
**Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development
Division of Business Partnerships**

**Notice of Request for Grant Applications (RGA)
State Training and Employment Program (STEP)
State Fiscal Year 2014 Round II**

**This Request for Grant Applications is dependent upon
appropriation of funds by the Alaska State Legislature**

Date of Issue: December 11, 2013

**Project Timeline
February 1, 2014 to June 30, 2014**

**Applicant Information Teleconference
Tuesday, December 17, 2013 from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.**

**Grant applications must be submitted through EGrAMS
by 5:00 p.m., January 10, 2014**

Questions about the content of this Request for Grant Applications should be directed to:

Christine Sanderford or Julie Frizzell, Program Coordinators
State Training and Employment Program
Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development
Division of Business Partnerships
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EGrAMS is an **Electronic Grants Administration and Management System**. It can be accessed from the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development website:

labor.alaska.gov/bp/egrans/home.htm

or through the *myAlaska* web site:

myalaska.state.ak.us/home/app

Questions about EGrAMS should be directed to:

EGrAMS Help Desk
907-465-4893
dol.dbp.egrans.helpdesk@alaska.gov

Americans with Disabilities Act

Auxiliary aides and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. To make arrangements for auxiliary aides or services, please contact the Division of Business Partnerships at (907) 269-3576 no later than ten working days prior to the application deadline. The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development is an Equal Opportunity Employer/Program. All grant recipients or sub-contractors must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

SECTION I: PROGRAM INFORMATION

Overview and Purpose: The purpose of the State Training and Employment Program (STEP) is to enhance the quality of in-state job training and employment assistance and to make in-state job training and employment assistance more easily available to employers, employees, and future employees by supplementing or leveraging existing training and employment assistance programs in priority industries identified by the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) and the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD).

This is the second STEP Request for Grant Applications (RGA) for state fiscal year 2014. Under this request, the AWIB and DOLWD seek to expand training in the following STEP priority industries: Tourism; Oil and Gas; Fisheries, Seafood, and Maritime (FSM); and Mining.

If your organization does not have a current STEP grant and would like to provide training in one of the specified priority industries, your organization is encouraged to apply. This is an opportunity for training incumbent workers who require a skills upgrade in order to increase their potential for promotion. Individuals who are unemployed or underemployed may be considered eligible program participants in addition to incumbent workers, provided there is a commitment to employment. STEP may be able to assist in the support for eligible participants to attend training. Support services may include transportation, housing, and meals during training. Applicants should cite the most recent industry led workforce development plan, draft plan, or labor market information when describing the demand for training. State of Alaska labor market information can be found on the Alaska Department of Labor Research and Analysis Section website at laborstats.alaska.gov. The website also includes the *Alaska Economic Trends* magazine which focuses on various employment sectors each month.

Scope of Services Requested: In accordance with AS 23.15.620(b), funds must be used to:

- 1) train more program-eligible individuals than would otherwise have been trained without the financial resources of STEP; or
- 2) expand existing training programs; or provide training and support services that cannot be paid by other sources of funds; and
- 3) target industry specific occupations in: Tourism; Oil and Gas; Fisheries, Seafood, and Maritime; and Mining industries;
- 4) train or upgrade eligible incumbent workers in occupations that earn at least 80 percent of the median industry wage by occupation or 80 percent of the median state wage, whichever is less, as published by the DOLWD Research and Analysis Section at live.laborstats.alaska.gov/occ/alloccs.cfm; and
- 5) provide short-term intensive training of at least 80 hours and less than 640 hours. Additional consideration will be given to applications that include training and experience resulting in commercial vehicle operation licensure.

However, STEP funds may not be used to replace other funds allocated for training or services for the purpose of reducing costs, such as maintaining operations during periods in which there are no STEP related activities.

Applicants must contribute at least 20 percent of the per-eligible-participant cost of training and services in match funds.

Unless approved by the department, financial resources of the program may not be used to construct, modify, or otherwise alter existing equipment and facilities, or to finance acquisition of new equipment and facilities to improve physical access to training.

A recipient of a grant awarded under the program may use the grant to provide any of the following training services to eligible participants:

Industry Specific Training – Industry specific training is for industries that need trained workers with industry-recognized skills, competencies, or certifications. This includes, but is not limited to, union and non-union journeyman training and registered apprenticeships.

On-the-Job Training (OJT) – Training provided by an employer at the work site while the employee is learning the requirements of the job, including training in a registered apprenticeship program under 29 U.S.C. 50. OJT is intended to compensate the employer for the extra cost associated with hiring and training an individual who does not meet the minimum requirements of the position. An OJT agreement may reimburse an amount negotiated with the Division of Business Partnerships, generally not to exceed 50 percent of the participant’s wages.

Institutional or Classroom Job-Linked Training – Customized institutional or classroom job-linked training must meet specific workforce development needs of an employer so that participants acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to remain employed or advance in employment. Employers must have expressed a willingness to hire participants who successfully complete the training. Participants who successfully complete the training must be hired within a reasonable timeframe.

Employment assistance services as defined in AS 23.15.641(b) may be funded in conjunction with training offered in one or more of the three areas identified above.

