



ALASKA

**Workforce Innovation and
Opportunity Act (WIOA)
Combined State Plan for
Program Years 2024 – 2027**

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Throughout this document, [blue text indicates language provided by the US Department of Labor](#). Black text indicates Alaska’s responses.

OVERVIEW

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the Governor of each State must submit a Unified or Combined State Plan to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor that outlines a four-year strategy for the State’s workforce development system. The publicly-funded workforce development system is a national network of Federal, State, regional, and local agencies and organizations that provide a range of employment, education, training, and related services and supports to help all job-seekers secure good jobs while providing businesses with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. States must have approved Unified or Combined State Plans in place to receive funding for core programs. WIOA reforms planning requirements, previously governed by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), to foster better alignment of Federal investments in job training, to integrate service delivery across programs and improve efficiency in service delivery, and to ensure that the workforce system is job-driven and matches employers with skilled individuals. One of WIOA’s principal areas of reform is to require States to plan across core programs and include this planning process in the Unified or Combined State Plans. This reform promotes a shared understanding of the workforce needs within each State and fosters development of more comprehensive and integrated approaches, such as career pathways and sector strategies, for addressing the needs of businesses and workers. Successful implementation of many of these approaches called for within WIOA requires robust relationships across programs. WIOA requires States and local areas to enhance coordination and partnerships with local entities and supportive service agencies for strengthened service delivery, including through Unified or Combined State Plans.

OPTIONS FOR SUBMITTING A STATE PLAN

A State has two options for submitting a State Plan—a Unified State Plan or a Combined State Plan. At a minimum, a State must submit a Unified State Plan that meets the requirements described in this document and outlines a four-year strategy for the core programs. The six core programs are—

- the Adult program (Title I of WIOA),
- the Dislocated Worker program (Title I),
- the Youth program (Title I),
- the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act program (Title II), and
- the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program (authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III),
- the Vocational Rehabilitation program (authorized under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by Title IV).

Alternatively, a State may submit a Combined State Plan that meets the requirements described in this document and outlines a four-year strategy for WIOA’s core programs plus one or more of the Combined State Plan partner programs. When a State includes a Combined State Plan partner program in its Combined State Plan, it need not submit a separate plan or application for that particular program. If included, Combined State Plan partner programs are subject to the “common planning elements” (Sections II-IV of this document) where specified, as well as the program-specific requirements for that program where such planning requirements exist separately for the program. The Combined State Plan partner programs are—

- Career and technical education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, as amended by the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.)
- Employment and Training programs under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(d)(4)))
- Work programs authorized under section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(o))
- Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers programs (Activities authorized under chapter 2 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2271 et seq.))
- Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program (programs authorized under 38, U.S.C. 4100 et. seq.)
- Unemployment Insurance programs (programs authorized under State unemployment compensation laws in accordance with applicable Federal law)
- Senior Community Service Employment program (programs authorized under title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3056 et seq.))
- Employment and training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Community Services Block Grant (Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.))¹

HOW STATE PLAN REQUIREMENTS ARE ORGANIZED

The major content areas of the Unified or Combined State Plan include strategic and operational planning elements. WIOA separates the strategic and operational elements to facilitate cross-program strategic planning.

- The **Strategic Planning Elements** section includes analyses of the State’s economic conditions, workforce characteristics, and workforce development activities. These analyses drive the required vision and goals for the State’s workforce development system and alignment strategies for workforce development programs to support economic growth.
- The **Operational Planning Elements** section identifies the State’s efforts to support the State’s strategic vision and goals as identified in the Strategic Planning Elements section. This section ensures that the State has the necessary infrastructure, policies, and activities to meet its

¹ States that elect to include employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.) under a Combined State Plan would submit all other required elements of a complete CSBG State Plan directly to the Federal agency that administers the program. Similarly, States that elect to include employment and training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development that are included would submit all other required elements of a complete State Plan for those programs directly to the Federal agency that administers the program.

strategic goals, implement its alignment strategy, and support ongoing program development and coordination. Operational planning elements include:

- State Strategy Implementation,
- State Operating Systems and Policies,
- Assurances,
- Program-Specific Requirements for the Core Programs, and
- Program-Specific Requirements for the Combined State Plan partner programs. (These requirements are available in a separate supplemental document, Supplement to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Unified and Combined State Plan Requirements. The Departments are not seeking comments on these particular requirements).

When responding to Unified or Combined State Plan requirements, States must identify specific strategies for coordinating programs and services for target populations.² States must develop strategies that look beyond strategies for the general population and develop approaches that also address the needs of target populations. Use of links to external websites and documents is permitted within the State Plan narrative submission if such links remain active and adhere to Section 508 accessibility requirements.

Paperwork Reduction Act: The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA) provides that an agency may not conduct, and no person is required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. Public reporting burden for this information collection is estimated to be 86 hours per state; including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Responding to this collection is required to obtain or retain the Federal grant benefit. In addition, responses to this information collection are public, and the agencies offer no assurances of confidentiality. Send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Workforce Investment, and reference OMB control number 1205-0522. Note: Please do not return the completed plan to this address.

² Target populations include individuals with barriers to employment, as defined in WIOA Sec. 3, as well as veterans, unemployed workers, and youth.

I. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE

Unified or Combined State Plan. Select whether the State is submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan. At a minimum, a State must submit a Unified State Plan that covers the six core programs.

Unified State Plan. This plan includes the Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser Act, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, and Vocational Rehabilitation programs.

Combined State Plan. This plan includes the Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser Act, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, and Vocational Rehabilitation programs, as well as one or more of the optional Combined State Plan partner programs identified below.

This is a combined plan.

COMBINED PLAN PARTNER PROGRAM(S)

Indicate which Combined Plan partner program(s) the state is electing to include in the plan.

Career and technical education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, as amended by the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.) No

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.) No

Employment and Training programs under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(d)(4))) No

Work programs authorized under section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(o)) No

Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers programs (activities authorized under chapter 2 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2271 et seq.)) No

Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program (programs authorized under 38, U.S.C. 4100 et. seq.) No

Unemployment Insurance programs (programs authorized under State unemployment compensation laws in accordance with applicable Federal law) No

Senior Community Service Employment program (programs authorized under title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3056 et seq.)) Yes

Employment and training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development No

Community Services Block Grant (Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.)) No

B. PLAN INTRODUCTION OR EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Unified or Combined State Plan may include an introduction or executive summary. This element is optional.

WIOA Overview

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) is a pivotal federal program that allocates resources to state and local workforce systems while offering various job training services tailored for adults and youth. This legislation overhauls and simplifies the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), ushering in a new era of flexibility for states to collaboratively address the evolving employment and skills landscape for employees, job seekers, and employers.

At its core, WIOA emphasizes education, training, credentials, and skills development. It is designed to assist individuals facing barriers to employment, meet employers' dynamic needs, and enhance workers' success and economic self-sufficiency. This multifaceted approach aligns workforce development with education and economic growth, creating a comprehensive framework for sustainable progress.

In Alaska, the responsibility for administering WIOA funds and implementing its provisions rests with the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD). This agency serves as the linchpin for ensuring the effective utilization of WIOA resources to address the state's unique workforce challenges and opportunities.

The WIOA legislation is characterized by several fundamental principles that underscore its significance and impact:

1. **Business and Worker-Driven Solutions:** The workforce solutions under WIOA are intricately linked to the needs of businesses and workers. Local workforce boards, accountable to their respective communities, are crucial in tailoring initiatives to address specific challenges and opportunities.
2. **Customer-Centric Job Centers:** Job centers, pivotal components of the workforce system, prioritize excellent customer service. These centers aim to provide seamless support to job seekers and employers by emphasizing continuous improvement, ensuring a responsive and adaptive approach.
3. **Support for Regional Economies:** As guided by WIOA, the workforce system actively contributes to the strength of regional economies. Participating actively in community and workforce development catalyzes positive change, fostering growth and sustainability.

The WIOA legislation represents a forward-looking and dynamic approach to workforce development, acknowledging the interconnectedness of education, employment, and economic advancement. Through collaboration, flexibility, and a commitment to excellence, WIOA seeks to build a resilient and responsive workforce system that benefits individuals, businesses, and communities.

Alaska's Four-Year Plan

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) mandates states submit a comprehensive four-year workforce plan to the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL). This document serves as the State of Alaska's four-year workforce plan covering 2024 to 2027, as stipulated by WIOA.

The composition of this updated strategic workforce development plan presents a significant opportunity for the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) to refine existing strategies and introduce innovative approaches. Key points in this endeavor include a

heightened emphasis on sector partnerships, cultivating career pathways, meticulous attention to cross-program data and measurement, and facilitating job-driven investments.

Within the Alaska WIOA Combined Plan framework, which includes the Senior Community Employment Services (SCSEP) program as the WIOA Core program partner, a detailed depiction emerges of the envisioned workforce development system that resonates with the aspirations of Alaskans. This plan outlines how Alaska is leveraging WIOA with other state and federal programs to realize its overarching vision. The central tenet of this vision is to provide diverse pathways leading to high-skill, high-wage jobs and careers. The plan underscores the state's commitment to ensuring access to education, training, and support services essential for individuals to prepare for and actively participate in high-demand occupations that offer family-sustaining wages.

This strategic workforce development plan for Alaska, as guided by WIOA, is characterized by the following key components:

1. **Innovation through Sector Partnerships:** The plan encourages the development of collaborative sector partnerships to address the evolving needs of industries, fostering innovation and relevance in workforce development strategies.
2. **Career Pathways:** Emphasis is placed on creating transparent and viable career pathways for individuals, aligning training and educational programs with the demands of high-skill, high-wage occupations.
3. **Data-Driven Decision-Making:** The plan recognizes the importance of cross-program data and measurement, advocating for a data-driven approach to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of workforce initiatives.
4. **Job-Driven Investments:** Strategic investments are directed towards job-driven initiatives to bolster employment opportunities and economic growth in alignment with workforce needs.

The Alaska WIOA Combined Plan articulates a roadmap for achieving the state's vision of a robust workforce development system. By leveraging the provisions of WIOA and collaborating with other programs, Alaska aims to create a dynamic and responsive ecosystem that empowers individuals, meets the demands of industries, and fosters economic prosperity through family-sustaining careers.

Public comment period

The comprehensive plan underwent a thorough public engagement process, during which it was made available for public comment from January 26, 2024, to February 16, 2024. The announcement of the public comment period was disseminated through the state's online public notices system: <https://aws.state.ak.us/OnlinePublicNotices/Notices/View.aspx?id=214052>.

Public outreach efforts were structured to ensure broad participation, emphasizing inclusivity. The state's online public notice system conveyed the notification to diverse stakeholder groups, including Alaska Native organizations, chief elected officials, businesses, labor organizations, economic development entities, community-based organizations, adult and youth education and training providers, institutions of higher education, disability service entities, youth-serving programs, veterans' service organizations, juvenile justice staff and programs, senior employment programs, individuals with disabilities, and the public.

Comments from the public were solicited and collected through email, providing a convenient and accessible avenue for stakeholders to contribute their insights and perspectives. The plan was

electronically transmitted to the identified stakeholder groups for participation in the public comment process.

This collaborative and inclusive approach ensured that a broad spectrum of voices and expertise contributed to the development and refinement of the plan. The plan stands as the culmination of this robust public input process. It reflects a synthesis of diverse viewpoints, experiences, and recommendations garnered from a broad cross-section of the state, reinforcing the commitment to transparency, responsiveness, and the incorporation of valuable insights from those directly impacted by the workforce development initiatives outlined in the plan.

Plan Sections

The plan is structured to provide a comprehensive understanding of Alaska's workforce strategies, with distinct sections serving specific purposes. The Strategic Elements section serves as the foundation, offering insights into the current and projected workforce landscape. It delineates the state's workforce vision and goals, providing a holistic view of the overarching objectives guiding workforce development efforts.

Following the Strategic Elements section, the Operational Planning Elements section delves into the practical aspects of implementing the strategic vision in day-to-day operations. This section explains the ongoing efforts and strategies employed to translate the broader goals into tangible outcomes. Further detail is achieved through dedicated sections specific to each core and partner program, outlining the workforce approaches tailored to individual programs.

Appendix 1 serves as a repository of Performance Goals for both the Core Programs and the Partner Program (Senior Community Service Employment Program). This section summarizes WIOA's measurable objectives, providing a summary of expected outcomes for each program.

Appendix 2.1 lists the acronyms used throughout the plan, offering clarity and aiding comprehension, while Appendix 2.2 serves as a directory of Alaska's One-Stop partners. This resource provides a handy reference for stakeholders, facilitating a deeper understanding of the collaborative network supporting implementation of workforce initiatives.

The plan's structure reflects a strategic and transparent approach, presenting a comprehensive view of Alaska's workforce development efforts. The integration of strategic and operational elements, adherence to a standardized format, and the inclusion of informative appendices contribute to a document that is both accessible and informative for a diverse audience.

II. STRATEGIC ELEMENTS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a Strategic Planning Elements section that analyzes the State's current economic environment and identifies the State's overall vision for its workforce development system. The required elements in this section allow the State to develop data-driven goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce and to identify successful strategies for aligning workforce development programs to support economic growth. Unless otherwise noted, all Strategic Planning Elements apply to Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan as well as to core programs. Where requirements identify the term "populations," these must include individuals with barriers to employment as defined at WIOA Section 3. This includes displaced homemakers; low-income individuals; Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians; individuals with disabilities, including youth who are individuals with disabilities; older individuals; ex-offenders; homeless individuals, or homeless children and youths; youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system; individuals who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and

individuals facing substantial cultural barriers; farmworkers (as defined at section 167(i) of WIOA and Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 35-14); individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program; single parents (including single pregnant women); and long-term unemployed individuals. Additional populations include veterans, unemployed workers, and youth, and others that the State may identify.

A. ECONOMIC, WORKFORCE, AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the economic conditions, economic development strategies, and labor market in which the State’s workforce system and programs will operate.

1. ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

A. ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the economic conditions and trends in the State, including sub-State regions and any specific economic areas identified by the State. This must include—

I. EXISTING DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTORS AND OCCUPATIONS

Provide an analysis of the industries and occupations for which there is existing demand.

II. EMERGING DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTORS AND OCCUPATIONS

Provide an analysis of the industries and occupations for which demand is emerging.

III. EMPLOYERS’ EMPLOYMENT NEEDS

With regard to the industry sectors and occupations identified in (A)(i) and (ii), provide an assessment of the employment needs of employers, including a description of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required, including credentials and licenses.

Alaska's Overall Economic Conditions and Key Trends

Alaska, like the rest of the country, continues to put more distance between current economic conditions and the dramatic disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic. At the end of 2023, the state still had not recovered all the jobs lost in 2020, but it is expected to do so before the end of 2024.

With most of the job growth tied to the pandemic recovery behind us, the catalyst for economic and employment gains for the next several years will be big projects from a few main sources. Spending from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) of 2021 and related federal funding for broadband enhancements will be massive. Alaska is expected to receive more per capita funding than any other state; over \$6 billion in specific project spending has already been announced.

Two large new projects on the state’s oil-rich North Slope are expected to add thousands of temporary construction jobs and hundreds of longer-term operations jobs. Even more important to the state’s economy, the new projects are expected to add significantly to the state’s long-declining oil production and, over the long-term, also bring additional oil-related revenue to the state.

Longer-term, the state’s abundant mineral resources and the global transition to lower carbon-emission energy sources will improve the odds for several mining projects, especially those that can produce minerals the U.S. Department of Energy has determined to be “critical.”

The U.S. Geological Survey has invested heavily to help the state map its critical mineral resources, which include cobalt, graphite, rare earth elements, tellurium, and tungsten, among others. Though the permitting process for new mines is long and uncertain, mining experts note that Alaska has much of what the world market will need to produce batteries, solar cells, and other key components in the transition to cleaner energy.

Another positive economic trend is Alaska's record-setting tourism interest. More than 1.6 million people visited the state in 2023 — 20 percent more than in the last pre-COVID year of 2019 — and slightly more are forecast in 2024.

As at least a partial counterweight to all the potential economic and employment growth tied to those factors, the state has struggled economically relative to other states for most of the last decade and has seen large migration-related losses as a result. Alaska ranked in the bottom five among states over the most recent decade in gross domestic product growth, employment growth, and population growth.

The state's working-age population — people from age 18 to 64 — dropped from 479,000 to 449,000 over the decade from 2013 to 2022. (Decline in working-age Alaskans, Alaska Economic Trends, March 2023.) As a result of that and the very large Baby Boomer population aging out of prime working-age years, there are significantly more open positions in the state than there are job seekers. As a consequence, the labor shortage that has persisted through much of the post-COVID period throughout the country is especially acute in Alaska.

Significant research has been done and more is in progress to help diagnose why Alaska has seen more people move out of the state than move in for eleven consecutive years, by far the longest stretch of negative net migration since statehood.

In most years, Alaska has the largest net migration flows (the combination of in and out migration) in the nation — between 40,000 to 50,000 people typically move to and from the state each year. With a population of 737,000, that equates to a gross migration rate of about ten percent. At the opposite end of the spectrum, Michigan's gross migration rate is a little over three percent and California, Ohio, Minnesota, and Wisconsin all have annual gross migration rates below four percent.

Other states with high gross migration rates include Wyoming, Hawaii, Colorado, and North Dakota. Those states share with Alaska either remoteness from the rest of the country (Hawaii) or heavy reliance on oil and other natural resources (Wyoming, Colorado, and North Dakota) (Movers and population turnover, Alaska Economic Trends, September 2022).

A few other states — Nevada and Idaho — also have high gross migration rates, but unlike Alaska and the other four mentioned, those states have had strong positive net migration in recent years, so much of their high gross migration is explained by the combination of factors that have made them especially desirable places to live. Those factors include strong job markets and relatively inexpensive housing, especially for movers coming from California.

Notably, movers to Alaska are not staying as long as in previous years, which suggests that something has changed in terms of the relative desirability or economic feasibility of putting down roots in the state (Movers aren't staying as long, Alaska Economic Trends, August 2022).

Another research project determined that nearly half of the Alaska class of 2005 high school graduates had left the state by 2021 (The class of 2005, 16 years later, Alaska Economic Trends, February 2023). Additional research is in progress to identify the characteristics of people who left the state: their age, gender, work history, and the length of time they lived here before deciding to move away.

Whatever the causes of Alaska’s current negative net migration trend and its disproportionate impact on the number of working-age people in the state, the trend is creating challenging conditions for employers looking to fill open positions. That means employers and the workforce development system will have to be more creative if the state is to maximize the benefit from Infrastructure Act money, new oil and gas projects, and strong tourism growth.

Longer term, workforce development professionals and researchers can help state policymakers understand what’s driving migration-related losses because that issue is so critical to the workforce and economy. Housing is likely a factor, as are the disruptions caused by the state’s slow and incomplete transition away from being able to rely almost exclusively on oil-related revenue to fund state government services.

When juxtaposed with other states, Alaska faces unique challenges each year in managing the introduction of new revenue sources, like a broad-based tax, and determining the yearly withdrawal from Alaska's well-established Permanent Fund, which has grown to be a crucial source for funding state services. This often strains the state's finances, prompting withdrawals from savings or the pursuit of additional revenue.

This persistent predicament significantly contributes to the fluctuating nature of Alaska's budgets, fostering uncertainty that particularly impacts institutions essential for workforce development.

WIOA Area, Planning Region, and Alaska’s Six Economic Regions

Alaska has a single local WIOA area encompassing the entire state. Operationally, however, Alaska includes six state-defined economic regions, which the state uses to collect and analyze labor market information and to inform planning. These economic regions are Anchorage/Mat-Su, Gulf Coast, Interior, Northern, Southeast, and Southwest, as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Alaska Economic Regions Map

Anchorage/Mat-Su Region

The Anchorage/Mat-Su Region is Alaska’s population center and one of the only areas where workers commute from one borough to another daily. Fifty-five percent of the state’s 737,000 people live in this region, although their population trends have diverged for decades now, with Mat-Su growing strongly and Anchorage being relatively flat.

Some of that difference is attributable to significantly cheaper housing in Mat-Su, although the gap has narrowed in recent years. The type of housing is also a key factor with larger, newer options on bigger parcels of land being more available in Mat-Su.

In terms of its economy and job market, the region is more integrated, with a mix of employment that's typical for medium-sized U.S. cities. The main difference is the importance of white-collar oil and gas jobs in Anchorage, the headquarters of in-state operations. Those high-paying jobs have fallen from a peak of 3,900 in 2015 to around 1,500 in 2023, which has been a challenge for Anchorage to absorb.

Longer term, the region's status is tied to the same drivers as the state, including oil and gas, federal government (including the military), and tourism. The region depends less directly on the state's world-class fisheries than other parts of Alaska and more on an air cargo sector that benefits from Anchorage's proximity to Asian markets and good airport facilities and support services.

Gulf Coast and Southeast Regions

Although parts of the Gulf Coast and Southeast regions are isolated and rural, their mix of jobs don't differ dramatically from statewide trends. Coastal areas have more jobs connected to fishing and fishing-support sectors, maritime transportation, and boat building, for example, but health care has grown wherever there are stable or growing populations. Similarly, the mix of government and private-sector support jobs in retail, hospitality, construction, and transportation doesn't differ markedly among areas with population centers of 10,000 or more.

One important difference between the Gulf Coast and Southeast regions is the presence of oil and gas activity in the Gulf Coast. Those unusually high-paying jobs are important to the region and add to its diversity.

Another difference is that Juneau's status as the state capital means Southeast has a noticeably larger percentage of government jobs. Many of them are in state government, of course, but Juneau also has a significant number of federal government jobs. Both regions have large and important Coast Guard facilities.

Interior Region

The Interior Region has a mix of resource industries — large coal and gold mines, for example — and is home to Denali National Park, which generates a substantial number of seasonal jobs and a much smaller number of year-round jobs.

Fairbanks, with a borough population of a little less than 100,000, depends on the military and the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF). The arrival several years ago of two new squadrons of F-35 fighter jets to Eielson Air Force Base was one of the bright spots in Alaska's economy in the years before COVID-19, creating population growth and spurring ongoing residential construction.

Fort Wainwright, an Army post, and Eielson are home to more than 8,400 active-duty military personnel and 10,000 dependents. UAF also plays an important economic role in the region, with a recent enrollment of a little more than 9,300.

Northern Region

The Northern Region is home to most of the state's large oil and gas industry and includes the Red Dog Mine, one of the world's largest zinc mines. As a result, this region benefits from oil, gas, and mining industry jobs as well as the construction and transportation jobs that support these industries.

North Slope workers typically work two weeks on and two weeks off, or some variation that includes an extended period of living and working in or near the oil fields and then an extended period of not working, while living elsewhere in the state or country. A substantial number of food services, health care, and custodial jobs are generated when oil and gas activity increases. Corresponding reductions occur with decreased activity.

Two large new projects — Conoco Phillips’ Willow Project and Australian oil company Santos’ Pikka Project — could increase the state’s oil production by more than 30 percent over the next decade and stimulate additional new activity in the region.

Because North Slope work schedules are itinerant, few permanent population centers exist near the oil and gas fields. The Northern Region’s largest city is Utqiagvik (formerly Barrow), with a population of about 4,500. Utqiagvik is about 200 miles away from the center of oil field activity and not connected by road. Economic benefits from oil and gas activity are primarily from the substantial revenue it generates to local governments (including tribal governments) in the region.

Southwest Region

The Southwest Region depends heavily on the fishing industry and related maritime activity. The region supplies a large percentage of the nation’s total commercial fish harvest by both poundage and value. Bristol Bay sockeye salmon, Bering Sea crab, and pollock represent some of the largest salmon, crab, and whitefish fisheries in the world. Much of the maritime activity is not captured in wage and hourly employment data because permit holders and their crews are self-employed. This means they typically aren’t subject to state unemployment insurance coverage and the mandatory reporting that generates the most reliable employment data.

The employment data do show many seafood processing jobs and a typical mix of government, health care, retail, construction, and hospitality employment that results from economic base industries associated with the area’s fisheries. Though biologically healthy overall, salmon runs have been volatile in recent years and the market has been chaotic, with excess supply producing extremely low prices.

Recent news that Trident Seafoods, Alaska’s largest processor, plans to sell a third of its Alaska plants will further disrupt the region’s lucrative fisheries in the next several years.

(i) Existing Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations.

Demand for workers is unusually high across *all* industries and most occupations by virtue of the fact that there’s strong economic activity in the state from Infrastructure Act-related spending, large oil and gas projects, and strong growth in tourism visitors to the state, combined with the fact that the state’s working-age population has steadily declined over the last decade.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey, Alaska’s job openings rate — the total number of job openings divided by the total of all filled and open jobs — has consistently been around two percentage points higher than for the country as a whole. In the most recent data available, Alaska’s job openings rate was 7.6 and the U.S. rate was 5.3.

The state’s 2024 employment forecast shows that growth is expected to be especially strong in the mining and oil and gas sectors and moderate overall. Those forecasts would be higher, however, if the difficulty in filling open positions weren’t factored into the forecasts. Figure 2 shows Alaska’s recently published 2024 industry forecast.

The outlook for statewide jobs, by industry

	Monthly avg, 2022 ¹	Monthly avg, 2023 ¹	Change, 2022-23	Percent change	JOBS FORECAST		
					Monthly avg, 2024	Change, 2023-24	Percent change
Total Nonfarm Employment²	318,800	326,200	7,400	2.3%	331,600	5,400	1.7%
Total Private	241,600	247,800	6,200	2.6%	252,700	4,900	2.0%
Mining and Logging	10,900	11,500	600	5.5%	12,500	1,000	8.7%
Oil and Gas	7,000	7,400	400	5.7%	8,000	600	8.1%
Construction	16,100	16,700	600	3.7%	17,800	1,100	6.6%
Manufacturing	12,100	12,600	500	4.1%	12,600	0	0%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	63,800	65,200	1,400	2.2%	66,000	800	1.2%
Wholesale Trade	6,200	6,400	200	3.2%	6,500	100	1.6%
Retail Trade	35,000	35,300	300	0.9%	35,500	200	0.6%
Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	22,600	23,500	900	4.0%	24,000	500	2.1%
Information	4,700	4,600	-100	-2.1%	4,600	0	0%
Financial Activities	11,000	10,900	-100	-0.9%	10,900	0	0%
Professional and Business Services	27,300	28,100	800	2.9%	28,600	500	1.8%
Educational (private) and Health Services	50,100	51,300	1,200	2.4%	52,000	700	1.4%
Health Care	38,900	40,000	1,100	2.8%	40,600	600	1.5%
Leisure and Hospitality	34,300	35,600	1,300	3.8%	36,100	500	1.4%
Other Services	11,100	11,400	300	2.7%	11,600	200	1.8%
Total Government	77,200	78,400	1,200	1.6%	78,900	500	0.6%
Federal, except military	15,000	15,400	400	2.7%	15,400	0	0%
State, incl. University of Alaska	22,400	22,800	400	1.8%	23,100	300	1.3%
Local and tribal, incl. public schools	39,800	40,200	400	1.0%	40,400	200	0.5%

¹Preliminary and adjusted estimates. ²Excludes the self-employed, uniformed military, most commercial fishermen, domestic workers, and unpaid family workers.

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

Figure 2: Alaska Job Outlook by Industry

Moving from industry projections to occupational projections, the occupations projected to grow the most over the 2020-2030 time horizon are clustered in health care (14 of the top 25 fastest growth occupations) with additional strong growth expected to come from transportation and resource extraction jobs (10-year occupational projections, Alaska Economic Trends, October 2022).

Looking at occupational projections by education level, nurses will continue to be in especially high demand for occupations that require a bachelor's degree. For occupations that require an associate degree, dental hygienists, civil engineering technologists and technicians, and paralegals and legal assistants are projected to have both high openings and high wages.

For occupations that require a postsecondary nondegree award, aircraft mechanics and service technicians and telecommunications equipment installers and repairers will be in high demand. For occupations that require a high school diploma (though often significant additional on-the-job training or an apprenticeship), operating engineers and construction equipment operators, carpenters, electricians, and plumbers are expected to be in unusually high demand.

(ii) Emerging Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations.

The very nature of emerging industry sectors and occupations make them difficult to capture using the standard taxonomies (North American Industry Classification System – NAICS - for industries and Standard Occupational Classification System for occupations). New industries and occupations are initially lumped with existing codes until it becomes clear that they are large enough and likely to be permanent enough to be worked into those taxonomies.

Since legalizing marijuana for recreational use in 2014, that industry has emerged over the last decade and appears to have reached a plateau of around 1,600 jobs and nearly \$50 million in wages (Cannabis industry matures, Alaska Economic Trends, December 2022). The employment is sprinkled throughout

retail trade industries and occupations as well as manufacturing / greenhouses, and manufacturing, and several others.

Aquaculture is an existing industry with substantial opportunity for further growth. Entrepreneurs are exploring the markets for a variety of seafood products grown or harvested in Alaska, and several companies have expanded to the point where they employ meaningful numbers of people.

Infrastructure Act and related broadband funding will create substantial opportunities for workers, but early research suggests that much of the work will be done by existing industries and occupations, though the work itself may be different, more technologically advanced, or focused particularly on certain emerging products and markets (electric ferries are one example).

That theme is an important one: industries and occupations generally don't "emerge" as much as existing industries and occupations "evolve" and "modernize." The more connected industry employers are to education and training providers and to the workforce development system broadly, the more likely it will be that the state and its workforce can benefit from those developments.

(iii) Employers' Employment Needs.

Employers' most obvious short-term need is simple: more job applicants. The highest needs appear to be concentrated in lower-wage occupations that require little postsecondary training because many of those workers have moved into higher-paying occupations and those with more desirable working conditions, but employers across the board report having substantial difficulties filling open positions.

Tourism-related employers, for example, reported having to forego business opportunities simply because they could not hire the workers needed to provide the goods and services (restaurants, charter fishing and whale-watching companies, retail stores, etc.).

The imbalance between open jobs and people looking for work makes it more important to streamline, where possible, rules, regulations, and the processes for obtaining credentials and licenses. More broadly, employers are re-examining the minimum qualifications for jobs to make sure they are not unreasonably eliminating applicants who could be trained on the job.

One of many possible examples is Alaska regulations that disqualify international refugees from obtaining commercial drivers' licenses. Other laws or regulations limit or prohibit people with licenses and experience in other states or countries from practicing in Alaska – military spouses, for example – merit scrutiny.

B. WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the current workforce in the State and within various state regions. Provide key analytical conclusions in aggregate as well as disaggregated among populations to identify potential disparities in employment and educational attainment and understand labor force conditions for items (i)-(iii) below. Populations analyzed must include individuals with barriers to employment described in the first paragraph of Section II. Analysis must include—

I. EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Provide an analysis of current employment and unemployment data, including labor force participation rates, and trends in the State.

II. LABOR MARKET TRENDS

Provide an analysis of key labor market trends, including across existing industries and occupations.

III. EDUCATION AND SKILL LEVELS OF THE WORKFORCE

Provide an analysis of the educational and skill levels of the workforce.

(i) Employment and Unemployment.

Employment growth in Alaska has been weaker than most states than in the U.S. as a whole for the last decade. One culprit was the state-specific recession from 2015 to 2018, which was precipitated by a steep decline in oil prices. The job loss and general economic downturn were extended by Alaska's long-standing dependence on oil-related revenue and what has been a difficult transition to new budget realities.

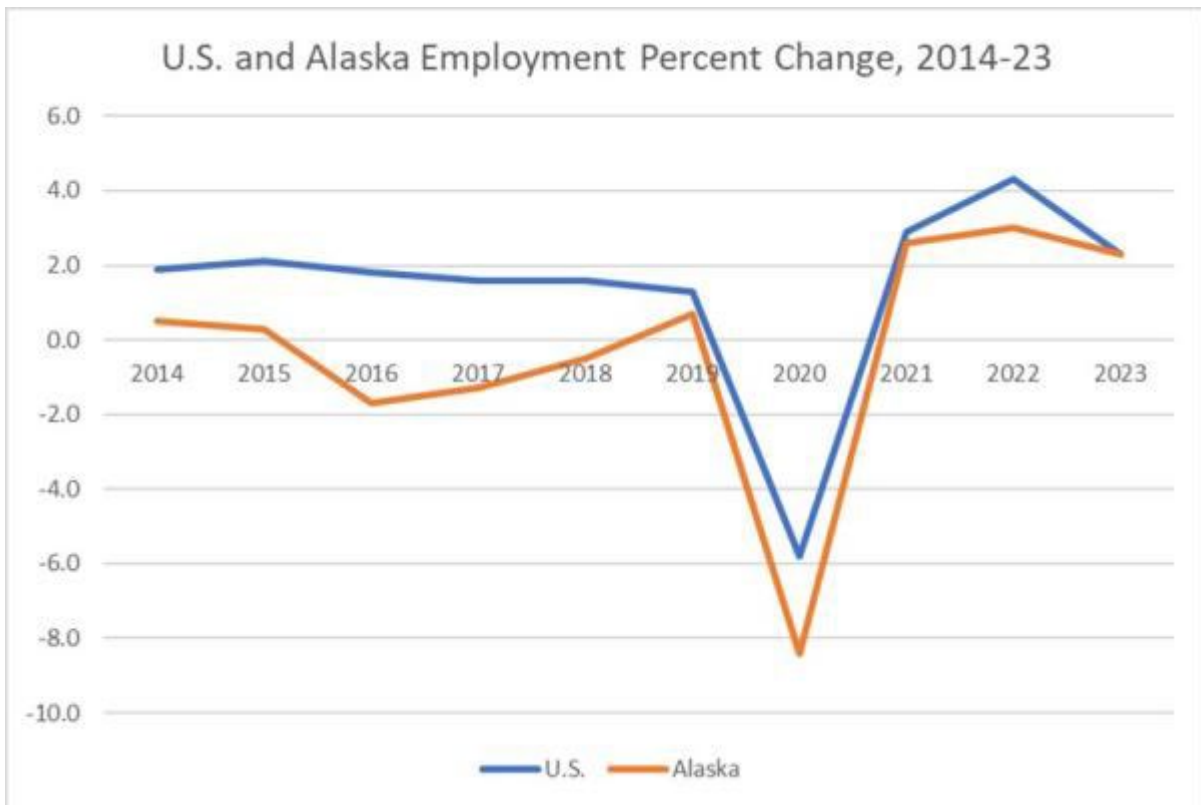


Figure 3: U.S. and Alaska Employment Percent Change, 2014-2023

Regionally, the employment picture varies depending on the level of dependence on the state's major economic drivers: oil and gas, fish and other seafood products, tourism, mining, and the federal government (including the military).

At different times of the year, primarily summer and fall, jobs are plentiful throughout the state, but much of rural Alaska has relatively little economic activity during off-season months for fishing and tourism. That creates potential opportunities for employers willing to be flexible with work schedules and to provide temporary housing.

Unemployment rates have been less reliable during and following the pandemic because of greater difficulty in collecting data and some new conceptual challenges like new questions about when and where someone is working. Broadly, though, the rates confirm that the U.S. economy has been a little stronger than Alaska's over the last decade.

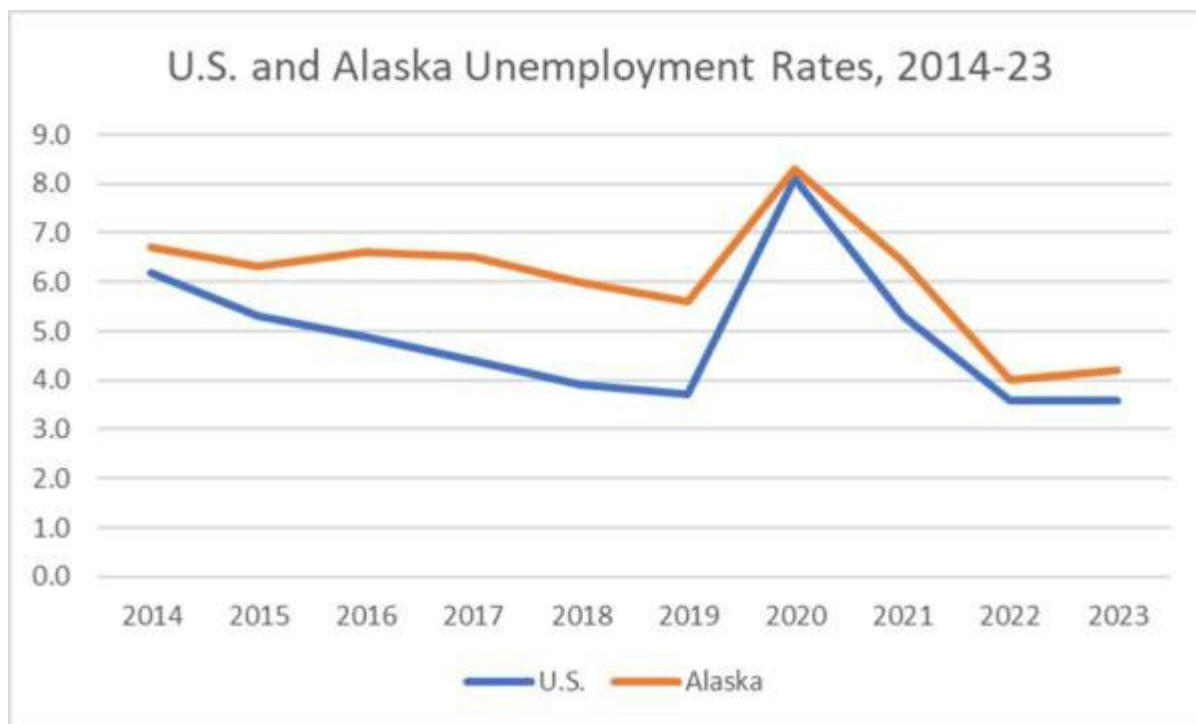


Figure 4: US and Alaska Unemployment Rates, 2014-2023

Labor force participation rates are less useful than would typically be the case because of the data quality challenges cited above, but the participation rates do point to a few relevant conclusions. First, Alaska's consistently higher rates are explained largely by the fact that the state has one of the youngest populations in the country (often second only to Utah).

Like the rest of the country, the state's average age has been rising for the last decade or so because of the aging of the large Baby Boomer cohort, but migration flows have always been negative for older Alaskans because of its climate. Birth rates also tend to be a little higher than national averages in rural Alaska and among the Alaska Native population.

Alaska has a smaller percentage of its population in the 65+ age group, and since labor force participation rates are calculated for the entire population 16 and over, having fewer retirement-aged seniors means a higher percentage of the state's population tends to be in the labor force (defined as either working or actively seeking work) than for the U.S. as a whole.

A second and weaker conclusion that suggests the labor shortage was caused by people not wanting to work anymore is not borne out in the data, especially when broken out for the prime working-age population (25-54). Roughly the same percentage of people of those ages are in the labor force post-pandemic as pre-pandemic.



Figure 5: U.S. and Alaska Labor Force Participation Rates, 2014-2023

As with unemployment rates, labor force participation rates don't differ dramatically by Alaska region. State analysts do sometimes focus on employment-to-population ratios to make the point that the most rural parts of the state have disproportionately small percentages of their populations working wage and salary jobs. Subsistence hunting and fishing activity complicates that analysis, though, as do data collection challenges in small rural areas.

(ii) Labor Market Trends.

The two most important macroeconomic trends for Alaska are probably 1) the eleven consecutive years of negative net migration discussed above, and 2) the massive amount of federal Infrastructure Act – more funding per capita than any other state – and related broadband funding headed to Alaska over roughly the next decade.

Another potentially developing trend is the breakthrough of two large oil and gas projects that are geographically important in that they could open up further development far to the west of the current hub of oil and gas activity in the Prudhoe Bay region.

Large numbers of high-paying jobs at every level of training and education will be generated in the next decade by that federal spending and a smaller number by Alaska's resource extraction industries. The state can benefit from them to a higher degree if it has a well-coordinated workforce development system and if it's a place where the people who take those jobs want to live and can afford to live.

(iii) Education and Skill Levels of the Workforce.

Educational Attainment

In the 1970s and 1980s, Alaska had the highest percentage of its population among all states who were high school graduates and the third highest who held bachelor's degrees (How educated are Alaskans, Alaska Economic Trends, March 2017). By 2015, the state had slipped to 5th and 27th places respectively.

The short and simplified answer for what changed is wages. In the 70s and 80s, the construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System and then the big influx of oil-related funding and state revenue lured a large number of educated Baby Boomers to the state. The state's per capita income in 1977 was 168 percent that of the U.S. as a whole, primarily because of high wages, which stayed high through the early 1980s.

Wages and income in Alaska are still higher than the U.S. average, though just barely. In 2022, the state's personal income was five percent higher than the nation's and in 2021 it was just two percent higher.

Ninety-three percent of Alaskans ages 25 and up have a high school diploma or higher, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, compared to 89 percent for the nation. That relationship switches for people with bachelor's degrees or higher, however, with 31 percent for Alaska and 36 percent for the U.S.

Other Credentials

Efforts to track licensing, certificates, apprenticeships, and other certifications are still a work in progress. These types of efforts will grow in importance as the need for workers forces change in the level of education employers can ask for and still get sufficient applicant pools.

Keeping with the broad theme of this update to Alaska's WIOA State Plan, the critical point here is that, at every opportunity, Alaska should work to communicate to high school and middle school students that some type of postsecondary training or education will be important.

Rivalries between the "college track" and other types of training — apprenticeships, occupational training that results in licenses or certificates, etc. — are counterproductive. Rather, students should have access to clear labor market information about the outlook of different possible career paths, including the employment and wage outcomes for specific training programs, degrees, and apprenticeship programs. As hungry as employers will be for workers, opportunities will be unusually plentiful, and good occupational projections and training and education program performance reporting will help maximize those opportunities.

Alaska Natives

Alaska Natives, a WIOA target population, are about 16 percent of the state's population, or 21 percent if using the "alone or in combination" designation. (Increasingly, racial and ethnic demographic analyses use the "alone or in combination" designation — which, as the name suggests, counts people in racial and ethnic groupings if they self-report as being part of more than one tracked race/ethnicity and one of those is the category being tracked — as the main measure of those populations' current status and also to identify trends). The state's Alaska Native population has grown slightly over the last decade by both measures.

Of the state's 151,000 Alaska Natives, (alone or in combination), large numbers live in eight rural boroughs or census areas where they make up more than 50 percent of the population. Broadly, Alaska Natives have lower educational attainment (both for high school completion and postsecondary training and education) and significantly higher poverty rates.

Older Workers

From 2000 to 2023, Alaska's 65+ population soared from 36,000 to over 110,000, growth that far exceeded that of the state's working-age population (18-64) or its youngest age group (0-17). The growth was due to the unusually large Baby Boomer population cohort — people born between 1946

and 1964 – aging in place rather than to domestic or international migration (Alaska consistently loses more seniors to migration than it attracts).

To the extent older Alaskans want to remain in the workforce, the conditions have rarely been more favorable, given the state’s decline in working-age population and the corresponding shortage of qualified applicants for available jobs.

A post-COVID analysis of workers who had not come back to work after the pandemic showed that a disproportionate number of the “missing” workers were at or near normal retirement age. The analysis suggested that some of those older workers found the challenging conditions of their COVID-era jobs unsatisfying or risky enough to push them into retirement, a move made more financially feasible than normal by several years of strong growth in both the housing market and in the stock market.

Employers have more of an incentive than they normally would to adjust working conditions in ways that are likely to appeal to older workers. Reducing work hours and allowing work from home are two examples of that. Another broad shift in the labor market that could favor some older workers is a reassessment of minimum qualifications. If employers decide that they don’t need a certain credential anymore, that expands the options for all job applicants, including older workers who may have highly relevant experience, if not some of the more formal credentials.

Other Key Groups

Employers’ difficulty in filling open positions means that at no time in recent memory has there been a better opportunity for workforce development systems to help individuals with various barriers to employment to get jobs and receive all the correlated benefits of being included in the workforce.

Nationally, 44 percent of people with a disability who were not working reported some type of barrier to employment. The most common reported barrier is with the disability itself (79 percent), but other barriers reported were lack of education or training (12 percent), special features or accommodations at the job (11 percent), and lack of transportation (10 percent).

Specific to Alaska, about 33,000 people have a hearing difficulty disability, 18,000 a vision difficulty, 32,000 a cognitive difficulty, 38,000 ambulatory difficulty, 14,000 self-care difficulty, and 25,000 independent living difficulty.

Another large population with significant barriers to employment is the formerly incarcerated. A 2021 report from the Bureau of Justice Statistics found that of the 50,000 people released from federal prisons in 2010, 33 percent found no employment at all over the subsequent four years. Further, the former inmates who did find jobs tended to find employment with much less job security or upward mobility.

Alaska’s Department of Labor and Workforce Development Research and Analysis section has conducted several studies of the impact employment has on recidivism rates. This work is particularly important in Alaska where incarceration rates are higher than the national average (according to the Prison Policy Initiative, Alaska’s incarceration rate of 718 per 100,000 was well above the national rate of 664 per 100,000).

Data is scarce on the population of formerly incarcerated individuals, but with a total prison population of about 15,000 people and a parolee population of another 10,000, the numbers are large. By a dramatic margin, the number incarcerated and out on parole are disproportionately male.

The homeless are another important population that face substantial barriers to employment. According to the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, Alaska had 1,900 homeless people in 2022. Of that number, 111 were veterans and 176 were young adults.

Other named populations with notable barriers to employment in Alaska include people currently or formerly in foster care, people whose first language is not English, and people with low literacy rates. Data for these populations are generally limited, but in all cases the numbers are believed to be significant. The key point in terms of the environment being uniquely favorable to assisting people with barriers to employment is that there have never been more job openings in Alaska than there are now, which means employers will be more open to considering hiring people that they may have discounted previously.

Military Veterans

Another significant demographic group is military veterans. According to the 2022 American Community Survey (<https://data.census.gov/table?q=veterans+in+alaska>), there are approximately 53,692 veterans in Alaska, which accounts for 10.1 percent of the state's adult population. The state's veteran population has decreased 3 percent since 2012.

Approximately 11 percent of Alaska veterans are between the ages 18 and 34, 48 percent are between the ages of 35 and 64, and 41 percent are 65 and older. While the median annual income for nonveterans in the state is estimated at \$41,979, the median annual income for veterans is \$64, 673. In 2022, 29.20 percent of Alaska veterans had a disability compared with 14.80 percent of the nonveteran population.

C. COMPARISON OF ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE ANALYTICAL CONCLUSION

Describe areas of opportunity for meeting hiring, education, and skills needs identified in the economy compared to the assets available in the labor force in the state.

Alaska has two unique assets to help identify and meet employers' needs for specific types of education, training, and skills. First, every year Alaska quantifies and catalogues by industry and occupation the nonresidents hired by state employers. It's able to do so thanks to its one-of-a-kind Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD) program, which annually distributes a share of oil-related investment earnings to Alaskans who have lived in the state for the previous full calendar year. That data gives Alaska the ability to comprehensively separate the workers who are residents of the state from the workers who are residents of other states or are international workers.

Second, Alaska is the only state with a long history of requiring employers to report the occupations of their workers as part of mandatory unemployment insurance reporting. Other states routinely collect employers' industry code (NAICS) in addition to their wages and, in some states, the number of hours worked. Still, only a few states collect occupational data, and none have a long history of using that data in Alaska's analyses.

Matching the detailed occupational data from employers with the residency information from the PFD program allows Alaska to produce a report each year detailing nonresident employment. The reliance on nonresident workers often indicates a shortage of local workers with the necessary training, education, skills, or experience that employers are seeking.

The most current report shows that a little more than 20 percent of all people who worked in Alaska in 2021 were nonresidents of the state that year. By industry, the percentage ranged from 7 percent in

utilities to over 80 percent in seafood processing (Nonresident workers in Alaska report, 2023 (2021 data)).

Aside from seafood processing, some of the other industries with high percentages of nonresidents include oil and gas, construction, metal mining, and visitor-related industries. These industries tend to have one or more of the following characteristics: high seasonal variation, a need for workers with specialized skills, or work sites in remote locations.

Occupationally, there's special interest and opportunity when certain types of jobs both pay especially well and have higher-than-average percentages of nonresident workers. Petroleum engineers, for example, earned over \$250,000 a year, and more than 20 percent of them were residents of other states. Computer programmers, 21 percent of which were nonresidents, earned about \$120,000 a year.

The new willingness by some employers to allow workers to live wherever they'd like and work remotely creates new challenges and underlines the importance of focusing on quality of life and housing affordability. Employment and demographics have a chicken-and-egg relationship: growth in one can drive growth in the other, and Alaska can derive maximum economic benefit from the jobs its economy generates to the extent it works to provide employers qualified resident workers to fill those jobs.

Similarly, to the extent new migrants to the state, often attracted by employment opportunities, are unable to find the quality of life characteristics they're looking for – affordable housing, good educational opportunities for their children, etc. – the state misses an opportunity to maximize economic benefits.

Identifying Regional Skills Gaps

The same annual report linked above identifies the extent to which regional employers hire from outside the local workforce. Whether a worker is imported from another state or another region in Alaska, that need signals an opportunity to benefit from generating more local employment.

Figure 6 highlights the dramatic difference between some regions' ability to fill jobs with locals and others' relative inability. In the Anchorage and Mat-Su areas, most jobs are held by people who live in those areas. In the Northern and Southwest regions, the majority of workers come from elsewhere in the state or from other states (or countries, in the case of seafood processing in Southwest).

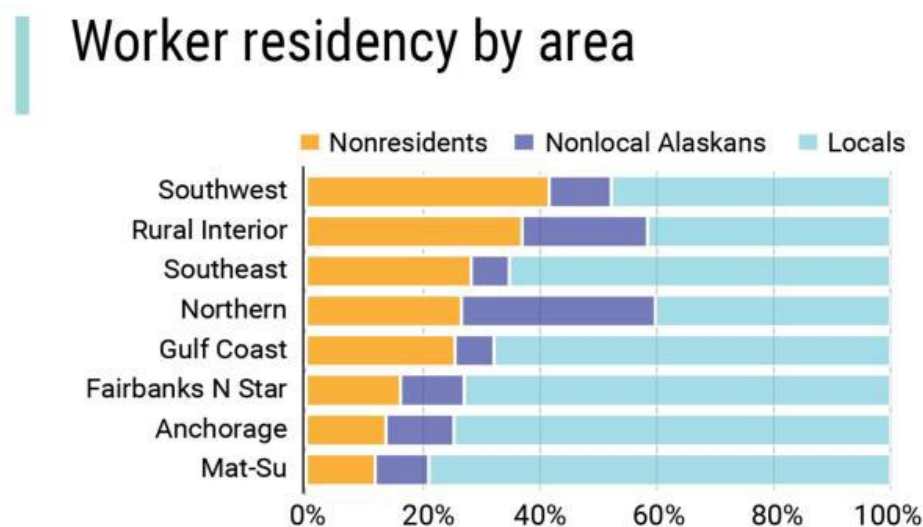


Figure 6: Worker Residency by Area

One final asset Alaska has is its small population and its well-integrated workforce development system. The state's education and training providers interact frequently with state agencies and industry leaders and there's a clear sense of urgency that Infrastructure Act funds are a once-in-a-generation opportunity.

Only Wyoming and Vermont have fewer people than Alaska and, partly because of the state's massive geographic size and partly because of its relative youth as a state, Alaska has a much less comprehensive transportation infrastructure than other states. Broadband connectivity in rural areas is also weak compared to other states, making that aspect of infrastructure spending especially important to Alaska.

2. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the workforce development activities, including education and training in the State, to address the education and skill needs of the workforce, as identified in (a)(1)(B)(iii) above, and the employment needs of employers, as identified in (a)(1)(A)(iii) above. This must include an analysis of—

A. THE STATE'S WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Provide an analysis of the State's workforce development activities, including education and training activities of the core programs, Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan, and required³ and optional one-stop delivery system partners.⁴

B. THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Provide an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the workforce development activities identified in (A), directly above.

C. STATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY

Provide an analysis of the capacity of State entities to provide the workforce development activities identified in (A), above.

(A) The State's Workforce Development Activities

Core and Partner Programs

Our comprehensive approach to workforce development is evident in the strategic focus of all core and partner programs, including our valued One-Stop partners, as outlined in Appendix 2.2. At the heart of our mission is a commitment to addressing the unique needs of diverse populations under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). These targeted populations encompass a broad

³ Required one-stop partners: In addition to the core programs, the following partner programs are required to provide access through the one-stops: Career and Technical Education (Perkins), Community Services Block Grant, Indian and Native American programs, HUD Employment and Training programs, Job Corps, Local Veterans' Employment Representatives and Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program, National Farmworker Jobs program, Senior Community Service Employment program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) (unless the Governor determines TANF will not be a required partner), Trade Adjustment Assistance programs, Unemployment Compensation programs, and YouthBuild.

⁴ Workforce development activities may include a wide variety of programs and partners, including educational institutions, faith- and community-based organizations, and human services.

spectrum, ensuring our initiatives reach and benefit individuals facing various challenges. We prioritize support for those with barriers to employment, displaced homemakers, low-income individuals, Alaska Natives, American Indians, Native Hawaiians, youth and adults with disabilities, older individuals, ex-offenders, homeless individuals, and those in or aging out of the foster care system or facing other risks. Our programs extend to individuals who are English language learners or possess low levels of literacy, those encountering substantial cultural barriers, farmworkers, individuals within two years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, single parents (including single pregnant women), and long-term unemployed individuals. The strategies also consider Alaska's refugee, asylum seeker, and immigrant youth and adult populations, who may find themselves encompassed within multiple categories. We also recognize the vital importance of extending specialized services to veterans and transitioning military personnel and other eligible persons, reflecting our commitment to supporting those who have served and facilitating their seamless integration into civilian employment.

Alaska Natives

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) underscores the significance of inclusivity by designating Alaska Natives as a specific targeted population. In alignment with this commitment, the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) has established collaborative partnerships with Alaska Native organizations to ensure a thorough approach to addressing cultural and geographic barriers that may impede workforce development within the Alaska Native population.

A core focus of our partnership is to provide adequate attention to the unique cultural contexts of Alaska Natives, recognizing the diversity and richness of their heritage. This involves tailoring workforce development initiatives to align with cultural norms, traditions, and values. Our collaborative efforts extend to providing culturally appropriate services designed for Alaska Native elders, acknowledging their invaluable role within their communities.

By actively engaging with Alaska Native organizations, the DOLWD strives to create a framework that not only meets the workforce needs of Alaska Natives but also fosters a culturally sensitive and inclusive environment. This approach reinforces our commitment to recognizing and respecting the distinct characteristics of the Alaska Native population, ensuring that workforce development is effective and respectful of their cultural identity.

Alaska Workforce Investment Board

Alaska's federal and state workforce programs are effectively steered by the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB), working with the state administration and legislature. This collaborative effort draws input from a diverse array of public and private entities engaged in workforce development, education, and training. Additionally, research from various sources, including the Department of Labor and Workforce Development's (DOLWD) Research and Analysis Section and the University of Alaska's Institute of Social and Economic Research, informs the guidance provided by the AWIB.

The AWIB has embraced priority industry sector workforce plans for maritime, health care, education, mining, renewable energy and energy efficiency, oil and gas, hospitality and tourism, construction, and transportation. These sector plans are developed in collaboration with sector partners and are regularly updated to emphasize strategies geared towards meeting future demands for priority occupations. The prioritization of occupations is informed by a thorough analysis, guiding the statewide and regional public workforce system to focus on in-demand occupations.

Integrating labor market information, economic insights, and the direct involvement of industry employers and sector partnerships plays a pivotal role in identifying career pathways and addressing employment needs and opportunities.

The Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) is the state's lead workforce agency for implementing the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) State Plan. Within this framework, the AWIB, situated in the Office of the Commissioner, collaborates closely with leadership to implement WIOA. This involves oversight, guidance, assessment, and continuous improvements to foster and sustain workforce partnerships in each economic region.

The AWIB ensures that regional workforce planning is linked to each region's economic and labor market needs. The grants unit, managed by the AWIB, administers program funding from various sources, including WIOA Youth, Apprenticeship, State Training and Employment Program (STEP), Alaska Construction Academy (ACA), Alaska Workforce Infusion Grant (AWIG), and Alaska's Technical Vocational Education Program (TVEP). This unit is the central hub for receiving and disbursing a substantial portion of Alaska's public workforce development resources, ensuring efficient and targeted allocation.

Title I – Adult and Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs

The Adult and Dislocated programs provide career services, supportive services, and training for adults to become self-sufficient. These services are provided by Career Support and Training Services (CSTS) case managers located in Alaska Job Centers (AJCs). The CSTS case managers work with participants, employment service partners, and training providers to develop Individualized Employment Plans (IEP) and create Individual Training Accounts (ITA) to manage payment of tuition-based job training activities with an approved provider on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). Individuals needing additional financial assistance while participating in program services are provided with support services. Participants may be concurrently enrolled in federal or state programs such as the State Training and Employment Program (STEP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), or vocational rehabilitation.

Title I – Youth Program

The AWIB is committed to the vision and implementation of an all-encompassing, no-wrong-door youth workforce system. The Youth program is administered through a rigorous competitive award process, ensuring that excellence and innovation are integral to its implementation. This approach guarantees that resources are allocated efficiently to initiatives that demonstrate the most significant potential impact. Services under the Youth program are delivered through a network of ten dedicated subrecipients strategically positioned throughout the state. This structure ensures that the program's benefits reach communities far and wide, catering to diverse needs and contexts. Subrecipients ensure that the WIOA Youth program's 14 basic elements are readily available to participants. These essential elements form the foundation for a comprehensive and holistic approach to youth workforce development. Subrecipients conduct comprehensive assessments of participants, identifying their strengths, challenges, and aspirations. These assessments serve as the cornerstone for personalized approaches, tailoring services to meet the unique needs of each individual. A key focus is on identifying and mapping career pathways for participants, guiding them toward sustainable and fulfilling employment opportunities. The goal is to empower youth with the skills and knowledge to navigate their chosen career paths successfully. Subrecipients coordinate work experience opportunities, offering participants hands-on exposure to real-world work environments. This practical engagement enhances the employability of youth, bridging the gap between education and the workforce. Subrecipients craft Individual Service Strategies (ISS) for participants, outlining specific services, goals, and support service

needs. ISS documents serve as personalized roadmaps, guiding participants toward their career objectives with clarity and purpose. Youth participants over the age of 18 may be co-enrolled in the Adult program to ensure an appropriate combination of services to meet all needs without duplication.

Types of services

Career Services – include labor market information, job listings, partner program listings, and individualized services such as comprehensive and specialized assessments; development of IEPs, ISSs, and ITAs; counseling; career planning; and workforce preparation activities. These services are provided to assist individuals in obtaining or retaining employment.

Training services – include occupational skills training including training for nontraditional employment; on-the-job training; incumbent worker training; programs that combine workplace training with related instruction, which may include cooperative education programs; training programs operated by the private sector; skill upgrading and retraining; entrepreneurial training; transitional jobs; job readiness training; adult education and literacy activities including activities of English language acquisition and integrated education and training programs; and customized training conducted with a commitment by an employer or group of employers to employ an individual upon successful completion of the training.

Support services – may be utilized by Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth participants engaged in individualized career and training services. Support services may include but are not limited to transportation, childcare, dependent care, medical and dental care, housing, food, and utility payments necessary to enable an individual to participate in services. Youth program participants may also utilize support services during the follow-up period.

Follow-up services – non-monetary activities for exited Adults and Dislocated Workers for up to 12 months, which help participants retain unsubsidized employment from the program-related services they received. For exited WIOA Youth, follow-up services include activities that help ensure successful employment or postsecondary education/training and may consist of monetary support services.

These Title I-B programs provide individuals with career guidance, employment skills, and vocational-technical training intended to rapidly lead to employment or re-employment or, for Youth, entry into postsecondary education or training. This includes work-based learning programs where skills are learned through work experiences, career and technical education (CTE), On-the-Job Training (OJT), internships, pre-apprenticeship, and apprenticeship training.

Title II – Alaska Adult Education

The Alaska Adult Education Program (AAE) is a statewide instructional program that provides formal education for adults over the age of sixteen to enhance their postsecondary education skills to transition into employment. The goal of AAE is to identify a student's educational level and facilitate a successful transition to postsecondary education, training, or employment. AAE programs instruct students in basic skills, high school equivalency diploma attainment, English language acquisition, digital literacy, and workforce preparation courses. AAE includes regional education programs, an integrated correctional system, and a statewide grant for Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education.

Title III – Wagner-Peyser/One-Stop

The One-Stop delivery system collaborates with partners to create a seamless system of service delivery that enhances access to services and improves long-term employment outcomes for individuals receiving assistance. The employment and training services provided through the Alaska Job Centers

(AJCs) are the foundation of the One-Stop delivery system in Alaska, providing universal access to labor exchange, career, and training services, in-person and online through the AlaskaJobs online labor exchange and case management system (<https://alaskajobs.alaska.gov/vosnet/Default.aspx>). The goal of universal access is that workers, job seekers, and employers may all obtain services under one roof from easy-to-find locations. The delivery points for the employment and training services are within the 13 AJC locations of the Alaska Job Center Network (AJCN) located throughout the state, and the AlaskaJobs online system. As part of the One-Stop service delivery system, AJCs provide the full spectrum of employment-related labor exchange services including job search, referral, and placement assistance to job seekers, re-employment services to unemployment insurance claimants, and recruitment services for employers with job openings. Services are delivered in one of three modes, including self-service, facilitated self-help services, and staff-assisted services.

Depending on individual needs, additional services may be available, such as assessment of skill levels and abilities, aptitude testing, career guidance, job seeking workshops, and referral for training and support services.

Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER) are essential in the AJCs with the highest veteran populations and fully integrated into the One-Stop delivery system. DVOP and LVER staff also work with employers to recruit, hire, promote, and retain veterans in meaningful employment. Outreach is provided in places such as U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs medical and veteran centers, homeless shelters, civic and service organizations, Veteran Stand Down events, veterans' job fairs, and military installations.

The DVOP specialists' primary responsibility is to provide individualized career services to eligible veterans and "other eligible persons" with significant barriers to employment (SBE) through a case management approach. DVOPs also conduct outreach to veterans in places such as U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs medical and veteran centers, homeless shelters, civic and service organizations, Veteran Stand Down events, Veterans' job fairs, and military installations. Once a veteran or other eligible person is determined to be "job ready" by AJC staff, their resume is provided to a LVER, a business services representative from the Business Connection team, or other appropriate AJC staff, to receive employment placement services. The LVER staff works directly with employers to recruit, hire, promote, and retain veterans in meaningful employment.

Apprenticeship specialists in the AJCs provide information and assistance to employers to create Registered Apprenticeship programs tailored to their workforce needs. Registered Apprenticeships allow employers to establish standards of proficiency while developing a local and loyal workforce, often solving key industry occupational shortages. Any business that requires skilled employees can benefit from this program.

DOLWD's efforts in providing prisoner re-entry services have proven successful for prisoners transitioning back into communities by partnering with the Department of Corrections (DOC) to coordinate and develop job placement assistance and services.

Services offered to employers, in addition to job seeker referral for available openings, include:

- Help in developing job order requirements;
- Matching job seeker experience with job requirements, skills, and other attributes;
- Assisting employers with special recruitment needs;
- Coordinating job fairs;

- Analyzing hard-to-fill job orders for employers;
- Providing information and resources for industry forecasts, wage and hour laws, occupational safety, and more;
- Helping employers minimize or avoid layoffs and business closures;
- Establishing USDOL Registered Apprenticeship programs;
- Providing information and resources for workforce training;
- Hire incentives like tax credits and Fidelity Bonding that encourage employers to hire at-risk workers;
- WorkKeys® assessments (at no cost to job seekers or employers) to determine a worker's foundational workplace skill levels for success in the workplace.

Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation

Vocational rehabilitation (VR) services are provided through the Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). DVR provides VR services to individuals with disabilities who, because of their disability/ies, have difficulty obtaining or maintaining employment. Disabilities that create an impediment to employment could include psychiatric conditions, physical impairments, orthopedic disabilities, cognitive impairments, and sensory disabilities such as auditory and visual impairments.

DVR provides rehabilitation services necessary for individuals with disabilities to achieve competitive integrated employment, including guidance and counseling, assessment, vocational or other training, transportation, diagnosis and treatment, on-the-job training, job-related services, and supported employment. Using informed choice and comprehensive assessments, an individual and their Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) to determine a vocational goal and the services necessary to achieve employment. Services identified in the IPE are based on the individual's needs. DVR also provides students who experience disabilities with Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS).

DVR delivers services throughout the state through five regional offices located in high population urban areas (two in Anchorage and one each in Fairbanks, the Mat-Su Valley, and Juneau) and four satellite offices in smaller, more rural areas (Eagle River, Kenai, Sitka, and Ketchikan). DVR has also identified six regional rural hubs to which assigned DVR counselors travel two to three times per year (Bethel, Nome, Kotzebue, Utqiagvik, Dillingham, and Kodiak). DVR partners with local Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation programs and local job centers and schools located in these rural hubs.

Alaska Native Organizations and Alaska Native WIOA Grantees

There are twelve Alaska Native Regional non-profit organizations recognized under WIOA as partners in the workforce system. Alaska Native Regional Employment and Training entities receive funding under WIOA to provide services, in tandem with state WIOA resources, to specifically serve Alaska's Native and American Indian people. These regional Alaska Native non-profits, formed under the federal Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971, are a vital component of Alaska's state and regional workforce development system. Alaska Native organizations help ensure adequate representation in workforce development planning and in delivery of culturally and regionally responsive services to Alaska Natives and American Indians, particularly for Youth and Elders. They have unique relationships with Alaska's largest economic drivers, Alaska Native Corporations, and businesses offering good paying jobs and careers in Alaska and across the nation. The regional non-

profits operate American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services programs funded by the federal Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration. They fill a gap when state DVR service providers are unable to directly serve eligible clients in rural communities and villages.

Trade Adjustment Assistance

The Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program helps workers who lose their jobs due to foreign trade-related competition or outsourcing. The program provides opportunities to the impacted individuals to obtain the skills, credentials, resources, and support needed to return to suitable employment as quickly as possible. Historically, Alaska's TAA-certified dislocations have been in the petroleum, timber, fishing, and customer service industries. Services provided to TAA participants include re-employment and case management services, career development, classroom training, on-the-job training, customized training, income support, job search allowance, relocation allowance, and Trade Readjustment Allowances – weekly income support much like unemployment insurance. The AlaskaJobs online labor exchange and case management system provides a single sign-on for WIOA Title I, II, and III and TAA, which allowed the TAA program to transition to complete electronic case management and conduct more seamless co-enrollment of participants with the WIOA Dislocated Worker program. While the Trade Act awaits congressional reauthorization after sunset on July 1, 2022, the TAA program continues to report on existing participants and conduct outreach by email to trade-affected workers impacted before that date, including AlaskaJobs messaging, announcements via social media, and information provided by the UI program and job center staff about potential eligibility for lifetime TAA training benefits. The Alaska TAA program remains prepared to serve trade-affected workers with all case management, training, employment, and other benefits for which they remain eligible under TEGL 07-23.

Senior Community Service Employment Program

The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) is administered by DOLWD and serves unemployed, low-income persons who are at least 55 years of age, are not work ready, and have a family income of no more than 125 percent of the federal poverty level. Enrollment priority is given to veterans and qualified spouses, then to individuals who are over 65, have a disability, have low literacy skills or limited English proficiency, and who reside in a rural area, are homeless or at risk of homelessness, have low employment prospects, have failed to find employment after using services through the AJCs, have been incarcerated within the last 5 years, or are under supervision following release from prison or jail within the last 5 years. The program assists them in developing skills and experience to facilitate their transition to unsubsidized employment. SCSEP is known in Alaska as Mature Alaskans Seeking Skills Training (MASST) and is a component of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. Its long-term strategy is to ensure that Alaska's job opportunities are available to older workers and that the program continues to engage workforce development partners, the business community, and senior service partners to provide successful outcomes for seniors and Alaskan businesses alike. SCSEP fosters individual economic self-sufficiency and promotes useful part-time opportunities in community service assignments.

SCSEP is a required One-Stop partner under WIOA and, as such, is part of the Alaska Job Center Network. When acting in their WIOA partner capacity, SCSEP staff and subrecipients are required to follow all applicable WIOA rules and regulations. The WIOA operational requirements do not apply to SCSEP operations, but as required partners under WIOA, grantees are obligated to be familiar with WIOA requirements. These regulations enable grantees and subrecipients to concentrate on the core missions of the SCSEP by providing community service assignments to hard-to-serve older individuals. AJCs will provide services both to older individuals who are not eligible for the SCSEP and to those who are eligible but need the career services that the SCSEP is unable to provide.

SCSEP staff works directly with mandated partners to co-enroll participants in state training and employment programs and other needed social service programs. This ensures that SCSEP is an integrated, effective, job-driven workforce program. DOLWD continues to solidify its commitments to public/private partnerships to refine strategies and increase the responsiveness of SCSEP by providing oversight and technical assistance activities to improve program performance.

SCSEP service delivery is integrated into the state's workforce investment system and the senior service system. Skilled DVR, AJC, and project operator staff provide quality services to older workers, and employers have reported high satisfaction levels with SCSEP participants who have entered unsubsidized employment with them. Alaska's strategy is to continue to reach out to workforce development partners, the business community, and the senior service partners to ensure successful outcomes for older workers and Alaskan businesses.

State-Funded Workforce Programs

Alaska State Training and Employment Program (STEP)

STEP is a job-training program funded by a 0.01 percent set-aside of employee payroll tax contributions from the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund, providing approximately \$5.8 million annually to enhance the quality of in-state training and employment services for Alaska residents. More than 2,900 residents are served by STEP each year. Services include job training and employment services to help individuals obtain work or new skills to remain employed, learn new technologies, and meet emerging job demand opportunities. In addition, individuals served by STEP may receive support services such as transportation, temporary housing, meals, tools, and other supplies while in training.

Alaska Technical Vocational Education Program (TVEP)

TVEP, a training program geared towards secondary and postsecondary training and education programs, is funded similarly to STEP, but by a 0.16 percent set-aside of employee payroll tax contributions from the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund, which amounts to over \$10 million annually (FY 22 was \$11.6 million, FY 23 was \$13.7 million). TVEP helps secondary and postsecondary institutions and training centers create and maintain education and training services that match the regional economic and workforce needs. TVEP is distributed through legislative designation to the University of Alaska, the Alaska Vocational Technical Center (AVTEC), and several specific regional training centers in each region.

Alaska Construction Academy

The Alaska Construction Academy (ACA) was created by a partnership including representatives from the state, industry, tribal organizations, and school districts to address the demand for construction workers. The goals of ACA are to develop a robust and flexible workforce able to continue with employment, registered apprenticeship, or postsecondary technical education and training in the construction industry; enable employers to employ trained Alaskans, which increases productivity and safety of the workforce; and place Alaskans in construction and construction-related occupations or additional training. Serving the Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, Kenai Peninsula, Ketchikan, Mat-Su, Nome, Bristol Bay, and Kotzebue areas, ACA helps the industry by developing a cadre of Alaskans with the basic skills needed to enter a registered apprenticeship, postsecondary training, or entry-level construction employment.

USDOL Registered Apprenticeship Programs

In 1947, the Carpenters' Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee created the first trade apprenticeship program in Alaska, and many Alaska employers began training their employees through

Registered Apprenticeship (RA), with these programs enjoying steady growth since that time. In 2015, Alaska began expanding registered apprenticeship programs, which has helped employers in many industries learn how apprenticeship can benefit their businesses, leading to increased opportunities in apprenticeship for health care, aviation, and construction in particular. As of November 2023, Alaska had about 3,013 registered apprentices training in over 120 occupations, with 418 program sponsors and more than 700 businesses that hire and train apprentices.

State Apprenticeship Expansion, Equity, and Innovation Grant

In June 2021, Alaska secured a \$3.92 million State Apprenticeship Expansion, Equity, and Innovation (SAEEI) grant to advance apprenticeships in construction, health care, information technology, mining, and other professions. The department has partnered with the Department of Corrections for Culinary and Peer Support apprenticeships, Pacific Northwest Ironworkers for a newly introduced Metal Fabricator apprenticeship, Alaska Primary Care Association for health care apprenticeships, and Providence Hospital as a fresh sponsor for health care apprenticeships focusing on phlebotomy. Recently, the USDOL Alaska Office of Apprenticeship authorized Alaska Behavioral Health, operating as Alaska Seeds of Change, to launch a peer support specialist RA program. Each partner is an SAEEI subrecipient and as such, they assist their apprentices by covering training costs and offering supportive services necessary for completing the program.

While women represent 48 percent of the population of Alaska, only 18 percent of apprentices are women. This is a ten percent increase since 2014 and can be attributed largely to the growth in health care apprenticeships. Of the 3,013 apprentices, 65 percent are Caucasian, 14 percent are Alaska Native or American Indian, 5 percent are African American, and 5 percent are Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. These numbers are roughly comparable to their proportion in the total Alaska population. The average age of Alaska apprentices is 31; 52 percent are between 20 and 29; and 30 percent are between 30 and 39.

Expanding Registered Apprenticeships will significantly increase earnings for those who become apprentices. Based on the latest data available from the Research and Analysis section of DOLWD, those who complete an apprenticeship earn three times more on average than they did the year before they entered apprenticeship. Those participating in an RA program and completing a program in 2021 had an average wage of \$77,000, 24 percent higher than the state average. Increasing the number of apprentices and the completion rate will significantly improve the local and statewide economy and the lives of individuals and their families.

State Apprenticeship Expansion Formula Grant

AWIB received a USDOL State Apprenticeship Expansion Formula Grant (SAEF) of \$342,148 in July 2023. This one-year grant aligns efforts with the Department of Education & Early Development (DEED) and the Division of Employment and Training Services (DETS) to integrate School-to-Work initiatives and Career and Technical Education (CTE) with Registered Apprenticeship Programs.

State Five-Year Apprenticeship Plan

Every SAEF grantee must create a five-year plan—AWIB’s plan entails a comprehensive outline, detailing the activities for the first year and mapping out quarterly milestones. This plan serves as a benchmark for evaluating the progress of states. The primary aim of this five-year strategy is to prompt states to strategically consider how they’ll leverage funding in subsequent years to enhance and advance their ongoing activities, achievements, and objectives.

(B) The Strengths and Weaknesses of Workforce Development Activities

Strengths

Alaska Workforce Development Convening

The Alaska Workforce Investment Board hosted a two-day convening where employers from across Alaska's regions and industries joined workforce development, labor, education, and training leaders to build a new vision for cultivating the highly skilled workforce our state will need to thrive and take advantage of new opportunities – including new federal funding grants. Day 1 focused on what industries and employers need to see from the workforce development system: What could industries and employers provide the workforce development system to galvanize success? What workforce development actions should the state, industry, and educators prioritize? Day 2 focused on action, operationalizing what was learned on day one and building momentum for greater connectivity to improve the workforce system: What roles are needed to meet these priorities? What short-term and long-term actions do we need to operationalize the priorities from day one? Based on the vision and priorities outlined during the convening, the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) and AWIB have used this knowledge to develop this Four-Year WIOA State Plan.

New Workforce Development Plans

- Integrated State Plan

The Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) is collaborating with the Alaska Safety Alliance to elevate Alaska's skilled workforce in an initiative to map essential skills, identify critical industries, and craft a comprehensive, flexible, cross-industry development plan, geared towards addressing current and projected gaps in a local qualified workforce and training availability, ensuring the best fit for both employees and businesses, and ultimately bolstering the capabilities of Alaska's workforce.

The first phase of this collaborative endeavor involves mapping essential skills required in today's dynamic job market and identifying critical occupations and industries that drive Alaska's economic growth.

To bridge gaps in accessing training, the collaboration will pinpoint areas where individuals and businesses may face challenges in acquiring the necessary skills and recommend targeted actions that meet the unique needs of Alaska's workforce.

The initiative will result in a flexible cross-industry plan designed to adapt to the diverse needs of employees and businesses across different sectors. By identifying commonalities and transferable skills, the state can better provide training and workforce development opportunities that benefit individuals while meeting the demands of critical industries.

- Alaska Broadband Workforce Development Plan

The Alaska Broadband Office, under the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development (DCCED), manages Alaska's federal program responses to the Digital Equity Act and the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program established in the Infrastructure, Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) of 2021. These programs provide the state with funding to bridge the digital divide by building out technology neutral infrastructure and increasing capacity for unserved and underserved Alaskans by providing grants to eligible parties to build out broadband infrastructure, in a scalable, sustainable, and technology neutral manner. The Alaska Broadband Office is collaborating with the DOLWD and a variety of stakeholders to develop and implement a Broadband Workforce

Development Plan ensuring there is an available and qualified workforce to meet Alaska efforts to build the necessary infrastructure to provide full Digital Equity for all Alaskans.

- **Infrastructure Plan**

The Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) is collaborating with the Department of Transportation (DOT), the Alaska Broadband Office, and the Research and Analysis Division to address the state's imminent and projected workforce needs. This collaborative effort will result in a comprehensive Infrastructure Plan to foster economic growth, enhance connectivity, and prepare the workforce for upcoming infrastructure projects.

The partners are committed to data-driven decision-making and will pool and share relevant data, utilizing it to assess current and projected infrastructure projects to determine their workforce needs and implement strategic planning to meet those needs. The resulting plan will be tailored to meet the evolving workforce needs of the state's infrastructure initiatives.

Alaska Native Groups

Alaska Native Corporations and other Alaska Native groups are extremely important to Alaska's economy and the health and prosperity of every region. Alaska Native non-profit organizations assure adequate and appropriate attention to cultural and geographic barriers that inhibit workforce development. The twelve regional Alaska Native Non-Profit Corporations organized under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act recognized under Section 4(b) of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (PL 93-638, 25 U.S.C. 450b) provide a wide range of social, education, and employment services. Each has unique abilities and resources to serve Alaska Natives and American Indians and drive new initiatives to overcome education and employment barriers to success among these populations. They provide a vital connection among education, training, and employment and are most able to respond to the needs and strengths of Alaska's Native and American Indian people.

Key Groups Supporting Education, Workforce, and Economic Development

A diversity of groups around the state actively promote workforce and economic development, including the Business Education Compact, Alaska Native Coalition for Employment and Training, Alaska Apprenticeship Training Coordinators Association, Alaska Association for Career and Technical Education; the AWIB; state agencies, including the Department of Education & Early Development and Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development; the University of Alaska system; regional training centers; Alaska Postsecondary Access and Completion Network; Alaska Safety Alliance; Alaska Native education and training providers; Alaska Works Partnership; and the Fairbanks Pipeline Training Center Trust, and various industry associations, among others.

Partnerships

Establishing robust partnerships and collaborations among state agencies is paramount in Alaska to align programs and services, reduce duplication, and amplify the impact of initiatives. There is ongoing and close cooperation among the Divisions of the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) and various other state entities, including the Departments of Corrections (DOC); Health (DOH); Commerce, Community, and Economic Development (DCCED); and Education & Early Development (DEED); and the University of Alaska (UA) system. This collaborative approach is pivotal in delivering integrated services to meet the diverse needs of Alaska businesses and residents.

Under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), partnerships will play a central role in shaping the growth of our state's businesses and workforce. This landmark funding will result in expansion across various industries, creating an unprecedented demand for labor and workforce

development efforts between public and private entities. Key partnerships among the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) other entities such as the Alaska Safety Alliance, Alaska Municipal League, Department of Transportation (DOT), and the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development's (DCCED) Office of Broadband will be increasingly important as we implement IIJA and state funded projects.

Weaknesses/Challenges of Workforce Development Activities

Geography

Alaska's expansive geographical size and diverse population present distinctive challenges to education, training, and employment accessibility. While roads link the state's major cities, a substantial portion remains accessible solely by air or water, requiring expensive and time-consuming travel. Moreover, bridging the gap between villages and urban areas introduces cultural differences, compounding residents' difficulties.

In response to these challenges, Alaska's Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) is developing mobile platforms that provide information and facilitate connections for career training in rural communities, an approach that ensures job seekers and employers alike have enhanced access to vital services, irrespective of their location or the mode of delivery.

While urban centers boast robust access to job training, registered apprenticeships, colleges, technical schools, and other training programs, remote rural communities often need help accessing these opportunities. Rural residents are often at a disadvantage, as courses tend to fill up quickly with local enrollees. The financial burden of connecting students and job seekers to essential resources and education is disproportionately high for those in rural areas. The added challenge of travel and housing expenses during training is a significant deterrent, unlike their urban counterparts who do not face these obstacles. Costs of travel and housing also increase significantly between Memorial Day and Labor Day due to Alaska's robust tourist season, and accommodations can become more limited, further increasing the barriers for job seekers and trainees to participate in activities.

While valuable, the Alaska Job Center (AJC) services can only address some of these barriers. Successfully preparing an engaged and qualified workforce in rural communities necessitates a more collaborative and resourceful approach. Overcoming rural Alaska's economic and social challenges requires collaboration and resource-leveraging efforts. By fostering partnerships and pooling resources, Alaskan communities can work towards creating a more equitable and accessible educational and training landscape, ultimately contributing to the development of a skilled workforce across the state.

Technology Access and Skills

The digital divide between urban and rural or remote communities is stark, with cities enjoying up-to-date technology and robust internet speeds. In contrast, their counterparts in rural areas lag behind. This gap hampers the ability of residents, including students, teachers, employers, and job seekers in remote communities, to acquire essential skills, apply for jobs, and access online services on par with their urban counterparts.

Though positive changes are on the horizon, fueled by funding from the IIJA, the current reality is that many individuals in remote communities lack the electronic capacity necessary for effective learning, job applications, and receipt of online services. This digital disadvantage has broader education, employment, economic, and community development implications.

The impact of the IIJA is expected to narrow this technological gap significantly over the next four years. As funding initiatives are implemented, remote communities will witness improvements in

technology infrastructure, thereby enhancing the electronic capabilities of residents. This advancement will help bridge the digital divide and empower individuals in remote areas to participate more effectively in the digital economy, fostering equal opportunities for education, employment, and access to essential services.

In essence, the current disparity in technological infrastructure represents a hidden facet of the skills gap, which requires attention and concerted efforts to ensure that all individuals, regardless of their geographical location, can harness the power of technology for personal and professional development. The positive trajectory set by the IJA and Alaska's Five-Year Internet For All Action Plan, which was developed by the Alaska Broadband Office in the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development, signals a promising future for closing this gap and fostering a more inclusive and technologically empowered society in the state.

Employability Skills

Employers frequently lament the need for more motivated job seekers equipped with essential employability skills to fill crucial community positions. This scarcity is attributed to a myriad of factors, ranging from personal challenges such as substance abuse and mental health challenges, to systemic issues like the absence of localized career pathway programs. Compounding the challenge is a need for more qualified instructors and mentors, exacerbating the struggle to cultivate a workforce with the necessary skills and abilities.

One prominent factor contributing to the shortfall is the prevalence of personal issues among potential job seekers, including challenges related to substance abuse. These issues can hinder individuals from effectively pursuing and securing employment opportunities, underscoring the need for comprehensive support systems and intervention strategies to address these underlying concerns.

Systemic challenges further compound the issue, with the need for local career pathway programs being a notable bottleneck. With structured programs guiding individuals toward viable career options, job seekers may be able to identify and pursue opportunities aligned with their skills and aspirations. Moreover, the scarcity of qualified instructors and mentors in the community exacerbates the skills gap, making it challenging for individuals to receive the guidance and training necessary for success in the workforce.

The issue of motivation is also linked to the seasonality of work, lack of fringe benefits, and the pay rates for entry-level jobs. In communities where job opportunities fluctuate with the seasons or entry-level wages are not commensurate with the cost of living, individuals may need help to sustain motivation in their job search and employment pursuits.

Addressing these multifaceted challenges requires a holistic approach encompassing personal and systemic interventions. This includes developing support programs to address substance abuse issues, establishing local or regional career pathway initiatives, and investing in training programs led by qualified instructors and mentors. Additionally, efforts to enhance the attractiveness of entry-level jobs through competitive wages and addressing seasonality concerns can foster a more motivated and skilled workforce, ultimately benefiting job seekers and the communities where they live.

Immigrant Population

As of 2022, Alaska had a little more than 34,000 people who had immigrated to the state and become citizens and nearly 21,000 immigrants who were not U.S. citizens. Combined, those numbers made up about 8 percent of the state's population, which was well below the 14 percent for the U.S. as a whole.

Many immigrants are highly educated and have knowledge and skills employers need, with immigrant workers most numerous in the health care, retail trade, accommodation and food services, public administration, and manufacturing industries. Foreign education and credentials may not be as valued or recognized in the United States, which results in high rates of unemployment, underemployment, and poverty among this population. Anchorage is one of the nation's most ethnically diverse communities. Limited English proficiency is a significant barrier to learning and employment. The inability to recognize foreign education degrees and occupational credentials is a significant barrier.

To address these challenges and harness the potential of Alaska's immigrant community, the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development has reinstated the Office of Citizenship Assistance within the commissioner's office to support refugees and legal immigrants. Guided by Alaska statute AS 23.05.125, this office provides crucial information about employment and training opportunities to legal aliens and refugees. Beyond this, the office collaborates with other federal and state agencies to improve employment opportunities and prevent discrimination against legal aliens and refugees in Alaska.

By recognizing the unique barriers the immigrant population faces, particularly in terms of language proficiency and credential recognition, the state aims to foster an inclusive environment that maximizes the contributions of all residents. The reinstatement of the Office of Citizenship Assistance underscores Alaska's commitment to embracing diversity, promoting economic integration, and ensuring that the skills and talents of its immigrant population are fully realized and valued.

Refugee Population

Since October 2021, refugee arrivals to Alaska have increased substantially beyond the historical average of approximately 130 per year. Although refugees quickly gain their employment authorization documents, there are other significant obstacles they face when seeking employment. AJC's coordinate with social service agencies to assist the refugees, including Title I-B funding to pay for foreign credential evaluations and subsequent training and support to gain self-sustaining employment.

State Fiscal Considerations

Alaska is in the unique situation among states of having to transition away from a period when oil-related revenue was more than sufficient to pay all of the costs of state government. In addition to paying for nearly all government services, the state seeded its "Permanent Fund" with mineral royalties and has grown the fund using a blend of investments (stocks, bonds, real estate, and private equity) to a current balance of more than \$77 billion.

Since 2018, the state has been drawing from the Permanent Fund as the largest source of its "unrestricted general revenue," essentially the non-federal funding that is available to spend on general government services. This had the effect of stabilizing and diversifying some the state's revenue sources. However, even with the \$3+ billion annual draw from the Permanent Fund and another one to two billion from oil taxes and royalties, it's not enough to pay for existing levels of state government services in perpetuity.

On the spending side, steep initial cuts have given way to mostly status quo spending over the last few years, but high inflation has meant that in real dollars (inflation-adjusted), smaller cuts have continued. Of most concern to the economy and the ability of key institutions to focus on their core purposes is the instability and uncertainty that have resulted.

All of the state’s potential choices in creating more permanent budget solutions will have economic costs, but until we make those choices and settle into a more stable year-to-year budget environment, Alaska’s economy and state government performance will be at a disadvantage relative to other states.

State budget reductions have meant fewer staff to deliver workforce development programs and services. Reduced funding has resulted in closing job centers located in rural hub communities such as Kotzebue and Utqiagvik. Consolidation of space in urban centers will require shifting to a model that provides fewer in-person services and more information and services online and in conjunction with regional workforce partners such as the University of Alaska community campuses, regional training centers, and Alaska Native WIOA grantees. The temporary closures of Job Centers and subsequent remote service delivery necessitated by the pandemic have provided a glimpse into the new model and how it might work.

(C) State Workforce Development Capacity

Secondary Education and Training

Alaska has 54 school districts, including a statewide boarding school. Many have at least one career and technical education (CTE) program for one or more of Alaska’s priority industries. Many districts have articulation agreements with a UA or other postsecondary program so students can earn concurrent secondary and postsecondary credits. High school CTE programs are aligned to industry, academic, and employability skills and to school-to-apprenticeship standards. The recent economic downturn and state budget cuts have hindered CTE across the K-12 spectrum, and Alaska’s share of federal Carl D. Perkins CTE funding has remained stagnant for more than three decades. Districts are trying to keep CTE programs viable by forming consortia with other districts or programs, offering alternative delivery models such as intensive academies, using equipment simulators for training, or partnering with local employers, non-profit organizations, or other agencies to share facilities or instructors.

Postsecondary Education and Training

AVTEC

The Alaska Vocational Technical Center (AVTEC) in Seward is the only state-owned and operated postsecondary technical training center. AVTEC offers student housing and serves a statewide-focused mission to expand employment opportunities for Alaskans by preparing students with career and technical skills required for success in the Alaska workforce. Training programs include culinary arts, heavy diesel mechanic, welding, construction, plumbing and heating, refrigeration, industrial electricity, office administrative support for medical and accounting, and networking. The Alaska Maritime Training Center at AVTEC is Alaska's largest maritime training center, offering over forty US Coast Guard-approved courses for licensed and unlicensed marine vessel deck and engine operations, plus shoreside vessel maintenance and repair training for small to medium shipyard employees. The maritime program continues to expand to meet the needs of Alaskan job seekers and employers with their partnership with Northeast Maritime Online providing online studies for coursework that is not offered on site at AVTEC. Students complete their training in less than a year, having obtained their credentials and certifications. They are employed in Alaska’s industries with the necessary entry-level technical and employability skills to provide continued career advancement and success.

University of Alaska

The University of Alaska (UA) is an open enrollment institution with education and training programs, including pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs, hands-on competency-based training, and traditional learning labs and classroom settings, leading students to industry-recognized certifications,

endorsements, and degrees. At UA, students may be eligible for credit for prior learning through military or prior work experience, and dual enrollment opportunities are available for high school students.

UA has three independently accredited universities in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau and 13 community campuses across the state, offering many distance learning courses for greater program access. The community campuses support regional economic growth by training people for local jobs. UA enrolls approximately 21,000 full and part-time students annually through about 400 unique degree, certificate, and occupational endorsement programs.

UA's workforce development focus aligns with the Alaska Workforce Investment Board's and regional priorities, including the health, mining, construction, oil and gas, education, and maritime occupations. UA rural campuses serve as regional training centers and support regional economic drivers through engagement with local industries and employers to provide timely education and training programs.

UA participates in apprenticeship programs through membership in the Registered Apprenticeship College Consortium, developing new federally Registered Apprenticeship programs, providing apprenticeship completers with credit for prior learning opportunities, and sponsoring apprenticeship programs. The UA system also works closely with school districts to offer dual credit opportunities for career and technical education students so they may quickly attain postsecondary certificates and degrees after completing high school. UA also partners with K-12 education through middle colleges and the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program.

The University is home to the Alaska Small Business Development Center, which has offices in Anchorage, Wasilla, Fairbanks, Soldotna, and Juneau. It provides no-cost advising services and low-cost educational programs to entrepreneurs looking to start or grow their small businesses. The Center's business advisors work with entrepreneurs in confidential, one-on-one sessions in management, marketing, sales, finance, accounting, and other disciplines required for small business growth, expansion, and innovation.

- University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA)
 - Community & Technical College – Anchorage
 - Matanuska-Susitna College – Palmer
 - Prince William Sound College – Valdez
 - Kodiak College – Kodiak
 - Kenai Peninsula College – Soldotna
- University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF)
 - Community & Technical College – Fairbanks
 - Chukchi Campus – Kotzebue
 - Interior Alaska Campus - based in Fairbanks, serves rural areas in Interior Alaska
 - Northwest Campus – Nome
 - Kuskokwim Campus – Bethel
 - Bristol Bay Campus - Dillingham

- University of Alaska Southeast (UAS)
 - Juneau Campus
 - Sitka Campus
 - Ketchikan Campus

Regional Training Centers

Alaska’s regional training centers (RTCs) are public or non-profit centers whose mission is to develop and provide educational and training activities linked to employment opportunities in the region. A local or regional board governs each RTC and is a partnership comprised of two or more of the following types of organizations: business/industry; Alaska Native regional or community organizations; economic development entities; local boroughs; city, state, federal, and tribal governments; registered apprenticeship programs; K-12 school districts; accredited college and university educational institutions; and DOLWD AJCs. RTCs work closely with the region’s employers to provide the training necessary to fill the workforce needs of that region. These programs train over 8,500 students each year. Regional training centers include:

- Alaska Technical Center, Kotzebue – <http://www.nwarctic.org/atc>
- AVTEC, Seward – <https://avtec.edu/>
- Fairbanks Pipeline Training Center, Fairbanks – <http://www.fptcalaska.com/>
- Galena Interior Learning Academy, Galena – <https://galenaalaska.org/gila>
- Iḷisagvik College, Utqiagvik – <https://www.ilisagvik.edu/>
- Northwestern Alaska Career and Technical Center, Nome – <http://www.nacteonline.org/>
- Partners for Progress in Delta, Inc., Delta – <http://www.partnersforprogressindelta.org/>
- Southwest Alaska Vocational Education Center, King Salmon – <http://www.savec.org/>
- Yuut Elitnaurviat - People’s Learning Center, Bethel – <https://yuut.org/>
- UA community campuses – <http://www.alaska.edu/research/wp/ua/>

Figure 7 shows the locations of Job Centers, Regional Training Centers, and University of Alaska campuses across the state.

(A) Goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including preparing youth and individuals with barriers to employment⁵ and other populations.⁶

(B) Goals for meeting the skilled workforce needs of employers.

3. PERFORMANCE GOALS

Using the tables provided within each Core Program section, include the State's expected levels of performance relating to the performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance described in section 116(b)(2)(A) of WIOA. (This Strategic Planning element only applies to core programs.)

4. ASSESSMENT

Describe how the State will assess the overall effectiveness of the workforce development system in the State in relation to the strategic vision and goals stated above in sections (b)(1), (2), and (3) and how it will use the results of this assessment, which may include evaluation findings, and other feedback to make continuous or quality improvements.

(1) Vision.

Vision: Empowering Alaskans for High-Skill, High-Wage Careers

In pursuit of Alaska's commitment to the well-being of its residents and economic prosperity, our strategic vision for developing the state's workforce revolves around the core principle "Enhance and improve opportunities for all Alaskans to obtain high-skill, high-wage jobs and careers by promoting the dignity of work and the value of employment." This vision serves as our guiding light, inspiring a collaborative and comprehensive approach to workforce development that resonates across all regions and industries.

Convening for Progress: A Two-Day Exploration

Acknowledging the pivotal role of collaboration and a holistic strategy, the Alaska Workforce Investment Board recently hosted a two-day statewide convening. Representatives from diverse businesses, workforce development, labor, education, and training sectors gathered to chart a course for a new model to develop a highly skilled workforce essential for Alaska's thriving future.

Day-1 - Identifying Needs and Priorities

The initial day focused on thoroughly exploring what industries and businesses require from the workforce development system. It delved into the reciprocal relationship, questioning what the workforce system needs from businesses and industries to succeed. Participants collaboratively

⁵ Individuals with barriers to employment include displaced homemakers; low-income individuals; Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians; individuals with disabilities, including youth who are individuals with disabilities; older individuals; ex-offenders; homeless individuals, or homeless children and youths; youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system; individuals who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers; eligible migrant and seasonal farmworkers (as defined at section 167(i) of WIOA and Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 35-14); individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program; single parents (including single pregnant women); and long-term unemployed individuals.

⁶ Veterans, unemployed workers, and youth and any other populations identified by the State.

identified key concerns that the state, industry, and educators should prioritize in their workforce development initiatives.

Day-2 - Operationalizing Insights for Progress

Building upon the insights from Day 1, the second day concentrated on translating the identified needs and priorities into actionable steps to operationalize the knowledge gained, fostering greater connectivity among stakeholders to improve the workforce system. Discussions centered on determining the immediate and long-term roles required to meet the established priorities.

The Path Forward: Alaska's Comprehensive Four-Year WIOA State Plan

In alignment with the vision and priorities outlined during the convening, the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) and the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) have translated these insights into this Comprehensive Four-Year Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) State Plan. This plan will serve as our roadmap, guiding the development and implementation of specific programs, policies, and initiatives to elevate Alaska's workforce and address the evolving needs of employers.

By embodying the principles of collaboration, dignity of work, and a comprehensive approach, Alaska is poised to cultivate a workforce prepared to seize new opportunities, including leveraging federal and state funding. Together, we embark on a journey to empower Alaskans, ensuring that high-skill, high-wage jobs are not just aspirations but attainable realities for every resident of our great state.

(2) Goals.

(A) Goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including preparing youth and individuals with barriers to employment and other populations.

1. Build clear careers and/or employment routes for all Alaskans.
 - Enhance and expand career information and guidance for students, parents, guardians, teachers, and counselors, with the help of employers, to engage students in exploring careers and workplaces.
 - Increase the life, work-ready, and technical skills of in- and out-of-school youth and adults.
 - Help youth transition from high school to postsecondary education, training, and work.
 - Assist veterans with barriers to employment transition into the civilian workforce.
 - Increase industry-sector-focused work-based learning opportunities for youth and adults through internships, school-to-work, pre-apprentice and apprentice training, seasonal employment work experience, and work-study.
2. Support job opportunities, training opportunities, and career progression opportunities for all Alaskans.
 - Provide technical assistance for school district career and technical education partners in connecting youth with the Alaska Job Center Network and career opportunities and pathways.
 - Maximize the use of Alaska's Job Centers (AJCs) and the no-wrong-door approach to provide information on career pathways and opportunities for youth and adults both in-person and virtually.

- Connect youth and adults with disabilities with educational opportunities and employment supports to maximize successful employment retention.
- Improve the ability to accept and transfer credits earned in high school through apprenticeships, postsecondary education, and college coursework.
- Link veterans with training and educational opportunities to optimize career progression.
- Promote competency-based occupational training that reduces the time required to complete training and go to work.
- Expand pre-apprentice and apprenticeship opportunities and other work-based learning approaches to youth and adults, including individuals with disabilities and others with significant barriers to training and employment.

(B) Goals for meeting the skilled workforce needs of employers.

1. Foster Collaboration and Partnership; build on the framework from the Convening
 - a. Facilitate meaningful collaboration and partnership among key stakeholders, including employers, education leaders, workforce development professionals, and government representatives.
2. Promote Inclusivity and Diversity
 - a. Emphasize the importance of inclusivity and diversity in workforce development strategies, ensuring that opportunities are accessible to individuals from all backgrounds and communities.
3. Strengthen Industry-Education Partnerships
 - a. Foster stronger partnerships between industries and educational institutions to create pathways for students and job seekers to gain relevant skills and experience.
4. Support Recruitment and Retention Efforts
 - a. Develop initiatives and strategies to support industries in recruiting and retaining a skilled workforce, addressing the unique challenges employers face in Alaska.
5. Promote Employment Opportunities to the Next Generation
 - a. Explore innovative ways to promote employment opportunities to the next generation, leveraging technology, outreach programs, and educational partnerships.
6. Expand and Enhance the Apprenticeship System
 - a. Evaluate and discuss opportunities to expand and enhance the apprenticeship system in Alaska, creating more pathways for individuals to gain hands-on experience and skills.
7. Address Regional Workforce Disparities:
 - a. Consider regional disparities and unique economic conditions within Alaska, tailoring workforce strategies to meet the specific needs of different regions.

3. Performance Goals.

Performance Goals for all programs are compiled in Appendix 1 - Performance Indicators

4. Assessment

Accountability Measures

The state uses the performance accountability measures in Section 116 of WIOA to assess the overall effectiveness of Alaska's workforce investment system and the individual core programs. These measures align well with the strategic vision and goals. DOLWD will negotiate updated performance goals for WIOA programs in spring 2024.

The state also tracks a number of success metrics for its apprenticeship grants, including the number of new Registered Apprenticeship programs, the number of new apprentices, and the number of sponsors and employers providing employment and training services.

Industry Sector Partnerships

DOLWD works with industry sector partners and solicits feedback about how the workforce system, programs, and initiatives are working for employers and training providers and will continue to solicit their ideas for continuous quality improvements.

Data Analysis

DOLWD analyzes the data from performance measures and outcomes such as employment and earnings to assess and compare strategies and determine which are working well and which need adjusting. Workforce program results are published annually for policymakers, the public, and the AWIB to further assess programs and comparative outcomes to determine the services and interventions that work and those that are less effective. The participant data and rich labor market information provide a solid platform for deeper and longer-term evaluation of workforce programs.

C. STATE STRATEGY

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the State's strategies to achieve its strategic vision and goals. These strategies must take into account the State's economic, workforce, and workforce development, education and training activities and analysis provided in Section (a) above. Include discussion of specific strategies to address the needs of populations provided in Section (a).

1. DESCRIBE THE STRATEGIES THE STATE WILL IMPLEMENT, INCLUDING INDUSTRY OR SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS RELATED TO IN-DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTORS AND OCCUPATIONS AND CAREER PATHWAYS, AS REQUIRED BY WIOA SECTION 101(D)(3)(B), (D). "CAREER PATHWAY" IS DEFINED AT WIOA SECTION 3(7) AND INCLUDES REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP. "IN-DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTOR OR OCCUPATION" IS DEFINED AT WIOA SECTION 3(23)

2. DESCRIBE THE STRATEGIES THE STATE WILL USE TO ALIGN THE CORE PROGRAMS, ANY COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS INCLUDED IN THIS PLAN, REQUIRED AND OPTIONAL ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS, AND ANY OTHER RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO THE STATE TO ACHIEVE FULLY INTEGRATED CUSTOMER SERVICES CONSISTENT WITH THE STRATEGIC VISION AND GOALS DESCRIBED ABOVE. ALSO DESCRIBE STRATEGIES TO STRENGTHEN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES IN REGARD TO WEAKNESSES IDENTIFIED IN SECTION II(A)(2)

(1) Describe the strategies the State will implement, including industry or sector partnerships related to in-demand industry sectors and occupations and career pathways, as required by WIOA section 101(d)(3)(B), (D).

Strategy 1. Engage industry sector partnerships and create career pathways for all Alaskans.

The AWIB and the department engage industry sector partners from in-demand industries, including health care, construction, maritime, oil and gas, transportation, hospitality and tourism, technology, education, and mining. The AWIB and DOLWD will continue to participate in, and in some cases lead, sector workforce and career planning efforts that include employers and other sector partners (K-12 education; postsecondary education; regional training centers; economic development organizations; labor unions; and other appropriate state agencies). The efforts help update existing workforce plan(s), gauge the status of current workforce development activities, and determine gaps in training both statewide and regionally. These sector-specific partnerships also help ensure that education and training investments are prioritized, focused on, and responsive to employer needs, and that career pathways are accessible to all Alaskans, including all WIOA-targeted populations.

Current labor market information from employers and DOLWD's Research and Analysis Section informs sector partnerships. Employers are encouraged to work closely with the AWIB, DOLWD, and other partners in developing career pathways to address the needs of the industry from K-12 through postsecondary. Postsecondary is viewed in the broad sense of any education or training that happens after high school, which could include college/university, technical training program, Registered Apprenticeships, short-term training, industry certification programs, pre-apprenticeship programs, adult education, etc. AJC career specialists and case managers use an industry-sector approach to work more effectively with employers and job seekers.

