

Vocational Fund for Alaska's Future

Gustavus Youth Bicycle Pathways Project

Applicant: City of Gustavus

Partners: Chatham School District, Glacier Bay Adventures / Gustavus Water Taxi, Cottonwood Cabins, Blue Heron Lodge, Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve, Aramark

Funding Request: \$50,000

Project Period: January 2026 – January 2027

Project Summary

The Gustavus Youth Bicycle Pathways Project will establish a hands-on, community-based career exploration program for middle school students in Gustavus, Alaska. By engaging youth in the repair, maintenance, and construction of bicycles, the program introduces foundational mechanical skills, safety practices, and entrepreneurial thinking. Students will gain confidence in using tools, following standard mechanical procedures, and developing service-oriented mindsets while improving access to bicycles for the Gustavus community. This project represents a model for small, rural Alaskan towns seeking to connect classroom learning with real-world technical skills and community service.

Statement of Need

Gustavus, a small gateway community to Glacier Bay National Park, offers few structured hands-on learning experiences for youth that connect directly to local workforce pathways. Despite strong community support and an existing bike shop located across the street from the school, the facility currently lacks the equipment, tools, and curriculum needed to serve as a learning lab. Alaska's workforce faces a growing need for skilled technicians, problem-solvers, and entrepreneurs. Early exposure to technical and mechanical skills can spark lifelong interest in trades, engineering, and tourism-related work—industries critical to the state's economy. By integrating mechanical learning into the school day, this project ensures equitable access for all students and builds a foundation for future CTE exploration.

Project Description

The Gustavus Youth Bicycle Pathways Project will:

- Renovate and equip the existing city leased bike shop building (\$15,000 for facility improvements and tools). The bike shop is currently leased by Kenn Magowan.
- Purchase "bike-in-a-box" kits to guide students through the process of assembling bicycles from the frame up. Some bikes will be donated to the school system to promote safe cycling and incorporate cycling into the recreation programs. While some will be raffled off to the public to raise funds.
- Develop and pilot a hands-on curriculum emphasizing tool use and safety, mechanical

reasoning, small business principles, and community engagement. The program just received a donation from Park Tool, a major producer of bike tools.

- Provide part-time staffing to support instruction and coordination between the school and community partners.
- Facilitate student-led community service projects, including repairing and donating bicycles to peers and residents in need.

Partnerships and Collaboration

This initiative is built on strong local collaboration. The city of Gustavus will serve as fiscal agent and lead program oversight. Glacier Bay Adventures / Gustavus Water Taxi and other local tourism partners will help mentor students on customer service and basic entrepreneurship. Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve and Aramark will provide visibility and potential opportunities for expansion into park-related visitor services. Local lodging partners, Cottonwood Cabins and Blue Heron Lodge, will help connect the program to tourism and community health goals.

This will go hand in hand with the advent of a proposed bicycle/pedestrian sidepath that the City of Gustavus hopes to have funded via a Federal Lands Access Grant. (FLAP)

Outcomes and Impact

By January 2027, the project will:

- Engage middle school students in hands-on mechanical training.
- Fully equip the Gustavus Bike Shop as a functional, educational workspace.
- Develop a replicable curriculum module for small-community mechanical training.
- Repair or assemble at least 15 bicycles for community use.
- Strengthen youth connections to local employers and CTE pathways.

Budget Overview (\$50,000)

Category	Amount	Description
Facility Improvements & Tools	\$15,000	Complete renovations and safety upgrades at city owned historical building now leased as a bike shop, purchase benches, toolkits, and safety equipment
Bike Kits & Materials	\$12,000	"Bike-in-a-box" kits, tires, tubes, chains, helmets
Staffing & Instruction	\$15,000	Part-time program coordinator/instructor stipend
Curriculum Development & Training	\$5,000	Create structured modules, safety materials, and integration into school schedule
Program Operations & Community Events	\$3,000	Student showcase, community outreach, and maintenance supplies

Sustainability

After the grant period, the program will be maintained through local partnerships, potential student-run fundraising, and if possible integration into the Chatham School District's middle school elective offerings. Local businesses and tourism operators have expressed commitment to ongoing mentorship, donations, and possible sponsorships of student projects. The Gustavus Youth Bicycle Pathways Project will serve as a scalable model for other small Alaska communities seeking to combine youth engagement, technical learning, and community wellness.