a Ph.D. in Education Leadership from the University of Alaska Fairbanks. He is the Superintendent of Chugach School District. Dr. Crumley's successful leadership has guided Chugach School District in

being recognized as one of the state and nation's principal educational innovators as evidenced by the commendations from the Alaska Performance Excellence Award (APEX) award, the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award for Excellence in Education, and the New American High School award. He has a wealth of experience in education in rural Alaska and in the design, implementation, and reporting of qualitative and quantitative research. Dr. Crumley's resume is attached.

- **Project Director:** 1.0 FTE. Billijo Mills, Project Director, will provide all budget oversight, program implementation, staff supervision, and operational and project management responsibilities; facilitate quarterly *VTE* Advisory Council meetings and monthly Management Team meetings; facilitate the work of the project evaluator and collect student participation data; oversee teacher recruitment and professional development; supervise maintenance and upkeep of the *VTE* facility; maintain ongoing communication with all project partners; seek and maintains business partnerships within the community, local and regional Native organizations, and partnerships with other school districts; and manage student recruitment. Mrs. Mills has a Master of Arts in Education/Standards-based Design from Alaska Pacific University and is currently completing a Masters of Education in Educational Leadership from the University of Alaska, Anchorage. She has nineteen years of experience in education including extensive experience in both the *Voyage To Excellence* program and in teaching in rural Alaska. Her resume is attached.
- **Life Skills Instructors:** 3.0 FTE. Life Skills Instructors provide direct services for *VTE* programs; assist with planning, set-up, and coordination of all student phases; assist in assessing students; follow up with school site teachers on progress and/or recommendations for students upon their return; track, correspond with, and maintain contact with *VTE*

graduates in all districts through surveys, phone contact and email up to 4 years past graduation; plan, coordinate, and assist with logistics of student travel to/from *VTE* activities; assist participants with their transition plan and electronic career portfolio; participate in monthly management meetings.

- **VTE Counselor:** 1.0 FTE. The VTE counselor will provide preventive services and implement a comprehensive counseling program that addresses academic, career, and personal/social development for all students.
- **VTE Advisory Council:** Consists of the Project Administrator, Project Director, Life Skills Instructors, and representatives from all partner organizations (MOU attached); ensure Alaska Native perspective is included throughout project; participate in quarterly meetings; plan and review student feedback from phase participants; ensure project activities are appropriate to fulfill the project goals and objectives; provide input for continuous improvement to meet student, community, and consortium needs.
- **Management Team:** Responsible for operational decisions related to the project; provide oversight of the project objectives; consists of the Project Director, VTE Counselor, and Life Skills Instructors; meet monthly; meet semi-annually with the Project Evaluator.

A management plan for this grant, with clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks, pays special attention to meeting the unique circumstances of working and communicating over large distances through the use of audio/videoconferencing, email communication, fax, phone, and newsletters. Partnership districts average roughly 31,305 square miles, about the size of the state of South Carolina. Participation in a geographically disbursed endeavor is not new to the *VTE* Consortium members. In Alaska, finding ways to work as a team over large distances is a way of life.

Table 4: Project Management Plan

Date	Activity	Milestone	Responsibility
Annual: July - August	Hire new/replacement <i>VTE</i> Master Teacher and Life Skills Instructors	Staff hired	Project Administrator & Project Director
Annual: September	Identify & recruit students for <i>VTE</i> phases; Develop <i>VTE</i> annual calendar	Calendar published	Project Director & Life Skills Instructors
Monthly: Sept.-May	Management Team meetings	Agendas and reports	Project Director
Monthly: Sept.-May	Operate <i>VTE</i> phases	168 students, asmt. growth	Project Director
October 2012 – updated continually	Develop business/university opportunities for job shadow/student internships/course work	Menu of active options	Project Director, with input from <i>VTE</i> Advisory Council
Annual: October	<i>VTE</i> Advisory Council established; Develop quarterly meeting schedule	10-12 members; meeting schedule	Project Administrator, Project Director
Semi-annual: October & March/April	Operate HSGQE Intensives and facilitate HSGQE	28 students, HSGQE	Project Director & Life Skills Instructors
Semi-annual	Project Evaluator meet with Management Team	Progress reports	Project Director & Evaluator
Quarterly	<i>VTE</i> Advisory Council meetings	Agendas and	Project Administrator