To maintain an understanding of Alaska's workforce needs, each AWIB meeting includes a labor market update. Face-to-face board meetings feature a panel and discussion with employers sharing information about their industry's training needs and practices and ties to Alaska's Job Center Network.

The Alaska Job Center Network also maintains strong relationships with key employers in priority industries through employer services. These relationships allow the department to effectively connect job seekers through One-Stop programs for training and employment placements. The MOU executed by the AWIB with the One-Stop Operator and WIOA required partners provides for an Alaska Job Center Network advisory council that facilitates program and regional information sharing about how partners successfully connect with industries and employers.

Strategy 2. Expand Registered Apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships, and other work-based learning approaches.

Registered Apprenticeship is recognized for enhancing job opportunities and aiding employers in cultivating a skilled workforce. The governor and the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) have identified expansion of Registered Apprenticeship programs as a strategic move, which will guide youth and adults, particularly those from underserved communities, towards well-paying careers, and to provide employers with skilled workers for in-demand jobs.

The Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) has incorporated apprenticeship strategies into its service model. AWIB staff and the Apprenticeship Unit Supervisor collaborate with Alaska's U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) Office of Apprenticeship (OA), offering support and technical assistance to employer partners. They also engage with industry partners and associations to advocate apprenticeship as a key workforce development tool, encourage multi-employer sponsorships, and create new apprenticeship programs.

The Alaska OA and DOLWD provide continual training to Apprenticeship Specialists and Employment Technicians, focusing on establishing approved programs and informing job seekers and students about apprenticeship benefits. The Apprenticeship Specialists, based in Job Centers and overseen by the Apprenticeship Unit Supervisor, conduct outreach to establish new apprenticeship programs and support existing ones. New sponsors registering apprentices are directed to case managers for financial support using WIOA and apprenticeship expansion grant funding. The DOLWD has seen a growing interest from employers in apprenticeships as a recruitment strategy, especially given the current labor shortage.

The Alaska Vocational Technical Center (AVTEC), a division of DOLWD, has established an Apprenticeship Unit and has become a statewide multi-employer apprenticeship sponsor, beginning with Information Technology. Additionally, AVTEC is working on creating the Residential Building Maintenance apprenticeship program.

DOLWD's State Apprenticeship Expansion (SAE) Formula Grant aligns activities of the Department of Education & Early Development (DEED) and DOLWD's Division of Employment and Training Services (DETS). This coordination is focused on integrating School to Work initiatives and Career and Technical Education (CTE) with Registered Apprenticeship Programs. The effort involves collaboration with the USDOL OA to identify emerging industries and potential employer partners. The grant also supports partnering with Alaska Job Center staff to advocate for registered apprenticeship among job seekers and employers needing a trained workforce. The initiative also includes collaboration with project staff for efficient and accurate data gathering, preparation of quarterly federal reports, administrative support, and maintaining communication with various partners.

Alaska encourages college participation in the Registered Apprenticeship, allowing apprentices to earn college credits applicable towards degrees and transferable. The AWIB staff collaborates with programs approved by the American Council on Education to offer distance-delivered Related Technical Instruction. Participating colleges award credits to apprentices completing these programs, giving them an advantage towards obtaining a degree or certificate.

DOLWD has revamped its apprenticeship website (<https://jobs.alaska.gov/apprentice/job-seekers/index.html>), created new materials for job seekers and employers, and developed a SAEF apprenticeship 5-year plan (https://awib.alaska.gov/documents/AWIB_State_Five_Year_Work_Plan_2023.pdf)

Strategy 3: Demonstrate innovation in delivery of Alaska Job Center services.

DOLWD is working in collaboration with the Department of Education & Early Development (DEED) to place Career Guides in regional job centers to help students make well-informed education and career decisions while focusing on regional workforce development needs and increasing the completion rate of the Free Application for Student Aid. Career Guides will partner with local school districts to provide direct services to high school students, using work-based learning, internships, and job placements that allow students to gain practical experience in real-world settings.

DOLWD recently became a Department of Defense SkillBridge Industry Partner, providing transitioning service members an invaluable opportunity to gain civilian work experience through specific industry training, apprenticeships, or internships prior to being released from active duty. There are currently two DOLWD opportunities approved and registered: Employment Services Technician and Wage and Hour Investigator. In addition, DOLWD is integrating this program as an employer service. We are now able to assist our employer community in establishing their own

SkillBridge programs, an innovative opportunity to access a premier talent pool at no cost, liability, or risk.

DOLWD continues to strengthen partnerships through events like the annual One-Stop Training Academies held regionally. These academies bring together local WIOA-required and non-required partners to share information about our organizations and discuss how best to serve our customers in common and provide meaningful and appropriate referrals.

DOLWD continues to review programmatic and individual AJC business processes and customer engagement and develop strategies to capitalize on new efficiencies and increase the depth and breadth of services. AJC services focus on serving WIOA priority populations and connecting Alaskans to career pathways leading to employment and career opportunities.

Strategy 4: Prioritize services to target populations.

WIOA funds focus on serving WIOA-defined target populations. Outreach is continually expanding through regional workforce partners, which helps inform people with barriers to employment and other target populations of the services that are available to them. Services include career awareness and planning, employment skills, education and training opportunities, job placement, and follow-up services. DOLWD enhances the connection among the systems and programs that serve the targeted populations, which are:

- Youth and adults with disabilities
- Alaska Natives
- Veterans and transitioning service members
- Out-of-school youth
- Returning citizens
- Unemployed and underemployed
- Individuals with multiple barriers to training and employment
- At-risk youth, including those exiting the Juvenile Justice system
- Homeless individuals

The DOLWD's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) provides training for AJC and partner staff working with clients who have disabilities to increase referrals to DVR. DVR uses vocational evaluation services and local labor market surveys to ensure individuals with disabilities are provided informed choice to foster the pursuit of career pathways in high-demand industries, including apprenticeship opportunities. DVR partners with WIOA core programs to maximize services to individuals with disabilities and coordinate services to promote successful employment outcomes.

The Department of Health supports "Disability Benefits 101," an online tool for those with disabilities, which provides information on available work incentives and helps individuals determine how their Social Security Insurance, Social Security Disability Insurance, or other public benefits may be affected by employment. The Achieving a Better Life Experience Act allows eligible persons with disabilities to secure a "taxed advantaged" savings account of up to \$100,000 without affecting public benefit limits. Calculating benefits and ABLE savings is a critical tool for achieving quality long-term outcomes. DVR works with Work Incentives Planning & Assistance Projects to ensure there is a system with multiple

partners to meet the needs of Alaska’s youth and adults with disabilities by expanding access to employment and career pathways to prepare for in-demand careers through comprehensive access to benefits planning by certified Community Work Incentive Counselors.

Alaska’s “Employment First” legislation calls for “competitive integrated employment” as the preferred outcome for those with disabilities. DOLWD has executed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Alaska Department of Health Division of Senior and Disability Services and is working on an MOU with the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development (DEED) to ensure progress towards that goal. Alaska DVR works collaboratively with DEED to maximize opportunities for students with disabilities to participate in Pre-ETS activities. DVR and DEED co-chair the Alaska Interagency Transition Council (AITC), a statewide stakeholder group with representatives from Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation, Statewide Parent Training and Information Center, Southeast Regional Resource Center, and urban and rural school districts.

Through Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), DVR provides the following required activities to students with disabilities (14- to 21-year-olds) who are eligible or potentially eligible for vocational rehabilitation services: (1) job exploration counseling, (2) work-based learning opportunities, (3) counseling on postsecondary educational opportunities, (4) workplace readiness training, and (5) instruction in self-advocacy. Pre-ETS implementation has increased transition coordination among local school districts and DVR.

DOLWD works with Alaska Native organizations already engaged in workforce development activities to ensure services are provided as widely as possible while avoiding duplication.

DOLWD continues to participate in Alaska’s Returning Citizens Initiative in partnership with the Alaska Department of Corrections to assist youth and adults leaving correctional facilities in obtaining gainful employment and connecting to a career path. DOLWD secured a two-year Linking to Employment Pre-Release grant intended to reduce recidivism. The program provided 600 pre-release inmates with career services, 200 of whom enrolled in the nine-week individualized Bridge to Success curriculum.

DOLWD works with agencies such as Catholic Social Services to support refugees, asylum seekers, and other immigrants in improving their skills and pursuing education, training, and sustainable employment in alignment with the White House Task Force on New Americans Plan developed with the participation of the Municipality of Anchorage.

DOLWD works with Alaska’s military leadership to provide training and employment opportunities to veterans and transitioning service members. DOLWD works with the Soldier for Life and Airmen for Life transition centers to assist with career path training for Transitioning Services Members, preparing them for employment in Alaska as they leave military service. The military-approved training providers create pre-apprentice and occupational training pathways to priority industry jobs.

Strategy 5: Partner with other agencies, organizations, and programs to leverage resources.

DOLWD will continue and expand its partnerships with other agencies and organizations. While the following list is not all-inclusive, below are some examples of partnership development and partner programs:

- Alaska AFL-CIO
- Alaska Apprenticeship Training Coordinators Association
- Alaska Association for Career and Technical Education

- Alaska Health Workforce Coalition
- Alaska Housing Finance Corporation
- Alaska Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Eielson Air Force Base, and Fort Wainwright Military Transition Services
- Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority
- Alaska Native Organizations
- Alaska Native Coalition for Employment and Training
- Alaska Native Regional Employment and Training Entities
- Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium
- Alaska Performance Scholarship Program
- Alaska Postsecondary Access and Completion Network
- Alaska Primary Care Association
- Alaska Reentry Partnership
- Alaska Regional Economic Development Organizations
- Alaska Safety Alliance
- Alaska state agencies such as Departments of Corrections; Health; Family and Community Services; Administration; Commerce, Community, and Economic Development; Education & Early Development
- Alaska Vocational Technical Center
- Alaska Works Partnership, Inc.
- Alaska Youth Works (Alaska Mental Health Trust Program)
- Alaska Youth Works (Disability Employment Initiative)
- Anchorage Literacy Project
- Catholic Social Services - Refugee Assistance and Immigration Services
- Fairbanks Pipeline Training Center
- Governor’s Council on Disabilities and Special Education
- Joint-Administered Training Trusts
- Northern Industrial Training, Inc.
- Regional Training Centers
- Renewable Energy Alaska Project

- Sponsors of Federal Registered Apprenticeship Programs
- University of Alaska Statewide Office for Workforce Development
- University of Alaska Community Campuses
- USDOL Alaska Office of Apprenticeship

Strategy 6: Streamline internal processes by fully integrating programs and services.

DOLWD has taken steps to streamline internal processes by creating full integration of programs and services, including the following:

Grants/Systems Support Realignment

In July 2019, the Commissioner of the Department of Labor and Workforce Development realigned the grants unit under the Alaska Workforce Investment Board. This realignment ensures greater coordination and efficiency of workforce investment dollars in the state. The realignment is consistent with the WIOA State Plan and elevates the status of the grants unit to be consistent with other state models.

Alaska Workforce Investment Board Grants Unit

The AWIB grants unit is led by the AWIB Executive Director along with an assistant director overseeing the following programs and initiatives:

- WIOA Youth
- Apprenticeship
- At Risk Youth
- State Training Employment Program
- Technical Vocational Education Program

Policy Review

Reorganization resulted in a policy review, and prior policies of the Division of Employment Training Services were adopted.

Integrity, Program Assessments, and Grants

The AWIB provides integrity for the allocation and use of public resources and the assessment, evaluation, and continuous improvement of workforce strategies and programs.

AWIB staff prepare public solicitations for grants and perform due diligence to assure all applicants considered for funding meet the application requirements. Grant administrators assist with the collection of grant applications and the AWIB grant application review process. AWIB members independently review applications, make recommendations to the commissioner for awarding grants, and ensure integrity in award, denial, and appeal of decision processes.

Other

DOLWD works with the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE) in streamlining processes for DOLWD grantees and Eligible Training Providers by sharing information between the two agencies regarding the status of training providers' compliance with ACPE regulations.

DOLWD coordinates with the University of Alaska and the Department of Education & Early Development on education and workforce issues such as continued implementation of the Alaska Career and Technical Education Plan; dual and concurrent credit for high school students; aligning secondary and postsecondary programs to industry standards and industry needs; and partnering to provide pre-apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship opportunities.

Strategy 7. Promote job creation and workforce development opportunities identified by regional data.

The Research and Analysis Section of DOLWD publishes a wide variety of employment, unemployment, wage, and population data for all of Alaska's economic regions on its website and regularly profiles different parts of the state in its monthly publication Alaska Economic Trends. Below are a few recent examples of those types of regional or local-area articles:

- Anchorage 2024 employment forecast, Alaska Economic Trends, January 2024
- Fairbanks 2024 employment forecast, Alaska Economic Trends, January 2024
- Southeast 2024 employment forecast, Alaska Economic Trends, January 2024

Strategy 8: Actively engage at-risk youth and provide immediate accessibility to program services.

DVR, along with other DOLWD programs, will continue work in concert to address the needs of at-risk youth exiting the foster care and juvenile justice systems. DVR provides vocational rehabilitation services to youth who experience disabilities to increase their likelihood of success and independence through employment.

(2) Describe the strategies the State will use to align the core programs, any Combined State Plan partner programs included in this Plan, required and optional one-stop partner programs, and any other resources available to the State to achieve fully integrated customer services consistent with the strategic vision and goals described above. Also describe strategies to strengthen workforce development activities in regard to weaknesses identified in section II(a)(2).

All core programs and the combined plan partner program - Senior Community Service Employment Program - are administered by DOLWD. All the strategies listed under Section I(c) State Strategy (1) align the core and partner programs and other entities in the state's education, workforce, and economic development arena. Staff members from each program meet regularly to discuss operational strategies aligned with the goals. These meetings identify areas of alignment that create efficiencies and increase program benefits to Alaskans, including cross-program training, DVR and AJC staff training, DOLWD policy changes, communication strategies, and frequent reviews of performance metrics.

DOLWD regularly engages One-Stop partners (See Appendix 2.2) to further implement state workforce programs and coordinate activities regionally to ensure the focus on WIOA target populations while supplying qualified job and apprentice applicants for employers and apprenticeship sponsors. Key projects include improving services for persons with disabilities (Work Matters), expanding Registered Apprenticeships, modernizing AJCs and service delivery, and increasing services for youth and adults reentering society - all of which require continuous program review and coordinated activities among partners.

Strategies to Strengthen Activities Regarding Identified Opportunities (Weaknesses)

Opportunity: A persistent challenge for Alaska is its vast geographic expanse and diverse population, presenting unique hurdles for education and training. While road networks link the state's major cities, a substantial portion remains reachable solely by air or water, introducing logistical complexities that make travel expensive and time-consuming. Beyond the geographical obstacles, an additional layer of complexity stems from cultural differences, particularly between individuals from village settings and those in urban areas. In many instances, the necessity for in-person training further compounds the challenge, requiring additional resources to cover travel and housing expenses. This results in the need for financial support to enable individuals to access training that may only be available through on-site instruction.

- **Strategy:** Use technology and strengthen local partnerships to tackle the unique challenges posed by Alaska's expansive geography and diverse population, particularly in employment and training services, to enhance accessibility and foster collaboration:
 - **Leverage Technology:** Alaska is implementing digital solutions to overcome the barriers presented by vast distances. Employment and training services are made available through the internet and smartphones, ensuring that individuals in remote areas can access valuable resources from the convenience of their devices. This will bridge the geographical gap and facilitate seamless participation in training programs.
 - **Utilize Local Resources:** Recognizing the significance of local infrastructure, Alaska is tapping into existing resources in rural areas. Local libraries and tribal council offices are supported to provide public internet access, ensuring that even regions without Alaska Job Centers (AJCs) can offer vital employment and training services. This approach maximizes the use of community spaces to facilitate learning and job-seeking activities.
 - **Strengthen Partnerships:** The state is forging partnerships with rural organizations, particularly tribal organizations, to enhance collaboration and resource-sharing. These partnerships go beyond co-enrollment in training programs; they extend to sharing the costs associated with travel and housing. By pooling resources and leveraging the strengths of various entities, we can alleviate the financial burdens associated with attending in-person training sessions, making such opportunities more accessible.
 - **Engage Communities:** Alaska is fostering stronger ties with tribal organizations and other community entities to ensure that the unique cultural aspects of different regions are considered in the design and delivery of employment and training services. This community-centric approach recognizes the diversity of Alaska's population and tailors initiatives to meet the specific needs of each community.

Opportunity: The digital divide persists, particularly in rural and remote communities, where internet speed and technology capacity lags significantly behind urban areas. This technological disparity poses a formidable challenge for residents, including students, teachers, employers, and job seekers, who lack access to the electronic tools necessary for learning, job applications, and accessing online services at a level comparable to their urban counterparts. This digital inequity is primarily attributed to these regions' lack of robust technology infrastructure.

In these remote locales, individuals need help acquiring essential skills, pursuing educational opportunities, and participating in the digital economy, given their limited internet speed and technology resources. Students need help accessing online educational materials, teachers encounter

challenges delivering remote education, and job seekers and employers need help to engage in online job searches and recruitment processes. Rural and remote communities' lack of technological infrastructure perpetuates a cycle of limited access to opportunities, hindering personal and professional growth. With the appropriate electronic tools, individuals in these areas can harness the benefits offered by digital advancements.

- **Strategy:** Leverage technology and partnerships to increase rural residents' access to online services to help to close the gap in skill development, employment prospects, and access to vital services:
 - Increase collaboration with stakeholders to address the challenges faced by rural residents in accessing employment and training services through the Internet. Partnerships with University of Alaska rural campuses, state-funded technical and vocational education programs, and local governments are being strengthened to identify and leverage the best available internet access options across all areas, ensuring that rural residents can seamlessly access crucial services:
 - Increase use of Alaska's new integrated labor exchange and case management system, AlaskaJobs, which serves as a unified portal, streamlining client access to services. Through AlaskaJobs, individuals can efficiently navigate various employment and training resources, providing a comprehensive platform for their needs. A notable feature of this system is its compatibility with mobile devices, addressing the growing trend of mobile device usage in rural Alaska. In Program Year 2023, we will launch a mobile application to increase direct usage of labor exchange system services.

Responding to the increasing reliance on mobile devices as a primary method for internet access in rural areas, including mobile device compatibility in AlaskaJobs, ensures that rural participants have greater flexibility and convenience in accessing employment and training services, aligning with the evolving technological landscape in these communities. As mobile device usage continues to increase in rural Alaska, DOLWD's emphasis on integrating this platform into AlaskaJobs reflects a commitment to meeting the population's evolving needs. By using technology and fostering partnerships, Alaska is working towards a more inclusive and accessible framework for employment and training services, empowering residents in rural areas to overcome barriers and participate fully in economic and educational opportunities.

Opportunity: A widespread concern among employers is the shortage of motivated job seekers equipped with essential employability skills to meet the demands of local jobs. This shortage is attributed to many factors, from personal challenges to systemic issues.

One significant contributor to the lack of suitable candidates is the prevalence of personal issues, notably substance abuse. Individuals grappling with substance abuse challenges often find it difficult to maintain the focus and dedication necessary for successful training and employment. This personal struggle becomes a significant barrier to entry into the workforce and hinders the development of essential skills.

Systemically, the absence of local career pathway programs compounds the issue. With no structured programs guiding individuals toward viable career options, job seekers are unable to identify and pursue opportunities aligned with their skills and aspirations. The absence of such programs limits the exposure of potential candidates to various career paths, hindering their ability to pursue their personal and career development.

The need for more qualified instructors and available mentors exacerbates the challenge. A lack of guidance and mentorship opportunities leaves job seekers without the necessary support to navigate the complexities of the job market. The need for qualified instructors further inhibits the development of essential skills among potential candidates, making it challenging for them to meet the expectations of employers.

- **Strategy:** Address the lack of motivated job seekers with essential employability skills by supporting programs that can address personal and training challenges:
 - Support Substance Abuse Programs. Collaborate with local health care providers and other organizations to offer substance abuse prevention and rehabilitation programs; provide resources and incentives for employees seeking assistance with such issues, foster a supportive and understanding workplace culture.
 - Develop Local Career Pathway Programs. Develop and implement localized career pathway programs in collaboration with educational institutions, industry, and community organizations; establish partnerships with local schools and vocational training centers to create internship and apprenticeship opportunities.
 - Train Instructors and Mentors. Invest in training programs for instructors to enhance their qualifications and ensure they are equipped to teach relevant technical and employability skills; create mentorship programs connecting experienced professionals with job seekers to provide guidance, support, and networking opportunities.
 - Enhance Community Outreach and Engagement. Conduct community outreach programs to raise awareness about available job opportunities, career pathways, and support services; collaborate with local organizations to organize job fairs, workshops, and informational sessions to engage potential job seekers.
 - Promote Employer-Led Training Initiatives. Initiate employer-led training programs that address specific skill gaps and align with the needs of the local job market; collaborate with industry associations to develop industry-specific training modules and certifications.
 - Leverage Government Support and Funding. Advocate for government funding and support for community-based employability programs, including substance abuse treatment, education, and training initiatives; explore and utilize available grants and subsidies to fund skill development programs for job seekers.
 - Provide Flexible Work Arrangements. Implement flexible work schedules to accommodate individuals with unique circumstances, such as those in recovery or who have family responsibilities; provide part-time, remote, or flexible working hours to attract a broader range of candidates.
 - Promote Continuous Learning and Upskilling. Encourage a culture of continuous learning within the workplace by providing ongoing training opportunities for employees; support initiatives that promote upskilling and reskilling to adapt to evolving job requirements and industry trends.
 - Collaborate with Educational Institutions. Engage with local schools, colleges, and vocational training programs to align educational curricula with industry needs; establish partnerships to create seamless transitions for students from education to employment.

- Use Data. Utilize data analytics to identify trends in workforce gaps, skill shortages, and areas for improvement; regularly assess the effectiveness of implemented strategies and adjust approaches based on data-driven insights.

Opportunity: Remote rural communities face significant challenges in accessing essential resources such as job training, apprenticeships, colleges, and career and technical education. This lack of access hinders residents' ability to acquire the necessary skills and education vital for personal and professional development.

- **Strategy:** Improve access to educational and training opportunities in remote communities:
 - Promote Community-Based Education Initiatives. Develop and support community-based education initiatives that directly bring training programs to these areas, fostering skill development tailored to local needs.
 - Use Mobile Learning Platforms. Implement mobile learning platforms and distance education programs to overcome geographical barriers and allow residents to access educational resources remotely.
 - Collaborate with Local Businesses. Foster partnerships among educational institutions and local businesses to create apprenticeship programs and on-the-job training opportunities that align with the needs of rural industries.
 - Leverage Government Support and Funding. Advocate for government support and funding to invest in educational infrastructure in remote areas, ensuring residents have access to quality training facilities, both physical and virtual.
 - Develop Digital Literacy Programs. Implement digital literacy programs to equip residents with the skills to leverage online educational resources, fostering a more digitally connected learning environment.
 - Create Scholarship and Financial Aid Programs. Establish scholarship and financial aid programs to alleviate the financial burden on residents seeking higher education or technical training.
 - Foster Community Engagement and Awareness. Conduct local awareness campaigns to highlight the importance of education and training and the availability of local training and employment, and encourage residents to seek available opportunities.

Opportunity: Limited English proficiency presents a substantial hurdle to learning and employment opportunities, compounding individuals' challenges in navigating educational and professional landscapes. The inability to transfer foreign education degrees and occupational credentials further exacerbates the barriers for these individuals. These dual challenges significantly impact the integration and success of non-native English speakers in educational institutions and the workforce.

- **Strategy:** Address the issues of limited English proficiency and the recognition of foreign education degrees and occupational credentials:
 - Support Language Proficiency Programs. Develop and implement language proficiency programs that focus on improving English language skills, both in formal educational settings and through community-based initiatives; collaborate with language schools, community centers, and online platforms to provide accessible language courses for individuals with limited English proficiency.

- Provide Cultural Competency Training. Provide cultural competency training for employers, educators, and service providers to enhance their understanding of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds; encourage the creation of workplace environments that value and celebrate linguistic diversity, fostering a more inclusive atmosphere.
- Support Credential Evaluation Services. Identify or establish credential evaluation services that help employers and educational institutions accurately assess foreign degrees and occupational credentials; work with professional associations to develop standardized processes for recognizing international qualifications.
- Advocate for Policy Development. Advocate for policies that promote the fair and equitable recognition of foreign education degrees and credentials, ensuring that individuals are not unfairly disadvantaged in the job market or educational programs; work with policymakers to create supportive immigration and education policies considering the diverse backgrounds of individuals entering the workforce or seeking educational opportunities.
- Support Community Support Centers. Establish community support centers that provide information, guidance, and resources for individuals with limited English proficiency, helping them navigate educational and employment systems; include services such as language classes, job readiness training, and assistance with credential recognition.
- Support Employer Engagement and Diversity Initiatives. Encourage employers to engage in diversity initiatives that prioritize the inclusion of individuals with diverse linguistic and educational backgrounds; promote employer-sponsored language training programs and mentorship opportunities to support employees with limited English proficiency.
- Provide Online Resources and Support. Develop and promote online resources and support services for individuals with limited English proficiency, including language learning apps, online courses, and virtual mentorship programs; ensure that online platforms provide accessible and culturally sensitive information about credential recognition processes.
- Collaborate with Educational Institutions. Collaborate with educational institutions to create bridge programs and transition support for individuals with foreign education degrees, helping them integrate into local academic and professional environments.
- Ensure Instructor Professional Development. Provide professional development opportunities for instructors and educators to enhance their ability to support students and employees with limited English proficiency; incorporate culturally sensitive teaching methods in educational programs to accommodate diverse linguistic backgrounds.
- Launch Public Awareness Campaigns. Highlight the value of linguistic and cultural diversity in the workforce and educational institutions; disseminate information about available language programs, credential evaluation services, and support resources through various media channels.

Opportunities and Strategies from Workforce Convening

Opportunity: Continuous Improvement - the old way of doing business is not an option. As the economy and population change, Alaska's workforce system must be more flexible to adapt to new demands and challenges. DOLWD/AWIB and its partners will work with businesses and industries to develop solutions to meet the needs of Alaska's workforce system, expand Alaska's talent pool, and provide solutions to ensure Alaska retains its talented workforce.

- **Strategy:** Assist businesses with recruiting and retaining workers to address the needs and expectations of employees.
 - Support Recruitment Strategies
 - Build a Strong Employer Brand. Communicate the company's values, mission, and workplace culture; showcase positive employee experiences and success stories.
 - Utilize Online Platforms. Leverage job boards, social media, and professional networking sites for job postings; optimize company websites to attract potential candidates.
 - Offer Competitive Compensation. Conduct regular market research to ensure salaries are competitive; consider offering benefits such as health care, retirement plans, and performance bonuses.
 - Provide Clear Career Paths. Clearly define career advancement opportunities within the organization; offer training and development programs to enhance employee skills.
 - Streamline the Recruitment Process. Simplify the application process to make it user-friendly; implement efficient recruitment systems to reduce time-to-hire.
 - Engage in Campus Recruiting. Build relationships with educational institutions to tap into emerging talent; offer internships and co-op programs to identify potential future hires.
 - Utilize Employee Referral Programs. Encourage employees to refer qualified candidates; implement incentives for successful referrals.
 - Support Retention Strategies
 - Create a Positive Work Environment. Foster a positive and inclusive workplace culture; promote work-life balance and stress management.
 - Provide Professional Development Opportunities. Offer training programs, workshops, and seminars; support ongoing education and skill development.
 - Recognize and Reward Performance. Implement a recognition program for outstanding achievements; provide performance-based incentives.
 - Facilitate Open Communication. Encourage regular feedback from employees; create avenues for employees to express concerns and ideas.

- Support Flexible Work Arrangements. Consider flexible work schedules or remote work options; acknowledge the importance of work flexibility for employee satisfaction.
- Offer Competitive Benefits. Provide comprehensive health care, retirement, and wellness benefits; regularly review and update benefits packages to remain competitive.
- Promote Work-Life Balance. Encourage employees to take breaks and vacations; implement policies that support a healthy work-life balance.
- Promote Employee Assistance Programs. Provide mental health and wellness resources, including counseling services and support for personal challenges.
- Provide Opportunities for Advancement. Communicate paths for career growth; provide mentorship programs and opportunities for promotion from within.
- Conduct Stay Interviews. Regularly check in with employees to understand their satisfaction and concerns; address issues proactively before they become retention challenges.

Opportunity: Alaska’s future workforce lacks awareness of career pathways and training opportunities available to them in Alaska.

- **Strategy:** Increase awareness of career pathways to Alaska's future workforce through targeted efforts to reach students, parents, educators, and the community.
 - Collaborate with Schools and Colleges. Partner with schools and colleges to integrate career education into the curriculum; organize career fairs, workshops, and information sessions to expose students to career options.
 - Engage Employers. Foster partnerships with local businesses and industries to provide internships, job shadowing, and mentorship programs; encourage businesses to participate in career events and share insights about the skills needed in the workforce.
 - Utilize Online Platforms. Develop a user-friendly website or portal that provides information on career pathways, required skills, and potential job opportunities; leverage social media platforms to share success stories, industry trends, and upcoming events.
 - Implement Community Outreach. Organize community events, workshops, and seminars to inform parents, guardians, and community members about available career pathways; collaborate with local organizations to reach a wider audience.
 - Highlight Success Stories. Showcase success stories of those who have followed different career paths, especially those who found success in Alaska; use testimonials to inspire and motivate students to explore career options.
 - Provide Career Counseling. Offer career counseling services in schools and community centers to help students understand their interests, skills, and potential career paths; ensure that counselors are well-informed about local job markets and all postsecondary training options.

- Promote STEM Education. Emphasize the importance of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education to prepare students for in-demand careers; facilitate STEM-related workshops and activities.
- Support Career and Technical Education (CTE) Training Programs. Promote CTE programs that provide practical skills and certifications for specific industries; collaborate with training institutions to align their CTE programs with the needs of local employers.
- Advocate for Supportive Government Policies. Advocate for policies that support school career development programs and allocate resources to CTE training initiatives; collaborate with government agencies to address workforce development challenges.
- Use Continuous Communication. Establish a communication channel to regularly update students, parents, and educators about emerging career opportunities, industry trends, and changes in the job market.

Opportunity: Registered Apprenticeship has proven a successful model of training, but it is underutilized in many industries. Alaska can successfully introduce apprenticeship models to those industries by customizing approaches, building solid partnerships, and addressing industry-specific concerns, leading to more options for job-seekers.

- **Strategy:** Expand apprenticeship to industries where they are not commonly used:
 - Research and Identify Opportunities. Conduct an analysis of industries in which apprenticeships are not widely used; identify skill gaps and areas where apprenticeships could be beneficial.
 - Build Awareness and Understanding. Educate employers in the target industries about the benefits of apprenticeship programs; highlight successful case studies from similar industries.
 - Collaborate with Industry Associations. Partner with industry associations to gain credibility and support; leverage their networks to connect with businesses in the target industries.
 - Customize Apprenticeship Models. Tailor apprenticeship programs to suit the specific needs and challenges of the target industries; consider flexible schedules and training structures.
 - Engage Employers. Host informational sessions and workshops for employers to explain the apprenticeship model; address concerns and misconceptions they may have.
 - Offer Incentives. Work with government agencies to provide financial incentives for businesses to adopt apprenticeship programs. explore tax credits, grants, or subsidies for participating employers.
 - Establish Partnerships with Educational Institutions. Collaborate with local schools, colleges, and vocational training centers to align educational programs with industry needs; develop pathways for students to transition seamlessly into apprenticeships.

- Promote Diversity and Inclusion. Emphasize the inclusivity of apprenticeship programs. encourage businesses to consider a diverse range of candidates.
- Demonstrate Return on Investment. Showcase the long-term benefits of apprenticeships, including increased employee loyalty and productivity; provide data on how apprenticeship programs positively impact the bottom line.
- Pilot Programs and Gather Feedback. Start with pilot programs in a few companies within the target industries; gather feedback from both employers and apprentices to refine and improve the model.
- Advocate for Policy Support. Collaborate with policymakers to advocate for supportive regulations and policies; work towards removing barriers that may hinder the adoption of apprenticeship programs.
- Create a Supportive Ecosystem. Establish a network of support services, including counseling, monitoring, and evaluation; provide ongoing assistance to both employers and apprentices.
- Measure and Communicate Success. Develop key performance indicators to measure the success of apprenticeship programs; share success stories to inspire other industries and businesses to adopt similar models.
- Continuous Evaluation and Improvement. Regularly assess the effectiveness of apprenticeship programs; adjust strategies based on feedback and industry needs.

Opportunity: Better data analysis, visualization, sharing CTE/training gaps, and economic forecasting are needed to provide informed decision-making, improved collaboration, and better outcomes for addressing training gaps and economic forecasting.

- **Strategy:** Improve data analysis, visualization, sharing CTE/training gaps, and economic forecasting to effectively use data to improve training, education, and job opportunities.
 - Assess Current State. Conduct a comprehensive assessment of existing data analysis capabilities, tools, and systems; identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to data analysis and forecasting.
 - Define Objectives and Key Metrics. Clearly define the goals of the data analysis, visualization, and forecasting efforts; identify key performance indicators and metrics that align with organizational objectives.
 - Invest in Training and Skill Development. Train existing staff in advanced data analysis tools, techniques, and best practices; encourage continuous learning and skill development to keep the team updated.
 - Implement Advanced Data Analysis Tools. Evaluate and implement advanced data analysis tools and platforms; ensure these tools can handle large datasets, provide real-time insights, and support predictive analytics.
 - Develop Data Visualization Standards. Establish standardized formats and guidelines for data visualization; invest in user-friendly visualization tools to enhance communication and understanding.

- Centralize Data Storage and Accessibility. Implement a centralized data storage system that is easily accessible to relevant stakeholders; ensure data security and compliance with privacy regulations.
- Automate Reporting Processes. Implement automated reporting processes for regular reports; use data visualization tools for dynamic and interactive reporting.
- Collaborate with Stakeholders. Collaborate with relevant stakeholders, including educational institutions, industry partners, and policymakers; share insights and data to facilitate collaborative decision-making.
- Create a Data-Sharing Platform: Establish a secure and user-friendly platform for sharing data and insights; consider using cloud-based solutions for flexibility and scalability.
- Utilize Predictive Analytics for Forecasting. Implement predictive analytics models to forecast economic trends, industry needs, and training gaps; continuously refine models based on the accuracy of predictions.
- Engage in Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation. Establish a process for continuously monitoring and evaluating data analysis and forecasting efforts; regularly update and adapt strategies based on the changing landscape.
- Promote Data-Driven Decision-Making Culture. Foster a culture that values and promotes data-driven decision-making; provide leadership with insights to inform strategic planning.
- Address Data Privacy and Security. Prioritize data privacy and security measures to build trust with stakeholders; comply with relevant regulations and standards.
- Publicize Success Stories. Share success stories of how data analysis and forecasting have positively impacted decision-making; use case studies to demonstrate the practical benefits to different audiences.
- Seek External Expertise if Needed. Consider bringing in external consultants or experts to provide insights and recommendations; collaborate with experts in data science and economic forecasting.
- Establish a Feedback Mechanism. Establish a feedback mechanism to gather input from end-users on data analysis tools and reports; use feedback to make continuous improvements.

Opportunity: Continuous communication is needed to effectively promote statewide training and workforce development opportunities.

- **Strategy:** Promote continuous communication about training and workforce development opportunities statewide through various channels and with multiple stakeholders. AWIB will regularly update and refine this strategy based on the evolving needs of the workforce and the effectiveness of communication channels.
 - Establish a Centralized Communication Hub. Create a centralized online platform or website to publish training and workforce development opportunities; ensure the platform is user-friendly, mobile-responsive, and accessible to a broad audience.

- Utilize Social Media. Leverage social media platforms to share regular updates, success stories, and announcements; use targeted advertising to specific demographics and communities.
- Email Newsletters. Develop a regular newsletter and distribute via email; include information on upcoming training programs, success stories, and relevant news.
- Collaborate with Media Outlets. Partner with local newspapers, radio stations, and TV channels to share information; conduct interviews and feature stories on workforce development initiatives.
- Engage with Community Organizations. Collaborate with community organizations, nonprofits, and grassroots groups; attend community events to share information and gather feedback.
- Host Webinars and Virtual Events. Conduct webinars and virtual events to disseminate information on training opportunities; provide a platform for Q&A sessions and interaction.
- Participate in Career Fairs. Attend and participate in career fairs and job expos; staff booths to provide information and engage with participants.
- Establish Partnerships with Employers. Work closely with employers to communicate job openings, skill requirements, and training opportunities; share success stories of those who have benefited from training programs.
- Partner with Local Workforce Development Offices. Collaborate with local workforce development offices and groups to disseminate information; provide materials for distribution in their offices and digitally.
- Implement Mobile Outreach. Develop a mobile outreach strategy, such as a mobile information van, to reach remote or underserved communities; offer on-the-spot information and registration for training programs.
- Create Multimedia Content. Develop engaging multimedia content, including videos, infographics, and podcasts; share content on various platforms to cater to different preferences and audiences.
- Incorporate Testimonials. Feature testimonials from individuals who have successfully undergone training programs; highlight the impact on their careers and lives.
- Utilize Government Channels. Collaborate with government agencies responsible for workforce development; share information through official government channels and websites.
- Employ Community Ambassadors. Recruit and train community ambassadors to promote workforce development opportunities; prepare and support them to host local information sessions and events.
- Implement a Feedback Mechanism. Regularly gather insights and suggestions; use feedback to improve communication strategies and program offerings.
- Use Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation. Regularly assess the effectiveness of communication strategies; adapt approaches based on feedback and changing communication trends.

- Promote Upskilling and Reskilling. Emphasize the importance of lifelong learning and promote ongoing upskilling and reskilling opportunities; illustrate the value of staying current with industry trends.

Opportunity: Cross-generational knowledge transfer between older and younger workers is needed to promote continuous learning and ensure the sustainability of knowledge through job transitions.

- **Strategy:** Help older workers learn from younger and younger to learn from older, sustaining knowledge through job transition.
 - Assess the Current Workforce. Conduct a skills and knowledge inventory to identify the strengths and weaknesses of both older and younger workers; identify critical skills that need to be transferred.
 - Promote a Culture of Inclusivity. Emphasize the value of diverse perspectives and experiences; foster a culture that values the contributions of both older and younger workers.
 - Implement Cross-Generational Mentorship Programs. Establish formal mentorship programs that pair older workers with younger counterparts and vice versa; encourage regular one-on-one meetings and knowledge-sharing; include topics such as technology, digital tools, and contemporary industry trends.
 - Provide Training and Skill Development. Offer training programs that address the specific needs of both age groups; incorporate technology training for older workers and leadership development for younger workers.
 - Create Knowledge Sharing Platforms. Implement digital platforms (e.g., intranet, collaboration tools) for employees to share knowledge, experiences, and best practices; provide forums, discussion boards, or knowledge-sharing sessions.
 - Host Storytelling Sessions. Encourage employees from different generations to share their career journeys, challenges, and successes; create a platform for open and honest communication.
 - Use Peer-to-Peer Learning. Facilitate collaborative projects; promote the idea that everyone, regardless of age, has valuable insights.
 - Implement Recognition Programs. Use the programs to highlight the contributions of both older and younger workers; acknowledge instances of successful knowledge transfer and collaboration.
 - Allow Flexible Work Arrangements. Accommodate different working styles, needs, and preferences; allow for a mix of in-person and virtual collaboration.
 - Form Cross-Functional Teams. Include members from different age groups; encourage collaboration on projects to leverage diverse skills and knowledge.
 - Recognize Experience. Emphasize the value of experience and institutional knowledge; create opportunities for older workers to showcase their expertise.
 - Provide Learning Resources. Offer online courses, workshops, and seminars; tailor resources to meet the learning preferences of different age groups.

- Conduct Regular Check-ins for Continuous Feedback. Use these opportunities to assess the effectiveness of knowledge transfer initiatives; gather feedback and make adjustments as needed.
- Document Best Practices. Encourage the documentation of best practices and lessons learned; create a centralized repository for sharing these insights.
- Use Ongoing Evaluation and Improvement. Regularly assess the success of the knowledge transfer strategy; adapt the strategy based on changing workforce dynamics and feedback.
- Promote Continuous Learning. Encourage pursuit of professional development opportunities at all career stages for all employees.

III. OPERATIONAL PLANNING ELEMENTS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an Operational Planning Elements section that supports the State’s strategy and the system-wide vision described in Section II(c) above. Unless otherwise noted, all Operational Planning Elements apply to Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan as well as to core programs. This section must include—

A. STATE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include—

1. STATE BOARD FUNCTIONS

Describe how the State board will implement its functions under section 101(d) of WIOA (i.e., provide a description of Board operational structures and decision making processes to ensure such functions are carried out).

As the governor’s lead workforce policy entity, the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) reviews statewide programs and policies to ensure Alaska’s workforce system is functional, accessible, and understandable to all customers. Its primary goal is to ensure the functionality, accessibility, and comprehensibility of Alaska's workforce system for all stakeholders, including businesses seeking qualified workers, unemployed Alaskans searching for jobs, new workers entering the labor market, and incumbent workers aiming to upgrade their skills.

The AWIB is composed of members appointed by the governor and is supported by an executive director, an assistant director, five program coordinators, two grants administrators, and one administrative assistant. Operating per Alaska statutory requirements and board bylaws, the AWIB holds annual elections for a Chair and Vice-Chair, who serve one-year terms. Formal decisions are made during full-board meetings, while the Executive Committee, consisting of committee Chairs and the current and past Chair and Vice-Chair, is authorized to make decisions between these meetings. AWIB staff diligently tracks action items and outlines the subsequent steps required to bring them to completion to ensure the efficient and effective execution of tasks. The Executive Director collaborates closely with the Executive Committee to develop meeting agendas and activities, guaranteeing that all essential functions are seamlessly carried out. This collaborative effort of AWIB staff plays a pivotal role in maintaining organizational momentum and achieving the board's objectives.

The AWIB is housed under the Commissioner of the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD). Guided by its vision to "build connections that put Alaskans into good jobs," the AWIB utilizes labor market data and stakeholder input to continuously improve Alaska's

workforce system. The AWIB is pivotal in developing a statewide workforce investment policy framework and fostering coordination among programs and agencies.

Proactively identifying priority industries through labor market data, the AWIB has supported and/or endorsed workforce development plans for key sectors such as health care, transportation, construction, oil and gas, mining, and maritime industries. The AWIB collaborates with these sectors to implement effective workforce strategies and has also played a significant role in developing a robust career pathway system within the statewide Alaska Career and Technical Education (CTE) Plan framework.

A key focus for the AWIB is the assessment and improvement of Alaska Job Centers (AJCs). Beyond monitoring job center sites, the AWIB evaluates various workforce programs and funds, including WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Dislocated Worker Training-National Emergency Grant, and National Emergency Grant funds.

Actively engaged in youth and adult training programs, the AWIB evaluates education grants emphasizing services for individuals facing employment barriers. The AWIB utilizes labor market analysis to recommend investments in programs preparing Alaskans for high-demand occupations in priority industries.

In fulfilling its oversight role for the Department of Labor and Workforce Development's training programs, the AWIB coordinates the preparation of the updated Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) State Plan. AWIB members stay informed through regular program updates at business meetings.

Throughout development of this WIOA State Combined Plan, the AWIB actively engaged its members and sought and considered external stakeholder feedback. The AWIB Executive Committee approved the Alaska WIOA State Plan on February 28, 2024, on behalf of the entire board, as allowed by AWIB bylaws during the times between full board meetings.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE STRATEGY

Describe how the lead State agency with responsibility for the administration of each core program or a Combined Plan partner program included in this plan will implement the State's Strategies identified in Section II(c). above. This must include a description of—

A. CORE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES TO IMPLEMENT THE STATE'S STRATEGY

Describe the activities the entities carrying out the respective core programs will fund to implement the State's strategies. Also, describe how such activities will be aligned across the core programs and Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan and among the entities administering the programs, including using co-enrollment and other strategies, as appropriate.

DOLWD supports the integration of services through a single delivery system for businesses and individuals. This efficient use of resources includes integrating all WIOA core programs with Unemployment Insurance (UI), Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG), the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program, apprenticeship, and sector partnership development.

The WIOA core programs are delivered through 13 AJCs located throughout the state, ten vocational rehabilitation offices, five of which are co-located with the AJCs, ten WIOA Youth Program subrecipients, and 15 Alaska Adult Education (AAE) subrecipients. SCSEP is co-located within the Alaska Job Centers, and staff works closely with its integrated partners to ensure that participants are

co-enrolled with other appropriate employment services. Program staff are trained to refer customers to the programs and resources that best fit their needs.

All core programs and the combined plan partner program, SCSEP, are housed under DOLWD. This results in alignment of the core and partner programs in addition to other entities in the state's education, workforce, and economic development arena. Staff from each program have bi-monthly meetings to discuss operational strategies aligned with the goals. These meetings identify areas for alignment and include discussions of cross-program training, DVR and AJC staff training, DOLWD policy changes, communication strategies, and frequent reviews of performance outcomes.

DOLWD created an online portal for staff to access forms, policy, guidance, and training and reference materials through SharePoint Online to ensure consistency and ease of use while deploying individual program services and engaging in meaningful partnerships.

DOLWD regularly engages One-Stop partners, such as Unemployment Insurance (UI), Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG), and the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program, (See Appendix 2.2 for full list of partners) to further implement state workforce programs and to coordinate activities regionally, ensuring the focus on WIOA target populations while supplying good job and apprentice applicants for employers and apprenticeship sponsors. Key projects include improving services for persons with disabilities, expanding Registered Apprenticeships, modernizing AJCs and service delivery, and increasing services for youth and adults reentering society, all of which require continuous program review and coordinated partner activities.

B. ALIGNMENT WITH ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE PLAN

Describe how the activities identified in (A) will be aligned with programs and activities provided by required one-stop partners and other optional one-stop partners and activities provided under employment, training (including Registered Apprenticeships), education (including career and technical education), human services and other programs not covered by the plan, as appropriate, assuring coordination of, and avoiding duplication among these activities.

Core and One-Stop Partners

Core program staff and partners continuously work towards seamless delivery of services to fit customer needs. Core and One-Stop partners meet regularly to collaborate on operational policies, procedures, and best practices for an integrated system of performance. Communication and the use of technology help to integrate and expand service offerings to achieve success.

DOLWD works with other state agencies, mandatory One-Stop partners, the University of Alaska, Alaska Native Corporations, private-sector employers, trade associations, and Joint Apprenticeship Training Programs to develop high-wage, high-demand employment and training plans that make the most of existing Registered Apprenticeship and other training models. These training plans have an increased focus on industry sectors and career pathways under WIOA.

Industry representatives help drive decisions and the design of workforce solutions, as shown in successful public-private partnerships for training apprentices and skilled workers for pipeline construction and maintenance on Alaska's North Slope. The training partnership includes contractors, labor organizations, Joint Apprenticeship Training Programs, and the State Training and Employment Program, which all provide opportunities for workers from across the state to attend pipeline construction courses.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Tribal TANF programs are used as a primary engagement and recruitment mechanism to identify and enroll appropriate low-income Alaskans into Career and Training Services offered through WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, Wagner-Peysner, and other programs specific to client need and eligibility, such as the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program. At locations throughout the state, DOLWD staff engage with the Division of Public Assistance (DPA) or their contractor's Work First/Families First program to identify individuals on their caseload to be co-enrolled with services offered through the AJCs. In locations served through Tribal TANF, the partnerships are being expanded to each of the seven programs in the state to ensure that collaboration and co-enrollment is promoted. These activities identify additional barriers to employment and allow for a complete employment plan with direct or partner support to overcome barriers and continue progress toward sustainable employment for the individual.

Alaska Job Centers and Partners

The Alaska Job Centers (AJCs) provide access and outreach to areas with higher numbers of low-income Alaskans. The AJCs provide a critical pathway to Career and Training Services through their physical locations, partner linkages, online presence, and itinerant services. Local coordination with partners, such as the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, TANF, Alaska Native entities, area correctional facility release programs, and regional training centers, promotes cross-referrals to services that address barriers to employment and facilitate attachment to employment or training. Apprenticeship and On-the-Job Training (OJT) are particularly beneficial for low-income individuals and those re-entering the workforce after incarceration, due to the immediate attachment to the community and to income.

Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)

The AJCs and DVR partner with SCSEP, branded as Mature Alaskans Seeking Skills Training (MASST). AJCs and DVR staff provide customer service training as well as training on use of job search tools, resume writing, interviewing, and job placement through referral and application or job development. The state provides a wide range of programs and services to seniors, spanning multiple divisions and other private and public entities. Funds from the Older Americans Act (OAA) are leveraged with WIOA, other federal programs, and resources from the Alaska State Training and Employment Program (STEP), assuring coordination and avoiding duplication of employment services or activities. The programs provide local training in priority industry sectors by placing participants in community work-based training sites at non-profits, faith-based organizations, transportation entities, governmental offices, senior centers, schools, and hospitals, to name a few.

Referrals

The referral process among the core programs is implemented individually depending on the specific needs of the client. All DOLWD staff are trained and knowledgeable in the requirements and eligibility of other core programs to ensure appropriate referrals, which are necessary to leverage resources and maximize service delivery to individuals while ensuring non-duplication of services. For example, AJC staff who provide initial intake and career services have been trained to ask follow-up questions to individuals and perform assessments to determine appropriate referrals to WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker programs as well as state programs for case management and assistance to participate in career training. Similarly, those who have identified they are experiencing a disability may be referred to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation, or other supporting entities as appropriate. This training has provided a high level of thoughtfulness to

the reason for each referral, increasing the success for the participant. Coordinated data collection captures cross-agency referrals. Additionally, AJCs keep a list of local resources pertinent to their service area to review for appropriate referrals and as a handout to provide to individuals.

C. COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS

Describe how the entities carrying out the respective core programs, Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan, and required and optional one-stop partner programs will coordinate activities and resources to provide comprehensive, high-quality, customer-centered services, including supportive services (e.g. transportation), to individuals, including those populations identified in section II(a)(1)(B), and individuals in remote areas. The activities described shall conform to the statutory requirements of each program.

DOLWD is the lead agency for the administration of the four core WIOA programs. DOLWD is also responsible for TAA, UI, and Veteran Services through the Jobs for Veterans State Grant. The SCSEP, operated as MASST, is under the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation within DOLWD and is the Combined State Plan partner program. Whether through direct service or subrecipients, the AJCs are primary access points for employment services provided by DOLWD's programs.

DOLWD manages Title V of the Older Americans Act (OAA) for senior employment. The planned action to coordinate activities includes following labor and education directives and guidance from health and social services programs in developing the workforce needs. SCSEP is aligned with the state's commitment to economic development, and its workforce development programs rely on the broad strategic policy decisions of the AWIB and Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA).

Partners collaborate to develop policies, procedures, and best practices to facilitate the integration of services to ensure job seekers' needs are being met and referrals to other resources are successful.

AJC partners are committed to co-enrollment to deliver customer-focused, integrated, and coordinated services. This includes the sharing of relevant customer program information and records such as referral information, assessment results, training plans, progress reports, and job-development strategies. Co-enrollment is encouraged to coordinate cohesive and consistent services that complement and strengthen each program's services. The coordination of services, including referrals, is supported by DETS/AWIB/DVR Policy 07-505.1, which promotes cooperative partnerships to maximize resources. The policy encourages program staff and grant subrecipients to develop procedures for co-enrollment.

Local management teams representing partner agencies at the AJCs work collaboratively to ensure that services provided in the locality are coordinated and non-duplicative. Customer flow, shared resources, co-enrollment, special initiatives/programs, and area workforce needs are addressed collectively.

