



**STATE TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (STEP)
REQUEST FOR GRANT APPLICATIONS (RGA)
PROGRAM YEAR 2027**

SECTION 1: PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE

The State Training and Employment Program (STEP), authorized under AS 23.15.620–652, is designed to strengthen Alaska’s workforce by supporting training and employment activities that lead to unsubsidized employment, industry-recognized credentials, and increased earnings for Alaska residents.

STEP prioritizes preparation for high-demand occupations essential to Alaska’s economic growth, with particular emphasis on those with high nonresident-hire rates under AS 36.10.130.

STEP is a performance-driven workforce investment program that emphasizes:

- Industry alignment
- Employer engagement
- Measurable employment outcomes
- Strategic investment of state funds

This Request for Grant Applications (RGA) defines the required programmatic components, evaluation criteria, and submission requirements for STEP funding.

Detailed templates and definitions are provided in the Appendices. Informational resources, including the STEP Technical Assistance Guide and Quick Start materials, are provided for support purposes only and do not modify the requirements of this RGA.

Applicants must rely solely on the requirements and instructions contained in this RGA and the associated appendices when preparing their application. Informational materials such as the STEP Technical Assistance Guide are provided for support purposes only and do not modify the requirements of this RGA.

Program goals

Funded projects must advance statewide workforce priorities, including:

- Strengthening employment, retention, and wage outcomes for Alaska residents
- Reducing nonresident hiring in high-demand occupations
- Expanding access to industry-aligned occupational training
- Enhancing employer engagement and co-investment
- Ensuring accountability and effective stewardship of state funds
- Supporting alignment with AWIB’s statewide workforce strategies

SECTION 2: ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants include organizations with demonstrated capacity to design, implement, and manage workforce training or employment projects aligned with STEP objectives.

Eligible entities include, but are not limited to:

- Training centers, CTE programs, and accredited postsecondary institutions
- Employers, employer consortia, and industry associations
- Labor unions, JATCs, and Registered Apprenticeship sponsors
- Community-based organizations, nonprofits, and tribal entities
- Local government agencies
- Other entities with relevant workforce training expertise

Applicants must demonstrate:

- Experience in workforce training or employment service delivery
- Administrative and fiscal capacity sufficient to manage state grant funds
- Ability to collect, track, and report participant-level data

Employer co-investment, sector partnerships, and capacity to serve rural or underserved populations are encouraged but are not required for eligibility.

SECTION 3: PRIORITIES AND FUNDING FOCUS AREAS

STEP investments must align with statutory objectives and statewide workforce priorities.

Priority alignment

Projects should demonstrate alignment with:

- High-demand sectors identified through Alaska labor market data
- Occupations with high nonresident hire rates (AS 36.10.130)
- Industry-recognized credentials leading to unsubsidized employment

Priority populations

Projects should prioritize unemployed and underemployed Alaska residents, including:

- Rural residents
- Justice-involved individuals
- Veterans
- Low-income individuals
- Youth and young adults
- Dislocated workers

Core proposal expectations (mandatory)

All applications must demonstrate:

- Employer engagement
- Training relevance and labor market alignment
- Measurable and achievable outcomes

Program design, projected enrollment, and training capacity should reflect documented employer demand and realistic operational capacity.

Projects must demonstrate a clear employment pathway supported by employer validation.

Placement projections may not rely on employer reimbursement of wages.

Optional value-add components (bonus consideration)

Applicants may respond to optional bonus prompts in EGrAMS by describing innovative or enhanced strategies aligned with STEP goals.

Bonus responses are optional and scored separately as described in Section 7.

SECTION 4: FUNDING PARAMETERS AND PROGRAM DESIGN REQUIREMENTS

Grant term and funding

Grant term: 12 months (July 1 – June 30)

Typical award range: Up to \$400,000

Allowable uses of funds

Allowable activities include:

- Occupational training
- Employer-delivered training (non-wage)
- Supportive services (when no other funding source is available)
- Credential and testing fees
- Direct instructional costs
- Participant-facing coordination directly supporting training progression, completion, or employment outcomes

STEP funds may not be used for:

- Employer wage reimbursement
- Payroll subsidies
- On-the-job training (OJT) wage payments
- Income share agreements or wage recapture mechanisms

STEP funds must supplement, not supplant, other resources.

Participant protections

Participants may not be required to repay STEP funds expended on their behalf for training or participant services. Applicants and subrecipients may not use promissory notes, repayment agreements, income share agreements, wage withholding, reimbursement clauses, or similar mechanisms to recover STEP-funded costs from participants.

See Appendix D – Definitions and key terms for controlling requirements.

Participant services requirement (50%)

At least 50% of total STEP funds awarded must be expended on participant services.

Compliance with this requirement must be demonstrated using the Appendix A – Participant Services 50% Validation Worksheet, which calculates the participant services percentage based on the applicant's proposed budget. Narrative statements alone do not satisfy the requirement.

Participant services are defined as direct services and costs that primarily benefit enrolled STEP participants and support participation in training, training completion, credential attainment, employment, or employment retention.

Administrative costs, indirect costs, executive overhead, and general program operations do not count toward the 50% requirement.

Applicants must demonstrate projected compliance at the time of application by submitting:

- Appendix A – Participant Services 50% Validation Worksheet (Excel)

Failure to maintain compliance during the grant term may result in funding conditions or corrective action.

SECTION 5: APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Applications must be submitted through EGrAMS.

The application consists of:

- Narrative responses completed directly within EGrAMS
- Required attachments uploaded in designated EGrAMS sections

Narrative responses entered in EGrAMS serve as the primary basis for evaluation and scoring.