		reports	& Project Director
Quarterly	VTE Newsletter	Newsletter published	Project Director
Annual: April	Identification and recruitment of students for EXCEL Summer Camp	Applications secured	Project Director & Life Skills Instructors
Annual: April	Staff Satisfaction Survey	Survey results	Project Director
Annual: May	EXCEL Summer Camp staff hired	Staff hired	Project Administrator & Project Director
Annual: May	High School Graduation	Participants graduate	Partner districts
Annual: June	Annual progress report and internal evaluation of process performance	Evaluation of data & discussion with VTE Advisory Council	Project Director, Project Administrator, Project Evaluator, VTE Advisory Council
Annual: July	EXCEL Summer Camp	60 students, asmt. growth	Project Director

Continuous improvement is imbedded in multiple *VTE* processes. Student and staff satisfaction surveys and student perception surveys related to achievement of Personal/Social, Career Awareness, and Leadership standards are administered online via Survey Monkey at the end of each phase. Staff can view the survey results immediately and use the information to improve activities and programming. Student perception data is useful in identifying and

targeting student needs. A Business Partner Survey and a Graduate Follow-up Survey will also provide data that can be used to improve the program. Finally, performance rubrics will be used to assess student growth at the end of each phase. Rubrics targeted and individualized, singling out particular areas of strength and weakness for each student. These targeted techniques work to continuously increase the effectiveness of the program for achieving project objectives.

NARRATIVE (d) Adequacy of Resources:

Collaboration is at the heart of the *VTE* project. Coalition members have already committed to successful implementation. See the attached Memorandum of Understanding.

Regional and local Native organizations and business partners will provide job shadows, internships and on-the-job training opportunities as they become available and provide project oversight through participation in the *VTE* Advisory Council. The need for support once a student returns home is important work provided by the local leadership of Chugachmiut, Chugach Alaska Corporation, Kuskokwim Corporation, Tatitlek Corporation, and Chenega Corporation. Additionally Native organizations and community members as teachers of cultural values and as leaders and mentors for students will work with students, the *VTE* counselor, teachers, and the *VTE* Advisory Council to ensure that each student has a solid cultural foundation and future focus as they move beyond high school.

Chugach School District, the managing partner for the *VTE* project, will provide funding and leadership. CSD is recognized within Alaska and beyond for educational leadership and creative, standards-based solutions to meet the needs of Alaska Native students. They were one of the first recipients of the coveted National Baldrige Quality Award in Education. Other rural school districts look to CSD to help meet the needs of their students. The Chugach School District Anchorage House facility will be utilized as a short-term instructional/boarding facility

for all phases during the school year. The Anchorage House has faculty and support staff offices, instructional rooms, and rooms to provide for daily living and boarding. In addition, a technology center, district transportation, and membership to a workout facility are also available to project participants.

The six school district partners will encourage students to complete all phases in *Voyage To Excellence* program. Alaska Pacific University (APU) will be used for summer EXCEL Camp to help rural Alaska Native students conceptualize their own future as college students. Students will have access to all facilities and staff.

The proposed project budget covers a three year period to provide stability in program implementation among the consortium districts and because a student engage in most project activities throughout high school. Expenses will remain the same for all years; therefore costs in the budget narrative are the same annually for each budget category. The budget for the *Voyage To Excellence* project reflects services to be delivered to 256 students annually. The cost per participant is ██████ per year, hardly an excessive educational expense for rural Alaska. ██████ of the total budget is allocated for direct to student services, i.e. teachers, student travel, student expenses, etc. Even though a local match is not required for this program, the *VTE* Consortium partners are committing local funds that add up to at least a ██████ match to the grant funds. Most of the local matching funds help support additional teaching and support staff, staff training, operation of facilities and student travel.

NARRATIVE (e) Quality of Project Evaluation:

Educational researcher, Victoria Bernhardt (2002), cautions that multiple measures are necessary to form valid decisions about student achievement and program effectiveness. Multiple measures should include analysis of student learning data, demographics, program process data,

and perception data. It is where these measures intersect that significant analysis can occur. Both qualitative and quantitative data will be collected to demonstrate the success of the *VTE* project. Both processes and student-outcomes will be measured in determining the effectiveness of the project and its viability replicating on an even larger scale.