Alaska Adult Education (AAE) has a required intake document that gathers information about each student's employment status and training goals. AAE programs also teach a career and college awareness class that discusses what is available in the community and through workforce partners.

The workforce system aligns services with those most in need. Efficient strategies support the timely delivery of services through alignment with the priorities of the AWIB. Effective strategies ensure job seekers and employers receive services based on their needs and circumstances.

DOLWD's objective is to maintain a fully integrated workforce development system that ensures availability of workforce services to all customers, with a focus on veterans and other eligible military persons, low-income individuals, public assistance recipients, adults and youth with disabilities, out-of-school youth, Alaska Natives, and individuals with barriers to employment.

D. COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO EMPLOYERS

Describe how the entities carrying out the respective core programs, any Combined State Plan partner program included in this plan, required and optional one-stop partner programs will coordinate activities and resources to provide comprehensive, high-quality services to employers to meet their current and projected workforce needs and to achieve the goals of industry or sector partners in the state. The activities described shall conform to the statutory requirements of each program.

The relationship between DOLWD and industry sector employers is critical to Alaska's workforce investment system. DOLWD continuously looks for ways to develop cooperative working relationships based on Alaska employer needs, and this creates lasting partnerships with the business community.

Business Connection Staff

Employer service representatives, particularly Business Connection staff, pay attention to local labor market trends to match employers with skilled job seekers. Staff works with employers to coordinate recruitments, plan job fairs, post job orders, provide applicant pre-screening and referrals, develop jobs, provide space for job recruitments, and offer employment and training service plans through the Incumbent Worker Training program using Title I-B funds. Using a mass e-mail distribution list of employers and other interested parties, staff send daily messages on new job postings, recruitments at the AJCs, and upcoming job fairs. DOLWD has identified health care, education, transportation, oil and gas, and mining industries as the highest-demand industries and continually engages industry leaders in these fields. Under WIOA, Business Connection staff have received more in-depth training to work with the various industry sector partnerships to meet training and labor needs for those industries.

Services and Programs

Employer services and programs available through AJCs include:

- Veteran services provided by a full-time Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) who conducts outreach to employers to advocate for veteran hire;
- Youth services provided by ten youth program grant recipients, which coordinate career pathways development and work experience opportunities with businesses to ensure young job seekers are prepared to enter the job market;
- Apprenticeship specialists in AJCs who increase employer involvement in Registered Apprenticeship. Benefits to employers may include reduced turnover, a skilled workforce, and customizable training;
- On-the-Job Training (OJT) that offers employers the opportunity to hire and custom train employees and receive partial employee wage reimbursements;
- Employers may apply for State Training and Employment Program (STEP) grants when seeking training to enhance employee skills to meet industry demands for skilled workers;
- Training based on current employer demands (including incumbent worker training) and the perceived needs of the future job market;
- Rapid Response services, including employee protection and layoff aversion strategies to companies facing layoffs and closures;

- Seafood processing and other specialized recruitments, job fairs, workshops, orientations, and interviews;
- Information resources for occupational forecasts, wage and labor laws, occupational safety, layoff aversion, and Workers' Compensation insurance; hire incentives like tax credits and Fidelity Bonding that encourage employers to hire at-risk workers; and
- Referral to local Alaska Adult Education programs and other partner programs.

Alaska Career Ready

Alaska recognizes the gaps between job seekers' education, training, and skills and those that Alaska employers request or require. The Alaska Career Ready program uses ACT WorkKeys® to help fill those gaps. WorkKeys assessments help job seekers earn the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC), a portable credential that certifies their essential, verifiable workplace skills. The foundational skills certified by the NCRC are recognized and used by thousands of employers nationwide. WorkKeys assessments are proctored in-person at Alaska Job Centers, at no cost to job seekers or employers, and are a valuable tool for job seekers, employers, and case managers to help identify skill gaps and training needs. WorkKeys Curriculum online courseware is used to prepare for the assessments and does not require in-person interaction with staff. The curriculum helps increase assessment scores while enhancing cognitive foundational skills required for success in the workplace.

Employer Relationships and Outreach

Business Connection staff members build trusting, long-term relationships with Alaska employers, from small businesses to large industries. Promotion of DOLWD's employment and training programs is based on meeting employer needs. It emphasizes the benefits to employers and avoids the impression of a "hard-sell" or bombardment with unwanted information. These relationships also ensure employers view DOLWD as a valuable resource. For example, DOLWD fosters relationships with mining industry employers and works closely with the University of Alaska Southeast mining training program to fill positions with Alaska workers, taking advantage of an annual underground miner training and incumbent worker training, including haul truck simulator training, in Southeast Alaska. The goal is to prepare qualified Alaska workers for Juneau-area mining employers, such as Hecla Greens Creek and Coeur Alaska Kensington.

Exploration of new outreach methods that can reach many employers at once, and material with better content, are intended to increase employer awareness of DOLWD employment and training resources. For example, the apprenticeship and veteran programs are working to determine the best ways to use GI Bill, WIOA, and STEP funds to support apprenticeship and other training opportunities for Alaska's veterans.

Business Connection staff provide electronic or paper packets to employers when they set up accounts in AlaskaJobs. These packets include employment and training information such as Alaska Career Ready, veterans' services, on-the-job training (OJT), apprenticeship, fidelity bonding, and many others. The information provided to these new or returning employers supports the state's WIOA strategies of expanding Registered Apprenticeships and focusing on veterans and transitioning service members as a priority population.

Website

DOLWD has revised its web pages that are specific to employer needs. The employer page focuses on the most requested employer services under easily identifiable general headings with associated topics

underneath. For example, the heading “Business Information” leads employers to topics including Child Labor Laws, the Fidelity Bonding Program, Minimum Wage, Workforce Opportunity Tax Credit, Voluntary Flexible Work Hour Plan, Proposed Regulations, a Laborer’s and Mechanic’s Minimum Rates of Pay Pamphlet, and Job Fairs, Recruitments, and Workshops. Other main headings include Post a Job, Workers’ Compensation, Training, Apprenticeships, Foreign Workers, Labor Relations, Worker Safety, Rapid Response – Layoffs, Unemployment Insurance Contributions, and Alaskans with Disabilities (DVR).

Employer Recognition for Veteran Hire

DOLWD promotes the Honoring Investments in Recruiting and Employing American Military Veterans Medallion Program (HIRE Vets), the only federal-level veterans’ employment award that recognizes employers who hire veterans. Award recipient recognition includes public identification of the business by public service announcements and identification on the AlaskaJobs system. Employers who participate in the annual Veterans Job Fair are recognized both in writing and verbally for supporting the hiring of Alaska veterans and family members. Business Connection and veteran staff will increase their presence at regular meetings of the Society for Human Resources Management and local chambers of commerce meetings in Juneau, Anchorage, and Fairbanks.

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)

DVR partners with employers to promote hiring individuals with disabilities and has implemented the dual customer model to deliver services to employers. DVR created a Business Employment Services Team (DVR-BEST), which is tasked with providing employers with the four required services as outlined in Section 109 of the Rehabilitation Act within WIOA, to secure competitive integrated employment for individuals with disabilities, which is part of DOLWD’s strategy to focus on serving those with disabilities.

Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)

SCSEP’s service delivery supports local economies by promoting jobs, economic stability, and growth through job training and workforce development opportunities across the state. Alaska is also building our internal workforce through improved training, mentorship, and opportunities for advancement to workforce development, and serving the most vulnerable through employment opportunities and more. Alaska SCSEP is designed to be a demand-driven workforce development system that aligns with activities that provide employment and training services that are responsive to the demands of local area employers.

SCSEP staff works with advocacy centers such as food banks, recovery programs, and housing programs, to assist people back into employment. DOLWD’s approach delivers employment programs that provide employment resources, advocacy, and connections to improve lives. Programs are supportive, comprehensive, and tailored to skill development and employment.

DOLWD leadership has improved recruitment, outreach, intake, and engagement activities to promote digital access; implemented technology programs to provide remote training, including job-training activities; and developed strategies to support participants’ needs. SCSEP partners with WIOA staff to assist participants in getting back into employment, reducing barriers, and assisting participants who need access to health care and behavioral health services that promote their health, well-being, and safety.

Work Matters Task Force

In early 2021, Alaska Governor Mike Dunleavy formed the Alaska Work Matters Task Force. The Task Force reviewed and analyzed existing policies, practices, and procedures, barriers, and workforce utilization data regarding the employment of people with disabilities in the state of Alaska, and prepared a report that includes recommendations that should be adopted by the governor and applicable departments, agencies, and commissions of the executive branch, and policy options for consideration by the legislative branch to expand and improve employment opportunities and outcomes for individuals with disabilities. Twenty-two recommendations and sixty-eight action steps were identified by the Task Force report. See

<https://health.alaska.gov/gcdse/Documents/AKWorkMattersReport.pdf>. One of the recommendations was to move SCSEP from the Division of Employment and Training Services to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, which was implemented on July 1, 2022. The power and value of work must be our number one priority for all Alaskans, including seniors and people with disabilities. The Work Matters recommendations will move us in that direction and further support the State of Alaska as a model employer and an employment first state for Alaskans with disabilities.

Senior Employment Initiative

The DOLWD Senior Employment Initiative committee works with workforce development programs to provide a combination of education and training services to prepare individuals for staying longer or re-entering the workforce and to help them improve their prospects in the labor market. Planned activities include dedicated staff to assist seniors with job search assistance, career counseling, occupational skill training, classroom training, or on-the-job training.

Alaska Mental Health Trust

DOLWD leadership and SCSEP are assisting Alaska Mental Health Trust staff in developing employment goals and needs for Trust beneficiaries and are working within committees for employment development for the State's Comprehensive Integrated Mental Health Program. This plan is being updated while our WIOA combined plan is being developed.

Senior Services State Plan

The Alaska Commission on Aging produces a plan which serves as a roadmap for addressing the issues affecting Alaskan Seniors. DOLWD leadership and SCSEP are active partners in the development of the Senior Services State Plan. On September 29, 2023, the Alaska State Plan on Aging was approved under the Older Americans Act for October 1, 2023, through September 30, 2027. The Senior Services State Plan outlines significant activities that will serve as a guide for Alaska's aging service network during the next four years. The Administration for Community Living stated, "Alaska's commitment is to build on strong partnerships to provide high-quality, culturally sensitive, affordable, accessible services for older Alaskans. The Administration for Community Living appreciates your commitment and dedication to ensure the continuity of quality services for older adults in Alaska. Staff continue to serve as effective and visible advocates for older adults and family caregivers at a state level."

E. PARTNER ENGAGEMENT WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND OTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDERS.

Describe how the State's Strategies will engage the State's community colleges, adult education providers, area career and technical education schools, providers on the State's eligible training provider list, and other education and training providers, as partners in the workforce development system to create a job-driven education and training system. WIOA section 102(b)(2)(B)(iv). Include

how the State's strategies will enable the State to leverage other Federal, State, and local investments to enhance access to workforce development programs at these institutions.

Alaska understands the vital role training providers play in workforce development and the need to focus attention on an effective career and technical training system. The state has pledged to create world-class schools that prepare graduates for careers that may begin immediately after high school graduation or may require additional education and training.

Career and Technical Education Plan

A comprehensive Alaska Career and Technical Education (CTE) Plan was approved by the AWIB in 2010 and involved a broad cross-section of policy-makers, educators, employers, state agencies, training institutions, and parent representatives. The AWIB and the Departments of Education & Early Development and Labor & Workforce Development, in coordination with the University of Alaska, have continued to meet on a regular basis to implement, review, and refine CTE strategies.

The 2010 Alaska CTE Plan recognized six key strategies to strengthen Alaska's CTE system and the need for career preparedness and an education and training system that is efficient, effective, and coordinates with regional and state current and future workforce needs. The CTE Plan strategies remain relevant to improving CTE programs:

- Ensure planned transitions and accountability for both successful student progress and systemic cooperation;
- Align curricula at all training institutions to meet current industry standards;
- Identify and promote CTE delivery models that ensure that Alaskans have opportunities to attain the knowledge and skills needed for further training and careers;
- Recruit, develop, support, and retain high-quality CTE teachers and faculty;
- Maximize the use of public facilities for training; and
- Establish and maintain sustainable funding mechanisms for a successful CTE system for youth and adults.

In 2017, the AWIB convened a workgroup of CTE professionals to review the 2010 Alaska CTE Plan and draft an updated addendum to reenergize CTE programs statewide, reexamine the existing CTE Plan strategies, and create an advocacy vehicle identifying the education and training opportunities available in Alaska. The update included feedback from stakeholder groups such as employers and private sector businesses through in-person presentations, webinars, and online surveys. The updated plan was approved by the AWIB in October 2018 as the 2018 Addendum to the Alaska CTE Plan https://awib.alaska.gov/CTE_Addendum_10-2018.pdf.

During the review of the Alaska CTE Plan and development of the 2018 addendum, several topics consistently arose related to implementation of the CTE strategies and on-going system improvement, which included the following:

- Promote CTE as a skills-based model that prepares Alaskans for high wage jobs;
- Leverage existing workforce planning efforts and CTE programs that lead to employment outcomes;
- Communicate with partners to promote programs and avoid duplication of effort; and
- Advocate for increased investment in CTE programs.

Technical Vocational Education Program

One of the funding mechanisms for Alaska CTE is through the Technical Vocational Education Program (TVEP), which provides state funding through a portion of unemployment taxes to designated technical training entities to provide industry-specific training, On-the-Job Training (OJT), and classroom-linked job training. Grant funds are appropriated by the Alaska Legislature and administered by DOLWD, the Department of Education & Early Development, and the University of Alaska. The AWIB establishes a list of industry priorities for training under this program.

State education and training providers are critical to prepare Alaskans to be successful with the academic and technical knowledge required for a specific career pathway. Programs of study incorporate industry and business standards and are validated using benchmarks, assessments, and a body of evidence to demonstrate that job seekers are prepared to be successful in their chosen careers.

Community Colleges and Area Career and Technical Schools

Alaska does not have separate community colleges; instead, the community college mission is carried out by the University of Alaska (UA) through its Statewide Office of Workforce Development and the programs offered at its network of community campuses. DOLWD is in regular contact with UA and with the state's career and technical schools (as defined in the Carl Perkins Career and Technical Education (CTE) Improvement Act of 2006), including secondary and postsecondary programs. Members of the AWIB represent these providers (university workforce programs and secondary and postsecondary CTE) and provide information to the AWIB as they develop recommendations for coordination and alignment of the state's workforce system. DOLWD meets annually with secondary and postsecondary CTE coordinators and directors to align programs and discuss issues of mutual interest. DOLWD also meets monthly with the Department of Education & Early Development CTE staff and the University of Alaska Office of Workforce Programs.

Partner Engagement with ETPL Providers and Other Education and Training Providers

The state routinely engages with partners and other education and training providers. An example is the Eligible Training Providers List (ETPL) policy and procedures, which were created in concert with education and training providers who provided feedback during AWIB meetings and a public comment period. The largest provider, the University of Alaska, was integral in providing feedback in drafting the ETPL process. The AWIB played an active role in reviewing guidance, and the education and training board members provided critical feedback that was incorporated with the final products. The Division of Employment and Training Services (DETS) has created an AlaskaJobs Provider Guide to reflect incorporation of the ETPL process in AlaskaJobs and to enhance provider compliance. DETS is updating the ETPL Operating Guide to make the ETPL a robust product that offers training to meet the needs of Alaska's high growth industries while making the ETPL process less cumbersome for education and training providers. See <https://labor.alaska.gov/dets/etpl.htm>.

Leverage with other Federal, State, and Local Investments

Alaska leverages resources as a strategy to increase and sustain economic growth. This practice fosters enhanced partnerships between federal, state, local, and private resources in innovative ways, relying on three kinds of leveraged resources.

First, cash contributions are state, local, and private resources that are allocated in direct support of a training project. A state general fund appropriation is an example of a cash contribution. Second, in-kind contributions are federal, state, local, and private resources that support the efforts of a training project but are not easily cost allocated. Third, Alaska applies federal and state resources as potential

leveraged funds consistent with the economic and workforce development goals of the state, preparing Alaska workers for employment in high-wage, high-demand occupations.

At the community-based participant level, AJC partners conduct joint planning and case management to maximize resources, providing individuals with comprehensive services. By working together for the common benefit of participants, each partner agency can reach more participants and ensure comprehensive and non-duplicative services.

F. IMPROVING ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIALS

Describe how the State's strategies will improve access to activities leading to recognized postsecondary credentials, including Registered Apprenticeship certificates. This includes credentials that are industry-recognized certificates, licenses or certifications, and that are portable and stackable.

The workforce and education systems work closely to expand the supply of skilled workers for Alaska's high-growth industries. Through partnership with the DOLWD, University of Alaska, and Department of Education & Early Development, the AWIB developed the Alaska CTE Plan to align education programs with Alaska's in-demand industries and occupations. Alaska continues to support the use of work-based and applied learning to cultivate student awareness of, and interest in, high-demand industries. The state will continue to expand the use of Registered Apprenticeships and industry led CTE programs.

Alaska's primary focus in responding to employers and job seekers is to maximize the benefits of workforce development, offering services and training to job seekers that lead to employment, including Registered Apprenticeship and OJT. The most effective programs result in portable and stackable industry-recognized credentials.

DOLWD is an active partner in Alaska's Postsecondary Access and Completion Network. The Network is working towards the goal of "65 by 2025" – 65 percent of Alaskans having a postsecondary credential or degree by 2025. DOLWD works directly with other Network partners to ensure that Registered Apprenticeship certificates, industry certifications, and occupational endorsements are included in the definition and corresponding outcome data are collected and reported. DOLWD's Research and Analysis staff regularly provide labor market information updates and ad hoc reports to the Network.

G. COORDINATING WITH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Describe how the activities identified in (A) will be coordinated with economic development entities, strategies, and activities in the State.

Alaska Regional Development Organizations

According to the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development (DCCED), there are nine Alaska Regional Development Organizations (ARDORs), whose mission is to prepare and implement regional development strategies. Through these strategies, local knowledge, and coordinated implementation, ARDORs champion economic development planning for Alaska's regions and communities by leveraging baseline support provided by the state.

As partners of the state and leaders of regional economic development efforts, ARDORs serve as conduits to a network of economic development programs and support services for their regions, communities, and businesses. Although ARDORs have much in common and implement similar scopes of work, the form and function of each ARDOR is customized to the region. Decisions that

reflect the economic diversity and character of the region are made by elected or appointed boards of directors.

Regional Economic Development Strategies

As provided by Alaska Administrative Code (3 AAC 57.090), ARDORs are required to develop and implement regional economic development strategies or similar economic development plans. These strategies or plans are commonly referred to as comprehensive economic development strategies or CEDS, and they satisfy the following requirements:

- Fact-gathering, to assure the region understands the current development situation;
- Identification of potential resources that serve as assets for economic development initiatives;
- Establishment of goals and objectives to guide direction of economic development activities;
- Production of a strategy for regional and local economic development that includes a work plan detailing the methods, resources, responsibilities, and schedules for implementing the strategy; and
- Development of a set of regional and local economic profiles for every community within the region.

ARDOR Work Plans

Each ARDOR develops its own economic development strategies and customized work plan for addressing regional economic development needs. Although each plan includes region-specific goals, objectives, and strategies, they all include the following broad goals:

1. Facilitating development of a healthy regional economy that results in sustainable business growth, new business investment, and economic diversification;
2. Identifying and working to eliminate regional economic development barriers;
3. Developing and implementing a comprehensive economic development strategy;
4. Coordinating regional planning efforts that result in new employment and business opportunities;
5. Working to enable multiple communities to collaborate and pool limited resources;
6. Strengthening partnerships with public, private, and non-government organizations; and
7. Providing technical assistance to encourage business startup, retention, and expansion.

The work plans are available on the DCCED website at:

<https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/dcra/ARDORs/DevelopmentStrategies.aspx>

Coordination with ARDORs

The AWIB and DOLWD coordinate with the ARDORS in a variety of ways:

- DOLWD staff are in regular contact with the ARDOR program manager to discuss workforce and economic development activities, needs, and opportunities;
- The Commissioner of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development is a member of the AWIB and brings the ARDOR voice to discussions; and

- ARDORS participate in providing public input into the WIOA plan and will continue to provide input to DOLWD on implementation of the plan.

ARDORS also maintain robust partnerships with education, training, and economic development entities within their state-defined region to foster growth in that region. At the core of the ARDOR mission is economic development that retains and creates well-compensated jobs. Once the jobs are available, the task of providing motivated, skilled, and reliable workers tailored for those jobs must also be accomplished. The ARDORS provide communication, collaboration, and knowledge of rural regions of the state to help inform the enhancement of the workforce investment system.

B. STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS AND POLICIES

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a description of the State operating systems and policies that will support the implementation of the State strategy described in section **II Strategic Elements**. This includes—

1. THE STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS THAT WILL SUPPORT COORDINATED IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE STRATEGIES (E.G., LABOR MARKET INFORMATION SYSTEMS, DATA SYSTEMS, COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS, CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS, JOB BANKS, ETC.).

Alaska uses two management information systems to collect and report data. Virtual OneStop (VOS), developed by Geographic Solutions, Inc., combines participant management functions for WIOA Titles I-B, II, and III, and TAA, WOTC, Apprenticeship, and Veterans' programs. Title IV, Vocational Rehabilitation, uses AWARE by Alliance Enterprises for case management and reporting.

WIOA Title I-B - Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker currently use the new case management system AlaskaJobs, which allows AJC staff delivering adult and dislocated worker services and subrecipients delivering youth services to maintain comprehensive records documenting interaction with participants. This includes planned and actual services for participants, training and supportive service-related costs, Individual Employment Plans, Individual Service Strategies, referrals to partner agencies, and funding amounts from each of the partner services involved in the participant's service strategy.

Title II – Alaska's Adult Education (AAE) also uses AlaskaJobs to collect and report adult education data for National Reporting System (NRS) accountability. It supports program planning and methodology in alignment with WIOA Title II performance reporting requirements, including a robust reporting system that allows for the flexibility to reduce data entry errors quickly, easily, and accurately in AlaskaJobs.

Title III - Wagner-Peyser also uses AlaskaJobs, which is not only a job bank but a virtual AJC system for clients looking for work, job search assistance, training, or career exploration. Registered employers can post jobs, view resumes of qualified candidates, and access a wide range of economic and labor market information. AlaskaJobs provides staff with the online tools to deliver, track, and report on Wagner-Peyser services for job seekers and employers. Automated interfaces are used to communicate and exchange information between AlaskaJobs and the Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage system to facilitate better delivery of services. AlaskaJobs automatically exchanges information among multiple programs to further enhance services to Alaskans and support the implementation of the state's strategies.

Title IV - Vocational Rehabilitation utilizes a management information system called AWARE, which was developed based on Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) business practices and federal

requirements. AWARE offers a comprehensive set of case, financial, and organizational modules. The features and procedures in AWARE are consistent and standardized throughout all modules and are designed around the natural flow of the VR case process, making it intuitive for VR counselors.

AWARE consists of 17 modules, approximately 300 data pages (screens), more than 350 reports, and a central database with over 330 tables. From AWARE, rehabilitation staff can perform all tasks, and collect and access all data required to perform case management. AWARE software is updated regularly to meet Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) federally mandated reporting requirements and to produce the data file for uploading the quarterly RSA-911 to RSA.

Electronic Grants Administration and Management System (EGrAMS) is a web-based system used to issue subawards for state and federal programs, including Apprenticeship, WIOA Youth, Alaska Adult Education, and SCSEP, to organizations and training providers to conduct program activities. The system provides consistent and standardized user interfaces to handle the process from grant application entry to closeout and uses a comprehensive security framework for user authentication and authorization. A grants management module for AlaskaJobs is under development; when implemented, the integrated systems will provide greater insight into participant activities relative to program objectives for state and federal reporting.

Research and Analysis, a component of the DOLWD Administrative Services Division, has access to databases containing much of the relevant data needed for state and federal reporting, including wage records, student records from the Department of Education & Early Development (DEED) and the University of Alaska (UA), and Permanent Fund Dividend data.

Alaska leverages and supports the understanding of labor market information, particularly as it relates to high-wage, high-demand industries, to the One-Stop operator responsible for determining and negotiating individual training accounts and delivering the majority of WIOA core program services. Labor Market Information staff works with AJC staff, partners, and subrecipients upon request to explain how the state and local economies operate, how to assess occupational employment opportunities at the state and local level, and how to use the tools and information available on the DOLWD Research and Analysis Section's website. In this era of consumer choice, labor market information creates informed consumers who can make better decisions about employment and training options leading to personal career development.

The primary vehicle for disseminating workforce information to internal and external customers is the internet. The AJC home page includes "Labor Market Information" as a main link with many other related links, including "Business/Employer Connection" and "Job Seeker Resources." The site is used in all AJC resource rooms and available to anyone with an internet connection, including libraries, schools, work sites, and homes. The DOLWD Research and Analysis Section also produces a monthly magazine, Alaska Economic Trends, which is distributed to businesses and individual subscribers, as well as published on the web.

In addition to the management and exchange of participant services, employer data, and labor market information, a variety of web-based systems that are essential in supporting state workforce development strategies are the Alaska Career Information System, America's Career InfoNet, America's Service Locator, O*NET OnLine, Alaska's Labor Exchange System (AlaskaJobs), and America's Job Bank websites.

The **Semi-Autonomous Research Assistant (SARA)** communication system is used by DETS for the Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG), and by DVR. SARA is designed to improve communication between division staff and program participants through the use

of text messages and emails, automating tasks such as reminding individuals of appointments, gathering employment information, and collecting post-exit information. The software was designed to meet Alaska's unique needs, and improvements are routinely made based on staff and participant feedback. Anecdotal data suggest that client communication has improved both in clarity and frequency. With automatic appointment reminders now being sent electronically to individuals, there has been an increase in the number of appointments kept, data validation documents received, and follow-up contact responses.

SARA continues to improve the overall employment and training experience. Individuals can use their smartphones to photograph documents for transmission to division staff, reducing the need for them to make a special trip to an office, and staff can electronically send documents to individuals for review or signature.

Integration of SARA into AlaskaJobs is under development. When complete, SARA will be a key communication tool and will be expanded to the WIOA Youth program and SCSEP.

2. THE STATE POLICIES THAT WILL SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATE'S STRATEGIES (FOR EXAMPLE, CO-ENROLLMENT POLICIES AND UNIVERSAL INTAKE PROCESSES WHERE APPROPRIATE). IN ADDITION, PROVIDE THE STATE'S GUIDELINES FOR STATE-ADMINISTERED ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO A ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM AND ANY ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE FOR ONE-STOP PARTNER CONTRIBUTIONS.

Most of Alaska's policies are cross-divisional among AWIB, DETS, and SCSEP, while others are division specific or inclusive of DVR. Additionally, the requirement to adhere to DOLWD policies is passed through to grant subrecipients in subaward agreements.

Alaska's policies are all accessible on DOLWD's public website and have been communicated to AJC staff and subrecipients to ensure full awareness of the policies and methods for compliance. It is important to ensure that policies are reasonable and necessary and provide adequate flexibility while meeting Alaska's strategic goals and vision.

Policy documents for WIOA Adult, Youth, Dislocated Worker, Wagner-Peyser, and Adult Education (AAE) are available here: <https://labor.alaska.gov/dets/policies.htm> and <https://awib.alaska.gov/ppi.htm> .

Policy documents for Vocational Rehabilitation and SCSEP are available here: <https://labor.alaska.gov/dvr/policies/index.html>

Alaska's One-Stop Operator Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), https://awib.alaska.gov/forms/PartnerMOU_22.pdf, is in effect through June 30, 2025, and provides information on the relationship among the Alaska Job Center Network (AJCN) partners, the AWIB, and DETS serving as Alaska's AJCN One-Stop Operator. The MOU includes the roles, responsibilities, and expectations for implementation of the provisions required in section 121 (c) of Title I of WIOA.

The MOU supports cross training to ensure all partners' staff are familiar with all programs represented within the AJCs. All AJCN partners are invited to participate in the AJCN Advisory Council to ensure ongoing communication on service delivery system improvement, training opportunities, new developments, and identification of web-based or technology driven resources. The MOU establishes joint processes and procedures that enable partners to collaborate in the service delivery system,

resulting in a seamless and comprehensive array of job matching, education, support services, job training, and other workforce development services.

Section VI. General Provisions, includes detailed information on Partner Impasse Resolutions, Local Dispute Process, Alaska Workforce Investment Board Dispute Resolution Process, Supplemental Agreements, Effective Dates and Term of the MOU, and Timelines for Modifications and Revisions.

Each partner is responsible for the funding of their direct program services, and resource/cost sharing is outlined in Attachment C of the MOU.

WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser, AEFLA, and AWIB Policies

WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser, AEFLA, and AWIB Policies	Policy Number
Alaska Adult Education	Assessment and Technical Assistance Manual
Allocating Wagner-Peyser Staff to Job Centers	07-519
Allowable Cost Guidelines	07-520.2
Cash Management	07-504.1
Co-enrollment	07-505.1
Data Integrity	07-541
Dislocated Worker Eligibility	07-524.1
Eligible Training Provider List	07-501.2
Equal Opportunity Discrimination Complaints Policy	07-506.4
GED® Manager Policy	07-544
Grant Monitor Corrective Action Plan Timelines	200-2016
High Concentration of Eligible Youth	07-503.3
Incident Report of Fraud, Waste, or Abuse	07-536.1
Job Center Universal Access for Customers with Disabilities	07-516
Military Veteran Priority of Service	07-509.1
Monitoring and Single Audit	07-523.2
Once-Stop Operator Certification	100-2017
Participant Common Exit	07-539
Participant Performance Data Collection	07-508.2
Pre-Award Risk Assessment and Due Diligence	07-527.2

WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser, AEFLA, and AWIB Policies	Policy Number
Priority Populations - Adult Program	07-517.1
Program Complaint and Appeal	07-510.2
Property Management	07-511.1
Process for AWIB Endorsement of Industry Workforce Development Plans	100-2016
Quality Pre-Apprenticeship Definition	07-525.1
Registrant Family Income	07-512.1
Sanctions for Non-Compliance	07-513.1
Self-Sufficiency	07-514.2
Subaward Amendments	07-526.1
Subaward Appeal	07-507.1
Subaward Close-out	07-528.1
Subrecipient Accrual Based Reporting	07-538.1
Supportive Service Limitations for Information Technology Supplies	100-2020
Supportive Services	07-521.1
Time Charging	07-531.1
Tuition and Training Funds	07-530.2
WIOA Incumbent Worker Training	07-529.3
WIOA Title I-B Within State Funding Allocations	07-518.1
WIOA Title I-B Youth Program Eligibility	07-502.2
Work Experience	07-515.3
Youth Incentives	07-522.2
Wagner-Peyser Program Monitoring Plan and Policy	07-543

Vocational Rehabilitation Policies (<https://labor.alaska.gov/dvr/policies/index.html>)

Vocational Rehabilitation Policy	Policy Number
Co-enrollment	07-505
Ethics	CS 1.0
Confidentiality	CS 2.0
Informed Choice	CS 3.0
Appeals	CS 4.0
Pre-Employment Transition Services	CS 5.0
Application	CS 6.0
Eligibility	CS 7.0
Trial Work	CS 8.0
Significance of Disability Determination	CS 9.0
Financial Participation	CS 10.0
Individualized Plan for Employment	CS 11.0
Vocational Rehabilitation Services	CS 12.0
Employment	CS 13.0
Supported Employment	CS 14.0
Self-Employment	CS 15.0

Senior Community Service Employment Program Policies

Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) Policy	Policy Number
SCSEP: Senior Community Service Employment Program Eligibility	07-S01
SCSEP: MASST Individual Durational Limits	07-S02
SCSEP: MASST Participant Termination	07-S03
SCSEP: MASST Wages and Unemployment Insurance	07-S04

3. STATE PROGRAM AND STATE BOARD OVERVIEW

A. STATE AGENCY ORGANIZATION

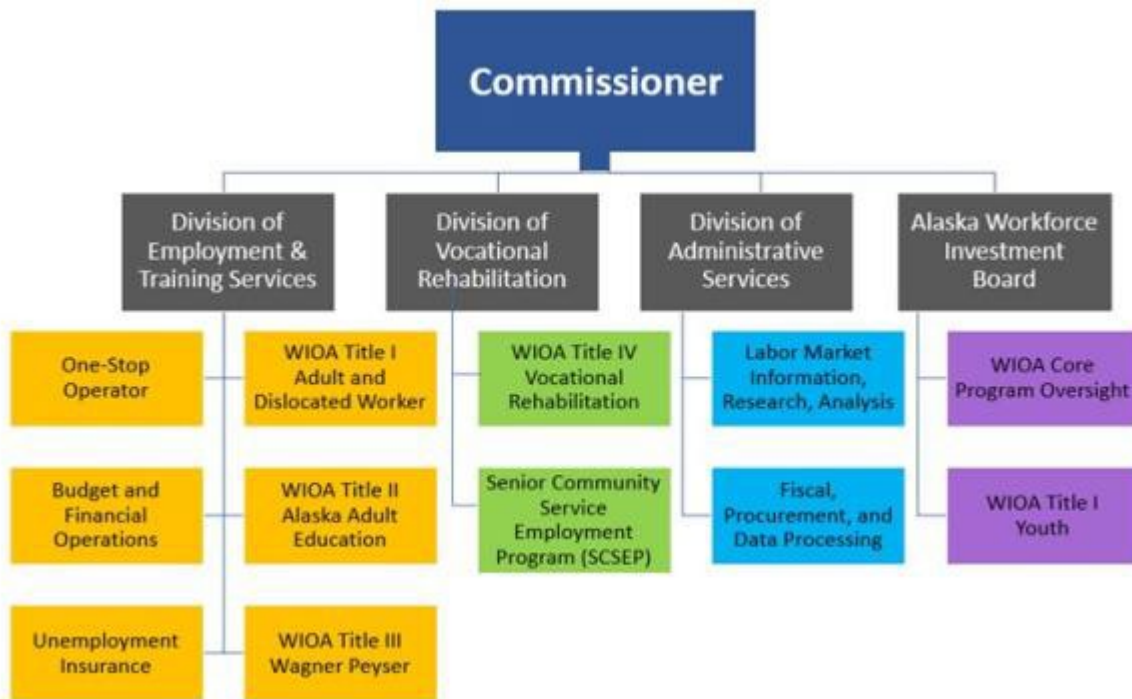
Describe the organization and delivery systems at the State and local levels for the programs covered in the plan, including the organizational structure. Include an organizational chart.

Within the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, the Division of Employment and Training Services (DETS) administers WIOA Title I–B, Adult Education and Literacy (AAE - WIOA Title II), and Wagner–Peyser (WIOA Title III). The AWIB administers WIOA Title I-B Youth, and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) oversees WIOA Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation and the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). This delineation of responsibilities ensures a streamlined and organized approach to implementing various WIOA titles, each managed by the appropriate entity within the broader employment and training services framework.

The AWIB assumes an oversight role over the WIOA core programs and various state employment and training initiatives. This includes programs such as the State Training Employment Program, the Alaska Construction Academies, and the Technical Vocational Educational Program. The Division of Employment and Training Services provides administrative support to ensure the effective implementation and coordination of these programs under the oversight of the AWIB. This collaborative structure enables the AWIB to strategically manage and enhance the impact of these programs in alignment with state workforce development goals.

DETS administers the Trade Act, Jobs for Veterans Services Grant (JVSG), Fidelity Bonding, Foreign Labor Certification, and Work Opportunity Tax Credit programs while concurrently managing the Alaska Job Centers (AJCs). As a proud partner of the American Job Center Network, the AJCs are strategically positioned with 13 centers across the state. The dedicated AJC staff are pivotal in delivering Wagner–Peyser and Title I–B career services. Additionally, they facilitate Title I–B Adult and Dislocated Worker Individual Training Accounts, along with training-related supportive services and SCSEP. The AJC team is actively involved in overseeing STEP training and its associated supportive services. Moreover, the AJCs extend their services to employers through the specialized AJC Business Connection staff, reinforcing their commitment to fostering effective connections between job seekers and employers in the community.

Figure 8 shows the organization of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development divisions and units working on WIOA.



**Figure 8: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development
Organizational Chart for WIOA Programs**

Under WIOA in Alaska, the cornerstone of our service delivery system is providing face-to-face personal services through the 13 AJCs across the state. Every AJC incorporates both Wagner-Peyser and Title I-B programs. Title II AAE is allocated to statewide grantees, and a standardized referral system has been established between AJCs and grantees. Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation and SCSEP are co-located in several AJCs, with a standard referral mechanism implemented in AJCs without an on-site Vocational Rehabilitation or SCSEP office.

The initial point of contact for clients is crucial, and AJC staff conduct comprehensive assessments to determine individual skill levels, aptitudes, abilities, and the necessity for supportive services. This "no wrong door" approach eliminates redundancy, ensuring access to the most appropriate service type for each client's needs, whether basic, individualized, or training-focused. This structure expedites the identification of needs and facilitates enrollment into funded training or education plans, attainment of credentials, or access to other services under WIOA programs. For job-ready clients, AJC staff provide a menu of career services. For those requiring further training, education, or other services, AJCs serve as access points in the referral and enrollment process, coordinating introductions to additional programs and services. Strong community partnerships underscore our commitment to seamless service delivery.

Training and education offerings align with the economic and workforce needs identified by the AWIB. WIOA core program services are delivered in-person, itinerantly through AJCs, or electronically, providing flexibility for clients.

Upon entering an AJC, clients undergo assessments to determine how individual needs can be best addressed. This initial assessment includes identifying veteran status to ensure receipt of Priority of Service (POS). Veterans are also assessed for eligibility and assistance through the Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG). Areas with the largest veteran populations have on-site JVSG-funded staff, while others are served itinerantly or electronically.

WIOA core program staff co-enroll eligible participants to optimize resources and funding, granting access to comprehensive services such as in-depth assessments, interest inventories, reviews of transferable skills, vocational training, and assistance with challenges like childcare and local transportation. These partnerships yield positive outcomes, leading to meaningful and sustainable employment. Clients can also engage in self-service activities through AlaskaJobs, including job searches, access to labor market information, and orientation to AJC services. Regular updates on job trends, opportunities, training academies, and career fairs are disseminated to clients via our public website and AlaskaJobs.

B. STATE BOARD

Provide a description of the State Board activities that will assist State Board members and staff in carrying out State Board functions effectively. Also, provide a membership roster for the State Board consistent with 20 CFR 679.110-120, including members' organizational affiliations and position titles.

Alaska Workforce Investment Board Activities

The AWIB convenes three times annually, utilizing virtual platforms or gathering in person as a complete board. These statewide board meetings serve as a valuable platform for engagement with regional stakeholders and sector partners. During these meetings, members of the AWIB adopt resolutions and motions crafted to provide essential policy guidance, program oversight, and enhancements to Alaska's dynamic workforce system.

In the interim between the three annual statewide board meetings, AWIB members actively participate in one or more standing committees, which include Workforce Readiness & Employment Placement, Policy & Planning, Assessment & Evaluation, Legislative, and the Executive Committee. The committees convene regularly, with most meeting bimonthly. However, the Executive Committee holds monthly meetings, and the Legislative Committee convenes at the call of the Chair.

This committee structure empowers AWIB members to delve into the intricacies of the workforce system. They identify areas for improvement, cultivate sector partnerships, formulate sector strategies, evaluate policies and programs, research and recommend legislative initiatives, and pinpoint areas for service enhancement to address the employment barriers faced by Alaska's adults and youth. The commitment to these committee-driven processes exemplifies the AWIB's dedication to thorough examination, strategic planning, and continuous improvement within Alaska's workforce landscape.

The AWIB, as mandated by Alaska statute, is comprised of members appointed by the governor. The board's composition reflects a comprehensive representation, with several of the governor's cabinet members serving as seated members, including the Lieutenant Governor, the Commissioners of Labor and Workforce Development; Health; Education & Early Development; and Commerce, Community, and Economic Development.

The diversity of the board extends to include a representative from the University of Alaska system, as well as representatives from various sectors, encompassing postsecondary and secondary career and technical education, adult education, and public education. Business and industry interests and organized labor are well-represented, with four representatives each. The inclusive approach continues with additional board members representing specific perspectives, including one with professional experience in the field of developmental disabilities, a Veteran member, and a representative from an organization dedicated to addressing the employment and training needs of Alaska Natives.

Furthermore, the board includes members from the private sector, contributing to a well-rounded representation of Alaskan interests. To ensure localized insights and perspectives, two chief local

elected officials have been appointed to the board, reinforcing the commitment to incorporating local input into the decision-making process of our Alternate Entity State Board. This diverse and inclusive composition ensures that the AWIB reflects a wide range of perspectives and expertise, fostering a comprehensive approach to addressing the workforce and employment needs of the state.

Contact information: Alaska Workforce Investment Board, 3301 Eagle Street, Ste. 305 Anchorage, Alaska 99503, (907) 269-7327. A detailed list of board members is provided below.

Alaska Workforce Investment Board Membership Roster

A complete member roster is shown in Figure 9 and is also available on the AWIB website https://awib.alaska.gov/AWIB_roster.pdf.



Alaska Workforce Investment Board					
Name	Term End	Organization	Address	Phone	Fax
Dahlstrom, Nancy Lt. Governor	Appointed	State of Alaska n.governor@alaska.gov	P.O. Box 110013 Juneau, AK 99811	465-3520 269-7460	465-5400 269-0263
Facant Lt. Governor Designee	Appointed	State of Alaska Facant	P.O. Box 110001 Juneau, AK 99811	465-3500 N/A	
Mulou, Catherine Acting DOLWD Commissioner	Appointed	State of Alaska cathy.mulou@alaska.gov	P.O. Box 111149 Juneau, AK 99811	465-2700 N/A	465-2784
Mayer, Duane DOLWD Commissioner Designee	Appointed	State of Alaska duane.mayer@alaska.gov	3301 Eagle St. Ste. 302 Anchorage, AK 99501	334-5963 N/A	
Bishop, Drena DEED Commissioner	Appointed	State of Alaska dred.commissioner@alaska.gov	P.O. Box 110500 Juneau, AK 99811	465-2802 N/A	465-2806
Billings, Brad DEED Commissioner Designee	Appointed	State of Alaska brad.billings@alaska.gov	P.O. Box 110500 Juneau, AK 99811	465-8720 N/A	465-2889
Hedberg, Heidi DOH Commissioner	Appointed	State of Alaska heidi.hedberg@alaska.gov	3601 C St. Ste. 902 Anchorage, AK 99503	269-2042 N/A	
Marasigan, Christine DOH Commissioner Designee	Appointed	State of Alaska christine.marasigan@alaska.gov	3601 C Street Ste. 902 Anchorage, AK 99503	334-2474 N/A	
Sande, Julie DCCED Commissioner	Appointed	State of Alaska julie.sande@alaska.gov	P.O. Box 110000 Juneau, AK 99811	465-2500 N/A	
Chambers, Sara DCCED Commissioner Designee	Appointed	State of Alaska sara.chambers@alaska.gov	333 Willoughby Ave. Juneau, AK 99801	465-2144 N/A	
Rizk, Michelle University of Alaska Rep.	12/1/2025	University Relations & Chief Strategy Michelle.rizk@alaska.edu	2025 Yukon Drive Fairbanks, AK 99775	322-8625 N/A	
FACANT Postsecondary Voc. Education	12/1/2025	Facant Facant	Facant Facant	Facant Facant	
Turner, Jayce Sec Voc. Ed	12/1/2025	jayce@alaska.gov	PO Box 8 McGrath, AK 99627	524-0304 524-3182	
Zagg, Patricia Public Education	12/1/2024	Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District trish.zagg@matnsd.k12.ak.us	501 N Gulkana St Palmer, AK 99645	250-1926 746-9238	
Smith, Malyn Adult Basic Education	12/1/2023	Alaska Job Corps Center malyn.smith@jcc.org	800 E. Lynn Martin Drive Palmer, AK 99645	N/A 861-8801 W	
Nielsen-Bryant, Alison Prof. Dev. Disabilities	12/1/2024	alisonnielsen@hotmail.com	16850 Olena Pointe Cir Anchorage, AK 99516	441-7747 N/A	
Delia, Tony Native E/T Org	12/1/2023	Tony Delia Enterprise LLC delia.tony@alaska.com	6843 O'Brien Street Unit B Anchorage, AK 99507	978-3425 N/A	
Facant, Brenda Business/Industry	12/1/2025	Calista Corporation bfacant@calistacorp.com	3111 C Street, Ste. 500 Anchorage, AK 99503	802-0608 C 275-2818 W	
Bell, Larry Business/Industry	12/1/2025	Nat. Electrical Contractors Assn. NECA larry@alaskaneca.org	712 West 36th Avenue Anchorage, AK 99503	561-1958 244-4166	
Sands, Lucille Business/Industry	12/1/2024	Bering Straits Native Cooperation lucille.sands@outlook.com	10641 Concord Hill Circle Anchorage, AK 99515	406-0433 N/A	
Selle, Mari Business/Industry	12/1/2024	Alaska Safety Alliance mari@alaskasafetyalliance.org	2600 Cordova Street Suite 105 Anchorage, AK 99503	301-2580 C N/A	
Frank, Peter Private Sector	10/13/2024	3E Construction peter@3econstructionak.com	1740 Terrillo Ct. Palmer, AK 99645	N/A 841-2169 W	
Rose, Patrick Private Sector	12/1/2023	Northern Industrial Training LLC. patrick.rose@nirataska.com	3201 C Street, Ste. 308 Anchorage, AK 99503	317-4100 C 743-7704 W	
Evans, Randall Veteran	12/1/2023	LS Technologies & Randall Evans Coaching randal22@gmail.com	5221 Rabbit Creek Road Anchorage, AK 99516	500-2706 N/A	
Mauterbach, Keith Private Sector	12/1/2023	Specialty Truck and Auto keith@autotruckenterprises.com	8225 Hartzell Road Anchorage, AK 99507	575-1637 N/A	
Jackson, Sharon Private Sector	12/1/2024	Alaska Rising LLC shakkal26@gmail.com	12703 Isis Way Eagle River, AK 99577	854-1469 N/A	
Facant Organized Labor	Facant	Facant Facant	Facant Facant	Facant Facant	
Baxter, Corey Organized Labor	12/1/2024	International Union of Operating Engineers 302 cbaxter@iuoe302.org	9309 Glacier Hwy Bldg. A, Ste 105 Juneau, AK 99801	321-4271 C N/A	
Andrew, Ryan Organized Labor	12/1/2022	IBEW Local 1547 randrew@ibew1547.org	3333 Denali Street, Ste. 200 Anchorage, AK 99503	777-7252 440-6099	
Ladd, Anthony Organized Labor	12/1/2022	Ironworkers Local 751 anthony.ladd.aku751@ironworkers.org	8141 Schoon Street Anchorage, AK 99518	590-9339 C N/A	
Ledford, Glenda Non-Voting Local Elected Official	12/1/2025	City of Wasilla gladford@cityofwasilla.gov	290 E. Herang Ave Wasilla, AK 99654	355-0562 N/A	
Facant Non-Voting Local Elected Official	Facant	Facant Facant	Facant Facant	Facant Facant	

3301 Eagle Street, Suite 305 • Anchorage, AK 99503 • (907) 269-7327
Jobs are Alaska's Future As of 10/26/2023

Figure 9: Alaska Alternate Entity Workforce Board Roster

4. ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS AND ONE-STOP PROGRAM PARTNERS

A. ASSESSMENT OF CORE AND ONE-STOP PROGRAM PARTNER PROGRAMS.

Describe how the core programs will be assessed each year based on State performance accountability measures described in section 116(b) of WIOA. Describe how other one-stop delivery system partner program services and Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan will be assessed each year. This State assessment must include the quality, effectiveness, and improvement of programs broken down by local area or provider. Such state assessments should take into account local and regional planning goals.

Assessment of Core Programs

One way to measure effectiveness is to analyze numbers and percentages of participants going to work. Alaska has the unique ability to match employment and wage records using the Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD) database, as well as obtaining information from state and federal wage databases. The state has a history of working with partners such as the Department of Education & Early Development (DEED), the University of Alaska (UA), and subrecipients to provide participant information, within the confines of privacy, which allows effective analyses.

Alaska is committed to using performance data to evaluate programs and partners. Alaska uses the joint performance measures found in Section 116 of WIOA to measure and evaluate program effectiveness, help improve program evaluations, and remove potential barriers to the integration of services. These joint performance measures promote consistency by creating common definitions of success.

The system is continuously monitored and evaluated using the reports required for federal and state reporting and ad-hoc reports generated from the databases used to capture service delivery data. Leadership and program staff review these reports and communicate with core program operators and partners to provide technical assistance on areas needing improvement and to obtain information on best practices to share.

Performance levels for Titles I and III are established through negotiations with the federal Employment and Training Administration (ETA). A state team representing the core programs reviews performance outcomes and determines proposed levels for each core program in those Titles. This team is responsible for coordinating with ETA to negotiate and report statewide performance levels as required by WIOA.

The state participant case management system, AlaskaJobs, collects, compiles, and exports performance data for Titles I, II, and III, and AWARE is used to collect and export Title IV performance data. All core programs are responsible for establishing a system for reviewing and evaluating performance results. If needed, each core program establishes and implements performance improvement plans based on the evaluation of performance data.

Ongoing monitoring and assessments related to programs and activities authorized by WIOA allow the AWIB to identify how effectively the state's programs are achieving the vision and goals of the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor and of DOLWD. The results provide the basis for making statewide and regional evaluations of the effectiveness of the WIOA programs administered within Alaska's workforce development system.

Title II requires the Alaska Adult Education (AAE) office to monitor and evaluate the quality and improvement of adult education and literacy activities. AAE programs are monitored with a formal monitoring document on a predetermined schedule. Routine monitoring is done through on-site visits

and reviews, pre-award risk analysis, desk monitors and file reviews of student records, and negotiated performance indicators of program data to assess progress in meeting the performance accountability measures based on indicators in Section 116. Programs not meeting the negotiated levels receive increased technical assistance. The AAE office submits annual reports to, and negotiates performance indicators with, the US Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education.

The AJCs, providing Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker, Title III Wagner-Peyser, and SCSEP services, are evaluated quarterly through the Self-Appraisal System as required by 20 CFR §658.601. This appraisal system consists of quantitative and qualitative aspects intended to determine success in reaching goals and correct performance deficiencies.

The overall strategy to improve core programs, grant administration, on-site monitoring, and assessment of programs is a crucial element for DOLWD's delivery of service and ensures that limited dollars are spent well. Alaska's assessment of programs is based on the delivery of high-quality, outcome-focused job seeker and business services. Alaska's workforce development system is demand-driven and fully integrated, and links employers to job seekers to promote the success of workers and businesses. Alaska uses the USDOL Core Monitoring Guide to ensure that oversight and monitoring practices reinforce USDOL principles while ensuring program outcomes are achieved and a high level of integrity is maintained. The guide provides a consistent framework and starting point for all on-site grant-monitoring responsibilities. The assessment includes the quality, effectiveness, and improvement of programs broken down by local area or provider.

Assessment of One-Stop Delivery System Partner Program Services

The assessment of One-Stop delivery system partner program services is based on participant outcomes identified under their statutorily required performance and reporting requirements. The WIOA joint performance measures, which consist of six customer outcomes specific to core indicators of performance and employer satisfaction, demonstrate value in promoting integration of services and boosting accessibility and transparency within the workforce system. Therefore, if possible, the same measures are applied to other One-Stop partner programs that are applied to the core programs, in addition to any program-specific measures required by federal or state regulations.