Training supporting other industries will be considered to the extent that employer demand, commitments to hire, and wage commitments exceeding the state’s median wage can be demonstrated, and availability of funding allow.

Applicant Eligibility: To be eligible for a STEP grant, the applicant must offer training services that meet the requirements of STEP, and be a private business, employer, governmental agency or a tax exempt organization recognized by the Internal Revenue Service.. Services necessary to support participants during the training can be included in the proposal; support-only proposals will not be considered. Applicants must demonstrate that:

- their accounting system is organized and maintained in accordance with Alaska Administrative Code 8 AAC 87.70(a), promotes efficiency, ensures compliance with

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- program requirements, and can be reviewed at the Department of Labor and Workforce Development's direction with not more than a reasonable amount of effort and expense; and
- grant funds will only be used as allowed under the STEP statutes AS 23.15.620 – 23.15.660, available at www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/statutes.asp#23.15.620.

Participant Eligibility: To be an eligible participant, a person must, immediately before beginning training or receiving benefits under the grant financed by this program:

- 1) be a resident of Alaska, defined for this program as someone who has been physically present in the state for at least 30 days and intends to remain in the state; and
- 2) have worked in a position covered by unemployment insurance (defined in AS 23.20, or similar provisions in another state) at any time during the five years immediately preceding the application for services; and
- 3) need training to improve the person's prospects for obtaining or retaining employment; and
- 4) be employable but not currently employed and
 - receiving unemployment insurance benefits; or
 - has exhausted the right to unemployment insurance benefits within the past three years; or
- 5) be employed, but liable to be displaced because of
 - reductions in overall employment within a business; or
 - elimination of the worker's current job; or
 - a change in conditions of employment requiring that, to remain employed, the employee must learn substantially different skills that the employee does not now possess.

Performance Outcomes: It is expected that:

- 1) training will result in an increase in wage or salary earnings after training; or
- 2) increase the prospect of employment in a training-related occupation at a wage commensurate with the training received;
- 3) result in a nationally recognized industry-based credential; and
- 4) at least 95 percent of participants receiving training will enter or advance in employment following training.

Funding Requirements: Applicants are required to provide grantee contributions equaling at least 20 percent of the training costs, and per-participant training costs are not to exceed \$5000.

Interested applicants are encouraged to participate in an informational teleconference on Tuesday, December 17th from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. Applicants who are unable to attend the teleconference are encouraged to contact either Christine Sanderford or Julie Frizzell.

When composing your grant proposal, it is important that the proposal is clearly written and provides concise details relevant to each question in the application. Successful applications will provide thorough, straight-forward responses without the inclusion of excessive information.

SECTION II: GENERAL APPLICATION INFORMATION

Application: Applications will only be accepted through EGrAMS, the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Division of Business Partnerships (hereinafter “Division”) **Electronic Grants Administration and Management System**. Application information shall not be treated as public information any time prior to the notices of award or denial, but is subject to public disclosure after the notices are issued. Upon receipt, all applications and their contents become property of the Division.^{AI}

Application Deadline: Only applications received by the deadline will be considered; EGrAMS will not allow submittal of applications past the submission deadline.

Cost Reimbursement Grants: Grants awarded are cost reimbursement grants; no advance payments will be made. Costs incurred by the applicant, including, but not limited to, the cost for the preparation and submission of an application, prior to the full execution of the grant agreement, are the sole responsibility of the applicant.

Budget Costs: The applicant must provide a detailed budget that reflects the anticipated costs of the project. The budget must be reasonable and practicable, account for the expenditure of all funds prior to the end of the FY 2015 fiscal year, and will be assessed and evaluated by a review committee. Unless specifically approved by the Division, incentives, promotional items and memorabilia, gifts, and souvenirs are not allowed.

All grant applications must *directly* contribute to the achievement of the performance outcomes identified in Section I of this RGA; no grant applications providing support services without also directly contributing to the required performance outcomes will be considered. Any support services that the grant applicant considers essential to achieving the performance outcomes or satisfying the requirements of an awarded grant, including, but not limited to, recruitment of participants; participant or instructor transportation to training sites or rural communities; lodging, meals, and local transportation required by participants or instructors; tools, either for the participants or as required to achieve the performance outcomes; facilities or office space rental; training coordination; supplies; shipping; participant licenses or certifications required prior to training, and services required to satisfy Section IV of this RGA, must be included in the grant application. If the grant applicant is unable to provide the necessary support services, it is incumbent upon the grant applicant to either form a partnership with an organization that can provide the services, or subcontract the services to another organization. In either case, the services must be included in the detailed budget submitted in response to this RGA.

Grantee Contribution: A grantee contribution includes all resources, including cash, in-kind, and leveraged, used by the applicant to support grant activity and outcomes. Applicants are encouraged to provide a contribution to the greatest extent feasible Applicants that provide contributions demonstrate an additional commitment to meeting the objectives of the program.^{AI}

Grantee contributions specified in the budget require expenditure documentation and will be considered in the overall grant performance evaluation that occurs at the end of the grant period.

