

# Summary for Policymakers and Agency Leaders

## Recommendations

1. **Single funding source based on risk:** We recommend the U.S. Congress close the \$80 million annual funding gap by providing a single, committed funding source for Alaska communities to protect-in-place, retreat, or relocate to new community sites. We recommend the entity that receives the gap funding is based in Alaska, has significant experience supporting community infrastructure development and environmental threats in rural Alaska, and the entity's funding can be used as a non-federal match to leverage other resources. A viable alternative to a single funding source is dedicated funding to multiple agencies who collaborate and fund projects from a common priority list. An example of an existing collaboration is the Alaska Sanitation Facilities Program. The single funding source or collaboration should provide 100 percent federal funding and should be based on a risk-based prioritization.
2. **Remove barriers to equity:** We recommend that federal agencies remove programmatic barriers and improve program design for small Tribal and rural communities. Simultaneously, we recommend that the U.S. Congress implement changes in enabling legislation and place conditions on the appropriation of funding for federal programs to remove barriers that limit access and reduce effectiveness. Identified barriers are listed in Appendix C.
3. **Whole-of-government implementation framework:** We recommend the U.S. Congress create a whole-of-government implementation framework to systematically support Alaska communities to address environmental threats. Tribal organizations and federal and state agencies could implement a pilot framework in Alaska as a transferrable model for use nationwide, consistent with U.S. GAO recommendations (GAO, 2020; GAO, 2022). We suggest a potential operational framework with specific agency roles and responsibilities in Chapter 6.

## Background

The federal government's system for providing resources and services to address climate change and environmental threats remains inequitable and inefficient. Both legislation and program design create persistent barriers for disadvantaged communities and perpetuate historical underinvestment. 144 Alaska communities face infrastructure damage from erosion, flooding, and permafrost degradation. Lack of funding, technical assistance, local capacity, community-specific hazard data collection, and risk assessments all hinder mitigating environmental threats. Also, ad-hoc agency coordination and inefficiency in implementing projects with multiple funding sources are primary barriers. See Chapter 4. We estimate that:

- \$4.3 billion in 2020 dollars will be required to proactively mitigate damage to existing infrastructure over the next 50 years.
- An \$80 million annual funding gap exists over the next 10 years.
- Implementing the recommendations can potentially avert approximately \$25.8 billion in emergency response and recovery costs.

## National Significance

The magnitude and severity of climate change impacts in Alaska will soon occur in communities throughout the United States. The strategies recommended in this report can serve as a nationwide model for how to efficiently deliver resources and services based on need. The report expands on the 2020 U.S. House Appropriations Committee request (BIA TCRP, 2020) and the 2022 GAO analysis (GAO, 2022) through a community, Tribal government, and partner engagement process that included more than 150 people from 27 communities and 39 agencies and organizations. See Appendix E. This report recommends how to invest funding and deliver services, details a whole-of-government implementation framework, and identifies dozens of barriers across federal programs. If adopted, the recommendations in this report will enable an effective approach to building resilience to climate change and improve the benefit of Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funds. This is an opportunity to act on urgent needs and test an innovative support system that could be expanded nationwide.