Regardless of whether a program is a core or a partner program, or whether a measure is required by WIOA or partner program law and regulation, performance measures and performance evaluations are applied at the customer level first and are then aggregated by program or population.

B. PREVIOUS ASSESSMENT RESULTS

For each four-year state plan and state plan modification, provide the results of assessments of the effectiveness of the core programs and other one-stop partner programs and Combined State Plan partner programs included in the Unified or Combined State plan during the preceding 2-year period (i.e. the 2-year period of the plan modification cycle), in accordance with methods described in 4(A). Describe how the State is adapting its strategies based on these assessments.

The AWIB has been monitoring federal apprenticeship program grantees since 2017. The Division of Employment and Training Services works closely with the AWIB to provide technical assistance with these monitoring activities.

The AWIB monitors WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs at the Alaska Job Center Network sites on a rotational schedule to ensure that each site is thoroughly reviewed and provided with immediate feedback and technical assistance.

One-Stop sites are the portals to our state’s workforce system and its broad array of career services and resources designed to help individuals acquire the skills necessary to gain meaningful employment and help our businesses access the talent pipeline that meets their human capital needs and fuels economic growth. Workforce system partners are required to collaborate to support a seamless customer-focused service delivery network. Every region across our state is unique in its economy and geography, and each is actively working to create a system that provides effective services for job seekers and business customers.

Alaska Job Center Network (AJCN) sites (One-Stops) are evaluated and certified every three years. The AWIB has certified the following One-Stop sites since 2019:

- May 23, 2019 – Valdez and Homer
- October 23, 2019 – Nome and Kodiak
- June 24, 2021 – Mat-Su Job Center
- October 6, 2023 – Fairbanks Job Center
- November 11, 2023 – Bristol Bay Job Center

The monitors are conducted in accordance with WIOA Proposed Rules, Federal Register Vol. 80, No 73, Subpart D, Sections 683.440; 2 CFR 200 and the DOLWD/DETS Monitoring and Single Audit policy 07-523.2. Financial management and program activities are reviewed. The financial reviews include an evaluation of participant expenditures and associated financial documentation, policies, procedures, and staff interviews. The program reviews include evaluating program activities and services provided to eligible participants, staff interviews, and examining randomly selected participant files, which are reviewed for inclusion of required forms and data, case notes to ensure continuity from program enrollment through exit and follow-up, and data entry practices for the case management system. Program performance information is compared to the state’s federally negotiated performance rates.

To ensure WIOA goals are met, the One-Stop certification teams are comprised of AWIB members and staff and individuals who represent local partners with specific expertise serving populations with barriers. Results and outcomes for the public investment in the One-Stop Operators are essential to the Alaska Job Center Network’s relevance. The effectiveness of the AJCN for employers and job seekers is evident in system performance, and service delivery decisions are based on data. Customer data from One-Stop partners and regional economic data are continuously collected, analyzed, and shared with all workforce system staff, community stakeholders, and WIOA partner representatives. Plans for improvement, enhancement, or adjustment are established and acted upon. The DOLWD and AWIB work closely together to ensure WIOA requirements are met.

C. EVALUATION

Describe how the State will conduct evaluations and research projects of activities carried out in the State under WIOA core programs; how such projects will be coordinated with, and designed in conjunction with, State and local boards and with State agencies responsible for the administration of all respective core programs; and, further, how the projects will be coordinated with the evaluations provided for by the Secretary of Labor and the Secretary of Education under WIOA (WIOA Section 116(e)).

Evaluation Projects and Products

With a portion of statewide funds set aside by the Governor, DETS and the AWIB Assessment & Evaluation committee partner with the department's Research and Analysis (R&A) Section; other DOLWD divisions; national, state and local agencies; trade unions and organizations; training providers; and other non-profit and private entities around the state to evaluate WIOA program performance via a variety of products and projects.

The Research and Analysis Section collects national, state, and local data in addition to working with WIOA program leaders and partners to conduct and publish longitudinal studies regarding Alaska's demography and economy as they relate to the workforce, to ensure that the state is on a continuous path of improvement and excellence in providing targeted training and support to the state's employers and job seekers.

R&A's occupational database and other proprietary information systems providing participant data and rich labor market information create a platform for deep, long-term evaluation of workforce programs. Examples include worker residency analysis, the Training Program Performance Report, and special labor market topics such as Employment Outcomes After High School Graduation, Decline in Working Age Population, the Child Care Industry, Recovery in Alaska's Tourism Industry After the Pandemic, and other special topics.

Re-employment Services and Eligibility Assessment

Alaska initiated Re-employment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) evaluations in PY 2020 according to the requirements of TEGL 06-19 to conduct evidence-based analysis to determine and deploy optimal interventions and service delivery. The DETS RESEA coordinator worked with the division's UI program and with R&A as the third-party evaluator.

Unemployment Insurance claimants are selected based on location and reported barriers to employment to participate in a RESEA interview with Title III Wagner-Peyser Alaska job center staff to maintain eligibility for benefits, where they receive additional services to enhance their likelihood of reemployment and can be evaluated for appropriate referral to core and partner programs such as Title IV Division of Vocational Rehabilitation services, Title II Alaska Adult Education services, or Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker Training services.

During PY 2021, a second RESEA interview requirement was selected as the intervention subject to evaluation based on a comparison to single interview data, where a randomly selected sample of first interview completers (75 percent) will be selected for a second interview. The third-party evaluator will compare this group against the single interview control group (25 percent) to determine how successful an additional intervention is for individuals obtaining and maintaining long-term employment based on four potential points: employment, median earnings, benefit weeks claimed, and benefit funds expended.

DETS continues to work with its system developer and the department's Data Processing unit to implement a second RESEA interview in AlaskaJobs, with completion anticipated by the end of PY 2023. Alaska has developed a statement of work for the evaluation project and will provide it to federally designated provider ABT Associates for review and technical assistance. Evaluation of the second RESEA interview will continue through PY 2024 and beyond.

Evaluation Peer Learning Cohort

Alaska is participating in the WorkforceGPS-sponsored Evaluation Peer Learning Cohort 2023 to develop additional avenues for evaluation. Representatives from all four WIOA titles and the AWIB

evaluate and improve cross-program communications and cooperation, resulting in more comprehensive and seamless service plans for customers who can benefit from the services and objectives of multiple programs.

5. DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

Describe the methods and factors the State will use in distributing funds under the core programs in accordance with the provisions authorizing such distributions.

A. FOR TITLE I PROGRAMS

Provide a description of the written policies that establish the State's methods and factors used to distribute funds to local areas for—

I. YOUTH ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 128(B)(2) OR (B)(3)

Alaska has been approved by the US DOL Employment and Training Administration (ETA) as a Single State Local Area due to the unique labor market and geographic workforce distribution. The DOLWD allocates funds to six regional economic and workforce areas: Anchorage/Mat-Su, Gulf Coast, Interior, Northern, Southeast, and Southwest.

The Within State Funding Allocation Policy 07-518.1 outlines how Youth funds are distributed.

1. Annually, five percent is reserved for statewide administration and 10 percent for statewide projects.
2. Competitive Grants Distribution: The majority of the remaining funds are distributed primarily through competitive grants, in line with 20 CFR § 681.400 Subpart C requirements.
3. Criteria for Fund Allocation Among Regions: The allocation among the six economic regions is based on three criteria, each accounting for one-third of the total distribution:
 - a. The relative number of unemployed individuals in areas of substantial unemployment (areas with an unemployment rate of 6.5 percent or higher) in each economic region compared to the total number statewide.
 - b. The relative excess number of unemployed individuals (areas with an unemployment rate of 4.5 percent or higher) in each economic region compared to the total excess number statewide.
 - c. The relative number of disadvantaged youth in each economic region compared to the total number of disadvantaged youth statewide.

This method ensures that the allocation of funds is equitable and responsive to the specific needs and challenges of different regions within Alaska, particularly focusing on areas with high unemployment and disadvantaged youth.

II. ADULT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 133(B)(2) OR (B)(3)

Alaska has been approved by the US DOL Employment and Training Administration (ETA) as a Single State Local Area due to the unique labor market and geographic workforce distribution. The DOLWD allocates funds to six regional economic and workforce areas: Anchorage/Mat-Su, Gulf Coast, Interior, Northern, Southeast, and Southwest.

The WIOA Title I-B Within State Funding Allocation Policy 07-518.1 outlines how Adult funds are distributed.

1. For the state level distribution of funds, five percent of the Adult federal allotment for statewide administration and 10 percent for statewide projects is reserved annually.
2. From the balance, the DETS Director or designee will determine the amount or percent of funding to be distributed to the economic regions. The most recent labor market, employment, and unemployment data available from the DOLWD, Research and Analysis Section will be used to determine the allocation.
3. As much as is practicable, from the amount to be distributed between economic regions:
 - a. One fourth is allocated based on relative number of unemployed individuals in areas of substantial unemployment (census areas with an unemployment rate of 6.5 percent or higher) in each economic region compared to the total number of unemployed individuals in areas of substantial unemployment statewide;
 - b. One fourth is allocated based on the relative excess number of unemployed individuals in each economic region compared to the total excess number of unemployed individuals statewide;
 - c. One fourth is allocated based on the relative number of disadvantaged adults in each economic region compared to the total number of disadvantaged adults statewide; and
 - d. One fourth is allocated based on the relative number of employed individuals in each economic region compared to the total number of employed individuals statewide.

Adult program allocations are distributed through the job centers for Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) and Supportive Services. The DETS Director or designee may reallocate Adult funds between the economic regions to make effective and efficient use of the funds while taking into consideration statewide needs. The transfer of up to 100 percent of funds between the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs is allowed with approval from the DETS Director or designee and supported by the Alaska Workforce Investment Board through resolution 16-06.

III. DISLOCATED WORKER EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 133(B)(2) AND BASED ON DATA AND WEIGHTS ASSIGNED

Alaska has been approved by the US DOL Employment and Training Administration (ETA) as a Single State Local Area due to the unique labor market and geographic workforce distribution. The DOLWD allocates funds to six regional economic and workforce areas: Anchorage/Mat-Su, Gulf Coast, Interior, Northern, Southeast, and Southwest.

The WIOA Title I-B Within State Funding Allocation Policy 07-518.1 outlines how Dislocated Worker funds are distributed.

1. For the state level distribution of funds, the DOLWD will:
 - a. Reserve five percent of Alaska's Dislocated Worker federal allotments for statewide administration;
 - b. Reserve 10 percent of Alaska's Dislocated Worker federal allotments for statewide projects;

- c. Reserve up to 25 percent of the Dislocated Worker federal allotment for Rapid Response activities.
2. From the balance, the DETS Director or designee will determine the amount or percent of funding to be distributed to the economic regions. The most recent labor market, employment, and unemployment data available from the DOLWD, Research and Analysis Section will be used to determine the allocation.
3. For the Dislocated Worker program, as much as is practicable, from the total to be distributed between economic regions:
 - a. One fourth is allocated on the basis of the relative number of insured unemployed individuals in each economic region compared to the total number of insured unemployed individuals statewide;
 - b. One fourth is allocated on the basis of the relative concentrations of unemployed individuals (census areas with an unemployment rate of 6.5 percent or higher) in each economic region compared to the total concentrations of unemployed individuals statewide;
 - c. One fourth is allocated on the basis of the relative number of long-term unemployed (15 weeks or more) individuals in each economic region compared to the total number of long-term unemployed individuals statewide; and
 - d. One fourth is allocated on the basis of the relative number of employed individuals in each economic region compared to the total number of employed individuals statewide.

Dislocated Worker allocations are distributed through the job centers for Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) and Supportive Services. The DETS Director or designee may reallocate Dislocated Worker funds between the economic regions to make effective and efficient use of the funds while taking into consideration statewide needs. The transfer of up to 100 percent of funds between the Dislocated Worker and Adult programs is allowed with approval from the DETS Director or designee and supported by the Alaska Workforce Investment Board through resolution 16-06.

B. FOR TITLE II

I. DESCRIBE THE METHODS AND FACTORS THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL USE TO DISTRIBUTE TITLE II FUNDS.

Title II funds will be awarded as multi-year Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) grants to eligible providers of adult education. AAE awards multi-year federal and state grant funding to regional eligible providers to support the delivery of adult education activities. Each grant serves as the main delivery system of AAE throughout Alaska but there is a separate competition for each region. Two additional grants are awarded under a statewide competition for Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education and AAE services to be offered in the Department of Corrections (DOC) correctional centers.

The AAE office issues one Request for Grant Application (RGA) for all AAE grants, which is announced statewide on Alaska's public notice system. AAE ensures direct and equitable access to AEFLA funds by conducting the competitive process to provide nondiscriminatory access. Organizations not previously funded are given a fair and equitable opportunity to apply for funding without hindrance. The AAE office ensures through its grant announcement, application, review, and

award process that regional adult education programs, Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) grants, and Department of Corrections (DOC) programs are represented throughout the geographic regions of Alaska.

The same announcement, application, and process are used for all applicants for each AAE RGA. The AAE office conducts the grant application process and ensures that the same review process is used for all applications received. The AAE grant recipients are directly funded from the state DOLWD.

The amount of funding to provide services under the DOC grant is determined by law (Section 222. (a)(1)), which states that no more than 20 percent of the 82.5 percent of federal funds used to award subgrants will be awarded for correctional education and other institutionalized individuals. The funding formula for Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education grants are determined and designated by federal award each year.

II. DESCRIBE HOW THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL ENSURE DIRECT AND EQUITABLE ACCESS TO ALL ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS TO APPLY AND COMPETE FOR FUNDS AND HOW THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL ENSURE THAT IT IS USING THE SAME GRANT OR CONTRACT ANNOUNCEMENT AND APPLICATION PROCEDURE FOR ALL ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS.

The Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) issues one Request for Grant Application (RGA) for all AAE grants. The RGA application is announced through the State of Alaska Public On-line Notice System as well as through traditional and non-traditional publications, such as websites, press releases, and social media to inform current and potential eligible providers of the grant release and application and award process. An announcement that the RGA is being published on the State of Alaska Public On-line Notice System is emailed to eligible providers that have signed up for notifications of grant releases from the Online-Notice System. During the initial period of the grant submission process, any eligible agency that contacts DOLWD with an interest in participating is told how to access the On-line Notice System if they have not yet accessed it.

As established in the RGA, informational teleconferences provide technical assistance and answer questions on the grant application in an open forum. Frequently asked questions are compiled and posted on the AAE website.

A copy of the RGA, scoring rubric, and AAE-specific definitions are attached to the online announcement. The announcement and the RGA both reference WIOA Title II's definition of eligible provider. Eligible providers, for the purposes of the RGA, are defined in Title II Section 203 (5). Organizations not previously funded are given a fair and equitable opportunity to apply for funding without hindrance.

The RGA outlines the information to be provided in a clear and concise narrative that is aligned with the WIOA 13 considerations. Through the RGA process, eligible providers must demonstrate past effectiveness in serving eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy. Providers who are previously funded Alaska Adult Education grantees will be required to provide data to demonstrate the average percentage of students who have shown an increase in at least one educational functional level; earned an alternative high school diploma through General Education Development (GED®) testing; and achieved gains in WIOA outcomes measures. An eligible provider that has not been previously funded under Title II of WIOA may demonstrate effectiveness by providing performance data related to record of recruitment, retention, instructional practices, workforce alignment, and improving the skills of eligible individuals, particularly those who have low levels of literacy in the content domains of reading, writing, mathematics, English language acquisition, and other subject areas relevant to the

services contained in the Alaska Adult Education application for funds. They will also be required to provide data about the average percentage of students achieving at least one grade level advancement; high school completion; and employment transition outcomes.

The same announcement, application, and process are used for all applicants for each RGA issued by the AAE office. The AAE office conducts the grant application process and ensures that the same review process is used for all applications received. The AAE grant recipients are directly funded from the state DOLWD.

C. VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

In the case of a State that, under section 101(a)(2)(A)(i) of the Rehabilitation Act designates a State agency to administer the part of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under which VR services are provided for individuals who are blind, describe the process and the factors used by the State to determine the distribution of funds among the two VR agencies in the State.

The DVR is a combined Agency; therefore, this is not applicable.

6. PROGRAM DATA

A. DATA ALIGNMENT AND INTEGRATION

Describe the plans of the lead State agencies with responsibility for the administration of the core programs, along with the State Board, to align and integrate available workforce and education data systems for the core programs, unemployment insurance programs, and education through postsecondary education, and to the extent possible, the Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan. The description of the State's plan for integrating data systems should include the State's goals for achieving integration and any progress to date.

Describe data-collection and reporting processes used for all programs and activities, including the State's process to collect and report data on co-enrollment, and for those present in the one-stop centers.

I. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S PLANS TO MAKE THE MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS FOR THE CORE PROGRAMS INTEROPERABLE TO MAXIMIZE THE EFFICIENT EXCHANGE OF COMMON DATA ELEMENTS TO SUPPORT ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Data Collection and Analysis Summary

Core program staff and subrecipients are responsible for the collection of data and subsequent entry into the applicable data systems. The collection of wage data is coordinated with DOLWD's Research and Analysis Section to automate the matching of wage data. Strict data-sharing agreements are adhered to when determining access levels and handling of wage data and participant information to ensure compliance with confidentiality agreements and requirements to safeguard Personally Identifiable Information. Wage data are used for reporting on the quarterly and annual reports and in reporting pre- and post-training earnings change for various state level reports, including ad hoc reporting.

Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker programs require a paper application, maintained for data integrity, and the information is then entered into AlaskaJobs by AJC staff or subrecipient staff. DOLWD conducts quarterly data validation to verify the accuracy and completeness of the

information and monthly analysis of negotiated metrics and Quarterly Report metrics to evaluate current outcomes and trends. Results are shared with AJC and department management.

Wagner-Peyser participants complete an on-line registration, and subsequent service information is system-generated in AlaskaJobs based on the participant's activity. AJC staff may also manually enter service information.

Adult Education individual student data are collected by program staff and entered into AlaskaJobs. The data are used to manage participants, improve programs, and provide required federal reports.

DVR participant data are collected through a paper application and one-on-one interviews. Data are also collected outside of the system to validate disability and public support dollars. The AWARE system is used to maintain continuous case information and documentation to meet the goal of successful employment for the participant.

Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) participant data are collected by program staff through a paper application and entered into the USDOL SCSEP database, which provides reports to aid in monitoring grantees' and subrecipients' data collection, reporting, and performance. By having all SCSEP grantees and subrecipients use a standardized database, USDOL can ensure the quality of information used to assess SCSEP effectiveness.

The USDOL Employment and Training Administration uses the Grantee Performance Management System (GPMS), which is cloud-based with a web-based platform and a service-oriented architecture. GPMS is the primary source for entering, tracking, and submitting program participant data that updates into the organization's Quarterly Performance Report data, which will be directly uploaded to the Workforce Integrated Performance System.

(i) Describe the State's plans to make the management information systems for the core programs interoperable to maximize the efficient exchange of common data elements to support assessment and evaluation.

Alaska uses Virtual OneStop (VOS), locally named AlaskaJobs, to manage WIOA Titles I-B, II, and III, and Trade Adjustment Assistance and the Work Opportunity Tax Credit system. This system interfaces with Alaska's Unemployment Insurance (UI) system to offer a common front door for employers, training providers, UI customers, job seekers, and workers. Additionally, AlaskaJobs allows delivery of streamlined services to customers, prevents duplication of data entry, leverages program resources, and ensures complete and accurate common Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL) federal reporting. Through AlaskaJobs, the core programs continue to share and combine participant information for PIRL reporting, performance evaluations, and statistical purposes as has been done since the implementation of WIOA.

The DOLWD's Research and Analysis section has coordinated for years with the Department of Education & Early Development, the University of Alaska, and other regional training providers to share data. For program performance measures based on employment and wages, Research and Analysis has access to databases to determine, among other measures, program participants' employment status, wages, and continued residency in the state. These relationships with state agencies and training providers support the sharing and integration of data.

II. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S PLANS TO INTEGRATE DATA SYSTEMS TO FACILITATE STREAMLINED INTAKE AND SERVICE DELIVERY TO TRACK PARTICIPATION ACROSS ALL PROGRAMS INCLUDED IN THIS PLAN

With the implementation of AlaskaJobs, Alaska possesses a fully integrated intake and data system for WIOA Titles I, II, and III. Title IV, Vocational Rehabilitation, uses the AWARE system based on Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) business practices and federal requirements. AWARE offers a comprehensive set of cases, financial, and organizational modules designed around the natural flow of the VR case process, making it intuitive for VR Counselors. AlaskaJobs and AWARE will integrate through the sharing of information collected by the Semi-Autonomous Research Assistant (SARA). SARA is designed to improve and share communication between division staff and program participants using text messages and emails, automating tasks such as reminding individuals of appointments, gathering employment information, and collecting post-exit information.

III. EXPLAIN HOW THE STATE BOARD WILL ASSIST THE GOVERNOR IN ALIGNING TECHNOLOGY AND DATA SYSTEMS ACROSS REQUIRED ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS (INCLUDING DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMON INTAKE, DATA COLLECTION, ETC.) AND HOW SUCH ALIGNMENT WILL IMPROVE SERVICE DELIVERY TO INDIVIDUALS, INCLUDING UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS

The AWIB implements memorandums of understanding, as appropriate, to ensure that the required common data elements can be collected and stored, and to facilitate shared use by all core programs. This process ensures that all the core programs share resources to the maximum extent possible and that the process is transparent to the applicant. This alignment improves service delivery to individuals, including unemployed individuals, by helping to open lines of communication among staff, reducing duplication of service, and improving efficiency.

IV. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S DATA SYSTEMS AND PROCEDURES TO PRODUCE THE REPORTS REQUIRED UNDER SECTION 116, PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM. (WIOA SECTION 116(D)(2)).

Alaska has successfully reported all elements identified in WIOA Section 116(d)(2). Participant activity for WIOA Titles I, II, and III, TAA, and SCSEP are maintained in AlaskaJobs, allowing for non-duplication of services, common exit, and common participant reporting. Title IV data are housed in the AWARE system for performance reporting. The core programs and SCSEP, TAA, R&A, and UI are all part of the Alaska DOLWD, ensuring a coordinated approach to data sharing and reporting. All aspects of the collection, exchange and reporting of required performance data have been implemented.

Eligible Training Providers submit program completer data into AlaskaJobs, with exception of the University of Alaska System and the Alaska Vocational Technical Center, which provide annual imports of training program completer data directly to DOLWD's Research and Analysis (R&A) Section. This information is merged with participant outcome and UI wage data.

AlaskaJobs is the local implementation of the Virtual OneStop (VOS) system developed by Geographic Solutions, Inc. AlaskaJobs is used for both data collection and PIRL reporting and provides quarterly and annual extracts of performance data. In-house staff produce monthly reports on ETA Quarterly Reports Analyses metrics and negotiated performance metrics. The current statuses and trends for these metrics are shared with AJC and department management for use in evaluating compliance and potential areas of improvement.

B. ASSESSMENT OF PARTICIPANTS' POST-PROGRAM SUCCESS

Describe how lead State agencies will use the workforce development system to assess the progress of participants who are exiting from core programs in entering, persisting in, and completing

postsecondary education, or entering or remaining in employment. States may choose to set additional indicators of performance.

In addition to the defined WIOA performance indicators, Alaska has two unique data sets that give it more options for performance analysis. Alaska can determine who left the state by accessing applications for the state's Permanent Fund Dividend, a program that distributes a share of mineral-related state investment earnings each year to Alaska residents. Alaska also has more detailed information about worker occupations because it is one of very few states that collect wage and occupation information as part of employers' mandatory quarterly reporting under state UI laws. This information, combined with PIRL-based data on participant training completion, entered employment, job retention, entered education, and earnings change, allows for a more in-depth performance analysis to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the workforce system and inform continuous improvement activities.

C. USE OF UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) WAGE RECORD DATA

Explain how the State will meet the requirements to utilize quarterly UI wage records for performance accountability, evaluations, and as a source for workforce and labor market information, consistent with Federal and State law. (This Operational Planning element applies to core programs.)

Alaska will continue to use quarterly UI wage records to look at outcomes in terms of occupations, wages, etc. The state will carefully control individuals' data and release only aggregated data consistent with federal and state regulations and statutes. DOLWD's Research and Analysis Section has a history of successfully working with various programs to obtain and analyze data while maintaining confidentiality and privacy safeguards.

D. PRIVACY SAFEGUARDS

Describe the privacy safeguards incorporated in the State's workforce development system, including safeguards required by section 444 of the General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. 1232g) and other applicable Federal laws.

Alaska carefully controls individuals' data and releases only de-identified or aggregated data consistent with federal and state statutes and regulations. DOLWD restricts access to microdata with file protocols, staff are familiar with working with confidential data, including Personally Identifiable Information (PII), and they are required to take regular training with the Bureau of Labor Statistics to ensure they are using the most up-to-date procedures.

UI wage record data are securely transferred from the state's UI program to DOLWD's Research and Analysis Section through system extracts. The records are then reviewed for quality control and stored in restricted-access folders. Except where specifically allowed or required by state statute (AS 23.20.100) or federal regulation (20 CFR 603.5), the wage record data are only released or published in aggregated form so that names and other confidential information of individual workers and individual firms are never revealed.

The analysts and economists who work with the data receive annual confidentiality training on state procedures and protocols and participate in annual data confidentiality training on federal-state cooperative data programs with the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. In over 15 years of working with confidential K-12, university, and UI data, there has never been a breach of confidentiality or any type of accidental disclosure.

7. PRIORITY OF SERVICE FOR VETERANS.

A. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL IMPLEMENT THE PRIORITY OF SERVICE PROVISIONS FOR COVERED PERSONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE JOBS FOR VETERANS ACT, CODIFIED AT SECTION 4215 OF 38 U.S.C., WHICH APPLIES TO ALL EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMS FUNDED IN WHOLE OR IN PART BY THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR.

B. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL MONITOR PRIORITY OF SERVICE PROVISIONS FOR VETERANS.

C. DESCRIBE THE TRIAGE AND REFERRAL PROCESS FOR ELIGIBLE VETERANS AND OTHER POPULATIONS DETERMINED ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE SERVICES FROM THE JOBS FOR VETERANS STATE GRANTS (JVSG) PROGRAM'S DISABLED VETERANS' OUTREACH PROGRAM (DVOP) SPECIALIST/CONSOLIDATED POSITION.

(A) Describe how the State will implement the priority of service provisions for covered persons in accordance with the requirements of the Jobs for Veterans Act, codified at section 4215 of 38 U.S.C., which applies to all employment and training programs funded in whole or in part by the Department of Labor.

Alaska state policies ensure Priority of Service (POS) to all covered persons and that they are identified at the initial point-of-entry whether in-person, at an AJC, or through AlaskaJobs.

After the Jobs for Veterans Act was enacted into Public Law 107-288, and after changes under WIOA, the state revised, published, and issued an updated Military Veteran Priority of Service Policy 07-509.1. This policy requires that veterans and other covered persons under Public Law 107-288 receive POS under all employment and training programs funded by the USDOL.

DOLWD administers many programs that are covered by the laws, regulations, and policies encompassing POS. These include the WIOA Adult, Youth, and Dislocated Worker programs, Wagner-Peyser, Trade Act programs, National Emergency Grants, SCSEP, DVR, Helmets to Hardhats, and the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI).

Staff Training

All WIOA and Wagner-Peyser staff receive training including specifics about the Jobs for Veterans Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and other legislation that impacts veteran priority, preference, and employability. All AJC staff are also required to complete the National Veterans Training Institute (NVTI) "A Day in the Life of JVSG Staff in an American Job Center" course, which provides a broad overview of how the Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) staff operate within the AJC. AJC efforts focus on the initial assessment of veterans to facilitate delivery of career and training services, as well as conducting outreach to employers to promote veteran hire. POS education efforts include signage at all AJC entry points, and all AJC staff provide initial contact, POS, and general information.

Priority of Service (POS) Definition

POS means that eligible veterans and covered persons receive head-of-the-line privileges for all programs funded either in whole or in part by the USDOL. All recipients of WIOA funds for employment and training programs are required to identify those who are eligible for POS at the points-of-entry to programs, resources, and services. Once veterans or eligible persons meet a program's eligibility requirements, AJC staff ensure covered persons receive POS, as specified. Other

community service providers funded by WIOA or Wagner-Peyser agreements are aware of their requirement to provide POS to veterans and eligible persons.

AlaskaJobs

When staff assist a job seeker, AlaskaJobs clearly identifies whether the individual is a veteran or eligible spouse. When staff see this alert, they know POS is in effect and act accordingly. DETS provides POS by moving veterans and eligible persons to the top of sign-up lists for workshops and other resources and through dedicated computers for use by veterans at the larger AJCs. As such, veterans and eligible persons receive services and resources before non-covered persons.

(B) Describe how the State will monitor priority of service provisions for veterans.

Regional managers monitor POS for veterans by frequent connection with the AJC managers and through weekly or monthly reports. The Statewide Veterans' Coordinator (SVC) provides quality control and ensures that POS processes and procedures are implemented by regularly reviewing and analyzing data on services and outcomes for veterans. The SVC conducts monthly veteran program meetings with local management and veteran staff to review processes and identify necessary improvements to services to veterans. The SVC meets monthly with the DETS Assistant Director to discuss veteran services, including POS, and any improvement measures that need to be implemented on a statewide level.

(C) Describe the triage and referral process for eligible veterans and other populations determined eligible to receive services from the Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) program's Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist/Consolidated Position.

Disabled Veterans' Outreach Programs

Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists and Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) staff are funded by the Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG). The JVSG utilizes federal funding to hire dedicated staff to provide individualized career and training-related services to veterans and other eligible individuals with significant barriers to employment (SBEs) and assisting employers to fill their workforce needs with veterans. These staff members provide vital services to veterans and employers seeking employment-related assistance.

The DVOP specialists are housed in AJCs located in areas with the highest veteran populations and provide in-depth interviewing and comprehensive assessments to identify employment goals, interim objectives, and appropriate services that will enable the veteran and/or other covered persons to meet their employment goals. DETS complies with all federal guidance for JVSG staff and fully utilizes the expertise of DVOPs and LVERs. DETS developed a referral process to direct veterans and other covered persons to the appropriate staff member to ensure a client-centered approach to the delivery of career and training services.

When job seekers indicate veteran status upon initial entry to an AJC, staff ask additional questions to determine if they have an eligible Significant Barrier to Employment (SBE). Staff utilize a one-page, quick-look DVOP eligibility guide, which contains a concise list of SBE criteria, along with the definitions of eligible spouse, homelessness, and Alaska low-income limits. If a determination is made that the veteran is eligible and in need of individualized career services, they are referred to the DVOP specialist for further assessment. If DVOP services are unavailable, the next available AJC staff member sees the veteran.

AJCs follow a team approach to serving customers, including serving veterans. Teams work together to support the roles of LVERs and DVOPs in providing services to veterans. All staff are trained to

deliver as many services to veterans as possible to ease the burden on DVOPs. DETS encourages staff to engage veterans and insists that all AJC staff are veterans' representatives, not just JVSG-funded staff. The state follows all Special Grant Provisions, Veterans' Program Letters, USDOL/VETS Law 107- 288, and United States Code Title 38.

8. ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Describe how the one-stop delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the one-stop delivery system partners), will comply with section 188 of WIOA (if applicable) and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs, services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities. This also must include a description of compliance through providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. Describe the State's one-stop center certification policy, particularly the accessibility criteria.

The state's One-Stop system of Alaska Job Centers (AJCs) has developed a comprehensive approach to ensure accessibility and inclusion of all customers, including those with disabilities, to all facilities, programs, and services. Physical and programmatic accessibility are continuously evaluated with an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) assessment incorporated into the One-Stop certification process and continuous improvement strategies planned and implemented when needed. Alaska will continue to refine the policies, training, and continuous improvement strategies to ensure compliance with WIOA and continued compliance with ADA. The One-Stop system's approach to ADA compliance includes 1) physical and programmatic accessibility; 2) staff training and accountability; 3) adaptive technology and other accommodations; and 4) on-going survey of effectiveness and continuous improvement.

Physical and programmatic accessibility

Job centers provide individuals with disabilities access to information, resources, programs, and activities in a manner that allows each individual, no matter their disability, the opportunity of full inclusion. All workshops, public access, programs, and services are fully accessible to ensure that the opportunities and benefits provided by the job center are available to individuals with disabilities in an equally effective and integrated manner.

Alaska's Job Center Universal Access for Customers with Disabilities Policy 07-516 plays a vital role in establishing the working-level framework for outlining and improving the accessibility, capacity, and accountability of AJCs to serve customers with disabilities.

- Each location has appropriate signage identifying the policy that no individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in, or be denied the benefit of, the services, programs, or activities of the AJCs.
- All job centers use universal design with printed materials. All posters, flyers, brochures, and other printed materials use common principles throughout the design. The outreach and marketing materials developed for distribution from the AJCs to partners, job seekers, and employers contain notice of the availability of auxiliary aids and services for needed accommodations to access programs and services.
- Alaska maintains an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance Program: <http://doa.alaska.gov/ada> . Through the state ADA Coordinator's Office, each department

has its own designated ADA coordinator, who acts as a technical assistance provider and liaison for that department.

Training and accountability for all AJC staff

As a result of three Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) grants, all AJC staff have and will continue to receive Disability Resource Coordinator I (DRC I) training, which includes awareness of programmatic and physical barriers to accessibility and covers familiarity of the “ADA checklist for Readily Achievable Barrier Removal.”

- The ADA checklist is completed annually at each facility and any needed corrective action is identified and implemented;
- The DRC I training is a mandated part of new-hire training for all AJC staff;
- The Local AJC Managers and Vocational Rehabilitation Managers identify periodic and on-going training in specialized topics to augment standardized training and ensure continual learning and awareness in improving access to all services within the AJC system for individuals with disabilities; and
- Each AJC manager documents physical and programmatic complaints and ensures a corrective action plan is developed and addressed by the most appropriate and relevant method: policy change, training, or addressing physical barriers.

Adaptive technology and other accommodations

Each AJC is equipped with a Universal Access Accessibility Station to improve the quality of the client’s experience, no matter the disability. Each station uses state-of-the art technology to help those with disabilities navigate the world of work based on their personal independence level.

- Assistive Technology (AT) available includes screen readers, magnifiers, adaptive software, virtual sign language interpretation, closed captioning on scrolling program and services video, motorized adjustable workstations, specialized keyboards and mice, TTY phones, and personal voice amplification device;
- “Tips for Improving Access to Workshops and Training” is part of staff training and resources. This document offers guidance and suggestions on increasing accessibility and success for individuals attending AJC workshops and training sessions and is broken down by disability type. The document outlines ways the facilitator or trainer can incorporate accommodations and adaptations into the class to ensure an optimal learning environment for all; and
- Any program and service may be accommodated for full inclusion on an “as needed” basis with the accommodation being dependent on the needs of the individual customer and provided through the AJCs in collaboration with partners.

On-going survey of effectiveness and continuous improvement

AJC certification is a collaborative process involving all partners of the One-Stop delivery system. The joint AJC management team collectively completes the documents and surveys for the certification and submits them to the AWIB for approval. Certification involves reviewing site working agreements, cost allocations, self-assessment surveys, and the ADA accessibility survey. In addition to reviewing all documents, members of the AWIB conduct an on-site review identifying best practices and need for

corrective action planning. Based on their review and findings, the AWIB recommends and approves certification. The State of Alaska hosts 13 AJC, each of which undergoes on-site One-Stop Certifications conducted by the AWIB every three years. A certification schedule has been developed by the AWIB to ensure compliance with the requirements outlined in 34 CFR § 361.800. As of PY 2024, both the Juneau and Dillingham Job Centers have been certified as One-Stop centers. The Homer, Kenai, and Valdez Job Centers are slated to undergo One-Stop Certifications before the conclusion of the program year.

Regular AJC management team meetings occur among all on-site partners to discuss all joint operations and implement plans for system improvement and corrective action. This forum is effective for change and addresses and improves accessibility for customers with disabilities.

One-Stop Job Center Certification Schedule

The State of Alaska hosts 13 Alaska Job Centers, each of which undergoes on-site One-Stop Certifications conducted by the AWIB every three years. A certification schedule has been developed by the AWIB to ensure compliance with the requirements outlined in 34 CFR § 361.800. As of PY 2024, both the Juneau and Dillingham Job Centers have been certified as One-Stop centers. The Homer, Kenai, and Valdez Job Centers are slated to undergo One-Stop Certifications before the conclusion of the program year. Additionally, five One-Stop Centers are scheduled to be recertification in PY2025.

9. ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Describe how the one-stop delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the one-stop delivery system partners) will ensure that each one-stop center is able to meet the needs of English language learners, such as through established procedures, staff training, resources, and other materials. Describe how English language learners will be made aware of the opportunity to enroll and/or co-enroll in all the core programs for which they are eligible.

In coordination with the Alaska Adult Education program, the Division of Employment and Training Services provides job center staff with materials, resources, and annual training to meet the needs of Limited English Proficient individuals. Training includes identifying and tailoring services to meet a client's communication strengths; directing a conversation using clear, basic terminology; using appropriate body language; and active listening. Staff are provided with materials published by Alaskan and national agencies such as the Anchorage Mayor's Office and U.S. Department of Education regarding the contributions and experiences of new Americans to gain familiarity with and respect for these clients' diverse backgrounds, challenges, and talents, and best approaches to serving them. The AJCs also maintain a contract for telephonic language interpreter services and can take advantage of direct referral to the Alaska Immigration Justice Project Language Interpreter Center.

IV. COORDINATION WITH STATE PLAN PROGRAMS

Describe the methods used for joint planning and coordination among the core programs, and with the required one-stop partner programs and other programs and activities included in the Unified or Combined State Plan.

Staff representing each core program - Titles I, II, III, and IV – regularly meet with Veterans Program and Senior Community Service Employment Program staff for joint planning and coordination. This working group addresses issues including data coordination, policy development, performance accountability, Eligible Training Provider List, and One-Stop operator designation. The Combined Plan programs strive for workers' economic self-sufficiency by aligning workforce development with education and economic development to support employment, training, and career progression opportunities for all Alaskans. The plan was developed with input from AWIB and surveys and ongoing input from employers, apprentices, workforce intermediaries, state agencies, and other partners' joint planning and coordination efforts to implement the WIOA goals, strategies, and performance measures.

An example of joint planning and coordination of programs is the Alaska State Plan on Aging under the Older Americans Act, approved on September 29, 2023, for October 1, 2023, through June 30, 2027. This Senior Services State Plan was developed by the Alaska Commission (ACoA) on Aging in conjunction with the Division of Senior and Disability Services and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. It is the culmination of years of planning, surveying, and in-depth consideration of specific goals, including financial security for seniors. Through these joint efforts, Alaska will keep pace with its employment needs through planning, advocacy, and public awareness efforts, in collaboration with all organizations focused on the well-being of Alaskans.

The coordination and planning process also included nine listening sessions in May 2021, a statewide senior survey, and a provider survey to identify the top issues of concern to Alaskans. Access to health care and financial security are the greatest concerns for respondents of the 2018 Senior Survey. The provider survey identified financial need (for food, utilities, etc.) as the most important issue facing Alaskan seniors. To address this need, DVR, WIOA, ACoA, and SCSEP participate in the Senior Employment Initiative and Work Matters to promote services to seniors who want or need to be employed because they do not have enough retirement income and to assist them in obtaining new skills so that they can remain competitive and find employment.

The combined WIOA plan is informed by several other collaborative workforce planning efforts: Alaska Career and Technical Education Plan; Apprenticeship Training Plan; Alaska Gasline Workforce Plan; Alaska Healthcare Workforce Plan; Building Alaska's Construction Workforce Development Plan; Alaska Transportation Industry Workforce Development Plan; Alaska Maritime Workforce Development Plan; Alaska Mining Workforce Development Plan; and Alaska Core Competencies for Direct Care Workers in Health and Human Services.

Another example of joint planning and coordination is determining the state's Effectiveness in Serving Employers performance indicators. After multiple discussions among the WIOA core and required partners, Alaska uses, and is committed to improving, its Employer Penetration and Retention Rates. Our approach to serving employers emphasizes proactive, staff-initiated outreach to meet the current and future employment and training needs of Alaska employers. This focus will continue to facilitate long-term business relationships built on confidence and trust between Alaska employers and well-trained job center staff.

V. COMMON ASSURANCES (FOR ALL CORE PROGRAMS)

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include assurances that:	Included?
1. The State has established a policy identifying circumstances that may present a conflict of interest for a State Board or local board member, or the entity or class of officials that the member represents, and procedures to resolve such conflicts;	Yes
2. The State has established a policy to provide to the public (including individuals with disabilities) access to meetings of State Boards and local boards, and information regarding activities of State Boards and local boards, such as data on board membership and minutes;	Yes
3. The lead State agencies with optimal policy-making authority and responsibility for the administration of core programs reviewed and commented on the appropriate operational planning elements of the Unified or Combined State Plan, and approved the elements as serving the needs of the populations served by such programs;	Yes
4. (a) The State obtained input into the development of the Unified or Combined State Plan and provided an opportunity for comment on the plan by representatives of local boards and chief elected officials, businesses, labor organizations, institutions of higher education, the entities responsible for planning or administrating the core programs, required one-stop partners and the other Combined Plan programs (if included in the State Plan), other primary stakeholders, including other organizations that provide services to individuals with barriers to employment, and the general public, and that the Unified or Combined State Plan is available and accessible to the general public; (b) The State provided an opportunity for review and comment on the plan by the State Board, including State agency official(s) for the Unemployment Insurance Agency if such official(s) is a member of the State Board;	Yes
5. The State has established, in accordance with WIOA section 116(i), fiscal control and fund accounting procedures that may be necessary to ensure the proper disbursement of, and accounting for, funds paid to the State through allotments made for the core programs to carry out workforce development activities;	Yes
6. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with uniform administrative requirements in this Act, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the uniform administrative requirements under WIOA section 184(a)(3);	Yes
7. The State has taken the appropriate action to be in compliance with WIOA section 188, Nondiscrimination, as applicable;	Yes
8. The Federal funds received to carry out a core program will not be expended for any purpose other than for activities authorized with respect to such funds under that core program;	Yes
9. The State will pay an appropriate share (as defined by the State board) of the costs of carrying out section 116, from funds made available through each of the core programs;	Yes

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include assurances that:	Included?
10. The State has a one-stop certification policy that ensures the physical and programmatic accessibility of all one-stop centers with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA);	Yes
11. Service providers have a referral process in place for directing Veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE) to DVOP services, when appropriate; and	Yes
12. Priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses is provided in accordance with 38 USC 4215 in all workforce preparation, development or delivery of programs or services funded directly, in whole or in part, by the Department of Labor.	Yes

VI. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

The State must address all program-specific requirements in this section for the WIOA core programs regardless of whether the State submits either a Unified or Combined State Plan.

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES UNDER TITLE I-B

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the following with respect to activities carried out under subtitle B—

A. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

1. REGIONS AND LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREAS

A. IDENTIFY THE REGIONS AND THE LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREAS DESIGNATED IN THE STATE

On June 30, 2024, the existing waiver that allows the State Board to fulfill the responsibilities of a Local Board will expire. Recognizing this impending expiration, Alaska formally seeks an extension of the waiver outlined in Plan Section VI (e): Waiver Request to Allow the State Board to Carry out the Roles of a Local Board.

In accordance with the definitions stipulated in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), a "local area" is defined as not containing more than one "region." As a single workforce area state, Alaska functions as a unified planning area. However, the state conducts planning and labor market analysis based on its six state-designated "economic regions" — Southeast, Southwest, Anchorage/Mat-Su, Interior, Northern, and Gulf Coast. This approach acknowledges the distinct economic and workforce needs of each region.

The Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) comprises members strategically chosen to represent various industries, offering a comprehensive perspective on the geographic and economic regions of the state. These members, representing employers, educational institutions, Alaska Native regional corporations, and other workforce partners, function as the voices of their respective regions. The AWIB emphasizes employer engagement, bridging education and training strategies by developing career pathways, fostering work-based learning, and enhancing career outcomes for job seekers and employers. These initiatives are tailored to the demographics and needs of each economic region.

Over the past decade, the AWIB has effectively carried out the functions of both a state board and a local board, demonstrating its capacity to bridge the operational gap and address the unique demands of Alaska's diverse regions. Consequently, the AWIB is steadfast in its commitment to continue this successful dual role, contributing to the ongoing workforce development in every economic region and statewide.

B. DESCRIBE THE PROCESS AND POLICY USED FOR DESIGNATING LOCAL AREAS, INCLUDING PROCEDURES FOR DETERMINING WHETHER THE LOCAL AREA MET THE CRITERIA FOR “PERFORMED SUCCESSFULLY” AND “SUSTAINED FISCAL INTEGRITY” IN ACCORDANCE WITH 106(B)(2) AND (3) OF WIOA. DESCRIBE THE PROCESS USED FOR IDENTIFYING REGIONS AND PLANNING REGIONS UNDER SECTION 106(A) OF WIOA. THIS MUST INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION OF HOW THE STATE

CONSULTED WITH THE LOCAL BOARDS AND CHIEF ELECTED OFFICIALS IN IDENTIFYING THE REGIONS

The AWIB has implemented comprehensive policies and procedures governing the designation of Local Workforce Areas under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). This structured framework facilitates the formal request process for such designation by a local governing board. Upon submission of an application, the AWIB conducts a meticulous review and subsequently presents a recommendation for approval or denial to the governor. Applicants are mandated to illustrate that the proposed area:

- Aligns with local labor market areas,
- Encompasses a joint economic development area,
- Possesses federal and non-federal resources, including relevant education and training institutions, to effectively administer activities under the Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker formula programs as per WIOA Title I-B, and
- Demonstrates fiscal, administrative, and reporting capacity and systems necessary for reporting participant outcomes mandated by WIOA and the Alaska WIOA Combined Plan.

To evaluate adherence to the criteria of "performed successfully" and "sustained fiscal integrity" as delineated in Section 106(b)(2) and (3) of WIOA, the AWIB conducts annual monitoring activities. This process involves a comprehensive review of performance measure outcomes, fiscal records, and reporting systems within the local area.

The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) actively sought input on the Combined WIOA Plan from stakeholders across the state. No responses were received in relation to the draft local area designation, waiver, and appeals process. Additionally, no requests for designation as a local area were received.

The AWIB will continue seeking feedback from local officials and employers through two primary channels:

- Outreach by individual board members to local officials: Board members will engage in personal outreach to local officials, fostering a direct line of communication to understand and incorporate local perspectives. This provides for understanding of regional dynamics and ensures that the AWIB remains attuned to different localities' unique needs and priorities.
- Opportunities for input at each board meeting: These meetings serve as platforms for stakeholders, including local officials and employers, to contribute insights and recommendations. The AWIB will facilitate broad participation and inclusivity by holding meetings in various locations.

The central focus of these engagement activities will be on statewide strategies and their seamless integration with regional economic and workforce development resources and needs. This ongoing commitment to engagement ensures that a comprehensive understanding of the diverse perspectives and requirements across the state informs the AWIB's decisions and strategies. Through these proactive measures, the AWIB will foster collaboration and inclusivity in shaping policies that address the unique characteristics of each region within the state.

C. PROVIDE THE APPEALS PROCESS AND POLICY REFERRED TO IN SECTION 106(B)(5) OF WIOA RELATING TO DESIGNATION OF LOCAL AREAS

The policy sets out the procedure for appeals as follows:

- The governor may approve or deny the request for designation. In either case, DOLWD will notify the applicant in writing. If the request is denied, the written notification will include the reasons for the denial;
- If the request for local area designation is denied, the applicant may appeal;
- Appeals must be made to the AWIB and must address each issue cited in the denial notification; and
- If a decision on the appeal is not made within 60 days or if the appeal to the AWIB does not result in the designation of the local area, the applicant may request a review by the Secretary of Labor per 20 CFR Section 683.640 of the WIOA statute.

D. PROVIDE THE APPEALS PROCESS AND POLICY REFERRED TO IN SECTION 121(H)(2)(E) OF WIOA RELATING TO DETERMINATIONS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

The core programs' lead agencies worked with AWIB on an infrastructure funding process included as a required part of the partner Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The Infrastructure Funding Agreement is inherent to the MOU and is subject to Section VI (a):

- Partner Impasse Resolution - Should any dispute or disagreements between partners regarding this MOU require discussion and resolution, the steps required by WIOA and other applicable authorizing Acts and laws shall be followed. Parties shall continue their responsibilities under this MOU during any dispute or disagreement. Disputes shall be resolved promptly.
- Informal Dispute Resolution Process - The AJCN partners agree to communicate openly and directly to resolve any problems or disputes related to providing services cooperatively and at the lowest level of intervention possible. In the event of an impasse between any AJCN partner and another AJCN Partner or the One-Stop Operator, an attempt to resolve the impasse shall first be made within five business days from when the first impasse occurred between the two parties involved in the disagreement.
- Local Dispute Resolution Process - If the impasse cannot be resolved through informal efforts, each party agrees to separately submit a written explanation within 15 business days from when the first impasse occurred to the One-Stop Operator, describing the nature of the dispute, steps taken to resolve differences, and recommended solution(s) to the impasse. The One-Stop Operator or their designee will confer with each partner's operational authority when attempting to resolve the impasse. The One-Stop Operator's decision will be issued in writing within 15 business days from receipt of the written explanation.
- Alaska Workforce Investment Board Dispute Resolution Process – to appeal the decision of the One-Stop Operator, a party shall submit information regarding the impasse in writing to the AWIB Executive Director. The Executive Director will collect information from all parties and the One-Stop Operator and coordinate with the Executive Committee for a final resolution. Following consideration of the provided materials, the AWIB Executive Committee shall issue a decision. If the impasse is between an AJCN partner and the One-Stop Operator and cannot be resolved by an informal dispute resolution process, the AJCN partner and One-Stop Operator will directly engage in the AWIB dispute resolution process.

2. STATEWIDE ACTIVITIES

A. PROVIDE STATE POLICIES OR GUIDANCE FOR THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM AND FOR USE OF STATE FUNDS FOR WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES

In alignment with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) guidelines, the state reaffirms its dedication to addressing the needs of at-risk populations through a series of initiatives funded by the governor's set-aside. These initiatives are designed to provide targeted support and opportunities for those facing challenges in the workforce. Key among them are:

- **Alaska's At-Risk Youth Initiative:** The primary goal of the initiative is to provide all Alaskan youth, with a special focus on those in vulnerable situations (exiting foster care, treatment, or detention facilities), opportunities for credential attainment or unsubsidized employment, and ensure they can access services and secure employment opportunities. This includes youths who may not be engaged with a WIOA Youth provider but require employment-related support. This initiative embodies the values of the no-wrong-door approach, fostering inclusivity and support for youth on their path to success.
- **Helmets to Hardhats Program:** This initiative, the first of its kind in the nation, focuses on transitioning military members, linking them with employment opportunities in the construction industry and offering hands-on training across multiple trades. The Helmets to Hardhats program has been particularly beneficial in Alaska, given its large population of transitioning service members.
- **Instructor Development for Commercial Driving:** Due to a significant statewide demand for professional truck drivers, this expertise is in high demand across various industries in Alaska. To address this need, DOLW provided financial support to hire two more CDL (Commercial Driver's License) instructors. Per Alaska regulations, all aspiring CDL instructors must fulfill the Entry Level Driver Training standards, pass a road skills test, and undergo a thorough onboarding process. Typically, qualifying a new CDL instructor takes about 90 to 120 days. Adding two more instructors will expand the training capacity, helping alleviate the state's CDL driver shortage.

Additionally, state funds will support the state's strategic vision and goals outlined in Section II (b) State Strategic Vision and Goals of this Combined Plan. This includes engaging at-risk youth, expanding Registered Apprenticeships, prioritizing services to target populations, making data-driven decisions to promote job creation, leveraging resources, and streamlining processes, including coordinating and aligning data systems.