SECTION III: AWARD/DENIAL PROCESS

Application Review: The Division will perform an initial review of all properly submitted applications. All complete, responsive, and eligible applications will be evaluated by a review committee, which will make funding recommendations to the Division. Applicants whose applications are not deemed complete, responsive, or eligible will be notified..

Evaluation: A review committee will evaluate applications using the evaluation criteria specified in EGrAMS. The Division will consider the results of the review committee's assessment along with other relevant criteria and information, including budgetary information, training schedules, and state priorities, when making funding recommendations to the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development commissioner. The Division may request additional information from applicants if it is needed to make funding recommendations. The commissioner is solely responsible for making all award or denial decisions under this solicitation.

Results of Application Review and Evaluation: Each application approved by the commissioner will be provided a written Notice of Intent to Award. Upon issuance of a Notice of Intent to Award, the application will move to grant negotiations with the Division. The Division reserves the right to revoke a Notice of Intent to Award if it is subsequently found to be in error, made on the basis of inaccurate information, or not in the best interest of the state.

An applicant whose application is not recommended for an award will receive a written Notice of Award Denial. Applicants receiving a Notice of Award Denial have ten working days to request reconsideration.^{AI}

Grant Negotiations: The Division will negotiate the grant award amount, performance, reporting levels, and any conditions to a grant award that it determines are prudent and in the best interest of the state. All grants awarded under this solicitation are contingent upon the appropriation of sufficient funds by the Alaska legislature or the federal government, as applicable. In the event that funding is withdrawn, reduced, or limited in any way after the effective date of the grant agreement, grants awarded are subject to termination, reduction, or re-negotiation subject to the new funding limitations or conditions imposed by the legislature.

Due Diligence: All grant recipients and any sub-contractors or sub-recipients receiving over \$25,000, which are not state agencies, are required to go through a multi-step due diligence process to demonstrate their suitability to receive grant funds. Applicants that fail to meet a due diligence condition will be allowed five working days to correct the deficiency or the grant award may be withdrawn.^{AI}

SECTION IV: GRANT TERMS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Certificate of Insurance: The types of insurance coverage required are specific to the project. If an applicant is not able to provide a Certificate of Insurance certifying the minimum coverage, the applicant must provide documentation to demonstrate it will obtain the necessary insurance coverage within 30 days of receipt of award.^{AI}

Progress Reporting: Grant recipients must complete and submit progress reports in EGrAMS. Progress reports must include narrative updates on the progress of the project and statistical data related to the grant recipient meeting the goals and objectives of the project scope. Upon completion of the project, the grant recipient is required to submit a final progress report.

Equal Opportunity Responsibilities: Grant recipients must disseminate the *Equal Opportunity Is the Law* notice, and provide initial and continuing notice that it does not discriminate on any prohibited basis. Grant recipients will also maintain a signed copy of the *Equal Opportunity is the Law* certification form, signifying that the document has been read and understood, from each individual and organization that receives services under this grant.^{AI}

Release of Information: Success stories and photographs are critical components to the continuation of the program and can be submitted at any time, but the grant recipient must submit three success stories by the completion of the grant period. Grant recipients must keep a Photo Consent and Release form on file for each participant included in a photograph.

Financial Reporting: It is critical to the success of the program that grant funds are fully expended by the end of the award period. To ensure that budgets are on target, grant recipients are periodically required to demonstrate how their budget will be fully expended by the end of the period of performance. Grant recipients that are not meeting their planned expenditures may have their grant awards reduced.

The Division will provide electronic forms to request reimbursement of expenditures and submit quarterly reports and income reports. Reimbursement requests and grant contributions must be supported with clear and concise financial reports and expense documentation.^{AI}

Participant Data Collection and Reporting: Grant recipients will gather and record information pertaining to participant demographics and other information using a data collection system provided by the Division. Files, including applications and documentation of eligibility, must be kept for each participant.^{AI}

Monitoring: Grant recipients are subject to monitoring. This will include, but is not limited to, review of grant recipient files and records to ensure adherence to the project scope, objectives, goals, training schedules, financial, and equal opportunity compliance. Monitoring may be conducted on-site, through written requests for information, or by distance-delivery.

Correspondence, Publications, and Promotional Materials: Correspondence, publications, and promotional materials for this program will include the following statement: “This training is funded in part by the State Training and Employment Program through the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Business Partnerships Division.”

Record Retention: All records related to this grant agreement shall be maintained by the Grant Recipient for a period of six (6) years following the grant closeout, or until completion of an audit and/or resolution of audit findings, or pending litigation, whichever is longer. The Grant Recipient should request approval from the Grantor before disposing of any records.

Equipment Retention: Any inventoried equipment that is approved and purchased with these grant funds must be retained by the applicant for a period of at least three (3) years from the end of the grant fiscal year. During that time it may not be sold, given away, surplus, or otherwise disposed of without prior approval from the department.^{AI}

Confidentiality of Participant Information: In accordance Alaska Statute, all grant recipients, sub-recipients, or sub-contractors must keep social security numbers, identifying information, and personal information confidential in accordance with state and federal law. Failure to maintain the confidentiality of such information may subject a grant recipient to civil or criminal liability and is grounds for termination of any grant agreement.