The Fairbanks Native Association (FNA) Tribal Home Visiting (THV) Program in Alaska is one of thirty-two grant programs operated out of the FNA nonprofit organization. The THV program is funded by a grant from the Tribal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program, administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (ACF).

FNA’s THV program began implementing their home visiting services in March 2020, at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, and had to balance starting up during this period with adjusting to the pandemic’s abrupt impact on their service delivery plans. Fortunately, the THV program had an implementation plan to guide the course of their efforts. The implementation plan is an integral part of the THV program and all Tribal MIECHV grantees develop one. Developed with the collective input of the community and the organization, FNA’s plan lays out how the THV program will work to support families to gain the skills and knowledge needed to be self-sufficient and empowered. The plan was completed by the FNA THV team in collaboration with FNA’s external evaluators, The Policy & Research Group (PRG).

In the first year, FNA completed a needs assessment with the support of PRG, which served as the foundation for the implementation plan. Although the data had rich information, the team knew that the data alone would not be enough to guide the program. It was important to the team to hear directly from the families and community stakeholders themselves to learn what was important to them and to translate what they learned into objectives that would direct the efforts of the program. Their learning resulted in a robust approach to address each family’s unique needs by considering and including the entire family unit. The team decided that the goal of the THV program would be to offer holistic wrap-around services to the family, including connecting the families to mental health services, participating in cultural connection opportunities, benefiting from nutritional services, and
providing resources to meet the family’s day-to-day needs such as getting diapers and formula.

As the FNA THV program has begun implementation of services, their partnership with PRG has remained central in the team’s learning and investment in the data collection efforts required to support successful implementation. PRG Junior Research Analyst Charlee Roundhill, shares: “The team members had varying levels of comfort, and no one had been prepared for the sheer amount of data they were collecting, but [PRG’s] goal was to ensure that each piece of information that was collected had value and it was important for the home visitors to understand that they were contributing to a greater cause of their grant.” Together, FNA and PRG developed methods, tools, and strategies that met evaluation needs while enhancing the program services to fully support families according to the vision laid out in the implementation plan. This process included seeking out flexibilities from the Parent as Teachers model and combing through a visual Performance Measure Report that PRG shared every month to make needed adjustments. FNA Deputy Director Melissa Charlie shares: “PRG has been involved since the beginning, and I am so thankful to have this partnership. They are amazing to work with, and I appreciate their involvement, especially during the implementation process.” This fruitful partnership is clear, as PRG Lead Research Analyst Alethia Gregory echoes: “It has been a blessing working with [FNA] because they stressed the importance of human connection from the beginning of the partnership. There was time built in at the start of the project to work on our connections with parents and community members as well as all of the people on the home visiting team. Because it was already understood and respected that these connections needed to be made, it has been a joy to do this work.”

For more information about the program contact the Program Director, Tribal Home Visiting Fairbanks Native Association Office: 907-452-1648 ext. 6021 or at THV@fairbanksnative.org.

ACF’s Tribal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting program grants to tribal entities to develop, implement, and evaluate home visiting programs in American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) communities. The grants help develop and strengthen tribal capacity to support and promote the health and well-being of AIAN families expand the evidence base around home visiting in tribal communities, and support and strengthen cooperation and linkages between programs that serve tribal children and their families. Find out more about the Tribal Home Visiting program and grantees at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ecd/home-visiting/tribal-home-visiting