Policies that support statewide activities include:

- Co-enrollment Policy 07-505.1
- Data Integrity Policy 07-541
- Eligible Training Provider List Policy 07-501.2
- Equal Opportunity Discrimination Complaints Policy 07-506.4
- High Concentration of Eligible Youth Policy 07-503.3
- Job Center Universal Access for Customers with Disabilities Policy 07-516

- Military Veteran Priority of Service Policy 07-509.1
- Monitoring and Single Audit Policy 07-523.2
- Priority Populations – Adult Populations Policy 07-517.1
- Quality Pre-Apprenticeship Definition Policy 07-525.1
- Self-Sufficiency Policy 07-514.2
- Supportive Services Policy 07-521.1

The state used governor’s set-aside funds to purchase and implement a Software-as-a-Service Virtual OneStop (VOS) System to replace the WIOA Titles I-B, II, and III, Trade Adjustment Assistance, and Work Opportunity Tax Credit systems. This system, locally named AlaskaJobs, connects with Alaska’s Unemployment Insurance (UI) system to offer a common front door for employers, training providers, UI customers, job seekers, and workers. Additionally, AlaskaJobs allows for streamlined services to customers, prevents duplication of data entry, leverages program resources, and ensures complete and accurate common PIRL reporting.

B. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE INTENDS TO USE GOVERNOR’S SET ASIDE FUNDING FOR MANDATORY AND DISCRETIONARY ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING HOW THE STATE WILL CONDUCT EVALUATIONS OF TITLE I ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES.

Alaska follows the requirements set out in 20 CFR Part 682.200 for using state funds, and various policies support these activities. Annually, the amount of state funds needed are identified and may be shifted between activities as necessary.

State funds will be used for

1. Carrying out the provision of Rapid Response;
2. The ongoing maintenance and dissemination of the Eligible Training Provider List;
3. Conducting program evaluations;
4. Providing technical assistance to job center staff and partners;
5. Staff development;
6. Conducting monitoring and oversight;
7. Addressing obstacles for individuals with barriers to employment;
8. Regional planning efforts;
9. The development of industry and sector partnerships;
10. Addressing performance deficiencies;
11. Providing additional assistance to local areas that have a high concentration of eligible youth;
and
12. Operating a fiscal and management information system.

State funds are directed toward supporting the state's strategic vision and objectives, as detailed in Section I (b), "State Strategic Vision and Goals" of the Combined Plan. This encompasses expanding Registered Apprenticeships, focusing on services for target groups, making data-informed decisions to stimulate job creation, optimizing resource use, and simplifying processes, including coordinating and integrating various data systems.

The development of DOLWD staff is an ongoing endeavor, including learning and professional growth opportunities to stay abreast of WIOA changes, industry trends, and best practices. Therefore, these funds are also used for technical support to job center staff and partners, encompassing training, assistance, and a commitment to continually enhance WIOA processes, thereby improving the overall effectiveness of workforce development initiatives.

DOLWD was a member of the EvalPLC 2023 cohort examining and learning about the evaluation process. The department was represented by five members: two from Title I (one from Adult and Dislocated worker, the other from Youth), and one each from Titles II, III, and IV; the Youth representative also represented the Alaska Workforce Investment Board. The culmination of this effort was the development of a capstone evaluation project examining the inter-Title referral process, that is, ensuring that customers who enter a WIOA enrollment under one Title will be ensured of a proper referral to appropriate other Titles depending on their needs. While this is simple in concept, an accountable, efficient, and effective referral process is complicated by the absence of a common data collection and reporting system used by the various Titles. Governor's set-aside funds will be used to continue development and implementation of this evaluation project.

C. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL UTILIZE RAPID RESPONSE FUNDS TO RESPOND TO LAYOFFS AND PLANT CLOSINGS AND COORDINATE SERVICES TO QUICKLY AID COMPANIES AND THEIR AFFECTED WORKERS. STATES ALSO SHOULD DESCRIBE ANY LAYOFF AVERSION STRATEGIES THEY HAVE IMPLEMENTED TO ADDRESS AT RISK COMPANIES AND WORKERS.

Rapid Response

Alaska views Rapid Response as a primary gateway to the workforce system for employers and workers who have been impacted by economic dislocations, industry declines, and natural disasters. The goal is to ensure communities, employers, and workers have the support and resources needed while in transition. Rapid Response acts as both a provider of direct re-employment services and as a facilitator of additional services and resources.

Funds are used to respond to dislocation events quickly while ensuring maintenance of Rapid Response quality principles: (1) timeliness; (2) convenience; (3) customer choice; (4) consistent and accurate information; (5) resource leveraging; (6) seamless service delivery; (7) active promotion; (8) layoff aversion; (9) performance measurements; and (10) partnerships.

Alaska's statewide Rapid Response coordinator leads a team of specialists housed in job centers throughout the state who work together to quickly address layoffs and business closures. Notification of layoffs or business closures are received through a variety of means, including workers filing unemployment insurance claims, direct contact from impacted employers and workers, media announcements, fluctuations in employer tax contributions, and Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification, also known as WARN Act notices.

Rapid Response meetings are tailored to each dislocation and may include information on unemployment insurance, job search and placement assistance, labor market information, on-the-job training, classroom training, Trade Adjustment Assistance, and referral to basic and remedial education.

Depending on the demographics of the worker group, partners may present services available through their organizations, interpreters may be provided to address English as a Second Language (ESL) needs, and mental health support may be made available.

Alaska's Rapid Response program is proactive, and layoff aversion is a priority. Ongoing engagement, partnership, and relationship-building with employers are essential to ensuring they understand how these services can help during all stages of the business cycle. Early intervention is critical for a layoff aversion effort to succeed by providing enough time to identify strategies to address the potential layoff and organize an effective response. Alaska's Rapid Response program has the ability to coordinate multiple agencies; provide assistance with labor market information to determine if it is feasible to save a struggling business; identify what resources are needed to help; and upgrade worker skills for workers to maintain their employment in a growing or changing company.

D. DESCRIBE THE STATE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES TO PROVIDE RAPID RESPONSES IN CASES OF NATURAL DISASTERS INCLUDING COORDINATION WITH FEMA AND OTHER ENTITIES.

In the event of a natural disaster, Rapid Response is coordinated with appropriate federal, state, and local agencies to ensure impacted communities, first responders, businesses, and workers receive the support and services needed. Each response is tailored to the unique characteristics of the event, and Alaska has a proven history of responding in both urban and rural areas to storm damage, floods, wildfires, and earthquakes. Coordination with local, state, and federal emergency management agencies is necessary to ensure timely, robust, and non-duplicative services.

Depending on the type of event, the Rapid Response coordinator works with the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, Bureau of Land Management, Alaska Interagency Coordination Center, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and local community partners to develop a response. In cases of a FEMA-declared disaster, the Rapid Response coordinator assesses the need and makes recommendations for application of a National Dislocated Worker Grant to support temporary jobs for clean-up and recovery efforts, humanitarian assistance for disaster victims, or training and support for workers who lost their jobs due to the disaster. Formal Rapid Response meetings may be held for groups of impacted individuals and/or information may be provided at a booth or table set up in the community to answer questions and provide information on and referrals to unemployment insurance, disaster unemployment insurance, temporary jobs, public assistance, community-based resources, small business development centers, and job centers.

E. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE PROVIDES EARLY INTERVENTION (E.G., RAPID RESPONSE) AND ENSURES THE PROVISION OF APPROPRIATE CAREER SERVICES TO WORKER GROUPS ON WHOSE BEHALF A TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE (TAA) PETITION HAS BEEN FILED. (SECTION 134(A)(2)(A) AND TAA SECTION 221(A)(2)(A) .) THIS DESCRIPTION MUST INCLUDE HOW THE STATE DISSEMINATES BENEFIT INFORMATION TO PROVIDE WORKERS IN THE GROUPS IDENTIFIED IN THE TAA PETITIONS WITH AN ACCURATE UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROVISION OF TAA BENEFITS AND SERVICES IN SUCH A WAY THAT THEY ARE TRANSPARENT TO THE DISLOCATED WORKER APPLYING FOR THEM (TRADE ACT SEC. 221(A)(2)(A) AND SEC. 225; GOVERNOR-SECRETARY AGREEMENT). DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE FUNDS THAT HAVE BEEN RESERVED FOR RAPID RESPONSE TO PROVIDE SERVICES FOR EVERY WORKER GROUP THAT FILES A TAA PETITION AND HOW THE STATE WILL ENSURE THE PROVISION OF APPROPRIATE CAREER SERVICE TO WORKERS IN THE GROUPS IDENTIFIED IN THE PETITION (TAA SEC. 221(A)(2)(A)).NOTE: UNTIL THE TAA PROGRAM IS REAUTHORIZED, THE REQUIREMENTS TO PROVIDE RAPID

RESPONSE AND APPROPRIATE CAREER SERVICES TO WORKER GROUPS ON WHOSE BEHALF A PETITION HAS BEEN FILED IS NOT APPLICABLE.

Alaska maintains a statewide Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) coordinator and a comprehensive TAA website at <https://jobs.alaska.gov/taa/>, listing all Alaska companies certified under a TAA petition, a TAA Program brochure, benefit information, links for employers, and layoff resources for workers. Alaska Job Center and Unemployment Insurance call center staff help to identify trade-affected workers and submit a completed “TAA Think Differently” form to the TAA coordinator at dol.taa@alaska.gov to investigate. The TAA and Rapid Response coordinators consult on all dislocation events to determine the potential of trade impact. If trade impact is likely, the TAA coordinator investigates to collect information to assist with filing, or files a petition, on behalf of the employer or worker group, to USDOL. Before filing a petition, the Rapid Response and TAA coordinators meet with the employer to explain TAA program benefits and petition process and to gather information.

When a TAA petition is filed, the TAA coordinator immediately notifies the Rapid Response coordinator, Career Support and Training Services (CSTS) staff, and Employment Service (ES) program staff in the job centers. Rapid Response and appropriate career services are provided as soon as possible after the petition is filed, whether before or after the actual layoff, while the petition is under investigation, or after a petition determination is made, and whether or not the petition is certified. The TAA coordinator is a lead member of the Rapid Response team when threatened and actual layoffs are trade-related. The Rapid Response team provides early intervention by coordinating with the employer to schedule on-site and/or virtual worker informational meetings before the layoff event. This ensures the workers have the information and resources needed for a smooth transition into the provision of employment and training services. Rapid Response team members charge staff time to the Rapid Response program grant when working on Rapid Response-related activities. Early intervention is provided by ES and CSTS staff when trade-affected workers contact a job center, based on written guidance from the TAA coordinator. ES staff ensure trade-affected workers are aware of resources and career services available to them. They determine workers’ immediate needs and refer them to the CSTS Dislocated Worker program for an appointment with a case manager to receive career and supportive services and training as appropriate.

When a TAA petition is certified, the TAA coordinator immediately obtains a list of impacted workers from the employer and notifies each worker of TAA eligibility through a formal letter. The TAA notification packet also contains detailed information on TAA benefits, timelines to apply, and an application for a TAA eligibility determination. A public notice is issued, and the names of affected workers are provided to Alaska Job Center managers. Additionally, specific information on TAA is presented to workers during on-site and virtual Rapid Response informational meetings if they have not already occurred. All eligible workers seeking TAA services are informed of the benefits of co-enrollment and must be co-enrolled with the WIOA Dislocated Worker and TAA programs if they are otherwise eligible. Co-enrollment leverages resources to ensure that a trade-affected worker’s case management, re-employment plan, support, training, and follow-up service needs are met.

B. ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKERS PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

1. WORK-BASED TRAINING MODELS

If the State is utilizing work-based training models (e.g. on-the-job training, incumbent worker training, transitional jobs, and customized training) as part of its training strategy and these strategies are not already discussed in other sections of the plan, describe the State’s strategies for how these models ensure high quality training for both the participant and the employer.

The state utilizes on-the-job training and incumbent worker training models and is exploring customized training options.

Often times the best candidate for a job is not necessarily the most qualified; sometimes the best candidate has a positive attitude but lacks specific skills needed for the job. Employers frequently interview job seekers who would be good hires if training were available to better prepare them. On-the-Job Training (OJT) gives employers the opportunity to tap into a pool of workers who are good candidates for a job but may need some training to be qualified. OJT is marketed through the AJCs, and formal contracts between the state and employer ensure OJTs are legal and lead to high quality training.

AJC staff take an active role to ensure OJTs are successful and provide ongoing monitoring of OJT participant progress. Studies of unsuccessful OJTs indicate that most of them fail shortly after they begin, often within the first few weeks. Thorough screening of individuals and employers before referral is the best way to prevent this, but regular status updates from both the employer and the trainee are also important. Staff initiate contact with the employee and the employer during the first two weeks of the OJT and at the OJT worksite at least once during the term of the agreement.

A percentage of local formula adult and dislocated worker funds is utilized for incumbent worker training (IWT). The annual amount identified for IWT fluctuates depending on employer needs, and it does not exceed 20 percent of local funds. Alaska's IWT program increases the competitiveness of the business and incumbent workers by ensuring they acquire the skills necessary to retain employment, advance within the business or to gain the skills necessary to avert a layoff.

Alaska recognizes and understands that employers must have a skilled workforce and the multiple benefits that OJT, incumbent worker training, and customized training provide. The state will dedicate additional resources to focus on these work based training models, and employer awareness and outreach will be increased to identify and respond to employers' unique workforce development needs.

2. REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP

Describe how the State will incorporate Registered Apprenticeship into its strategy for service design and delivery (e.g., outreach to sponsors and prospective sponsors, identifying potential participants and connecting them to apprenticeship opportunities).

Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) staff at the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) collaborate with local employers and the U.S. Office of Apprenticeship (OA) in Anchorage to enhance the presence of Registered Apprenticeship (RA) programs throughout the state. To achieve this, the state has adopted a strategic plan encompassing several goals and initiatives:

1. Support for Registered Apprenticeship Through State Policies:
 - a. Review and propose modifications or new policies that aid registered apprenticeship, like tax incentives, training vouchers, and usage requirements.
 - b. Emphasize registered apprenticeship as a key workforce development strategy within DOLWD, allocating resources accordingly.
 - c. Work with other state departments to integrate registered apprenticeship into hiring practices.
 - d. Seek opportunities to align and utilize existing resources and systems (like WIOA, STEP, other training programs, DVR, programs for Returning Citizens) to bolster registered apprenticeship.

- e. Pursue available apprenticeship grants.
2. Enhancing Employer and Sponsor Engagement:
 - a. Develop and maintain unified branding and communication strategies for outreach and marketing, using both digital and traditional media.
 - b. Build partnerships with employers and industry groups to boost employer involvement.
 - c. Offer technical support to employers and sponsors regarding the specifics of Registered Apprenticeship.
 - d. Innovate to meet the capacity and needs of employers, including establishing multi-employer sponsors where possible.
 - e. Extend Registered Apprenticeship programs into non-traditional industry sectors.
 3. Increasing Apprenticeship Accessibility to Underrepresented Groups and Areas:
 - a. Launch rural-focused apprenticeships in fields such as teaching, health care, mining, and water/wastewater operations to provide opportunities in villages and hub communities.
 - b. Collaborate with various organizations and programs to enhance apprenticeship accessibility and retention for Alaska Natives, minorities, veterans, disabled individuals, women, long-term unemployed, and others facing barriers to training and employment.
 - c. Implement best practices following U.S. Department of Labor guidelines for apprenticeship practitioners and equality in opportunities and policies.
 4. Expanding Pre-Apprenticeship and School-to-Apprenticeship Programs:

In Fiscal Year 2024, the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) received a one-year State Apprentice Expansion Formula (SAEF) grant to enhance the Registered Apprenticeship system as a tool for workforce development and a pathway for postsecondary education careers. The planned activities under this grant are designed to correspond with Alaska’s economic development strategies, and they will integrate overarching principles while expanding the reach of Registered Apprenticeship programs.

The goal of this initiative is to broaden School-to-Apprenticeship to provide access to Registered Apprenticeship programs that are essential and pertinent to the current and future workforce needs of Alaska. This includes focusing on industries that are poised for growth and the emergence of new opportunities as a result of significant legislative acts such as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, the CHIPS and Science Act, and the Inflation Reduction Act. These acts are expected to catalyze expansion in various sectors, providing fertile ground for the implementation and growth of Registered Apprenticeship programs. Additional aspects include:

- Broaden outreach to other secondary education initiatives, including Job Corps and alternative education institutions.
- Assist postsecondary institutions like the University of Alaska in integrating apprenticeship programs with college credits and degree pathways.

- Engage with apprenticeship intermediaries to develop quality pre-apprenticeship programs tailored to the needs of both employers and potential sponsors.

3. TRAINING PROVIDER ELIGIBILITY PROCEDURE

Provide the procedure, eligibility criteria, and information requirements for determining training provider initial and continued eligibility, including Registered Apprenticeship programs (WIOA Section 122).

Alaska’s Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) is a comprehensive list of training provider programs that maintain performance levels identified by the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB). Alaska’s ETPL policy 07-501.2 was revised in June 2020; all ETPL forms and applications were updated June 2023. Updates to the September 2023 ETPL Operating Guide are under department review and will be published upon approval. Additionally, the new AlaskaJobs system houses ETP information and performance in an easy to read and understand format for the public. The state has tested system capabilities and functionality to ensure the data requirements needed for ETP eligibility are met.

Program performance is reviewed biennially, and the ETPL is updated on an ongoing basis. Alaska ETPL applications and operating guide are located at <https://labor.alaska.gov/dets/etpl.htm>.

To be considered for the ETPL, all training providers must have a status (authorized or exempt) with the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE) per Alaska Statute 14.48.20 “Authorization and Permits Required.” ACPE’s authorization ensures postsecondary education providers and training programs meet the standards outlined in law. ACPE determines if a postsecondary institution meets the minimum standards regarding institutional soundness, quality of education, ethical business practices, and fiscal responsibility. Any institution offering postsecondary programs, courses, vocational training, or an educational credential, including distance education, must be authorized or determined exempt from authorization.

In addition to the ACPE requirement, new providers requesting initial ETPL approval must complete an application, provide three years of student data, provide details on the program, demonstrate efficiency, and commit to collect and provide annual performance data. New programs are added to the ETPL as they apply, and initial eligibility remains in effect for at least one year. Continued eligibility is determined biennially based on program performance, as determined from student data provided by the provider and state UI wage records to calculate:

1. **Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after Exit:** The number of students who have completed and exited the training program during the reporting period who are employed during the second quarter after exit (numerator) divided by the number of students who have exited during the reporting period (denominator), multiplied by 100, and reported as a percentage.
2. **Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit:** The number of students who completed the training program and have exited the training program during the reporting period who are employed during the fourth quarter after exit (numerator) divided by the number of students who have exited during the reporting period (denominator), multiplied by 100, and reported as a percentage.
3. **Median Earnings Rate:** The median earnings of students who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program. Students’ quarterly earnings will be obtained from UI wage records. The median earning amount is the wage at the midpoint between the highest and lowest wage earned in the second quarter after exit.

4. **Credential Attainment Rate:** The number of students who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential during participation or within one year after exit (numerator) divided by the total number of students exiting the program (denominator), multiplied by 100, and reported as a percentage.
5. **Completion Rate:** The number of participants who completed their training program (numerator) divided by the total number of students exiting the program (denominator), multiplied by 100, and reported as a percentage.

The following are specific to the training provider and program and are used for either initial or continued eligibility, or both.

Industry Recognized Credential: The training program leads to a recognized postsecondary credential.

Performance Goal: Credentials offered by the provider are regionally, and/or nationally recognized, stackable, and portable, or specific to an in-demand industry or occupation (initial eligibility).

Information reported to state agencies on federal and state training programs other than WIOA Title 1-B programs: The state is determining how additional information from state-funded training and partner programs, e.g., Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, Trade Adjustment Assistance, State Training and Employment Program, Alaska Construction Academy, Technical and Vocational Education Program, etc. will be incorporated to determine continued eligibility. This will be included in the revised policy and operational guide.

In-demand Occupation/Industry: The degree to which the training program relates to in-demand industry sectors and occupations in the State. A list of Alaska's in-demand industry sectors and occupations are on the AWIB website <https://awib.alaska.gov/>.

Performance Goal: The training program prepares participants for priority occupations in an in-demand industry. If the training is not associated with these occupations, an exemption may be provided if the program is used to address participants who possess a barrier to employment, specialized occupations, or unique employer requests (initial and continued eligibility).

Partnership with Business: This may be done by providing letters of support from business or other documentation showing a partnership between the training provider and business. Additionally, the Division may review training participant wage data to establish that participants are able to secure employment with the training they received.

Performance Goal: Training participants can secure employment with the training and credentials received from the training provider (initial eligibility).

State Accessibility and Distance Delivery: The ability of the training program to be accessed throughout the state, including rural areas using technology.

Performance Goal: The training program is available via distance learning, if applicable, or deliverable in rural locations (initial eligibility).

Completer Data: Timely and accurate student completer data are submitted annually as required by WIOA.

Performance Goal: Training providers submit complete and accurate student completer data by August 31st each year (continued eligibility).

Performance Levels for Initial ETPL Eligibility of Existing Training Programs

Rate and Earnings	Point Value
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after Exit must meet 60 percent	15.0
Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit must meet 60 percent	15.0
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter after Exit must meet \$5,025	15.0
Credential Attainment Rate must meet 65 percent	7.5
Program Completion Rate must meet 35 percent	7.5
Industry Recognized Credential	20.0
Partnership with Business	5.0
Accessible Throughout the State by Web Based Learning	5.0
In Demand Industry/Occupation	10.0
Total Points Available	100.0

Note: Initial eligibility for existing training program(s) must score at least 75 points to qualify

Performance Levels for Initial ETPL Eligibility of New Training Programs

Rate and Earnings	Point Value
New Program – No Completer Data Available	N/A
Industry Recognized Credential	20.0
Partnership with Business	5.0
Accessible Throughout the State by Web Based Learning	5.0
Industry Recognized Credential	10.0
Total Points Available	40.0

Note: Initial eligibility for new training program(s) must score 30 points to qualify

Performance Levels for Continued Eligibility

Rate and Earnings	Point Value
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after Exit must meet 60 percent	20.0
Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit must meet 60 percent	20.0
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter after Exit must meet \$5,025	20.0
Credential Attainment Rate must meet 65 percent	10.0
Program Completion Rate must meet 35 Percent	10.0
In Demand Industry/Occupation	20.0
Total Points Available	100

Note: The training program must score at least 80 points to qualify for continued eligibility.

Registered Apprenticeship (RA) programs registered under the National Apprenticeship Act are eligible to be included on the ETPL and not subject to ETPL data reporting and performance related requirements, as RAs go through a detailed application and vetting process at the US DOL in order to qualify, and the programs are monitored by US DOL apprenticeship staff.

The US DOL Office of Apprenticeship (OA) provides the division with a quarterly report of new and cancelled RA programs. The Division or the USDOL will contact RA sponsors to ask if they want their program listed on the ETPL. RA sponsors who wish to be included on the ETPL must notify the Division and provide information specific to their RA program. For proper identification and reporting, the title of the ETPL training program must match what is specified within the apprenticeship standards.

Registered Apprenticeship programs will remain on the ETPL until: they are deregistered, or; the RA program notifies the State that it no longer wants to be included on the ETPL, or; the RA program is determined to have intentionally supplied inaccurate information or to have violated any provision of Title I of WIOA or the WIOA regulations, including 29 CFR part 38.

Deregistered apprenticeships will be reclassified as non-registered apprenticeships and their exemption status removed. If the registered apprenticeship was listed on the ETPL at the time of its removal from the national apprenticeship registry, the training provider will be held accountable to the same rules, regulations, and performance criteria as a regular training provider.

An RA program whose eligibility is terminated for intentionally supplying inaccurate information will be terminated for not less than two years and is liable to repay all youth, adult, and dislocated worker training funds it received during the period of noncompliance.

When a Registered Apprenticeship program is using a third-party vendor for related technical instruction, the vendor providing the instruction may receive funds under WIOA without the related technical instruction program being listed on the ETPL.

4. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL IMPLEMENT AND MONITOR FOR THE ADULT PRIORITY OF SERVICE REQUIREMENT IN WIOA SECTION 134 (C)(3)(E) THAT REQUIRES AMERICAN JOB CENTER STAFF, WHEN USING WIOA ADULT PROGRAM FUNDS TO PROVIDE INDIVIDUALIZED CAREER SERVICES AND TRAINING SERVICES, TO GIVE PRIORITY OF SERVICE TO RECIPIENTS OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE, LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUALS, AND INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE BASIC SKILLS DEFICIENT (INCLUDING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS).

Alaska Policy 07-517.1 supports adult priority populations and has been updated to reflect TEGL 19-16. Staff who deliver WIOA Title I-B funds must adhere to this policy and give priority to individuals for the provision of individualized career and training services.

Veterans and other eligible persons continue to receive Priority of Service (POS) for all DOLWD-funded job training programs. However, as described in TEGL 19-16, when programs are statutorily required to provide priority for a group of individuals, such as the WIOA Adult program priority population described above, priority must be provided in the following order: first, to veterans and eligible persons who are also included in the groups given statutory priority for WIOA adult formula funds, meaning that veterans and eligible persons who are recipients of public assistance, low-income, or basic skills deficient would receive first priority for services provided with WIOA adult formula funds; second, to non-covered persons, meaning individuals who are not veterans or eligible spouses, who are included in the groups given priority for WIOA adult formula funds; third, to veterans and eligible persons who are not included in WIOA adult program priority groups; and last, to non-covered persons outside the groups given priority under the WIOA adult program.

Alaska Job Centers are monitored annually, including monitoring for priority of service for public assistance recipients, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient such as English language learners. Monitoring includes the review and evaluation of physical documentation and participant files in the case management system. Characteristics and statistics are examined to compare priority subpopulations to the population as a whole, and the information is used to inform outreach, partnering, and awareness strategies for program enrollment. Alaska policy states that WIOA adults who receive individualized career and training services must have documentation justifying the priority population designation. State policy outlines the Priority of Service for Title I Adults; the only way someone can receive individualized career or training services is by meeting one of the Priority of Service categories.

5. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S CRITERIA REGARDING LOCAL AREA TRANSFER OF FUNDS BETWEEN THE ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKER PROGRAMS

Alaska's WIOA Title I-B Within State Funding Allocation Policy 07-518.1 provides for transfer authority of up to 100 percent of funds between Adult and Dislocated Worker (DW) programs. Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) Resolution 16-06 provides this authority to the DETS Director or designee. Transferring of funds to or from the Youth Program is not allowed.

Transferring funds between Adult and DW programs or among economic regions is necessary to address regional economic needs. Reasons may include large layoffs leading to additional employment and training service needs for workers, military base realignments, incumbent worker training to address automation or a changing business practice, capital improvement projects, rapid growth or decline in population, etc. Quarterly expenditure evaluations are conducted to identify a need for fund transfers when a service area is under- or over-expending.

6. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S POLICY ON WIOA AND TAA CO-ENROLLMENT AND WHETHER AND HOW OFTEN THIS POLICY IS DISSEMINATED TO THE LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARDS AND REQUIRED ONE-STOP PARTNERS.

TRADE ACT SEC. 239(F), SEC. 235, 20 CFR 618.325, 20 CFR 618.824(A)(3)(I).

Alaska co-enrolls all eligible TAA participants in the WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker program unless they do not meet selective service requirements or decline co-enrollment. The TAA coordinator ensures that written guidance is available for all Career Support and Training Services (CSTS) case managers and provides reminders to all DETS staff who have potential contact with trade-affected workers via tech alerts and inclusion in meetings with CSTS and job center resource room staff at least quarterly.

7. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S FORMAL STRATEGY TO ENSURE THAT WIOA AND TAA CO-ENROLLED PARTICIPANTS RECEIVE NECESSARY FUNDED BENEFITS AND SERVICES.

TRADE ACT SEC. 239(F), SEC. 235, 20 CFR 618.816(C)

Alaska's TAA program publishes written guidance for TAA participant case management including mandatory co-enrollment with the Dislocated Worker program so that participants can receive full support while they engage in TAA services, with the TAA program as the primary source of funding for authorized training and training-related expenses. The TAA coordinator provides training to CSTS case managers annually or as needed.

8. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S PROCESS FOR FAMILIARIZING ONE-STOP STAFF WITH THE TAA PROGRAM. 20 CFR 618.804(J), 20 CFR 618.305

The TAA coordinator includes information about the program in monthly meetings with job center staff who assist employers and job seekers and coordinates at least quarterly with Rapid Response and CSTS leads to ensure that all job center staff are aware of the TAA program and the benefits it offers to trade-affected workers.

C. YOUTH PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS.

With respect to youth workforce investment activities authorized in section 129 of WIOA, States should describe their strategies that will support the implementation of youth activities under WIOA. State's must-

1. IDENTIFY THE STATE-DEVELOPED CRITERIA TO BE USED BY LOCAL BOARDS IN AWARDING GRANTS OR CONTRACTS FOR YOUTH WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES AND DESCRIBE HOW THE LOCAL BOARDS WILL TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THE ABILITY OF THE PROVIDERS TO MEET PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES BASED ON PRIMARY INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE FOR THE YOUTH PROGRAM AS DESCRIBED IN SECTION 116(B)(2)(A)(II) OF WIOA.⁷ FURTHER, INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION OF HOW THE STATE ASSISTS LOCAL AREAS IN DETERMINING WHETHER TO CONTRACT FOR SERVICES OR TO PROVIDE SOME OR ALL OF THE PROGRAM ELEMENTS DIRECTLY.

Youth grants are allocated through a competitive process, facilitated by AWIB's online grants management system. Grant announcements are posted on the state's online public notice website

⁷ Sec. 102(b)(2)(D)(i)(V)

(<https://aws.state.ak.us/OnlinePublicNotices/>). To ensure a wide range of applicants, the state also emails an announcement to publicize the grant opportunities.

The AWIB oversees the annual solicitation process for program operators, with a yearly review of program performance. Grant agreements are initially set for one fiscal year, with the consideration of renewal for a second year in future solicitations. This two-year grant cycle will be designed to provide sufficient time for the projects to address long-term needs in youth services and career pathways.

AWIB is responsible for managing the entire grant solicitation process, from announcing applications to reviewing them and making recommendations to the DOLWD Commissioner, who holds the ultimate authority to approve or reject grant awards.

Award Criteria for WIOA Youth Program Management

Applicants are assessed based on their capacity to fulfill WIOA Youth performance measures as outlined in 116(b)(2)(A)(i) and (ii) of WIOA. Factors such as infrastructure, project resources, partnerships, and program model are considered. Past experience and success in managing grant programs and the nature and demographics of the target population are also taken into account.

2. EXPLAIN HOW THE STATE ASSISTS LOCAL WORKFORCE BOARDS IN ACHIEVING EQUITABLE RESULTS FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL AND IN-SCHOOL YOUTH. DESCRIBE PROMISING PRACTICES OR PARTNERSHIP MODELS THAT LOCAL AREAS ARE IMPLEMENTING AND THE STATE'S ROLE IN SUPPORTING AND SCALING THOSE MODELS WITHIN THE STATE FOR BOTH IN-SCHOOL AND OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH.

Support and Guidance to Workforce Board

The state plays a pivotal role in assisting the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) to achieve equitable results for both out-of-school and in-school youth, including identifying promising practices and partnership models for state support to scale across different regions.

- AWIB staff provides technical assistance and guidance to ensure the AWIB understands and meets federal WIOA Youth requirements and performance measures.
- AWIB staff offer training and resources to the board, ensuring they have the necessary tools and knowledge to reach and serve youth effectively.
- Collaborations with Educational Institutions: Partnerships with high schools, vocational schools, and colleges help integrate academic learning with workforce development. Such collaborations can be particularly effective for in-school youth, offering them hands-on training and exposure to real-world job experiences.
- Engagement with Community Organizations: Local areas often partner with community-based organizations to reach and serve out-of-school youth. These organizations can provide critical support services like mentoring, career counseling, and life skills training.
- Sharing Best Practices: The state facilitates the sharing of best practices and successful models across different regions. By organizing forums, workshops, or online platforms, the state helps local areas learn from each other's experiences.
- Focus on Equity and Inclusiveness: The state ensures that the strategies and models implemented are inclusive and equitable and reach diverse groups of youth, including those from underserved communities, minorities, and those with disabilities.

3. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE ASSISTS LOCAL WORKFORCE BOARDS IN IMPLEMENTING INNOVATIVE MODELS FOR DELIVERING YOUTH WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING EFFECTIVE WAYS LOCAL WORKFORCE BOARDS CAN MAKE AVAILABLE THE 14 PROGRAM ELEMENTS DESCRIBED IN WIOA SECTION 129(C)(2); AND EXPLAIN HOW LOCAL AREAS CAN ENSURE WORK EXPERIENCE, INCLUDING QUALITY PRE-APPRENTICESHIP AND REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP, IS PRIORITIZED AS A KEY ELEMENT WITHIN A BROADER CAREER PATHWAYS STRATEGY.

The state ensures the availability and effective implementation of all 14 basic elements throughout the grant cycle stages. During the solicitation process, applicants must exhibit the capability to deliver these elements, either internally or through partner agencies. Applicants are required to detail how each service will be executed from planning to implementation, specifying the resources, entities, curriculum, and strategies for effective delivery. If a program partner is engaged for a basic element service, a comprehensive description of the partner, along with the agreement type (e.g., letter of support, memorandum of agreement, contract), must be provided.

The grant agreement incorporates the approved text from the application, outlining the delivery approach for each of the 14 basic elements, and explicitly defines expectations for programs to provide each element to youth participants. The state mandates that each program allocate 20 percent of its operating budget for work experience services and the development or participation in quality pre-apprenticeship programs.

Throughout the grant award negotiation process between AWIB grant staff and subawardees, grant deliverables are scrutinized to ensure they are achievable. Before final grant approval, grant staff also ensure that subawardees understand the provision of WIOA Youth 14 basic elements.

Monitoring and Single Audit Policy 07-523.2 dictates annual monitoring by the AWIB to ensure sound financial management, compliance with Equal Employment Opportunity laws, and adherence to statutory and regulatory language in program activities. Monitoring verifies the availability of all 14 Youth program services to eligible youth, including:

- Providing support activities to ensure program quality and achieve performance goals.
- Demonstrating alignment with Youth program design components or legislative requirements.
- Aligning with policies, guidance, and advisories supporting program performance.
- Implementing appropriate program practices and procedures, encompassing participant eligibility, assessment, planning, service delivery, and other agreed-upon activities and outcomes defined in the negotiated grant award.

The state mandates that grant applicants identify and collaborate with occupational training providers, pre-apprenticeship programs, and apprenticeship programs.

4. PROVIDE THE LANGUAGE CONTAINED IN THE STATE POLICY FOR “REQUIRING ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE TO ENTER OR COMPLETE AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM, OR TO SECURE AND HOLD EMPLOYMENT” CRITERION FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH SPECIFIED IN WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(B)(III)(VIII) AND FOR “REQUIRING ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE TO COMPLETE AN EDUCATION PROGRAM, OR TO SECURE AND HOLD EMPLOYMENT” CRITERION FOR IN-SCHOOL YOUTH SPECIFIED IN WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(C)(IV)(VII). IF THE STATE DOES NOT HAVE A POLICY,

DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL ENSURE THAT LOCAL AREAS WILL HAVE A POLICY FOR THESE CRITERIA.

The definition of "requires additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure and hold employment" for both in-school and out-of-school youth is delineated in WIOA Youth Program Eligibility Policy 07-502.2. This includes any youth who:

- Lacks the employability skills necessary to obtain or retain employment.
- Faces challenges in accessing training opportunities due to geographic constraints.
- Needs special accommodations for education or employment due to a disability.
- Experiences cultural dissonance.
- Is a migrant youth.
- Is currently enrolled in an educational program and has either:
 - Previously dropped out of an educational program; or
 - Demonstrated poor attendance patterns in an educational program during the last 12 calendar months, along with below-average grades.
- Is not attending an educational program and has no vocational or employment goal; and
 - Has a poor work history (including no work history) or has been fired from a job in the last six calendar months;
 - Has completed full high school attendance and:
 - Failed comprehensive high school graduation tests;
 - Was denied a high school diploma;
 - Requests and requires intensive tutoring or remedial education to prepare for and retake the comprehensive examinations or the General Education Development (GED®) examination.

D. SINGLE-AREA STATE REQUIREMENTS

In States where there is only one local workforce investment area, the governor serves as both the State and local chief elected official. In such cases, the State must submit any information required in the local plan (WIOA section 106(d)(2)). States with a single workforce area must include—

1. ANY COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD THAT REPRESENT DISAGREEMENT WITH THE PLAN. (WIOA SECTION 108(D)(3).)
2. THE ENTITY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DISBURSAL OF GRANT FUNDS, AS DETERMINED BY THE GOVERNOR, IF DIFFERENT FROM THAT FOR THE STATE. (WIOA SECTION 108(B)(15).)
3. A DESCRIPTION OF THE TYPE AND AVAILABILITY OF WIOA TITLE I YOUTH ACTIVITIES AND SUCCESSFUL MODELS, INCLUDING FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES. (WIOA SECTION 108(B)(9).)

(1) Any comments from the public comment period that represent disagreement with the Plan. (WIOA section 108(d)(3).)

Alaskans could comment on the draft state plan through public meetings of the Alaska Workforce Investment Board and by email response to the public comment announcement on the state's online public notice system, which was open from January 26, 2024, through February 16, 2024. There were no comments that represented disagreement with the Plan.

(2) The entity responsible for the disbursal of grant funds, as determined by the governor, if different from that for the State. (WIOA section 108(b)(15).)

The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development is responsible for disbursal of grant funds.

(3) A description of the type and availability of WIOA title I Youth activities and successful models, including for youth with disabilities. (WIOA section 108(b)(9).)

In Alaska, the selection of youth project operators follows a rigorous competitive process encompassing the state's six economic regions. These operators are crucial in providing academic, employment, and training services tailored to eligible youth aged 14-24, for both in-school and out-of-school participants. The primary goal is to implement a comprehensive workforce development program to prepare youth for postsecondary education, employment, career training, and career advancement. A dedicated focus is on accommodating and supporting disabled youth to ensure inclusivity and equal access to opportunities within the program.

Collaboration is vital to the initiative, with project operators working closely with Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) counselors to maximize resource utilization between programs. The department has also implemented an At-Risk Youth project that coordinates efforts and services with WIOA Youth and DVR, ensuring a holistic range of programs and services for all youth in need, with project operators integral to this collaborative effort.

Recognizing the diversity across regions, each project operator tailors its service delivery models based on location, the specific area served, and the target population. A noteworthy best practice statewide involves the establishment of youth-operated businesses, which provide a nurturing environment for skill development and foster community connection and support. They offer a consistent work experience opportunity, enabling youth to rotate through various roles.

The state ensures the availability of the WIOA Youth 14 basic program elements, ensuring that all project operators demonstrate the capacity to conduct an objective assessment and formulate an individual service strategy, which includes the development of a career pathway plan for each participant, utilizing the Alaska Career Information System (AKCIS). This comprehensive approach empowers youth with the skills, resources, and support needed to successfully transition into postsecondary education, employment, and long-term career development.

Project operators provide services for each of the WIOA Youth elements based on the federally prescribed services in WIOA Section 129(c)(2), Program Elements, and expanded on below:

1. Tutoring, study skills training, and instruction leading to high school completion, including dropout prevention strategies;
2. Alternative high school services that offer specialized, structured curriculum inside or outside of the public school system;

3. Summer youth employment that takes place between May 15th and September 30th and consists of employment for which youth are paid a wage and results in occupational learning that leads to an employment goal;
4. Paid and unpaid work experiences, including internships and job shadowing, are short-term, planned, structured learning experiences that occur in a workplace and are focused on career exploration and the development of work readiness skills;
5. Occupational skills training that leads to the attainment of a certificate or credential, including participation in Job Corps, apprenticeship programs, and training programs that provide skills necessary to enter or advance in a specific occupation;
6. Leadership development, including community service and peer-centered activities that encourage responsibility, employability, and other positive social behaviors;
7. Adult mentoring in a one-to-one supportive relationship between an adult and youth that is based on trust and lasts for at least 12 months;
8. Supportive services to enable an individual to participate in program activities such as housing, meals, medical care, daycare, transportation, school-related supplies, and training-related supplies;
9. Follow-up services to monitor the success of youth during their transition to employment or education and help as needed for a successful transition;
10. Comprehensive guidance and counseling to help youth make and implement informed educational, occupational, and life choices;
11. Financial literacy education to gain skills to create household budgets, initiate savings plans, and make informed financial decisions about education, retirement, home ownership, wealth building, and other savings goals;
12. Entrepreneurial skills training using a curriculum-based training module that teaches youth the value of being skilled and applying those skills to meet a consumer need or demand, to think creatively and critically, to problem solve; how to recognize opportunities and other skills related to entrepreneurialism;
13. Career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration using labor market and employment information on in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local area; and
14. Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training, including exposure to postsecondary education options, assisting youth with placement into postsecondary education, and placement into training opportunities such as apprenticeships and occupational training.

4. A DESCRIPTION OF THE ROLES AND RESOURCE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE ONE-STOP PARTNERS.

One-Stop Partner roles and resource contributions are identified in the Alaska One-Stop Partner Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) posted here: [PartnerMOU_22.pdf \(alaska.gov\)](#)

Section IV(b) details the partner roles and responsibilities, attachment A explains partner-provided services in detail, and attachment C provides the Infrastructure Funding agreement.

Per the MOU and Section 121(b), the partners will be responsible for providing available career services in a non-discriminatory and universally accessible manner, providing referrals to system partners, serving populations with multiple barriers to employment, supporting the cross-training of partner agency staff to ensure familiarity with and representation of all programs, participate in communications and workgroup planning, and share in the equitable and proportionate share of job center operational costs that benefit their program(s) participants.

5. THE COMPETITIVE PROCESS USED TO AWARD THE SUBGRANTS AND CONTRACTS FOR TITLE I ACTIVITIES.

The distribution of Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker funding follows a distinct process in Alaska. Unlike subawards, this funding is channeled through the Alaska Job Centers. In contrast, youth program project operators are allocated across the state's six economic regions through a competitive solicitation process.

A comprehensive solicitation for youth program project operators is conducted every other year from February through April. Subawards are issued at the start of the state fiscal year in July. In alternate years, project operators in good standing may have their grants extended for a second year, contingent upon funding availability. Should a project operator not be renewed, a limited solicitation is initiated to seek a replacement operator in that locality to accommodate the securing of new project operators as necessary while allowing high-performing operators to maintain uninterrupted operations supporting program participants.

The AWIB, in collaboration with department leadership, plays a pivotal role in identifying program focus areas. The focus areas include pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship opportunities and suicide prevention awareness. The AWIB Executive Committee is actively involved in reviewing and approving solicitation documents. AWIB grant committees diligently review all subrecipient project proposals, offering recommendations for funding to the Commissioner. This coordinated process ensures that the allocation of resources aligns with program priorities and facilitates effective decision-making within the framework of Alaska's workforce development initiatives.

6. HOW TRAINING SERVICES OUTLINED IN SECTION 134 WILL BE PROVIDED THROUGH INDIVIDUAL TRAINING ACCOUNTS AND/OR THROUGH CONTRACTS, AND HOW SUCH TRAINING APPROACHES WILL BE COORDINATED. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL MEET INFORMED CUSTOMER CHOICE REQUIREMENTS REGARDLESS OF TRAINING APPROACH.

Alaska uses Individual Training Accounts (ITA) and Incumbent Worker Training (IWT). ITA service delivery is coordinated through Alaska's Job Center case management staff who work one-on-one with each participant to develop an Individual Employment Plans (IEP), which ensures participant engagement and commitment. Career exploration and assessment provide the individual with options for career entry, career path, and (if needed) training provider selection through the state's Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), ensuring informed customer choice at each stage leading to the ITA.

Alaska's IWT focuses on training needed by incumbent workers to retain or succeed in their current occupation or career ladder, providing increased skills that will ensure their employment and provide increased productivity or competitiveness for the employer.

7. HOW THE STATE BOARD, IN FULFILLING LOCAL BOARD FUNCTIONS, WILL COORDINATE TITLE I ACTIVITIES WITH THOSE ACTIVITIES UNDER TITLE II. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE BOARD WILL CARRY OUT THE REVIEW OF LOCAL

APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED UNDER TITLE II CONSISTENT WITH WIOA SECS.
107(D)(11)(A) AND (B)(I) AND WIOA SEC. 232.

Title I activities in Alaska are predominantly conducted through the Alaska Job Centers, with the exception of the youth program. The youth program operates under the administration of various project operators, selected through a competitive process and strategically distributed across the state's six economic regions.

Similarly, Alaska Adult Education (AAE) under Title II undergoes procurement through a competitive multi-year process. This process is specifically designed to engage eligible adult education providers serving the regions within the state.

The department uses a cohesive and integrated approach to align activities between Title I and II through a referral mechanism. Individuals, including adults and dislocated workers who access services at job centers and express a need for adult education, GED® completion, or English as a Second Language (ESL) courses are referred to AAE providers.

Conversely, AAE providers refer participants to adult, dislocated worker, or youth programs for services beyond their scope. These additional services may include case management, individualized support, or postsecondary training services. This collaborative coordination ensures a comprehensive and holistic approach to meeting Alaskans' diverse educational and employment needs. By leveraging the strengths of Title I and Title II programs and facilitating seamless referrals, the overall effectiveness of workforce development initiatives is enhanced.

8. COPIES OF EXECUTED COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WHICH DEFINE HOW ALL
LOCAL SERVICE PROVIDERS WILL CARRY OUT THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
INTEGRATION OF AND ACCESS TO THE ENTIRE SET OF SERVICES AVAILABLE IN
THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM, INCLUDING COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH
ENTITIES ADMINISTERING REHABILITATION ACT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES.

The AWIB finalized the One-Stop Operator MOU, including the Infrastructure Funding Agreement, with required partners effective until June 30, 2025. The full document is available at [PartnerMOU_22.pdf \(alaska.gov\)](#)

E. WAIVER REQUESTS (OPTIONAL)

States wanting to request waivers as part of their title I-B Operational Plan must include a waiver plan that includes the following information for each waiver requested:

1. IDENTIFIES THE STATUTORY OR REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS FOR WHICH A WAIVER IS REQUESTED AND THE GOALS THAT THE STATE OR LOCAL AREA, AS APPROPRIATE, INTENDS TO ACHIEVE AS A RESULT OF THE WAIVER AND HOW THOSE GOALS RELATE TO THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;
2. DESCRIBES THE ACTIONS THAT THE STATE OR LOCAL AREA, AS APPROPRIATE, HAS UNDERTAKEN TO REMOVE STATE OR LOCAL STATUTORY OR REGULATORY BARRIERS;
3. DESCRIBES THE GOALS OF THE WAIVER AND THE EXPECTED PROGRAMMATIC OUTCOMES IF THE REQUEST IS GRANTED;
4. DESCRIBES HOW THE WAIVER WILL ALIGN WITH THE DEPARTMENT'S POLICY PRIORITIES, SUCH AS:

- A. SUPPORTING EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT;
 - B. CONNECTING EDUCATION AND TRAINING STRATEGIES;
 - C. SUPPORTING WORK-BASED LEARNING;
 - D. IMPROVING JOB AND CAREER RESULTS, AND
 - E. OTHER GUIDANCE ISSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT.
5. DESCRIBES THE INDIVIDUALS AFFECTED BY THE WAIVER, INCLUDING HOW THE WAIVER WILL IMPACT SERVICES FOR DISADVANTAGED POPULATIONS OR INDIVIDUALS WITH MULTIPLE BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT; AND
6. DESCRIBES THE PROCESSES USED TO:
- A. MONITOR THE PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE WAIVER;
 - B. PROVIDE NOTICE TO ANY LOCAL BOARD AFFECTED BY THE WAIVER;
 - C. PROVIDE ANY LOCAL BOARD AFFECTED BY THE WAIVER AN OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON THE REQUEST;
 - D. ENSURE MEANINGFUL PUBLIC COMMENT, INCLUDING COMMENT BY BUSINESS AND ORGANIZED LABOR, ON THE WAIVER.
 - E. COLLECT AND REPORT INFORMATION ABOUT WAIVER OUTCOMES IN THE STATE'S WIOA ANNUAL REPORT.
7. THE MOST RECENT DATA AVAILABLE REGARDING THE RESULTS AND OUTCOMES OBSERVED THROUGH IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EXISTING WAIVER, IN CASES WHERE THE STATE SEEKS RENEWAL OF A PREVIOUSLY APPROVED WAIVER.

The current waiver allowing the State Board to carry out the functions of a Local Board expires June 30, 2024. Alaska is requesting a renewal of this waiver, with the information below providing the plan and justification for this waiver request.

(1) Identifies the statutory or regulatory requirements for which a waiver is requested and the goals that the State or local area, as appropriate, intends to achieve as a result of the waiver and how those goals relate to the Unified or Combined State Plan

The overarching goals of this combined state plan and the associated waiver request are rooted in a commitment to enhance the efficiency and performance of Alaska's workforce system. Aligned with the state's vision to "Enhance and improve opportunities for all Alaskans to obtain high skill, high wage jobs and careers by promoting the dignity of work and the value of employment," the request seeks to allow the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) to carry out the role of a local board for the entire state. This streamlined governance structure, with a single board overseeing workforce investments across Alaska, is currently housed under the Alaska Commissioner of Labor and collaborates closely with all Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) programs to ensure inclusivity and diversity in local areas.

The State of Alaska is seeking the continuance of its waiver under the WIOA Section 107(b) application, empowering the State Board to fulfill the Local Board(s) roles. Recognizing the unique workforce dynamics in each area, the AWIB actively engages local officials and employers to solicit feedback. This engagement is facilitated through various channels, including individual outreach by

board members, opportunities for input at the three yearly board meetings held at diverse locations, and participation in local economic development gatherings and summits.

Key elements of the ongoing engagement strategy include the geographic diversity reflected in board member locations, a dedicated sub-committee addressing the state's diversity, and non-voting seats for mayors from each local area. Continuation of the waiver is widely supported, given its practicality in allowing the State Board to fulfill the roles of local boards. Disruption of this waiver would be counter-productive to workforce development in Alaska, potentially leading to fund inefficiencies and operational challenges associated with managing multiple local boards.

The equitable distribution of funding further strengthens the case for the waiver, as outlined in Policy 07-518.1. Guided by labor market data and unemployment figures, funding allocation ensures a fair distribution among the local areas. Competitive grants play a significant role in the distribution of WIOA Youth allocations, while Adult and Dislocated Worker allocations are channeled through job centers and competitive grants.

The history of the AWIB's authorization as an alternate entity, beginning in 2016 and renewed in 2018, 2020, and 2022, underscores the continued need for this unique approach. Official letters on the AWIB webpage provide additional documentation and transparency regarding the waiver request. The ongoing commitment to an inclusive and streamlined workforce development system is evident in the collaborative efforts of the AWIB, contributing to the realization of Alaska's vision for enhanced opportunities and career advancement for all its residents. Below are the links to the official waiver approval letters on the AWIB webpage AWIB Plans Policies and Initiatives <https://awib.alaska.gov/ppi.htm>.

