EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The CIRI Foundation Community Needs Assessment

Understanding Our Community. Shaping Our Future.

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WHY THIS MATTERS

This assessment explores the real-world challenges and opportunities experienced by current, former, and prospective recipients of The CIRI Foundation and their families. It will inform how we grow, evolve, and serve more meaningfully in the years ahead.

WHAT WE LEARNED

Alaska Native Futures

- By 2050 projections, Alaska Natives will comprise **25% of the state's population**.
- Native families face **double the poverty rate** and **five times the unemployment rate** of Caucasian residents.
- **Cost of living, housing insecurity**, and **inflation** continue to rise faster than wages.

Education & Careers

- AN/AI students in Alaska **graduate at lower rates, pursue college less often**, and **complete degrees more slowly** than their peers.
- Over **half of Native students at UAA leave before** their junior year.
- **Career Technical Education** (CTE) has strong outcomes, including an **85%+ graduation rate** at AVTEC and vast **opportunities in STEM fields that don't require a four-year degree**.

Voices from the Community

(505 survey respondents | 95% confidence level)

- **81%** say **financial hardship**—especially housing, food, and tech—is their top barrier.
- **75%** want **help with FAFSA and financial aid** navigation.
- **>70%** view **mental health** support as critical.
- Students seek **mentorship, cultural connections**, and **summer programs**.
- Many families **lack access to counselors or structured planning guidance**.

From Key Informants

- Students need **earlier, culturally rooted support,** starting before high school.
- **Local jobs in trades** are limited but important.
- TCF is considered **essential**, but the community **wants more flexible, earlier engagement.**

Opportunities Ahead

This report is a call to action. The findings will help guide:

- Strategic planning and future board decisions
- Evolution of scholarship and support programs
- Workforce partnerships across the CIRI family
- Competitive grant proposals rooted in real needs
- Early outreach and mentorship for tomorrow's recipients

"I knew that I wanted to succeed, for all the people before me who did not have the opportunity to and for those who had no voice."

– TCF Key Informant