

Faith-Based and Community Initiatives
Scoping Meeting Synopsis
Cathedral of the Nativity Parish Hall, Juneau
April 24, 2003 at Noon – 2:00 pm

Several attendees expressed gratitude for the Administration's commitment to this initiative. We received positive feedback on what is working for the faith community as it works with the State. The State was well represented at the meeting with the participation of the Lieutenant Governor, four departments (including a commissioner), a legislator and a representative of the federal government. We also heard from three outstanding local organizations currently serving the Juneau community.

Commissioner Marc Antrim spoke of his enthusiasm in working with this initiative in the Department of Corrections. This project is a priority for the Department as it takes a fresh look at rehabilitating prisoners. Deputy Commissioner Karleen Jackson has been overwhelmed by the positive feedback from the employees within the Department of Health and Social Services regarding this initiative. She told those who were present, "I'm so glad I can talk about my faithlife in my job and see the connection between the two."

The panel was asked what types of funds are available to faith-based organizations and how could they get some? Jackson noted that in FY03 the Department of Health and Social Services awarded more than 600 grants/contracts to nonprofits funded at more than \$109 million, which has provided some of the funding for more than 1,300 employees of faith/community based organizations. There is not, however, any new funding for this initiative in the Governor's proposed budget or in the budget expected to be passed by the Legislature.

Another person questioned the distribution of funds. Because the applicant pool may increase, some fear that the money will be stretched too thinly across the State. Although believe competition is a good thing, one person suggested that rural areas could be forgotten while urban Alaska benefits disproportionately. They were told that all areas of the State will continue to be eligible for funding based on need and the resources available. Every organization that receives State funds will be held highly accountable for that money. Recipients will produce a measure of their program's success. The State is going to focus on award of grants to programs that are the most effective.

Concern about government intrusion into ministries was voiced by some who attended. What strings are attached to government grants/contracts? Grantees do not want government to restrict their activity, particularly practicing their faith while ministering to those in need. As with any grant, there will always be strings attached. It was suggested that organizations read grant applications carefully to determine how compatible their ministries are with the guidelines of the grants/contracts.

Another issue that was discussed was communication among churches, other faith-based groups and volunteer organizations. It has been difficult for some groups to get a grasp on what each other is doing and what services are being provided for the community. Because of this, some communities may experience duplication of services. Some suggested collaboration or communication among organizations needs to improve, including mentoring or teaching. Some of the new organizations make the same mistakes and experience the same frustrations another group made years ago when they first started a similar program.

Lieutenant Governor Lemman closed the meeting and announced that he plans to name a diverse group of Alaskans, perhaps by the date of the next meeting in Fairbanks (May 28), to a Task Force to help implement the FBCI.