- 2016 https://awib.alaska.gov/forms/AK_PY_2016_Waiver_Letter_June_2016.pdf
- 2018 https://awib.alaska.gov/forms/AK_PY_2018_Waiver_Letter_June_2018.pdf
- 2020
https://awib.alaska.gov/forms/AK_PY_2020_Waiver_Letter2_26_May_2020_signed.pdf
- 2022 https://awib.alaska.gov/documents/AK_Signed_Waiver_Letter.pdf

The Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) operates under the authorization of Alaska statute and is comprised of members appointed by the governor. The board is designed to be inclusive and representative, featuring key figures from the governor's cabinet and various sectors. Cabinet members include the Lieutenant Governor, Commissioners of Labor and Workforce Development; Health; Education & Early Development; and Commerce, Community, and Economic Development.

Board membership extends to representatives from diverse educational institutions, such as the University of Alaska system, secondary and postsecondary vocational education, adult education, and public education. The composition also reflects the involvement of business and industry, with four board members representing these sectors alongside four representatives from organized labor. The board includes members with specific expertise, such as a professional with experience in individuals with developmental disabilities, a veteran, and a representative from an organization focusing on the employment and training needs of Alaska Natives.

To ensure local input, two chief local elected officials have been appointed to the board. This strategy aims to incorporate perspectives from different regions and communities, contributing to the effectiveness and inclusivity of the AWIB as an Alternate Entity State Board. This diverse and

comprehensive composition positions the AWIB to address Alaska's multifaceted workforce development needs, leveraging experience and expertise across various sectors and communities.

The AWIB roster is available on the AWIB website https://awib.alaska.gov/AWIB_roster.pdf.

(2) Describes the actions that the State or local area, as appropriate, has undertaken to remove State or local statutory or regulatory barriers;

The governor has designated Alaska as a statewide area and workforce region for WIOA purposes. There are no state or local barriers to the implementation of this waiver.

(3) Describes the goals of the waiver and the expected programmatic outcomes if the request is granted;

The continuation of the waiver is pivotal for streamlining Alaska's governance structure, ensuring responsiveness to the state's unique economic and geographic considerations, particularly in the face of fiscal challenges.

The waiver is crucial in simplifying awarding grants by eliminating redundant administrative layers and processes. The Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB), serving as both the local and state board and situated under the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) Commissioner, collaborates closely with DOLWD, including collaboration on determining grant criteria, reviewing grant applications, and evaluating subrecipients, resulting in a more efficient and consolidated approach.

Furthermore, the waiver enables the DOLWD to maintain consistent standards across the state. This consistency is vital, preventing the existence of multiple boards with varying eligibility and performance standards across different regions. The streamlined approach facilitated by the waiver ensures a cohesive and unified implementation of workforce programs.

The waiver's continuation will lead to improved accountability in workforce investment programs. Having one board overseeing all workforce programs ensures consistency in the evaluation and oversight processes. Additionally, it allows the DOLWD to report as a single area, enhancing clarity and transparency in reporting mechanisms. This unified approach contributes to a more effective and accountable workforce development system that aligns with the state's unique economic landscape and geographical challenges.

(4) Describes how the waiver will align with the Department's policy priorities, such as:

- (A) supporting employer engagement;**
- (B) connecting education and training strategies;**
- (C) support work-based learning;**
- (D) improving job and career results, and**
- (E) other guidance issued by the Department.**

The majority of Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) members represent business and the private sector, hailing from diverse industries across the state. These dedicated board members are firmly committed to amplifying the voice of employers in the workforce system. Their proactive engagement extends beyond the boardroom as they reach out to others, fostering collaboration and involvement in workforce initiatives.

The AWIB maintains a focus on employer engagement, recognizing it as a cornerstone of effective workforce development. The board is dedicated to forging vital connections between education and training strategies. This includes the strategic development of career pathways, active support for work-based learning, and an overarching commitment to enhancing career outcomes for job seekers and employers. By aligning education and training initiatives with the dynamic needs of the workforce, the AWIB works to create a cooperative relationship that contributes to the overall success and prosperity of Alaska's workforce and economy.

(5) Describes the individuals affected by the waiver, including how the waiver will impact services for disadvantaged populations or individuals with multiple barriers to employment;

This waiver positively impacts all WIOA-eligible participants, including disadvantaged populations and those facing multiple barriers to employment, and employers. The streamlined approach ensures that participants and employers do not need to seek resources from different local areas, as the state operates and reports as a single statewide designation.

By functioning as a unified entity, the waiver eliminates the need for participants and employers to navigate different local systems or face potential disparities in resource availability. This statewide designation enhances accessibility and consistency in delivering services and resources, providing a more seamless experience for those seeking workforce development support.

The waiver is particularly beneficial for disadvantaged populations and individuals with multiple barriers to employment, as it facilitates a more coordinated and comprehensive approach to addressing their unique needs. Employers, too, benefit from this streamlined structure, as they can engage with a unified system that offers consistent services and resources throughout the state. Overall, the waiver ensures that WIOA-eligible participants and employers experience a more efficient and effective workforce development process, fostering equal access and opportunities across the entire state.

(6) Describes the processes used to:

- (A) Monitor the progress in implementing the waiver;**
- (B) Provide notice to any local board affected by the waiver;**
- (C) Provide any local board affected by the waiver an opportunity to comment on the request;**
- (D) Ensure meaningful public comment, including comment by business and organized labor, on the waiver.**
- (E) Collect and report information about waiver outcomes in the State's WIOA Annual Report.**

During the development of this waiver, the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) actively sought input from local officials and employers across the state. As part of the plan development process, DOLWD solicited feedback, creating an inclusive and participatory approach. Notably, no local officials expressed a desire for designation as a local area, and the draft local area designation and waiver process received no comments.

The Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) is committed to maintaining this engagement with local stakeholders. The AWIB will continue to solicit valuable feedback through various channels, including individual outreach by AWIB members to their local officials. Opportunities for input will be provided at each AWIB meeting. These meetings will focus on statewide strategies and their direct connection to the economic and workforce development needs of different regions within the state.

The process by which a local area designation may be requested is thoroughly outlined and referenced in Section VI, Program Specific Requirements for Core Programs of the Alaska WIOA Combined Plan. This ensures transparency and clarity regarding the avenues available for local areas to seek designation, emphasizing the collaborative and inclusive nature of the waiver development and implementation process.

Policy and Procedure

The outline of the policy and procedure to request designation as a local area is:

Policies

The chief elected official and local governing board from any unit of general local government or combination of units may submit a request for designation as a workforce development area. The AWIB, in consultation with DOLWD staff, will review the request and recommend approval or denial to the governor.

Designation as a new local area will be based on the extent to which the proposed area demonstrates that it:

- Is consistent with local labor market areas; and
- Has a joint economic development area; and
- Has the federal and non-federal resources, including appropriate education and training institutions, to administer activities under the Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker formula programs under WIOA Title I-B; and
- Has the fiscal, administrative, and reporting capacity and systems to report on participant outcomes as required by WIOA and the Alaska WIOA Combined Plan.

The governor may approve or deny the request for designation. In either case, DOLWD will notify the applicant in writing. If the request is denied, the written notification will include the reasons for the denial. The applicant may appeal if the request for local area designation is denied. Appeals must be made to the AWIB and address each issue cited in the denial notification. If a decision on the appeal is not made within 60 days or if the appeal to the AWIB does not result in the designation of the local area, the applicant may request a review by the Secretary of Labor per 20 CFR Section 683.640 of the WIOA statute.

Procedures

A request for local area designation must be made on a form supplied by DOLWD. A completed and signed request must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. on May 1 of the year preceding the Program Year for which the request is being made.

Any local area wishing to appeal the governor's decision must be made per the appeal procedures described in the Policies Section above. Incomplete or unsigned requests will be returned, and application review will be delayed.

The governor will monitor the progress of this waiver by reviewing information provided by DOLWD and the AWIB on costs, processes for awarding grants, eligibility standards, and performance on accountability measures. This information will also be used to report waiver outcomes in the state's annual WIOA reports.

(7) The most recent data available regarding the results and outcomes observed through implementation of the existing waiver, in cases where the State seeks renewal of a previously approved waiver.

The State of Alaska, operating as a single-area state, has demonstrated significant success in aligning with the provisions outlined in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), specifically under WIOA sec. 107 and relevant regulatory sections including 20 CFR § 679.270, § 679.300, and § 679.370.

Under the leadership of the AWIB serving as the Local Workforce Development Board (Local WIB), Alaska has effectively carried out the mandated functions per WIOA regulations. The state's commitment to fulfilling the outlined responsibilities has contributed to its success as a single-area state.

Key Achievements and Highlights

Alignment with WIOA sec. 107

The State of Alaska has actively aligned its workforce development strategies and initiatives with the objectives outlined in WIOA section 107. This alignment ensures that the state's workforce programs are designed to meet the needs of businesses, job seekers, and the community.

In adherence to state statute and WIOA sec. 107, the Alaska Governor appoints representatives to the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB). These appointees represent governmental and economic development entities, mirroring the diverse landscape of the state's businesses and job seekers across its six economic regions. As outlined in the statute, these representatives play integral roles in shaping the direction of the AWIB, contributing to its mission of supporting economic development and workforce initiatives throughout the state.

The board structure has been designed to ensure broad representation, with each state region having a voice in decision-making. This approach guarantees that the AWIB is well-informed about the specific needs and challenges faced by businesses, job seekers, and the state within each economic region.

The commitment to appointing representatives per state statutes underscores the dedication to transparency, legal compliance, and equitable representation in pursuing the AWIB's objectives. This approach further strengthens the effectiveness of the AWIB in meeting the unique demands of Alaska's diverse communities.

Compliance with 20 CFR § 679.270

Alaska has successfully adhered to the requirements specified in 20 CFR § 679.270, ensuring that the State WIB, in its capacity as the Local WIB, effectively carries out essential functions while strategically reducing unnecessary burdens and avoiding duplication of processes.

Per 20 CFR § 679.270, the State of Alaska, operating as a single-board state, has established a robust and integrated model for addressing workforce needs. Collaboratively, a variety of the state's departments, including Labor and Workforce Development; Health; Education & Early Development; Family and Community Services; Corrections; and Commerce, Community, and Economic Development, along with strategic partners, have developed a coordinated approach to deliver comprehensive services that cater to the employment and career goals of businesses and job seekers throughout Alaska.

This state model ensures that businesses and job seekers benefit from a seamless and effective path toward sustainability. By combining services and resources, including education, training, counseling,

job placement, and support services, the state offers a comprehensive solution tailored to the unique needs of both businesses and job seekers. This approach results in a streamlined system that enhances the overall effectiveness of workforce development initiatives.

The single-board state structure in Alaska has proven instrumental in facilitating collaboration among government agencies, educational institutions, businesses, and community organizations. This collaborative effort eliminates barriers and creates a cohesive network of services, addressing the state's immediate and long-term workforce development needs. The interconnected system ensures that individuals and businesses can access diverse services without encountering unnecessary hurdles.

Alaska's model also extends tailored support to businesses, recognizing their critical role in the state's economic landscape. The state aims to enhance its competitiveness, growth, and contribution to Alaska's overall economic prosperity by offering targeted services to businesses.

As a single-board state, Alaska has successfully employed a strategic and resourceful approach to leveraging funds. Through strategic partnerships, co-investment initiatives, and efficient resource allocation, the state has maximized its financial impact and garnered additional support to meet the diverse workforce needs of each region.

The collaborative spirit of Alaska's strategic partnerships has played a pivotal role in attracting external support and resources. By forging alliances with public and private entities, the state has pooled resources, shared expertise, and collectively addressed workforce challenges. This collaborative effort has not only increased the overall funding available but has also facilitated knowledge exchange and innovative solutions.

Co-investment strategies in Alaska have proven effective in optimizing financial resources. Encouraging multiple stakeholders to contribute to common goals has resulted in a diversified funding base. This approach not only spreads financial responsibilities but also enhances the sustainability of workforce development initiatives, ensuring a resilient and adaptable system.

Efficient resource allocation has been a cornerstone of Alaska's success in leveraging funding. The state has achieved more with less by optimizing the use of existing resources. This efficient approach ensures that funds are directed where they are most needed, maximizing the impact on workforce development initiatives.

Alaska diligently complies with the stipulations outlined in 20 CFR § 679.270. The AWIB, acting as the Local WIB, adeptly fulfills its crucial functions. Notably, Alaska strategically streamlines processes, minimizing unnecessary burdens and preventing duplication, to ensure efficient and effective implementation of workforce development initiatives.

Effective Implementation of § 679.300

Alaska has effectively implemented the requirements outlined in 20 CFR § 679.300. The state has prioritized incorporating local interests, ensuring that workforce development initiatives are tailored to the unique needs and priorities of the local community.

In our examination of how Alaska aligns with WIOA sec. 107 and complies with 20 CFR § 679.270, it is evident that the state has effectively implemented the requirements outlined in 20 CFR § 679.300. Alaska's commitment to incorporating local interests is a key highlight. The state places a significant emphasis on tailoring workforce development initiatives to align with each local region's distinct needs and priorities.

This deliberate and customized approach goes beyond mere compliance with federal regulations; it reflects Alaska's dedication to being responsive to the specific challenges and opportunities present in the state. Alaska has successfully created a more impactful and community-driven approach to workforce development by prioritizing regional needs.

In essence, the state's strategy ensures that its workforce development efforts are not only legally sound but also deeply rooted in the realities and aspirations of the communities they serve. Alaska's proactive stance in aligning with federal guidelines while simultaneously addressing the unique characteristics of each locality exemplifies a comprehensive and effective model for workforce development that is both regulatory-compliant and community-centric.

Strategic Fulfillment of § 679.370

Alaska has not only met the functions specified in § 679.370 but has done so in a manner that showcases flexibility and innovation. The state has successfully balanced incorporating local interests while minimizing unnecessary burdens and process duplications.

By effectively balancing the incorporation of local interests, Alaska ensures that workforce development initiatives are finely tuned to the unique needs of each community. Simultaneously, the state has minimized unnecessary burdens and avoided process duplications, demonstrating a commitment to streamlined and efficient operations. This strategy showcases Alaska's capacity to meet regulatory requirements while fostering a dynamic and responsive environment for workforce development.

Alaska's success as a single-area state underscores its commitment to creating a dynamic and responsive workforce ecosystem. By adhering to the principles outlined in WIOA sec. 107 and the associated sections, the state has positioned itself as a model for effective workforce development that considers both statewide and local needs.

This success underscores the State of Alaska's unwavering commitment to cultivating a robust and responsive workforce development system designed to effectively address the distinctive needs of Alaska as a single workforce planning area. The highlighted achievements vividly demonstrate the state's dedication to optimizing the impact of workforce initiatives through collaborative efforts with key stakeholders. This collaborative approach works to foster economic growth, support businesses, and empower individuals to thrive in a rapidly changing labor market. Alaska's initiatives are thoughtfully tailored to the evolving needs of the state, reflecting a dynamic and forward-thinking approach to workforce development that ensures the continued success and resilience of Alaska's workforce.

TITLE I-B ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include assurances that:	Included?
1. The State has implemented a policy to ensure Adult program funds provide a priority in the delivery of training services and individualized career services to individuals who are low income, public assistance recipients and basic skills deficient;	Yes
2. The State has implemented a policy to ensure local areas have a process in place for referring veterans with significant barriers to employment to career services provided by the JVSG program’s Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist;	Yes
3. The State established a written policy and procedure that set forth criteria to be used by chief elected officials for the appointment of local workforce investment board members;	Yes
4. The State established written policy and procedures to ensure local workforce investment boards are certified by the governor every two years in accordance with WIOA section 107(c)(2);	Yes
5. Where an alternative entity takes the place of a State Board, the State has written policy and procedures to ensure the alternative entity meets the definition under WIOA section 101(e) and the legal requirements for membership;	Yes
6. The State established a written policy and procedure for how the individuals and entities represented on the State Workforce Development Board help to determine the methods and factors of distribution, and how the State consults with chief elected officials in local areas throughout the State in determining the distributions;	Yes
7. The State will not use funds received under WIOA Title I to assist, promote, or deter union organizing in accordance with WIOA section 181(b)(7);	Yes
8. The State distributes adult and youth funds received under WIOA equitably throughout the State, and no local area suffers significant shifts in funding from year-to-year during the period covered by this plan;	Yes
9. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I;	Yes
10. The State agrees to report on the impact and outcomes of its approved waivers in its WIOA Annual Report.	Yes
11. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 2900, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance under section WIOA 184(a)(3);	Yes

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR WAGNER-PEYSER PROGRAM (EMPLOYMENT SERVICES)

All Program-Specific Requirements provided for the WIOA core programs in this section must be addressed for either a Unified or Combined State Plan.

A. EMPLOYMENT SERVICE STAFF

1. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL STAFF THE PROVISION OF LABOR EXCHANGE SERVICES UNDER THE WAGNER-PEYSER ACT, SUCH AS THROUGH STATE EMPLOYEES, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO STATE MERIT STAFF EMPLOYEES, STAFF OF A SUBRECIPIENT, OR SOME COMBINATION THEREOF.

State merit staff provide labor exchange services under the Wagner-Peyser Act.

2. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL UTILIZE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICE STAFF TO ENSURE STAFF IS ABLE TO PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY SERVICES TO BOTH JOBSEEKERS AND EMPLOYERS

Employment Service (ES) staff receive comprehensive professional development training during their first year of employment and ongoing refresher training to ensure they are prepared to provide high-quality employment and training services to job seekers, workers, and employers.

Most ES staff participate in the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals Five Core Competency Trainings, professional competency courses that focus on customer service methods, diversity in workforce development, labor market information and intelligence, principles of communication, and workforce development structure, policies, and programs.

Staff training includes overviews of policies and procedures that guide their work; information on partners' employment and training programs and services; Rapid Response; Fidelity Bonding; Work Opportunity Tax Credit; Veterans programs and Priority of Service; state and federally funded training programs; Equal Employment Opportunity; disability awareness, etc. ES staff also receive training on customer service skills, conducting a job search, and how to use the state labor exchange and case management system to assist both job seekers and employers.

Staff performance is monitored closely, and additional training is provided to correct areas of deficiency. Such training is provided through classroom instruction, webinars, and one-on-one sessions.

3. DESCRIBE STRATEGIES DEVELOPED TO SUPPORT TRAINING AND AWARENESS ACROSS CORE PROGRAMS AND THE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) PROGRAM AND THE TRAINING PROVIDED FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND WIOA STAFF ON IDENTIFICATION OF UI ELIGIBILITY ISSUES AND REFERRAL TO UI STAFF FOR ADJUDICATION

Alaska uses several strategies to ensure that core program staff understand the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program, can make referrals to UI for claim filing, and can recognize and assist in responding to UI eligibility issues.

All ES and WIOA staff have a working knowledge and awareness of the UI requirement that claimants must register for work in the state labor exchange system (AlaskaJobs), maintain an online resume, and conduct weekly work searches. The UI website and the claimant handbook are also available to all ES staff. Staff located in the AJCs guide UI claimants toward understanding and satisfying the UI requirements and assist them to contact the UI Claim Center for in-depth answers regarding eligibility.

UI staff routinely provide UI eligibility issue training to ensure ES staff can recognize barriers and forward potential issues for investigation through a dedicated email address. Only UI staff are authorized to make determinations on UI issues.

The Re-employment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) team is led by a combination of UI and ES staff who work together to develop strategies that ensure UI claimants, particularly veterans and those deemed most likely to exhaust UI benefits, receive a combination of meaningful financial and job-search support while they are in transition. Development of these strategies necessitates a sound level of understanding of both programs. RESEA continuous improvement strategies include implementation of a required second assessment and interview for RESEA claimants who complete their first assessment and interview.

B. EXPLAIN HOW THE STATE WILL PROVIDE INFORMATION AND MEANINGFUL ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUALS REQUESTING ASSISTANCE IN FILING A CLAIM FOR UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION THROUGH ONE-STOP CENTERS, AS REQUIRED BY WIOA AS A CAREER SERVICE

UI claimants and employers are priority customers at Alaska's AJCs. All AJCs have phone banks specifically identified for UI purposes. UI customers who use the phone banks at the AJCs have a dedicated queue, and their calls are given priority and are answered immediately by knowledgeable UI claim center staff. ES staff promptly assist claimants and employers to meet filing requirements for UI purposes and provide dedicated resources such as computers, telephones, fax machines, and printed materials regarding eligibility requirements and filing for UI benefits. ES staff have general knowledge and awareness of eligibility requirements and report potential issues to UI staff for follow-up.

C. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S STRATEGY FOR PROVIDING REEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE TO UI CLAIMANTS AND OTHER UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS

UI claimants are a priority population, and AJC staff are charged with improving claimants' services, training options, and support programs. One of the state's top priorities is the RESEA program. The goal is to reduce the number of UI benefit weeks paid to claimants by fast-tracking them into the right combination of re-employment services, resources, and opportunities to promote rapid re-employment. RESEA is offered in Alaska's six largest AJCs, which also have the highest percentage of UI claimants: Anchorage-Midtown, Mat-Su, Juneau, Fairbanks, Kenai, and Ketchikan. RESEA focuses on targeted assistance to two types of UI claimants: recently separated veterans and individuals most-likely to-exhaust UI benefits. UI uses wage data and a USDOL ETA-approved statistical model that uses claimant characteristics and economic indicators to assess the likelihood of a claimant exhausting UI benefits.

Formal and on-going training is provided to staff in all AJCs participating in RESEA. As a best practice, AJC staff who have conducted past re-employment service programs participate in the development of new staff training materials, particularly during the transition period from one re-employment services version to another. Their input is crucial, as they are the experts at eliciting and reading the re-employment needs of the claimants they interview.

The UI office mails weekly notifications to selected claimants who have received a first payment of mandatory participation in RESEA and advises self-registration and completion of requirements immediately to ensure continued eligibility for UI benefits. In addition, to alert AJC RESEA staff, UI auto-transmits RESEA selection data to AlaskaJobs. To ensure that all selected claimants receive notification of the mandatory participation, AJC RESEA staff also receive an electronic list with the contact information of selected claimants. Staff then personally call all claimants to remind them of

their responsibility to participate in the program to promote rapid re-employment. These calls also help to facilitate immediate registration into the mandatory in-person RESEA Event workshop to ensure all RESEA obligations are fulfilled timely.

Extensive outreach uses the media, press releases, reminder postcards, and booklets strategically placed in military installation resource rooms.

Each claimant selected for RESEA is required to participate in a 60 to 90-minute, in-person, re-employment services and eligibility assessment workshop with RESEA staff. Based on the eligibility assessment, the orientation to AJC resources, the claimant's work search efforts combined with real-time labor market information, and the assessment of the unique re-employment needs of each claimant, an Individual Re-employment Plan is developed with the claimant. The claimant actively participates in the development of this plan, increasing the likelihood it will be completed. Recommended services are explored and at least one service is provided during the session, while others may be referred for completion later using other re-employment and training resources including those funded under Wagner-Peyser, Dislocated Worker, Adult, and Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG).

A large percentage of claimants selected for RESEA are military veterans, a group who are always a top priority in Alaska. Some of the veterans will be recently separated from the military and others will be veterans who meet the criteria associated with the most likely to exhaust UI benefits. The latter are veterans who are homeless, disabled, or have other significant barriers to re-employment. In the three RESEA AJCs with on-site Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) staff, a personal introduction and referral to the DVOP is the norm. In other AJCs, RESEA staff will telephonically introduce the RESEA participant to the DVOPs who serve veterans itinerantly for that region.

All the resources offered to claimants selected for RESEA are also available to other UI claimants, including those funded under Wagner-Peyser, Dislocated Worker, Adult, and JVSG. Service strategies include awareness through UI and ES outreach and re-employment assistance through comprehensive, readily available resources. All claimants receive notification from the UI program that re-employment services are offered from statewide job centers to help them find work. The notification is standard to all UI claimants and is viewable on the UI website from which claimants file claims, on mailed documents generated at the point of filing, and during telephonic interviews with UI claims-takers. All claimants are advised to register for work in AlaskaJobs. Upon registration, the menu of re-employment services is readily viewable by claimants and includes a link to the online Alaska Job Center Orientation (also available by ES workshop) which describes the in-person and online re-employment and training resources available through Alaska Job Centers. Job seekers self-identify as UI claimants upon registration in AlaskaJobs and when entering a job center. Job center walk-in claimants are greeted by frontline staff and asked to complete an assessment form describing their circumstances and re-employment needs. ES staff are trained to guide claimants through the re-employment process, which includes registration, online resume, and job search requirements. All Alaska Job Centers have clearly marked, dedicated telephones in the resource rooms for use by UI claimants.

Awareness of employment and training resources is enhanced by information posted in resource rooms and on our public website. Large stand-up banners located at the entrances of the participating RESEA job centers describe how UI claimants can take advantage of re-employment and training resources.

**D. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE W-P FUNDS TO SUPPORT UI CLAIMANTS,
AND THE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN W-P AND UI, AS APPROPRIATE INCLUDING
THE FOLLOWING:**

1. COORDINATION OF AND PROVISION OF LABOR EXCHANGE SERVICES FOR UI CLAIMANTS AS REQUIRED BY THE WAGNER-PEYSER ACT;

UI benefits serve not only to bridge the economic gap for the individual worker, but also as a stabilizing influence on local economies, especially with the seasonal nature of much of the state's workforce. Workers who have become unemployed or are working less than full-time are encouraged to apply for UI benefits as soon as possible and are provided labor exchange services. These services, provided through AlaskaJobs and through AJCs, assist UI claimants with their job search efforts. Job seekers can find state and local jobs advertised by Alaska employers through AlaskaJobs and obtain help with resume development, additional job seeking methods, applications for employment, interviewing workshops, and more from AJC staff. Unless specifically exempted by UI, all claimants must actively be seeking work and be physically able and available to accept suitable, full-time work.

2. REGISTRATION OF UI CLAIMANTS WITH THE STATE'S EMPLOYMENT SERVICE IF REQUIRED BY STATE LAW;

In Alaska, unless specifically exempted by UI, claimants filing for benefits are responsible for registering for work and posting at least one online resume in AlaskaJobs within seven days of filing a new or reopened claim for UI benefits. Claimants must maintain the online resume and ensure it is current and accessible to employers by regularly checking that it is in online status. The registration and resume stay active while the claimant is actively engaged in job search and referral activities in AlaskaJobs and while receiving re-employment services from AJC staff.

Instructions for registering in AlaskaJobs are provided to all claimants in the UI Claimant Handbook. The online UI Filing Guide also provides registration instructions and includes a live link to AlaskaJobs.

3. ADMINISTRATION OF THE WORK TEST FOR THE STATE UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION SYSTEM, INCLUDING MAKING ELIGIBILITY ASSESSMENTS (FOR REFERRAL TO UI ADJUDICATION, IF NEEDED), AND PROVIDING JOB FINDING AND PLACEMENT SERVICES FOR UI CLAIMANTS; AND

Claimants required to register and post an online resume in AlaskaJobs are also required to perform work search contacts for each week they claim UI benefits. For the claimant and UI staff, applications for jobs posted on AlaskaJobs serve as an easily verifiable record of the number of job searches being conducted each week. The record also provides ES and RESEA staff with a way to determine the suitability and validity of claimant work searches, which is one component that helps build the foundation for a solid re-employment plan. Work search efforts can be recorded and accepted on any template if the record is verifiable; however, both UI and ES provide a formal Work Search Log with clear instructions, and they encourage claimants to use it. If it becomes apparent to ES or RESEA staff that a claimant is not seeking work or has refused suitable work, ES staff will promptly notify their UI counterparts to alert them of the potential issue. In addition, all UI staff are trained to maneuver through AlaskaJobs to verify that a claimant is registered, has an online resume, and is conducting work searches.

4. PROVISION OF REFERRALS TO AND APPLICATION ASSISTANCE FOR TRAINING AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES.

UI claimants are provided information on training and education programs and resources through a variety of means and via both AlaskaJobs self-service and self-service and staff-assisted service in AJCNs. For example, after registering in AlaskaJobs, UI claimants can be provided with a variety of workshops including, but not limited to, AJCN orientation, training orientation, General Educational

Development (GED) workshop, and interviewing strategies workshop. The orientations and workshops educate UI Claimants on the training and education programs and resources that are available through AlaskaJobs and various partner programs. After interaction and assessment by Employment Service (ES) and Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) staff, in which UI claimants discuss their skills, education, and career objectives, referrals are made to WIOA title I and II programs, and to English as a Second Language (ESL) providers in Alaska, among other core and non-core partner programs, as applicable. Upon receipt of the referral, UI claimants receive application assistance from partner program staff. UI claimants may also be referred to Wagner-Peyser services by core partners such as Adult Education and Vocational Rehabilitation.

E. AGRICULTURAL OUTREACH PLAN (AOP). EACH STATE AGENCY MUST DEVELOP AN AOP EVERY FOUR YEARS AS PART OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN REQUIRED UNDER SECTIONS 102 OR 103 OF WIOA. THE AOP MUST INCLUDE AN ASSESSMENT OF NEED. AN ASSESSMENT NEED DESCRIBES THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS IN THE AREA BASED ON PAST AND PROJECTED AGRICULTURAL AND FARMWORKER ACTIVITY IN THE STATE. SUCH NEEDS MAY INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO: EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, AND HOUSING.

1. ASSESSMENT OF NEED. PROVIDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS IN THE AREA BASED ON PAST AND PROJECTED AGRICULTURAL AND FARMWORKER ACTIVITY IN THE STATE. SUCH NEEDS MAY INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO: EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, AND HOUSING.

The geography and expense of traveling to Alaska limits influx of Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers (MSFWs), and within Alaska, few workers travel to participate in various types of agriculture, aquaculture, and timber employment that fall under the definition of MSFW. In PY22, there were an estimated 211 MSFWs statewide based on self-identified individuals in AlaskaJobs, Federal Census data, and MSFWs discovered in field visits. MSFWs made up less than 2% of all registrants during PY22. According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, 93 percent of producers are white, and in discussion with employers, the same demographic appears to be true of employees.

In PY22, there were four H-2A approved employers in Alaska, with a total of 58 H-2A visa workers. Workers hired through H-2A visas primarily migrate from Mexico and speak Spanish. In Alaska Job Centers, bilingual staff members work with MSFWs of limited English proficiency to provide career services. When no qualified and trained bilingual employee is available, staff will offer and secure, at no cost to the client, a qualified interpreter or translator service.

Alaska's farms are mainly family owned and operated with little outside employment. Outside the family, hiring is usually restricted to intensive short-term employment of two weeks or less. Sometimes, local college or high school students on summer break meet these needs. Because the population of MSFWs is limited, Alaska does not have National Farmworker Jobs Program grantees. However, coordination of services for employment, training, and housing from public and private community service agencies and groups are available to MSFWs as needed.

2. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY IN THE STATE MEANS: 1) IDENTIFYING THE TOP FIVE LABOR-INTENSIVE CROPS, THE MONTHS OF HEAVY ACTIVITY, AND THE GEOGRAPHIC AREA OF PRIME ACTIVITY; 2) SUMMARIZE THE AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS' NEEDS IN THE STATE (I.E. ARE THEY PREDOMINANTLY HIRING LOCAL OR FOREIGN WORKERS, ARE THEY EXPRESSING THAT THERE IS A SCARCITY IN THE AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE); AND 3) IDENTIFYING ANY ECONOMIC, NATURAL, OR OTHER FACTORS THAT ARE

AFFECTING AGRICULTURE IN THE STATE OR ANY PROJECTED FACTORS THAT WILL AFFECT AGRICULTURE IN THE STATE

Alaska's Agriculture Outreach Plan includes traditional agriculture, aquaculture, and timber activities.

Agricultural Overview: Most of Alaska's traditional agricultural activities, however limited, are located in areas with the richest soil in the state: Anchorage, Matanuska-Susitna Valley (Mat-Su), Kenai Peninsula, Fairbanks, and Delta Junction. According to the USDA Economic Research Service, Alaska's top five labor-intensive crops include bedding plants and flowers grown in greenhouses and nurseries, hay, barley, and vegetables.

A large number of Alaska's farms are located in the Anchorage/Mat-Su area. Here, the agricultural season extends from April through October, from planting during April and May, to growing season from May through August, and harvesting season from June through October. Timeframes across the state and within this area of fertile farmland differ depending on the crop, farming methods, location, and weather patterns. For outdoor planting, the average last frost date dictates when crops are planted and ranges from May 1 in the Anchorage/Mat-Su Valley to June 1 on the Kenai Peninsula and Fairbanks. Greenhouse operations generally start in mid-February and operate through late October. However, some greenhouse operations are year-round. Some farms similarly use hoop houses to cover patches of ground or raised beds with a series of hoops made of pipes covered with plastic, which is another means to extend the farming season from April through October. Hydroponic farms are also growing in number, and while they enable year-round production, they are still small-scale businesses in Alaska. For example, at its peak, the largest hydroponic farm in Alaska employs approximately 125 workers.

Alaska continues to increase its number of in-state agricultural businesses and thereby enhance Alaskan food security. However, because many communities are not connected to a road system, it remains expensive to bring goods to market. Small farms, which can focus on serving local markets, are increasing at a greater rate than in other states. Farm size is also impacted by a small labor pool, which faces competition from larger seasonal industries such as seafood processing and tourism. Economy of scale means that Alaska's farms are family owned and operated with little outside employment.

Outside the family, hiring is usually restricted to intensive short-term employment of two weeks or less. Sometimes, local college or high school students on summer break meet these needs. Most workers at Alaska's largest hydroponic farm, for example, are local high school students. Most other employees are also local and therefore do not meet the definition of MSFW, as they live close enough to travel to and from work each day (within 55 road miles as defined by Alaska Unemployment Insurance definition).

To receive H-2A visas, an employer is required to demonstrate a lack of available U.S. workers resulting from positive U.S. worker recruitment. Based on recent history, an average of three Alaskan agricultural employers pursue H-2A visas each year. These employers cite the lack of skills in nursery and hydroponic work in the U.S. applicant pool and look for foreign workers to meet these needs. After unsuccessful U.S. recruitment, the employer can gain certification of H-2A visas. Many of Alaska's agricultural employers continue to use word of mouth, placement of job orders in Alaska's online labor exchange system, AlaskaJobs, or other methods of public recruitment to pursue workers.

Aquaculture Overview: Although permitting of aquatic farms has been happening since 1988, most aquatic farms in Alaska were slow to take root. Modern commercial seaweed cultivation in Alaska didn't begin until 2017. Mariculture, or marine aquaculture, has flourished in recent years. Alaska is now home to the largest kelp farm in the United States, Seagrove Kelp, which covers 100 acres near Craig.

Mollusks, various types of seaweed, sea cucumbers, and urchins are grown along the southeastern, southcentral, and southwestern coasts. Alaska has 95 active operations, and permitted acreage has grown from less than 350 acres in 2016 to more than 1,360 today.

As shown in Figure 10 below, Alaska’s operations farm a plethora of marine species. Oysters are the highest-value harvest, with the Pacific oysters sold to the public worth nearly \$1.5 million in 2022, a number that’s climbing again after taking a hit during the pandemic when demand plummeted. Shellfish cultivation in Alaska is mainly oysters, but farms include multiple varieties of mussels, clams, scallops, sea urchins, and sea cucumbers.

Farming seaweed, especially kelp, is the fastest growing branch of the aquaculture industry. In 2022, Alaska farms sold nearly 873,000 wet pounds of kelp to the public or other farms, up from almost nothing in 2016. Kelp includes ribbon kelp, sugar kelp, bull kelp, five-ribbed kelp, three-ribbed kelp, split kelp, giant kelp, broad-ribbed kelp, dragon kelp, and spaghetti kelp. Other seaweed includes black seaweed-nori, red ribbon-dulse, stiff ribbon-dulse, sea lettuce, dark sea lettuce, beach asparagus, seagrass laver, and fucus.

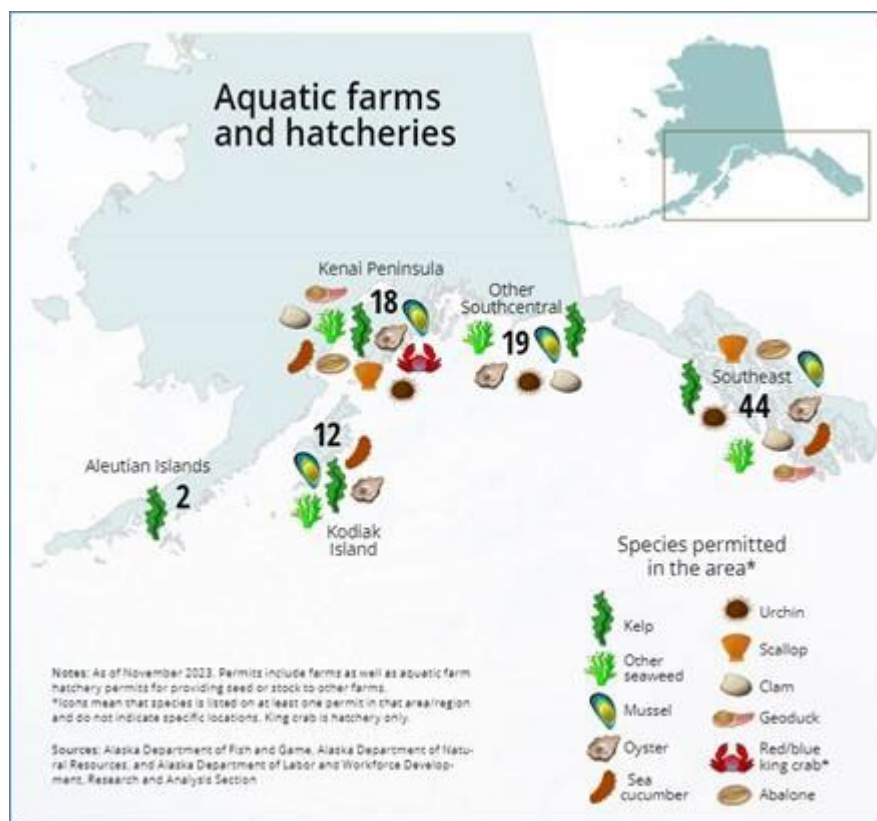


Figure 10: Locations of Aquatic Farms and Hatcheries

Timber Industry Overview: Commercial harvests occur on private, Alaska Native Corporation, federal, and state lands, including the Mental Health Trust Authority and University Trust properties. Harvesting and timber processing activities occur throughout the state with distinctly different industry sectors represented in the three main geographic regions: Southeast, Southcentral, and Interior Alaska. Since the 1990s, this sector of the economy has been in decline in Southeast, while activity in Southcentral is cyclic and responds to market demand and price. The industry is now in the bottom of this cycle, so little commercial activity is occurring. The Interior (a large swath of central Alaska including the Fairbanks area) has experienced modest growth in this sector over the same period.

With changes in federal timber management policy in the Tongass National Forest and most second growth forests not at a harvest age, the Southeast region supports a few companies that are mid-sized with the majority being small owner/operator businesses. Workers in these smaller operations work in the vicinity of their home and do not migrate. In the southern part of Southeast Alaska, a small workforce migrates to Prince of Wales Island to conduct timber harvest for five medium-sized companies. A medium-sized sawmill also processes harvested logs into a variety of products and depends on a local workforce. Due to geographical variables within the forest and timber stands of various ages and natural productivity, there is often the need for remote work sites for operations to occur where the timber is located. Businesses respond with remote bunkhouses, bunkhouses on barges, or other remote camp adaptations, and workers will need to translocate during seasonal operations.

The season varies depending on weather and temperature. Depending on demand, logging can occur year-round. Seasonally, work can begin as soon as March and go through November, while other years the timeframe is shorter. The timber industry is cyclic depending on natural forest growth and demand. Tree pre-commercial thinning activities are constant year-to-year, with land managers setting goals of thinning/treating up to 10,000 acres per year.

Interior and Southcentral Alaska utilize a local workforce both in timber harvest and processing activities with occasional need for specific skilled labor from outside the region in the timber harvesting sector. These workers typically come from Pacific Northwest states. Timber harvest often peaks in winter months, due to the use of snow roads and ice bridges to access areas that are inaccessible during the warmer months.

3. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS MEANS SUMMARIZING MIGRANT AND SEASONAL FARM WORKER (MSFW) CHARACTERISTICS (INCLUDING IF THEY ARE PREDOMINANTLY FROM CERTAIN COUNTRIES, WHAT LANGUAGE(S) THEY SPEAK, THE APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF MSFWS IN THE STATE DURING PEAK SEASON AND DURING LOW SEASON, AND WHETHER THEY TEND TO BE MIGRANT, SEASONAL, OR YEAR-ROUND FARMWORKERS). THIS INFORMATION MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT DATA SUPPLIED BY WIOA SECTION 167 NATIONAL FARMWORKER JOBS PROGRAM (NFJP) GRANTEES, OTHER MSFW ORGANIZATIONS, EMPLOYER ORGANIZATIONS, AND STATE AND/OR FEDERAL AGENCY DATA SOURCES SUCH AS THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR (DOL) EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION

The geography and expense of traveling to Alaska limits influx of MSFWs with the exception of the timber industry, which often tries to recruit workers from both outside and within Alaska. Within the state, few workers travel to participate in various types of agriculture and aquaculture employment that fall under the definition of MSFW.

In PY22, there were an estimate of 211 MSFWs statewide during peak season and 56 MSFWs during low season based on self-identified individuals in AlaskaJobs, Federal Census data, and MSFWs discovered in field visits. According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, 93 percent of producers are white, and the same demographic appears to be true of employees. Workers hired through H-2A visas migrate from Mexico and primarily speak Spanish. In PY22, there were four H-2A approved employers in Alaska, with a total of 58 H-2A visa workers. The Alaska Job Center Network staff work with individuals from many ethnic backgrounds and are able to assist job seekers and workers who need language support, including MSFWs.

Based on discussions with job center staff and employers, most farm work is done by farm owners/operators, with additional work done by employees during planting and harvest for short, two-

week time periods. Temporary seasonal workers often reside in an area they can travel to and from on a daily basis. The English-speaking, seasonal white workers are often local high school or college students.

The forest management industry workers, including planners and silviculturists, loggers, equipment operators, and mill workers, are primarily Caucasian with five to ten percent Alaska Native. Dockworkers who load timber export vessels are predominantly Alaska Native. Tree thinners and planters are almost exclusively migrant workers from Mexico and Central American countries, with the exception of Interior Alaska, where local labor participates in reforestation (planting) activities. These workers are critical to the long-term success of the Alaska timber industry for long-term stand productivity, as the economically harvestable productive old growth stands have been depleted and the industry transitions to young growth wood products. In the past three years, Alaska has received no H-2A cases for forestry workers.

4. OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

The local offices outreach activities must be designed to meet the needs of MSFWs in the State and to locate and contact MSFWs who are not being reached through normal intake activities. Describe the State agency's proposed strategies for:

Sections A, B, C, D, and E below provide DOLWD's strategies under each heading.

A. CONTACTING FARMWORKERS WHO ARE NOT BEING REACHED BY THE NORMAL INTAKE ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED BY THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE OFFICES

Alaska is a non-significant state, with a part-time State Monitor Advocate (SMA), as approved by USDOL Employment & Training Administration Region 6. Per Training and Employment Notice No. 10-23, the SMAs are not outreach staff; therefore, SMAs cannot fulfill the state's responsibility to provide outreach staff under § 653.107(a). Job center employment service staff are utilized to conduct MSFW outreach. When hiring for a MSFW Outreach position, the state emphasizes hiring qualified candidates who speak the language of a significant proportion of the state MSFW population, who are from MSFW backgrounds, or who have substantial work experience in farmworker activities.

MSFW outreach is conducted on an ongoing basis. Outreach efforts occur at the farms and in traditional community settings such as housing facilities, faith-based organizations, health departments and restaurants, community centers, or other areas where MSFWs may congregate.

The farmworkers are contacted at their living, gathering, or other assembly areas by outreach workers. An explanation of workforce services available to MSFWs, their rights, including the availability of referrals to agricultural and nonagricultural employment, training, and supportive services, and other job development services are provided in their native language. MSFWs are also provided information about other area organizations available to serve them.

The MSFW Program will continue to establish working relationships with local, regional, and statewide agencies to disseminate information regarding the job services provided to MSFWs. Outreach workers are also encouraged to propose new ideas for effective outreach.

B. PROVIDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO OUTREACH STAFF. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE MUST INCLUDE TRAININGS, CONFERENCES, ADDITIONAL RESOURCES, AND INCREASED COLLABORATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS ON TOPICS SUCH AS ONE-STOP CENTER SERVICES (I.E. AVAILABILITY OF REFERRALS TO TRAINING, SUPPORTIVE SERVICES, AND CAREER SERVICES, AS WELL AS SPECIFIC EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES), THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE AND EMPLOYMENT-

RELATED LAW COMPLAINT SYSTEM (“COMPLAINT SYSTEM” DESCRIBED AT 20 CFR 658 SUBPART E), INFORMATION ON THE OTHER ORGANIZATIONS SERVING MSFWs IN THE AREA, AND A BASIC SUMMARY OF FARMWORKER RIGHTS, INCLUDING THEIR RIGHTS WITH RESPECT TO THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT.

The SMA provides training for outreach workers on topics inherent to the MSFW program, such as: Federal Guidelines and Regulations, Migrant Immigration of Compliance Reports, Outreach Worker Roles and Responsibilities, MSFW Effective Outreach, and Best Practices. These trainings provide an opportunity for Outreach Workers to better understand the challenges and opportunities that may arise when serving MSFWs.

The SMA also trains Employment Services staff on the complaint system, identification and understanding of why MSFWs are afforded special rights under the Judge Richey court order, and how to work with customers whose first language is not English, to ensure that equivalent and proportional services are offered to both MSFW and non-MSFW workers under Wagner-Peyser. The SMA receives guidance and support from the National Monitor Advocate Region 6 Coordinator in addition to guidance from SMAs in other states.

C. INCREASING OUTREACH WORKER TRAINING AND AWARENESS ACROSS CORE PROGRAMS INCLUDING THE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) PROGRAM AND THE TRAINING ON IDENTIFICATION OF UI ELIGIBILITY ISSUES

One-Stop academies are conducted annually to create awareness of core employment and training programs, including unemployment insurance, for One-Stop staff and partners.

D. PROVIDING STATE MERIT STAFF OUTREACH WORKERS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES TO ENSURE THEY ARE ABLE TO PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY SERVICES TO BOTH JOBSEEKERS AND EMPLOYERS

Alaska DOLWD provides professional development opportunities to employment service merit outreach staff upon hire and throughout their tenure to ensure high quality services are provided to job seekers and employers.

Outreach Workers are trained in job center services and programs along with specialty trainings designed to help them in their specific jobs. Outreach staff also participate in training offered to all job center staff. The range of training includes:

- IntraLearn New Hire Modules
- Alaska Foundations of Workforce Professional Certification (Dynamic Institute)
- Apprenticeship Foundation Training (if applicable)
- De-escalation & Workplace Violence
- Disability Resource Coordinator I
- National Veterans Training Institute (NVTI): Day in the Life of Jobs for Veterans State Grant Staff in an American Job Center
- State of Alaska, Respectful Workplace
- State of Alaska, Valuing Diversity

- Business Connection/Employer Services
- Career Ready 101/WorkKeys® Curriculum
- Career Support and Training Services
- Employment After Incarceration
- Interviewing for Employment
- Introduction to Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)
- Resume Writing
- Re-employment & Eligibility Assessment Interview
- Seafood Orientation
- TABE Testing Observation
- Veteran Services
- Workplace Alaska
- WorkKeys® Testing

E. COORDINATING OUTREACH EFFORTS WITH NFJP GRANTEES AS WELL AS WITH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COMMUNITY SERVICE AGENCIES AND MSFW GROUPS

Alaska does not have any National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantees, although public and private community service agencies and groups have been identified for coordination of services with employment services staff located in the region where there is MSFW activity. However, due to the small MSFW population, most of these organizations assist individuals interested in farming with business guidance and marketing support, rather than providing assistance to farmworkers, either migrant or non-migrant.

5. SERVICES PROVIDED TO FARMWORKERS AND AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS THROUGH THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM

Describe the State agency's proposed strategies for:

A. PROVIDING THE FULL RANGE OF EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICES TO THE AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY, BOTH FARMWORKERS AND AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS, THROUGH THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM. THIS INCLUDES:

I. HOW CAREER AND TRAINING SERVICES REQUIRED UNDER WIOA TITLE I WILL BE PROVIDED TO MSFWs THROUGH THE ONE-STOP CENTERS

II. HOW THE STATE SERVES AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS AND HOW IT INTENDS TO IMPROVE SUCH SERVICES

(i) How career and training services required under WIOA Title I will be provided to MSFWs through the one-stop centers.

Alaska adheres to the principles of the Judge Richey court order, which states that services to MSFWs should be equitable and proportionate to those received by non-MSFWs. Alaska acknowledges and

prioritizes services to target populations. With the goals of enhancing and improving opportunities for all Alaskans for high skill, high wage jobs and careers by promoting the dignity of work and the value of employment, a full range of employment and training services are provided to both MSFW and non-MSFW workers to define a clear route to meet career objectives and/or to obtain employment. Initial career services are provided to job seekers by job center resource room staff. Additional training and support through WIOA Title I-B programs are provided by Career Support and Training Services staff, who work with participants to develop comprehensive individual employment plans that identify goals and associated training and support service needs. Additionally, individuals who are English Language Learners and need basic skill development to obtain a high school equivalency diploma (through GED® testing) or employment, are referred to and assisted by WIOA Title II Alaska Adult Education. These programs ensure workers receive the individualized support needed to identify career pathways leading to high-demand occupations that pay family-sustaining wages.

(ii) How the State serves agricultural employers and how it intends to improve such services.

The job center Business Connection staff assist agricultural employers to find qualified applicants to meet their unique business needs. To ensure quality job seeker referrals, trained Business Connection staff work one on one with employers to understand the worker skill requirements, process job orders, and match applications from local, state, and national labor pools. Customized recruitment and hiring events conducted at job centers ensure a professional atmosphere for employers. To streamline H-2A housing inspections and better serve H-2A employers in Alaska, tech unit and job center staff in Anchorage have been trained to conduct housing inspections, which lessens the need for the Foreign Labor Certification coordinator, located in Juneau, to travel to H-2A employers in the Anchorage area.

B. MARKETING THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE COMPLAINT SYSTEM TO FARMWORKERS AND OTHER FARMWORKER ADVOCACY GROUPS

Each Alaska Job Center has a prominently displayed poster outlining the complaint system. All job center staff are trained in handling both employment service and employment law-related complaints to ensure workers have a safe, non-discriminatory work environment required under federal and state regulations as well as complaint provisions of WIOA Section 188.

Training includes the special provisions for MSFWs, including additional time for information requests, handling employment law-related complaints, and the potential involvement of the SMA in complaint resolutions. The job center manager provides oversight, and the system is under the purview of the Complaint System Coordinator. Additional marketing may be conducted through the DOLWD's social media venues, including Facebook posts and Twitter.

C. MARKETING THE AGRICULTURAL RECRUITMENT SYSTEM FOR U.S. WORKERS (ARS) TO AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS AND HOW IT INTENDS TO IMPROVE SUCH PUBLICITY.

Due to the geographical separation between Alaska and the nearest state, Washington, the Agriculture Recruitment System is of limited value to agricultural employers. However, employment service staff explain and offer businesses the opportunity to place job orders in the National Labor Exchange. U.S. DOL lists H-2A and H-2B job orders on <https://seasonaljobs.dol.gov/>.

6. OTHER REQUIREMENTS

A. COLLABORATION

Describe any collaborative agreements the state workforce agency (SWA) has with other MSFW service providers including NFJP grantees and other service providers. Describe how the SWA intends to build upon/increase collaboration with existing partners and in establishing new partners over the next four years (including any approximate timelines for establishing agreements or building upon existing agreements).