No separate narrative document may be submitted unless specifically requested.

Applicants are responsible for ensuring proportional alignment between program design, budget structure, and performance projections.

Required Attachments at Time of Application

Applicants must upload the following required attachments:

- Appendix A – Budget Narrative Template
- Appendix A – Participant Services 50% Validation Worksheet (Excel)

- Appendix C – STEP Performance Projection Table (Excel)
- Letters of support
- Key staff resumes and organizational chart

Applicants must use the required templates provided in the appendices where specified.

Application Alignment Requirement

Applicants are responsible for ensuring that all submitted application components are internally consistent and proportionally aligned.

Before submitting an application, applicants should confirm that the following elements align across all required documents:

- Project design described in EGrAMS narrative responses
- Projected enrollment and training completion rate entered in Appendix C – STEP Performance Projection Table
- Budget totals and cost structure are described in Appendix A – Budget Narrative Template
- Participant Services expenditures calculated in the Appendix A – Participant Services 50% Validation Worksheet

Budget totals and program projections must reconcile across all submitted documents.

Applications containing significant inconsistencies between the narrative, budget, or performance projections may receive reduced evaluation scores or may be deemed non-responsive.

SECTION 6: EVALUATION CRITERIA & SCORING

Applications will be scored using the weighted criteria below (base score = 100 points).

Category	Weight
Organizational capacity	15%
Project design & implementation	25%
Employer engagement	15%
Participant services & eligibility	15%
Outcomes & accountability	15%
Budget & fiscal management	15%

Evaluation considers proportional alignment between narrative design, program scale, budget structure, participant services allocation, and program design projections submitted in Appendix C.

Narrative responses and required attachments are evaluated holistically within each category.

Reviewers assess proportional alignment across:

- Narrative design
- Budget structure
- Participant services allocation
- Performance projections

Applications demonstrating structural misalignment may receive reduced scores.

Up to five (5) bonus points may be awarded under Section 7.

SECTION 7: INNOVATION & ACCESS (OPTIONAL BONUS)

Applicants may respond to optional bonus prompts in EGrAMS.

Bonus strategies may include:

- Accelerated participant advancement
- Innovative service delivery models
- Virtual or hybrid training approaches
- Demonstrated employer co-investment
- Measurable strategies to reduce nonresident hiring

Bonus responses are optional and do not affect eligibility.

SECTION 8: REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Awarded grantees must comply with:

- Participant-level reporting in AlaskaJobs
- Fiscal reporting in EGrAMS
- Monitoring and documentation standards
- Applicable statutory and regulatory requirements

Operational guidance will be provided in the STEP Grantee Welcome Packet post-award.

SECTION 9: SUBMISSION AND TIMELINE

Applications must be submitted through EGrAMS by the deadline published in the official posting and public notice.

In the event of inconsistency between posted materials, the most recent written addendum governs.

SECTION 10: APPLICATION SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Applications must be:

- Submitted through EGrAMS
- Complete
- Properly formatted
- Uploaded using required templates

Late or incomplete applications may be deemed non-responsive.

SECTION 11: REQUIRED ATTACHMENTS AND REQUIRED TEMPLATES

Applicants must upload the following required attachments:

- Appendix A – Budget Narrative Template
- Appendix A – Participant Services 50% Validation Worksheet (Excel)
- Appendix C – STEP Performance Projection Table (Excel)
- Letters of support
- Key staff resumes and organizational chart

Missing or improperly submitted documents may result in the application being deemed non-responsive.

SECTION 12: APPENDICES

The following appendices provide required templates, performance tools, and definitions referenced throughout this Request for Grant Applications (RGA). Applicants should review the appendices carefully and use the required templates when preparing their application.

The following appendices are provided with this RGA:

- **Appendix A – Budget Narrative Template and Participant Services 50% Validation Worksheet**
Provides the required Budget Narrative Template and the Participant Services 50% Validation Worksheet

used to demonstrate compliance with the STEP requirement that at least 50% of grant funds support eligible participant services.

- **Appendix B – Eligible Training and Credential List**

Provides examples of industry-recognized credentials, apprenticeship programs, and occupational training pathways that align with STEP program priorities.

The list is intended to guide applicants in selecting training activities that support employment outcomes in high-demand occupations. Applicants may propose other credentials or training programs not listed in Appendix B if they can demonstrate strong employer demand and industry recognition.

- **Appendix C – Performance Projection Table**

Provides the required spreadsheet for entering projected program enrollments and training completion rates. These projections help reviewers assess program scale, operational capacity, and alignment with the proposed budget.

- **Appendix D – Definitions and Key Terms**

Provides official definitions used throughout the STEP RGA, the appendices, the grant agreement, and the monitoring process.

SECTION 13: POST-AWARD SCOPE ALIGNMENT AND GRANT EXECUTION

Following award determination, selected applicants will participate in a structured post-award alignment process to finalize:

- Scope of work
- Enrollment targets
- Performance benchmarks
- Budget alignment
- Implementation timeline

Performance projections submitted during the application inform this process, but do not automatically establish final contractual requirements. Appendix C projections represent program design assumptions used for evaluation and alignment purposes and do not constitute contractual performance guarantees.

Final requirements will be reflected in the executed Grant Agreement.

FINAL NOTE TO APPLICANTS

STEP is a performance-based workforce investment model.

Strong applications demonstrate:

- Proportional alignment
- Employer-validated placement pathways
- Realistic performance projections
- Clear compliance with the 50% participant services requirement
- Fiscal defensibility

Applications are evaluated holistically.

Applicants should design projects with clear alignment between program scale, employer demand, participant services investments, and realistic program outcomes.