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Robert R. Nathan Associates, Inc., has been awarded a contract by the Department of the Interior to head up a team of independent consulting groups which will prepare a study and report on various characteristics of the Alaska Native community and on selected Federal programs, it was announced today.

The studies were mandated by Section 2 (c) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, signed into law by President Nixon December 18, 1971. It requires the Secretary of the Interior to study Federal programs primarily designed to benefit Alaska Native people and to report back to the Congress with his recommendations by December 18, 1974.

Eight firms submitted proposals to lead the studies for the Interior Department. The Nathan firm will serve as prime contractor in conjunction with James R. Leonard Associates, Inc., the Alaska Native Foundation, the University of Alaska, and Sidney Hollander Associates, Inc., at an overall cost of $531,547.

Award of the contract was based on four criteria, Department officials said: understanding of the problem and logic of the proposed approach, experience, resources and ability to deliver, and price. Interior's evaluation of the eight proposals it received, placed the Nathan proposal substantially ahead of all others, they said. The work to be done falls into three major categories:

1. A statistical analysis of demographic and socio-economic characteristics (population, size of households, vital statistics, migration, income, business development, employment and unemployment, educational levels and opportunities, health, housing, and such social indices as parental desertion, crime rates, and delinquency.)

2. A descriptive summary of major Federal programs designed to serve Alaska Natives --their objectives, histories, administration, financing, operations, performance, and program evaluations, and how these relate to data in the statistical analyses.

3. A survey and presentation of Native views regarding the services they need and how they are being delivered by these programs.

Sampling of Native views will cover various kinds of communities, from the urban areas of Alaska to small and remote villages --covering 50 or 60 in all.

Robert R. Nathan Associates is one of the oldest and largest economic consulting firms in the united States, with years of experience in Alaska. During the 1960's it conducted an in-depth social and economic study of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands for the Department of the Interior.

The Alaska Native Foundation was organized in 1968 to provide technical assistance to the Alaska Federation of Natives; it provides services to the 12 Native regional corporations. Its directors represent a cross-section of Native leadership across Alaska.

James R. Leonard Associates is a firm of economic management and social services consultants with many private and U. S. and foreign government contracts. Sidney Hollander Associates is one of the Nation's oldest marketing and opinion research firms.