A main outcome for the *Voyage To Excellence* project is to increase the number of Alaska Native students who graduate high school based on research that students who possess strong personal, social, and life skills and concrete plans to transition from school to employment or further training are more likely to experience academic success. Therefore, student success as measured by the HSGQE and graduation rates are important quantitative data tools for the project. In addition, qualitative data will also be collected using surveys and interviews. An annual report based on the following data will be prepared by the evaluator and presented to the *VTE* Advisory Council for analysis as part of the project reporting process. The *VTE* Advisory Council's yearly continuous improvement goals, based on their analysis of this data, will be included in all summary reports of the project.

The evaluator for the project will be Carol Wilson. Mrs. Wilson has a Master Arts in Education/Standards-based Design from Alaska Pacific University and is currently completing a Masters of Education in Educational Leadership from the University of Alaska, Anchorage. She has fifteen years of experience in education and a high degree of competence in both grant management and evaluation. She has a breadth of experience in education in rural Alaska; experience in the design, implementation, and reporting of qualitative and quantitative research; and strong writing and interpersonal skills. See her attached resume for additional information.

Table 5: Project Goals, Objectives, Outcomes

Outcomes	Data Collection and Analysis
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<p>GPRA Goal for Alaska Native Education high school programs: An increased percentage of Alaska Native students who graduate from high school with a diploma in four years.</p> <p>Project Goal 1: Increase the percentage of Alaska Native students who graduate from high school by increasing the percentage of Alaska Native students who pass the HSGQE in reading, writing, and math.</p>	
<p>90% of students who complete all VTE phases (New Beginnings through Pathways) will graduate from high school in four years.</p>	<p>Examination of district records for graduation.</p>
<p>The percentage of project participants who graduate from high school with a regular diploma in four years will increase over baseline.</p>	<p>(Quantitative)</p>
<p>GPRA Goal for Alaska Native Education high school programs: An increased percentage of Alaska Native students who meet or exceed proficiency standards for reading, mathematics, and science on the State assessments.</p> <p>Goal 1: Increase the percentage of Alaska Native students who graduate from high school by increasing the percentage of Alaska Native students who pass the HSGQE in reading, writing, and math.</p>	
<p>90% of students who attend EXCEL camp or the HSGQE phases will pass the HSGQE prior to high school completion.</p>	<p>Examination of district HSGQE results for EXCEL students fall and spring. (Quantitative)</p> <p>Collection of HSGQE scores prior to EXCEL or HSGQE phase. Comparison with subsequent test scores from fall and spring retesting. Academic growth and progress toward proficiency collected for each student. (Quantitative)</p>
<p>Goal 2: Increase the percentage of Alaska Native students with the skills and knowledge to</p>	

successfully transition from school to postsecondary education and life by providing career development guidance and opportunities.	
The percentage of project participants who complete all <i>VTE</i> phases and attend post-secondary training after graduation will increase year-to-year over baseline.	Examination of graduate follow-up surveys and interviews. (Quantitative)
The percentage of project participants who complete all <i>VTE</i> phases and who remain enrolled in post-secondary training at least one year will increase over baseline.	
100% of students completing <i>VTE</i> Phase 3 will have a proficient electronic career portfolio and plan.	Examination of <i>VTE</i> records and student career portfolios using a scoring rubric to determine quality (Qualitative)
100% of students completing <i>VTE</i> Phase 3 will have two or more job shadow/internship experiences.	
Goal 3: Increase the percentage of Alaska Native students who display the personal and life skills necessary to be successful in transitioning to post-secondary education and in meeting life's challenges including character, resiliency, and leadership skills.	
90% of project participants will report personal growth in responsibility, personal and social skill development, and the ability to live and work independently.	Examination of student perception surveys upon all phase completion. (Qualitative)
100% of students completing <i>VTE</i> Phase 3 will have a realistic, proficient health and nutrition plan.	Examination of student health plans using a scoring rubric to determine quality (Qualitative)