

2 Alaska programs eligible to win grants of \$100,000

WASHINGTON, D.C. — A program to strengthen the cultural identity of the Inupiaq community in a 10-village region mostly above the Arctic Circle and the Village Public Safety Officer Program were named as finalists in the 1990 Innovations in State and Local Government Awards Program.

Innovations is sponsored by the Ford Foundation and Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

The Inupiaq Iitqusiat of the Maniilaq Association, in Alaska's NANA Region, serves a population of 6,500 residents, 90 percent of whom are Eskimos.

The program seeks to reverse the area's high rates of alcohol abuse and suicide, particularly among youth, that have arisen through attempts to modernize the Inupiaq way of life.

The program uses social workers and peer counselors to strengthen the Inupiat's sense of belonging. It also operates a halfway house for recently released prisoners and a children's camp.

The Village Public Safety Officer Program, managed by the Alaska State Troopers, trains individuals who serve in place of conventional law enforcement officers to respond to the most common emergencies that arise in isolated communities.

These include fires, medical emergencies, water accidents, search-and-rescue operations and problems relating to alcohol abuse. Currently, 123 communities unconnected to any road system are served by 125 officers.

Since the program began in 1979, the number of deaths due to water-related accidents has dropped by more than 50 percent in these communities, while fire-related deaths have decreased by 25 percent.

The Alaska program has been copied by the U.S. Trust Territories of the Mariana, Marshall, Caroline and Ponape Islands, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police is currently looking into the possibility of replicating the program in Canada's rural areas.

The Inupiat Iitqusiat project and the VPSO Program are two of 25 finalists cited this year by the Innovations Program. Ten outstanding state

and local projects drawn from the finalists each will receive \$100,000 grants from the Ford Foundation when the winners are announced in September.

The Innovations Awards seek to recognize programs and policies considered to be unusually creative in addressing public needs at the state and local levels.

Review teams of scholars and government professionals worked to narrow the number of applicants to the 25 finalists, which represent only 2 percent of all applicants.