The state-appointed part-time SMA works with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Alaska Department of Natural Resources, and the DOLWD Research & Analysis Section to identify MSFWs and provide services to them. DOLWD also works with those agencies to capture data on agricultural employees and MSFWs in the state. The SMA will continue outreach to the 13 Alaska Job Centers to obtain information on employers and MSFWs to expand knowledge of this population to better serve them with outreach and Wagner-Peyser services.

This knowledge will lead to development of career pathways in agriculture and aquaculture, especially for target populations. Expanding business opportunities in the state will enhance Alaska's food security and promote multiple pathways for statewide economic stability and job growth.

B. REVIEW AND PUBLIC COMMENT

In developing the AOP, the SWA must solicit information and suggestions from NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other interested organizations. In addition, at least 45 calendar days before submitting its final AOP, the SWA must provide a proposed plan to NFJP grantees, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other organizations expressing an interest and allow at least 30 days for review and comment. The SWA must: 1) Consider any comments received in formulating its final proposed AOP; 2) Inform all commenting parties in writing whether their comments have been incorporated and, if not, the reasons therefore; and 3) Transmit the comments and recommendations received and its responses with the submission of the AOP.

The AOP must include a statement confirming NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations and other interested employer organizations have been given an opportunity to comment on the AOP. Include the list of organizations from which information and suggestions were solicited, any comments received, and responses to those comments.

Alaska does not have any participants in the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP). In addition to the statewide outreach for public comment on the state plan as a whole, the draft Alaska AOP was sent to the following groups representing appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other interested organizations on January 15, 2024, with comments accepted for 30 days.

Agriculture

- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Field Service Local Office
- Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Agriculture
- Matanuska Experimental Farm
- USDA Farm Service Agency

Aquaculture

- Aquaculture Section/Commercial Fisheries Division/Alaska Fish and Game (ADFG)
- Department of Natural Resources, Aquatic Farm Program
- Department of Environmental Conservation Seafood Program
- Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation
- Alaska Sea Grant
- Alaska Shellfish Growers Association

Forestry

- Alaska Division of Forestry
- U.S. Forest Service, Northern Southeast Alaska Region
- U.S. Forest Service, Southern Southeast Alaska Region

Other vested organizations

- Alaska Institute for Justice
- Alaska Legal Services

C. DATA ASSESSMENT

Review the previous four years Wagner-Peyser data reports on performance. Note whether the State has been meeting its goals to provide MSFWs quantitatively proportionate services as compared to non-MSFWs. If it has not met these goals, explain why the State believes such goals were not met and how the State intends to improve its provision of services in order to meet such goals.

Alaska has an accurate MSFW count, and since at least 2019, Alaska has met or exceeded federal compliance goals to provide both quantitative and equivalent services to MSFWs in proportion to non-MSFWs.

D. ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

The plan must include an explanation of what was achieved based on the previous AOP, what was not achieved and an explanation as to why the State believes the goals were not achieved, and how the State intends to remedy the gaps of achievement in the coming year.

Alaska met the expectations listed in the previous AOP, including increasing awareness of the agriculture, aquaculture, and timber industries and redefining the labor exchange profile to accurately identify MSFWs. The state developed training for staff on both working with English Language Learners and the Employment Service Complaint System, which included information on identifying MSFWs.

E. STATE MONITOR ADVOCATE

The plan must contain a statement confirming the State Monitor Advocate has reviewed and approved the AOP.

The State Monitor Advocate reviewed and approved the AOP.

WAGNER-PEYSER ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include assurances that:	Included?
1. The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service is co-located with one-stop centers or a plan and timeline has been developed to comply with this requirement within a reasonable amount of time (sec 121(e)(3));	Yes
2. If the State has significant MSFW one-stop centers, the State agency is complying with the requirements under 20 CFR 653.111, State Workforce Agency staffing requirements;	Yes
3. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser Act services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I; and	Yes
4. SWA officials: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Initiate the discontinuation of services; 2) Make the determination that services need to be discontinued; 3) Make the determination to reinstate services after the services have been discontinued; 4) Approve corrective action plans; 5) Approve the removal of an employer’s clearance orders from interstate or intrastate clearance if the employer was granted conditional access to ARS and did not come into compliance within 5 calendar days; 6) Enter into agreements with State and Federal enforcement agencies for enforcement-agency staff to conduct field checks on the SWAs’ behalf (if the SWA so chooses); and 7) Decide whether to consent to the withdrawal of complaints if a party who requested a hearing wishes to withdraw its request for hearing in writing before the hearing. 	Yes
5. The SWA has established and maintains a self-appraisal system for ES operations to determine success in reaching goals and to correct deficiencies in performance (20 CFR 658.601).	Yes

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAMS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a description of the following as it pertains to adult education and literacy programs and activities under title II of WIOA, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA).

A. ALIGNING OF CONTENT STANDARDS

Describe how the eligible agency has aligned its content standards for adult education with State-adopted challenging academic content standards, as adopted under section 1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (20 U.S.C. 6311(b)(1)).

The Alaska Adult Education (AAE) Program has adopted and implemented national College and Career Readiness (CCR) standards designed for WIOA Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy. Alaska adopted and disseminated these standards following the 2016 adoption by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education.

After a review of the national CCR standards to ensure alignment with Alaska's K-12 standards, the AAE Office determined the National CCR standards provide benchmark alignment with the standards and standardized academic content that do not meet the needs of Alaska students. The AAE Office contracted with the American Institute for Research (AIR) to write state-specific standards that better align with Alaska's K-12 standards and focus on advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging within our students' unique cultural diversity.

In fall 2022, the AAE Office, adult educators, and the AIR team began working on a five-year project to update the Alaska Adult Education State Standards. The Alaska Adult Education Content Standards for English/Language Arts, Mathematics, and Digital Literacy were finalized and implemented spring 2023. The AAE Office and professional development staff at AIR held a statewide training event in fall 2023. From Program Year 2023-2025, the following content standards will be implemented: Alaska Adult Education English Language Proficiency Standards, Science, Social Studies, and Citizenship Content Based Standards. Development and delivery of implementation training will follow each standard completion. At the conclusion of the five-year project, a statewide summit on best practices in standards implementation will take place.

Since the implementation of distance education in program year (PY) 2021, Alaska continues to allow adult education programs to target skills for the necessary alignment of Alaska Adult Education State Standards to synchronous and asynchronous learning activities. The ever-changing landscape of instructional methodology that has evolved since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the importance of interactions with students in distance learning environments. Programs will continue to be trained in effective implementation of Alaska Adult Education State Standards as related to distance education.

B. LOCAL ACTIVITIES

Describe how the eligible agency will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA and in accordance with 34 CFR 463 subpart C, fund each eligible provider to establish or operate programs that provide any of the following adult education and literacy activities identified in section 203 of WIOA, including programs that provide such activities concurrently. The Unified or Combined State Plan must include at a minimum the scope, content, and organization of these local activities.

ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY ACTIVITIES (SECTION 203 OF WIOA)

- Adult education;
- Literacy;
- Workplace adult education and literacy activities;
- Family literacy activities;
- English language acquisition activities;
- Integrated English literacy and civics education;
- Workforce preparation activities; or
- Integrated education and training that—
 1. Provides adult education and literacy activities, concurrently and contextually with both, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster, and
 2. Is for the purpose of educational and career advancement.

Special Rule. Each eligible agency awarding a grant or contract under this section shall not use any funds made available under this title for adult education and literacy activities for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are under the age of 16 and are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law, except that such agency may use such funds for such purpose if such programs, services, or activities are related to family literacy activities. In providing family literacy activities under this title, an eligible provider shall attempt to coordinate with programs and services that are not assisted under this title prior to using funds for adult education and literacy activities under this title for activities other than activities for eligible individuals.

The Alaska Adult Education (AAE) program is a statewide instructional program that provides formal education for adults over the age of sixteen (16) seeking to enhance their postsecondary education skills to transition into employment. The AAE Program has been an institution in Alaska for over 45 years. Housed within the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD), Division of Employment and Training Services (DETS), the AAE office provides grant management for Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) funds. The AAE Office is responsible for the administration and programmatic oversight of AEFLA funding distribution to eligible providers to offer adult education and literacy activities that fall within the scope of services required under state and federal regulations, policies, and laws. Due to limited funding, AAE programs rely heavily on partnerships and obtaining smaller grants that support the local adult education programs to successfully provide students with the educational advantages they need.

The mission of the AAE Program is to provide adult learners the skills needed to prepare them for employment, vocational training, or postsecondary education to assist:

- adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skill necessary for employment and economic self-sufficiency;

- adults who are parents or family members to obtain the education and skills necessary to become full partners in the educational development of their children and lead to sustainable improvements in economic opportunities for their family;
- adults in attaining a secondary school diploma and in the transition to postsecondary education and training including career pathways; or
- immigrants and other individuals who are English language learners in improving their English reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension skills, mathematics skills, and acquiring an understanding of the American system of government, individual freedom, and the responsibilities of citizenship.

In PY2021, Alaska awarded new competitive, four-year AEFLA grants to fourteen eligible adult education providers. The AAE office ensures, through the RGA process, regional adult education programs, Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) grant, and Department of Corrections (DOC) programs are represented throughout the geographic regions of Alaska.

For the next statewide RGA, Alaska will award providers a multi-year grant beginning in July 2025 contingent upon the local provider’s ability to successfully implement the terms of the grant, meet performance expectations, and provide regional adult education and literacy activities. All grant awards are subject to availability of funds from the federal government and legislative appropriation.

Eligible Providers

An applicant for AEFLA funding must be considered an eligible provider to be a recipient of adult education funds. According to federal definition, an “eligible provider” is an organization that has demonstrated effectiveness in providing adult education and literacy activities. Eligible providers may include, but are not limited to:

- local educational agency;
- community-based organization or faith-based organization;
- volunteer literacy organization;
- institution of higher education;
- public or private nonprofit agency;
- library;
- public housing authority;
- nonprofit institution that is not described in any of paragraphs (a) through (g) of this section and can provide adult education and literacy activities to eligible individuals;
- consortium or coalition of the agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries, or authorities described in any of paragraphs (a) through (h) of this section; and
- partnership between an employer and an entity described in any of paragraphs (a) through (i) of this section. (WIOA, Title II, Section 203[5]; 34 CFR 463.23)

Request for Grant Application (RGA) Process

The request for grant application (RGA) process establishes a mechanism for the AAE office to determine suitable eligible providers of grant funds based on federal and state mandates and policies. DOLWD awards multi-year federal and state grant funding to regional eligible providers to support the delivery of adult education activities. The AAE Office ensures that the RGA is completed in accordance with 34 CFR section 463 subpart C.

In accordance with WIOA section 231(e), the AAE Office issues one RGA for all Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) funded grants. Adult Education AEFLA funds will be awarded based on a competitive application process. The final award for each grant will be approved by the Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

The Commissioner reserves the right to revoke a Notice of Intent to Award if the decision was made based on inaccurate information provided in the application. A grant applicant that receives a Notice of Denial of Award may file a written request for reconsideration as outlined in the Alaska Division of Employment and Training Services policy Grant Award and Appeal Policy 07-507.

Direct and Equitable Access

The AAE office ensures direct and equitable access to AEFLA funds, in accordance with WIOA 231(c), by continuing to conduct a competitive process that provides nondiscriminatory access. Grant publications are made available to a broad range of potential applications through expansion of outreach. The AAE office utilizes traditional and non-traditional publications, such as websites, public notices, and email blasts to inform current and potential eligible providers of the process. Technical assistance is provided to assist the grant applicants during the process. Frequently asked questions are compiled and posted on the AAE website. Organizations not previously funded are given a fair and equitable opportunity to apply for funding without hindrance.

Demonstrated Effectiveness

An applicant must be able to demonstrate past effectiveness by providing performance data on their record of improving the skills of eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy, in the content domains of:

- reading;
- writing;
- mathematics; and
- English as a second language (ESL) instruction.

An eligible provider must also submit information regarding the outcomes for participants related to:

- Employment;
- attainment of secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent; and
- transition to postsecondary education and training.

Past Effectiveness

An eligible provider must be able to demonstrate past effectiveness by providing the last two years of performance data on their record of improving literacy of eligible individuals to meet state-adjusted

levels of performance for the primary indicators of performance, particularly eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy.

Local Board Review Process

The Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) functions as the local workforce investment board in the state of Alaska. As part of the State of Alaska's WIOA Combined Plan, AAE programs will conduct a needs assessment to determine local and regional needs. In accordance with WIOA requirements, the AWIB will review and score the Regional Needs Assessment and Regional Labor market Analysis for alignment with the Combined Plan.

Upon receipt of the applications, the AAE Office will compile and submit the afore mentioned sections to the reviewer designated by the AWIB. The AWIB will provide comments and recommendations to the AAE office on how the application aligns with the Alaska' WIOA Combined Plan. The comments and recommendations provided by the AWIB will be attached to the application and provided to the review panel for final review and consideration of the extent to which the application addresses the Regional Needs Assessment and Labor Market Analysis. The panel will integrate any comments made by the AWIB into the final rubric of the grant and provided to the applicant.

Parts of the Application

The AAE Office has structured its application process to ensure local providers meet the needs established in their regions and operate programs that provide adult education and family literacy activities as identified in WIOA Section 203. The Alaska Adult Education Program uses WIOA Section 231, 225, and State Match Funding to fund the following activities:

- Adult education;
- Literacy;
- Workplace adult education and literacy activities;
- Family literacy activities;
- English language acquisition activities;
- Integrated English literacy and civics education;
- Workforce preparation activities; and
- Integrated education and training

In addition to regional and basic information, the AAE RGA requires regional program applicants to describe their intended scope of work related to adult education and literacy activities and how they will meet the needs of their students. Applicants are required to submit their location and regional outreach plan, proposed budget, agency policies and programmatic information related to grant management. Applicants are also required to outline their capacity for instituting the thirteen considerations identified in Section 231(e) and other expectations as mandated in state and federal statute and regulation. Substantial consideration is given to programs who integrate the following into their application:

- Innovation in adult education practices or supportive activities that facilitate knowledge and skill development, secondary credential attainment, postsecondary credential attainment, and/or employment.
- Ability to describe intention to provide concurrent and contextual integrated education and training (IET). The service approach must detail the requirements and definitions set forth in 34 CFR § 463.37 and outline the overlap in services between adult education and literacy activities, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training.
- As part of the grant application process, the Alaska RGA outlines the thirteen (13) considerations specified in WIOA 231(e). The grant applicants must respond in detail how they will carry out each of the considerations in their respective programs throughout the grant period.
- Among the thirteen (13) considerations, programs must describe their ability to incorporate effective use of technology and distance education learning. Technology is not limited to the classroom, and distance learning can facilitate an interaction between the teacher and student that helps to eliminate barriers the student may be facing. Programs must have the ability to provide synchronous and asynchronous program delivery throughout the grant period.

Eligible providers are mandated to describe their curriculum and instructional materials in their RGA. Curricula must align with current state-adopted Alaska Adult Education State Standards.

Once grant applications are submitted, they will be evaluated and scored by external reviewers using a rubric that aligns with the thirteen (13) considerations required in WIOA Section 231(e). The AAE Office will use the scores and feedback, along with the feedback received from the AWIB, to determine final funding decisions.

Local Administrative Costs

Not more than five percent of a local grant to an eligible provider can be expended to administer a grant under Title II of WIOA. In cases where five percent is too restrictive to allow for administrative activities, the eligible provider must negotiate with the AAE office to determine an adequate level of funds to be used for non-instructional purposes (WIOA Section 233).

An eligible provider may consider costs incurred in connection with the following activities to be administrative costs:

- Planning: including budgeting; writing grant applications; clerical and/or bookkeeping work;
- Administration: including carrying out performance accountability requirements, salary related to data entry and rent/utilities where administrative staff are located;
- Professional development: including program coordinators, teachers, data entry staff, tutors, etc.;
- Providing adult education and literacy services in alignment with local workforce plans, including promoting co-enrollment in programs and activities under title I, as appropriate; and
- Carrying out the One-Stop partner responsibilities described in 20CFR§678.420, including contributing to the infrastructure costs of the One-Stop delivery system. 34CFR §463.26.

Programs negotiated administrative rates must be reasonable, necessary, allowable, and allocable.

Annual grant applications are required for subsequent funding, and renewals are contingent on the grantee's ability to successfully implement the terms and conditions of the grant, meet performance expectations, and provide quality regional adult education and literacy activities. Each grantee is required to submit a one-year renewal application at the start of the fiscal year. Grantees must revise program and contact information, projected budget narrative, job descriptions for all positions funded under the grant, and program income rationale, if applicable. The renewal application also requires programs to outline steps taken to ensure equal access to education compliance with the principles of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA). Finally, grantees are mandated to inform the AAE office of any proposed change in service or negotiated administrative limitations, and they must re-sign program assurances and grant terms and conditions.

Alaska Adult Education Activities (Section 203)

Eligible providers receiving state and/or federal funding for the delivery of AEFLA activities are required to provide the following, as mandated by the State of Alaska Adult Education Program Office: adult education and literacy activities, English language acquisition activities, and workplace adult education and literacy. Providers may deliver the following optional services throughout the grant period: family literacy activities, integrated English literacy and civics education, workforce preparation activities, and integrated education and training. Eligible providers receiving WIOA Title II state and/or federal funding must follow the Alaska Adult Education Assessment & Technical Assistance Manual with outlined policies related to enrollment, assessment, instruction, professional development, test taking, programmatic responsibility, and other policies as incorporated.

Alaska recognizes the ever-present need for digital literacy skills within adult learning programs. In PY2022, the state began requiring eligible providers to institute digital literacy activities to enable adult learners to succeed in workforce and academic settings. Alaska adult education providers integrate technology into instruction, including utilizing information and communication to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information digitally. Programs must use the Alaska Adult Education State Standards to increase students' access to technology and, where applicable, leverage technology for innovative and personalized instruction and increasing access to internet and devices for students and families.

AAE regional programs will be awarded according to their capacity to conduct adult education and literacy activities defined as:

- Adult education as defined in Alaska as academic instruction below postsecondary education to assist adults in obtaining skills needed, including reading, writing, math, English language proficiency, and problem-solving, for the attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, obtaining economic self-sufficiency employment, and/or transition to postsecondary education or training.
- Literacy as defined in Alaska as an individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English, compute, and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job, in the family of the individual, and in society.
- Workplace adult education and literacy activities as defined in Alaska as adult education and literacy activities offered by an eligible provider in collaboration with an employer or employee organization at a workplace or an off-site location that is designed to improve the productivity of the workforce.

- Family literacy activities as defined in Alaska as activities of sufficient intensity and quality to make sustainable improvements in the economic prospects for a family and that better enable parents or family members to support their children’s learning needs, and that integrate all of the following activities:
 - parent or family adult education and literacy activities that lead to readiness for postsecondary education or training, career advancement, and economic self-sufficiency;
 - interactive literacy activities between parents or family members and their children;
 - training for parents or family members regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children; and
 - an age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences.
 - Note: family literacy activities may be offered with approval by the AAE Office.
- English language acquisition as defined in Alaska as the process by which English learners and immigrant students attain English proficiency and achieve academic success. English language acquisition activities may vary depending on population served.
- Integrated English literacy and civics education (IELCE) as defined in Alaska as education services provided to English language learners under Title II section 231 of WIOA who are adults, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries, that enable such adults to achieve competency in the English language and acquire the basic and more advanced skills needed to function effectively as parents, workers, and citizens in the United States. Such services shall include instruction in literacy and English language acquisition, instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation and may include workforce training.
- Workforce preparation activities as defined in Alaska as activities, programs, or services designed to help an individual acquire a combination of basic academic skills, critical-thinking skills, digital literacy skills, and self-management skills, including competencies in utilizing resources, using information, working with others, understanding systems, and obtaining skills necessary for successful transition into and completion of postsecondary education or training, or employment.
- Integrated education and training (IET) as defined in Alaska as a service approach that provides adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster for the purpose of educational and career advancement. The IET must include adult education and literacy activities, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster.
- Digital Literacy (state imposed) as defined in Alaska as the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills.

Special Funding Rule

The AAE office will not award grant funding for adult education and literacy activities for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are under the age of sixteen and are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under state law. Programs may use AEFLA funds for individuals under the age of sixteen if providing programs, services, or activities related to family literacy activities. In providing family literacy activities under this title, the AAE office shall attempt to coordinate with programs and services that are not assisted under this title prior to using funds for adult education and literacy activities under this title for activities other than activities for eligible individuals.

C. CORRECTIONS EDUCATION AND OTHER EDUCATION OF INSTITUTIONALIZED INDIVIDUALS

Describe how the eligible agency will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA and in accordance with 34 CFR 463 subpart C, fund eligible providers to establish or operate programs that provide any of the following correctional educational programs identified in section 225 of WIOA:

- Adult education and literacy activities;
- Special education, as determined by the eligible agency;
- Secondary school credit;
- Integrated education and training;
- Career pathways;
- Concurrent enrollment;
- Peer tutoring; and
- Transition to re-entry initiatives and other post release services with the goal of reducing recidivism.

Each eligible agency using funds provided under Programs for Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Individuals to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution must give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within 5 years of participation in the program.

Using the criteria outlined in the Request for Grant Application (RGA) process above, Alaska Adult Education (AAE) will award Section 225 grant funds for correctional education and other institutionalized individuals. A competitive, multi-year grant cycle is required, and eligible providers will be subject to the same considerations as adult education regional grants.

In PY2021, Alaska awarded a new competitive, four-year AEFLA grant to a statewide correctional education eligible provider. The AAE office ensures, through the RGA process, that correctional education programs are represented throughout the geographic regions of Alaska.

For the next statewide RGA, Alaska will award a statewide multi-year grant beginning in July 2025 contingent upon the local provider's ability to successfully implement the terms of the grant, meet performance expectations, and provide adult education and literacy activities. Grant awards are subject to availability of funds from the federal government and legislative appropriation. Eligible providers

who demonstrate effectiveness in providing adult education and literacy activities may apply for WIOA Section 225 funding to provide correctional education activities.

Request for Grant Application (RGA) Process

The request for grant application (RGA) process establishes a mechanism for the AAE office to determine suitable eligible providers of grant funds based on federal and state mandates and policies. DOLWD awards multi-year federal and state grant funding to regional eligible providers to support the delivery of adult education activities. The AAE Office ensures that the RGA is completed in accordance with 34 CFR section 463 subpart C.

Alaska issues one RGA for all Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) funded grants, which will serve AAE students in Alaska Correctional Centers. No more than 20 percent of the 82.5 percent of the federal grant allotted is awarded statewide to service correctional education and institutionalized individuals. Historically, due to limited funding, the Alaska Department of Corrections (DOC) has partnered with AAE to offer educational services in all fourteen state correctional facilities.

The Commissioner reserves the right to revoke a Notice of Intent to Award if the decision was made based on inaccurate information provided in the application. A grant applicant that receives a Notice of Denial of Award may file a written request for reconsideration as outlined in the Alaska Division of Employment and Training Services policy Grant Award and Appeal Policy 07-507.

Direct and Equitable Access

The AAE office ensures direct and equitable access to AEFLA funds, in accordance with WIOA 231(c), by continuing to conduct a competitive process that provides nondiscriminatory access. Grant publications are made available to a broad range of potential applications through expansion of outreach. The AAE office utilizes traditional and non-traditional publications, such as websites, public notices, and email blasts to inform current and potential eligible providers of the process. Technical assistance is provided to assist the grant applicants during the process. Frequently asked questions are compiled and posted on the AAE website. Organizations not previously funded are given a fair and equitable opportunity to apply for funding without hindrance.

Demonstrated Effectiveness

An applicant must be able to demonstrate past effectiveness by providing performance data on their record of improving the skills of eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy, in the content domains of:

- reading;
- writing;
- mathematics; and
- English as a second language (ESL) instruction.

An eligible provider must also submit information regarding the outcomes for participants related to:

- Employment;
- attainment of secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent; and
- transition to postsecondary education and training.

Past Effectiveness

An eligible provider must be able to demonstrate past effectiveness by providing the last two years of performance data on their record of improving literacy of eligible individuals to meet state-adjusted levels of performance for the primary indicators of performance, particularly eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy.

Local Board Review Process

The Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) functions as the local workforce investment board in the state of Alaska. As part of the State of Alaska's WIOA Combined Plan, AAE programs will conduct a needs assessment to determine local and regional needs. In accordance with WIOA requirements, the AWIB will review and score the Regional Needs Assessment and Regional Labor market Analysis for alignment with the Combined Plan.

Upon receipt of the applications, the AAE Office will compile and submit the afore mentioned sections to the reviewer designated by the AWIB. The AWIB will provide comments and recommendations to the AAE office on how the application aligns with the Alaska' WIOA Combined Plan. The comments and recommendations provided by the AWIB will be attached to the application and provided to the review panel for final review and consideration of the extent to which the application addresses the Regional Needs Assessment and Labor Market Analysis. The panel will integrate any comments made by the AWIB into the final rubric of the grant and provided to the applicant.

Parts of the Application

The corrections narrative will focus on how adult education and literacy activities will be delivered throughout an integrated correctional system or within Alaska correctional institutions. The term correctional institution refers to prison; jail; reformatory; work farm; detention center; halfway house, community-based rehabilitation center; or any other similar institution designed for the confinement or rehabilitation of criminal offenders.

Alaska Adult Education Correctional Grantees may use allowable funding under Section 225 to provide the following academic programs in correctional and other institutions:

- Adult education and literacy activities;
- Special education, as determined by the eligible agency;
- Secondary school credit;
- Integrated education and training;
- Career pathways;
- Concurrent enrollment;
- Peer tutoring; and
- Transition to re-entry initiatives and other post-release-services with the goal of reducing recidivism.

In addition to regional and basic information, the AAE RGA requires correctional program applicants to describe their intended scope of work related to adult education and literacy activities and how they will meet the needs of their students. Applicants are required to submit their location and regional

outreach plan, proposed budget, agency policies, and programmatic information related to grant management. Applicants are also required to outline their capacity for instituting the thirteen considerations identified in Section 231(e) and other expectations as mandated in state and federal statute and regulation. Substantial consideration is given to programs who integrate the following into their application:

- Innovation in adult education practices or supportive activities that facilitate knowledge and skill development, secondary credential attainment, postsecondary credential attainment, and/or employment.
- Ability to describe intention to provide concurrent and contextual integrated education and training (IET). The service approach must detail the requirements and definitions set forth in 34 CFR § 463.37 and outline the overlap in services between adult education and literacy activities, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training.

As part of the grant application process, the Alaska RGA outlines the thirteen (13) considerations specified in WIOA 231(e). The grant applicants must respond in detail how they will carry out each of the considerations in their respective programs throughout the grant period.

Once grant applications are submitted, they will be evaluated and scored by external reviewers using a rubric that aligns with the thirteen (13) considerations required in WIOA Section 231(E). The AAE Office will use the scores and feedback, along with the feedback received from the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB), to determine final funding decisions.

Local Administrative Costs

Not more than five percent of a local grant to an eligible provider can be expended to administer a grant under Title II of WIOA. In cases where five percent is too restrictive to allow for administrative activities, the eligible provider must negotiate with the AAE office to determine an adequate level of funds to be used for non-instructional purposes (WIOA Section 233).

An eligible provider may consider costs incurred in connection with the following activities to be administrative costs:

- Planning: including budgeting; writing grant applications; clerical and/or bookkeeping work;
- Administration: including carrying out performance accountability requirements, salary related to data entry and rent/utilities where administrative staff are located;
- Professional development: including program coordinators, teachers, data entry staff, tutors, etc.;
- Providing adult education and literacy services in alignment with local workforce plans, including promoting co-enrollment in programs and activities under title I, as appropriate; and
- Carrying out the One-Stop partner responsibilities described in 20CFR§678.420, including contributing to the infrastructure costs of the One-Stop delivery system. 34CFR §463.26.

Programs negotiated administrative rates must be reasonable, necessary, allowable, and allocable.

Annual grant applications are required for subsequent funding, and renewals are contingent on the grantee's ability to successfully implement the terms and conditions of the grant, meet performance expectations, and provide quality regional adult education and literacy activities. Each grantee is required to submit a one-year renewal application at the start of the fiscal year. Grantees must revise

program and contact information, projected budget narrative, job descriptions for all positions funded under the grant, and program income rationale, if applicable. The renewal application also requires programs to outline steps taken to ensure equal access to education compliance with the principles of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA). Finally, grantees are mandated to inform the AAE office of any proposed change in service or negotiated administrative limitations, and they must re-sign program assurances and grant terms and conditions.

Priorities for AAE students in correctional centers are increasing the number of incarcerated adults completing the Tests of General Education Development (GED®) and increasing the number transitioning into postsecondary education and training provided in the various correctional centers. Non-AEFLA funded programs in the correctional centers address other academic programs listed below. In some cases, AAE teachers may concurrently teach basic reading, writing, math, and ESL to students participating in one of the other programs.

The funds shall be used for the cost of educational programs for criminal offenders in correctional institutions, and for other institutionalized individuals, including academic programs for adult education and literacy activities; special education, as determined by the eligible agency; secondary school credit, GED® testing preparation; integrated education and training (IET); career pathways; concurrent enrollment; peer tutoring; and transition to re-entry initiatives and other post release services with the goal of reducing recidivism.

Eligible providers receiving funding under WIOA Section 225 will give priority of service to individuals likely to leave a correctional institution within five years of participation in the program. Correctional and institutionalized individuals will be given an opportunity to develop adult education and literacy skills for successful integration into society upon their release.

In addition to reporting required by the Adult Education Office, the grantee receiving funding under this section to service correctional education and institutionalized individuals will prepare and submit an annual progress report. The annual report will consist of, but is not limited to, activities carried out under this section; rate of recidivism; enrollment information; educational gains, including high school equivalency outcomes; and employment outcomes.

D. INTEGRATED ENGLISH LITERACY AND CIVICS EDUCATION PROGRAM

Describe how the eligible agency will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA and in accordance with 34 CFR 463 subpart C, fund eligible providers to establish or operate Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) programs under section 243 of WIOA. Describe how adult English language learners, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries, are served in IELCE programs.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be offered in combination with integrated education and training activities found in 34 CFR section 463.36.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will include instruction in literacy and English language acquisition and instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to prepare adults who are English language learners for, and place such adults in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program.

According to the guidelines outlined in Section 243, Alaska's Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) program receives funding to prepare adults who are English language learners for employment and assist in the transition to unsubsidized employment in an in-demand occupation that will lead to economic self-sufficiency. One IECLE grant is funded to provide statewide support and activities related to Section 243. The Alaska Adult Education (AAE) program that receives IELCE funding is required to work with the local workforce development system to carry out the activities of the program. The grant application must clearly establish a detailed description of supports and services available for the integration of concurrent and contextual English language acquisition activities and civics education.

In PY2021, Alaska awarded a new competitive, four-year AEFLA grant to a statewide IELCE eligible provider. The AAE office ensures, through the RGA process, that the IELCE program is represented throughout the state of Alaska.

For the next statewide RGA, Alaska will award a statewide multi-year grant beginning in July 2025 contingent upon the local provider's ability to successfully implement the terms of the grant, meet performance expectations, and provide Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education. Grant awards are subject to availability of funds from the federal government and legislative appropriation. Eligible providers who demonstrate effectiveness in providing adult education and literacy activities may apply for WIOA Section 243 funding to provide Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education activities.

Request for Grant Application (RGA) Process

The request for grant application (RGA) process establishes a mechanism for the AAE office to determine suitable eligible providers of grant funds based on federal and state mandates and policies. DOLWD awards multi-year federal and state grant funding to regional eligible providers to support the delivery of adult education activities. The AAE Office ensures that the RGA is completed in accordance with 34 CFR section 463 subpart C.

In accordance with WIOA section 231(e), the AAE Office issues one RGA for all Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) funded grants, which will search IELCE students. IELCE grants are awarded federal WIOA Section 243 funding based on a competitive application process. The final award for each grant will be approved by the Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

The Commissioner reserves the right to revoke a Notice of Intent to Award if the decision was made based on inaccurate information provided in the application. A grant applicant that receives a Notice of Denial of Award may file a written request for reconsideration as outlined in the Alaska Division of Employment and Training Services policy Grant Award and Appeal Policy 07-507.

Direct and Equitable Access

The AAE office ensures direct and equitable access to AEFLA funds, in accordance with WIOA 231(c), by continuing to conduct a competitive process that provides nondiscriminatory access. Grant publications are made available to a broad range of potential applications through expansion of outreach. The AAE office utilizes traditional and non-traditional publications, such as websites, public notices, and email blasts to inform current and potential eligible providers of the process. Technical

assistance is provided to assist the grant applicants during the process. Frequently asked questions are compiled and posted on the AAE website. Organizations not previously funded are given a fair and equitable opportunity to apply for funding without hindrance.

Demonstrated Effectiveness

An applicant must be able to demonstrate past effectiveness by providing performance data on their record of improving the skills of eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy, in the content domains of:

- reading;
- writing;
- mathematics; and
- English as a second language (ESL) instruction.

An eligible provider must also submit information regarding the outcomes for participants related to:

- Employment;
- attainment of secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent; and
- transition to postsecondary education and training.

Past Effectiveness

An eligible provider must be able to demonstrate past effectiveness by providing the last two years of performance data on their record of improving literacy of eligible individuals to meet state-adjusted levels of performance for the primary indicators of performance, particularly eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy.

Local Board Review Process

The Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) functions as the local workforce investment board in the state of Alaska. As part of the State of Alaska's WIOA Combined Plan, AAE programs will conduct a needs assessment to determine local and regional needs. In accordance with WIOA requirements, the AWIB will review and score the Regional Needs Assessment and Regional Labor market Analysis for alignment with the Combined Plan.

Upon receipt of the applications, the AAE Office will compile and submit the afore mentioned sections to the reviewer designated by the AWIB. The AWIB will provide comments and recommendations to the AAE office on how the application aligns with the Alaska' WIOA Combined Plan. The comments and recommendations provided by the AWIB will be attached to the application and provided to the review panel for final review and consideration of the extent to which the application addresses the Regional Needs Assessment and Labor Market Analysis. The panel will integrate any comments made by the AWIB into the final rubric of the grant and provided to the applicant.

Parts of the Application

The IELCE program must provide education services to English language learners, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries, to enable them to achieve competency in the English language. Instruction is designed to assist with the acquisition of basic and

more advanced skills needed to function effectively as parents, workers, and citizens in the United States. Alaska requires instruction in literacy and English language acquisition, the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, civic participation, and workforce training.

The eligible provider receiving funds through the IELCE program must provide services that:

- Include instruction in literacy and English language acquisition and instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation; and
- Are designed to:
 - Prepare adults who are English language learners for, and place such adults in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency; and
 - Integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program.

Alaska issues one IELCE RGA for Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA)-funded grants. Eligible providers wishing to incorporate IELCE services must demonstrate an ability to deliver services to assist English language learners and immigrants:

- To become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and economic self-sufficiency;
- Who are parents or family members, to obtain the education and skills that are necessary to becoming full partners in the educational development of their children and lead to sustainable improvements in the economic opportunities for their family;
- In attaining a secondary school diploma or equivalent and in the transition to postsecondary education and training, including through career pathways;
- Improving their reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension skills in English and mathematics skills; and
- Acquiring an understanding of the American system of government, individual freedom, and the responsibilities of citizenship.

Eligible providers are also required to demonstrate the method by which they will incorporate integrated education and training activities.

As part of the grant application process, the Alaska RGA outlines the thirteen (13) considerations specified in WIOA 231(e). The grant applicants must respond in detail how they will carry out each of the considerations in their respective programs throughout the grant period.

In addition to basic information, the AAE RGA requires IELCE program applicants to describe their intended scope of work related to adult education and literacy activities and how they will meet the needs of their students. Applicants are required to submit their outreach plan, proposed budget, agency policies, and programmatic information related to grant management. Applicants are also required to outline their capacity for instituting the thirteen (13) considerations identified in Section 231(e) and other expectations as mandated in state and federal statute and regulation. Eligible IELCE applicants are specifically asked to address how their program will integrate the following components into their programs:

- Workforce preparation activities and integrated education and training (IET) to prepare English language learners for, and place them in, unsubsidized employment in an in-demand occupation that will lead to economic self-sufficiency as described in 34 CFR section 463.36;
- Instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation; and
- Instruction in literacy and English language acquisition, which includes the use of the Alaska English Language Proficiency Standards.

Furthermore, substantial consideration is given to programs who integrate the following into their application:

- Innovation in adult education practices or supportive activities that facilitate knowledge and skill development, secondary credential attainment, postsecondary credential attainment, and/or employment.

As part of the Alaska workforce development system, and to meet the needs of ESL learners, the IELCE program is required to provide Integrated Education and Training (IET) courses concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training as outlined in 34 CFR Part 463 Subpart D. During the RGA process, eligible providers seeking IELCE funds must identify occupational clusters in Alaska and the potential for growth in these occupations. Utilization of these data and partnering with workforce development services will provide students career pathways and employability skills while building on their English proficiency. The IELCE program will work with the AJCN, employers, and apprenticeship programs to build curriculum to support English language learners. Additionally, eligible providers seeking and receiving IELCE funding will be required to provide general information regarding their program to the AAE office, keep the program information up to date, and submit it with the RGA and additional grant awards. Information must include the following:

- Courses offered, including objectives and schedule of when available;
- Attendance requirements and program income fee structure, if applicable;
- Description of the integration of the components of the IET program and partnerships created to build successful career pathways, including:
 - ESL activities,
 - Workforce preparation activities, and
 - Workforce training.
- Identified postsecondary education or credentialing opportunities available to participants, ways to access them, and organizations who administer them.

As part of the application process, the provider must provide examples of IET training in the local workforce development system. To meet the needs of the students, IELCE programs must provide opportunities for co-enrollment with an adult education program and local job center for workforce training.

Eligible providers are required to design a program that integrates with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out program activities. Co-enrollment in Alaska is designed for the student to receive services concurrently to build supportive services and wrap-around case management for the student's benefit. Partnering with the Alaska Job Center Network (AJCN),

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), and Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), for example, enables the IELCE program to develop stronger career advancement opportunities within the community. English language learners can access services such as career counseling, job placement, training opportunities, and apprenticeships. Teachers work with the AJCN to develop a plan for employment and economic stability.

As part of the application process, the IELCE applicant will illustrate the extent to which the local provider will align activities with partner agencies. Activities must demonstrate strategies for alignment with core partners, both local and statewide, to integrate with the workforce development system as carried out by the statewide AWIB and the activities of the Alaska Job Center Network (AJCN).

Once grant applications are submitted, they will be evaluated and scored by external reviewers using a rubric that aligns with the thirteen (13) considerations required in WIOA Section 231(e). The AAE Office will use the scores and feedback, along with the feedback received from the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB), to determine final funding decisions.

In addition to reporting required by the AAE Office, the grantee receiving funding under this section to service English language learners for employment and assist in the transition to unsubsidized employment in an in-demand occupation that will lead to economic self-sufficiency will prepare and submit an annual progress report, which consists of, but is not limited to, activities carried out under this section: enrollment information; educational gains, including high school equivalency outcomes; IET activities; and employment outcomes.

Local Administrative Costs

Not more than five percent of a local grant to an eligible provider can be expended to administer a grant under Title II of WIOA. In cases where five percent is too restrictive to allow for administrative activities, the eligible provider must negotiate with the AAE office to determine an adequate level of funds to be used for non-instructional purposes (WIOA Section 233).

An eligible provider may consider costs incurred in connection with the following activities to be administrative costs:

- Planning: including budgeting; writing grant applications; clerical and/or bookkeeping work;
- Administration: including carrying out performance accountability requirements, salary related to data entry and rent/utilities where administrative staff are located;
- Professional development: including program coordinators, teachers, data entry staff, tutors, etc.;
- Providing adult education and literacy services in alignment with local workforce plans, including promoting co-enrollment in programs and activities under title I, as appropriate; and
- Carrying out the One-Stop partner responsibilities described in 20CFR§678.420, including contributing to the infrastructure costs of the One-Stop delivery system. 34CFR §463.26.

Programs negotiated administrative rates must be reasonable, necessary, allowable, and allocable.

Annual grant applications are required for subsequent funding, and renewals are contingent on the grantee's ability to successfully implement the terms and conditions of the grant, meet performance expectations, and provide quality regional adult education and literacy activities. Each grantee is required to submit a one-year renewal application at the start of the fiscal year. Grantees must revise program and contact information, projected budget narrative, job descriptions for all positions funded

under the grant, and program income rationale, if applicable. The renewal application also requires programs to outline steps taken to ensure equal access to education compliance with the principles of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA). Finally, grantees are mandated to inform the AAE office of any proposed change in service or negotiated administrative limitations, and they must re-sign program assurances and grant terms and conditions.

The AAE office will continue to provide technical assistance and professional development to support efforts administered under Section 243.

E. STATE LEADERSHIP

1. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE THE FUNDS TO CARRY OUT THE REQUIRED STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES UNDER SECTION 223 OF WIOA

Alaska Adult Education (AAE) utilizes State Leadership funds to enhance existing programming and develop innovative programming to prepare students for transition into postsecondary education, employment, or training. No more than 12.5 percent of the total adult education grant funds will be expended to carry out required and allowable activities as directed in Section 223 of WIOA. State Leadership funds are only calculated from adult education funding; this excludes funds explicitly set aside for Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) activities.

Alignment of Adult Education and Literacy Activities

The AAE program is housed in the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development. The integration of all WIOA titles under one department has enriched partnership and provided a deeper comprehension of each title. Local providers and state representatives can align adult education and literacy with other WIOA core programs, including those provided through the Alaska Job Center Network (AJCN).

Through aligning adult education with core partners, Alaska has integrated career pathways with student learning. This model includes adult education as a vital entry point for Alaskans seeking to improve their basic academic skills. Alaska will continue to identify career pathway opportunities, professional development activities, and best practice approaches to increase career pathways for students that lead to sustainable employment.

At the state level, collaboration with senior management plays a vital role in alignment of core partners. The AAE office participates in WIOA strategic planning, division meetings, and WIOA-specific meetings to work in partnership on building a common career pathway vision. The AAE office provides professional development to key stakeholders on Title II-specific approaches, promising practices, and the integration of adult education into the workforce system. These meetings also provide contextual knowledge of core partners to build professional development for regional programs, related to topics such as in-demand jobs, available supports and services, regional contacts, and current employment trends.

AAE continues to align adult education with WIOA partners through the integration of a single log-on management system. Grantees are able to access information, reports, and student information quickly and easily. Programmers are modifying the adult education section to match state-specific needs. The system integration allows Alaska to continue its collaboration efforts.

AAE providers will continue to build Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs throughout Alaska. To meet the required three components, programs will work collaboratively with partners to provide concurrent and contextual services within the overall scope of a particularly well-planned IET program. Local programs will provide adult education and literacy activities in alignment with Alaska

Adult Education State Standards. Programs will collaborate with local One-Stops, employers, universities, and apprenticeships to provide the workforce preparation activities and workforce training components. The overall scope of each IET will: provide sufficient intensity and quality; be based on the most rigorous research available, particularly with respect to improving reading, writing, mathematics, and English proficiency of eligible individuals; occur simultaneously; and use occupationally-relevant instructional materials.

Professional Development

Alaska has an established an ever-growing professional development system that ensures training for all staff, including program coordinators, data entry clerks, teachers, and support personnel, is relevant to the growth of adult education. The Alaska Adult Education (AAE) Office works with programs to establish high-quality professional development programming, including improving instructional practices, incorporating essential components of basic skill development, providing foundational support for data entry and outcome-based reporting, enriching instruction provided by volunteers or by personnel of the state or outlying area, and disseminating information about models and promising practices related to such programs.

Alaska will continue to hold two annual meetings where staff from AAE programs receive training. The AAE Office has switched to a hybrid model to meet the needs of adult education staff. Though borne out of necessity, the integration of a hybrid meeting solution has had a positive impact on adult education programs. Some programs struggle to attend meetings due to inclement weather, transportation issues, and minimum grant funding. This hybrid solution has added the ability for more staff to attend professional development opportunities. The AAE Office will continue to host in-person mandatory meetings in Anchorage to foster collaboration for programs. The second meeting will be held for AAE management and program coordinators. These meetings focus on the dissemination of information about models and proven promising practices in overseeing regional programs. Adult education staff will also have an opportunity to participate in a statewide conference highlighting best practices and Alaska-specific needs; the AAE office will partner with the Alaska Adult Education Association to help coordinate the conference.

In an overall commitment to retention of program coordinators and teachers, the National Reporting System for Adult Education (NRS) Statewide Team has committed to creating an onboarding system. Many local programs possess limited background knowledge of WIOA and adult education guidelines. Consequently, onboarding is not consistent, and teachers in some programs are not getting comprehensive or timely information. The AAE Office will work with the NRS Statewide Team to create an onboarding professional development system and integrate it into AspireAlaska. The state's onboarding process will deliver adult education guidance and support in a centralized and consistent manner and be the source of continuous professional development for inexperienced staff.

Alaska will increase professional development through state and federal-specific trainings. The AAE office will focus on providing improved instruction, establishing career pathways, and expanding Integrated Education and Training programs. Currently, teachers are participating in trainings offered by several entities, including Center for Applied Linguistics, Data Recognition Cooperation, Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS), General Educational Development (GED®) Testing Services, Literacy Information and Communication System, and the Alaska Career Information System (AKCIS).

Technical Assistance

Technical assistance is available to eligible providers to effectively enhance their program and fulfill the grant requirements. Technical assistance is initiated by: the eligible provider; findings associated with monitoring or evaluations; or information distributed from state or federal programs. Monthly meetings with the regional programs have been established to disseminate instructional and programmatic information through the program coordinators. Technical assistance topics include the following:

- Data management
- National Reporting System requirements
- Recruitment and intake
- Testing requirements and policies
- Updated federal and state policies
- Career pathways and transitioning to postsecondary education
- Use of technology

Providing technical assistance to the local programs is an ongoing activity. Assistance is provided through professional development presentations; webinars; phone assistance; teleconferences; on-site training; in-person conferences; and one-on-one counseling. Technical assistance has been changed to include a hybrid model available for all in-person mandatory meetings. Technical assistance will be provided until no longer required.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring procedures are thorough and well established in adult education. AAE will continue to monitor sites using a formal monitoring procedure. Program statistics are monitored on a regular basis, and desk audits of student records are conducted. AAE will continue to provide data monitoring, on-site visits and reviews, and desk monitors.

Quality improvement and monitoring goals:

- Monitoring Schedules: The AAE office will create a monitoring schedule at the beginning of each fiscal year to assess on-site visits and reviews; desk monitoring and data reviews; and self-assessment checks.
- On-site Visits and Reviews: The AAE office will work with the program on-site review protocols. Evaluators will observe classroom instruction, tour the facility, interview staff, and monitor files. On-site reviews will also consist of programmatic and/or financial monitoring. Monitoring will include assessment of instruction, instructional materials, and Alaska Adult Education State Standards; evaluation of policies and procedures; quality of program administration; review of overall adherence to grant requirements; and financial data audit.
- Pre-Award Risk Analysis Questionnaire: The AAE Office requires programs to fill out a Pre-Award Risk Analysis Questionnaire prior to award of a grant [2 CFR 200.331(b)]. The risk analysis questionnaire requires programs to provide programmatic and financial documentation related to internal controls of the organization. The questionnaire and required documentation are analyzed to determine if the organization has the responsibility of

programmatic decision-making and is therefore able to adhere to the state and federal rules and regulations.

- Desk Monitoring and File Review: The AAE office will work with programs in reviewing data entered into the management information system to promote program improvement. Desk monitoring and file review will consist of reviewing data collected from students, teachers, and program information.
- Negotiated Performance Indicators: The AAE office will negotiate annual performance targets with grantees at the beginning of each program year. Grantees will be required to provide a plan to meet or exceed the state performance targets. Programs that do not meet or exceed their targets for the program year may be placed on a Program Improvement Plan, and grant renewal funding may be affected.

2. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE THE FUNDS TO CARRY OUT PERMISSIBLE STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES UNDER SECTION 223 OF WIOA, IF APPLICABLE

The AAE office reserves the right to utilize funding available under WIOA section 222(a)(2) for other permissible State leadership activities outlined in section 223, such as: support of state or regional networks of literacy resource centers; development and implementation of technology applications; development and dissemination of curricula, including curricula incorporating the essential components of reading instruction; development of content and models for integrated education and training and career pathways; integration of literacy and English language instruction with occupational skill training; activities to promote workplace adult education and literacy activities; or development and piloting of strategies for improving teacher quality and retention.

F. ASSESSING QUALITY

Describe how the eligible agency will assess the quality of providers of adult education and literacy activities under title II. Describe how the eligible agency will take actions to improve such quality, including providing the activities described in section 223(a)(1)(B) of WIOA. Describe how the eligible agency will use evaluations, data analysis, program monitoring, or other methods to improve the quality of adult education activities in the State.

The Alaska Adult Education (AAE) office will assess the quality of each eligible provider based on their individual goals and outcomes provided in the Request for Grant Application (RGA).

Monitoring

Desk Monitoring and File Review: The completeness and quality of student data submitted by programs will be assessed through ongoing desk monitoring and file review. Desk monitoring and file review are used for program accountability, identification of anomalies, program improvement, professional development, and informing change. The state AAE office will randomly select samples of student data from the management information system to review for accuracy and completeness. Desk monitoring and file reviews will consist of a review of data collected from students, teachers, and program information in alignment with their hard copy files. Each data element will be marked as Passed, Missing Information, Data Not Matched, or N/A, as appropriate. Missing and erroneous data identified during the review process must be corrected and documented within 30 days of identification.

On-site Visits and Review: Each year, at least 20 percent of programs will be selected to receive an on-site visit and review. A formal review schedule is set at the beginning of the fiscal year. The AAE office will work with the program on-site review protocols. Evaluators will observe classroom instruction,

tour the facility, talk with stakeholders, and interview program staff and coordinators. On-site reviews will also include programmatic and/or financial monitoring. Monitoring will include assessment of instruction, instructional materials, and Alaska Adult Education State Standards; evaluation of policies and procedures; quality of program administration; review of overall adherence to grant requirements; and financial data audit.

Financial Review: The comprehensiveness of financial data will be reviewed upon request for payment reimbursement. Expenditure reports and backup documentation must be complete and thorough. Financial data audits may be completed in conjunction with on-site monitoring.

Negotiated Performance Indicators: The AAE office will negotiate annual performance targets with grantees at the beginning of each program year. Grantees will be required to provide a plan to meet or exceed the state performance targets. Programs that do not meet or exceed their targets for the program year may be placed on a Program Improvement Plan, and grant renewal funding may be affected.

Statistical Data Review: In addition to more formal monitoring, the AAE office will determine the quality of eligible providers' recruitment and retention processes. Statistical data will be collected throughout the year from the management information system, which will help the AAE office determine monitoring or technical assistance needs or identification of best practices in teaching.

Recruitment and Partnership Evaluation: Eligible providers are also monitored on recruitment activities and partnerships based on the overall success of their program and alignment with the outcomes provided in their grant agreement. Types of local partnerships developed (e.g., One-Stop Centers, career and technical education training centers, health and human services offices) to facilitate successful transition into postsecondary education, training, or employment are examined. Recruitment activities are also observed and have the possibility of triggering a technical assistance plan.

Professional Development

Intake and Orientation: Effectiveness of Regional Programs' intake and orientation processes will be evaluated by the AAE Office during desk monitoring and on-site reviews. Attendance data will be used to determine the percentage of students who attend 12 or fewer hours.

Assessment and Placement Protocol: Timeliness of the administration of the TABE, WorkKeys®, CASAS, and/or BEST pre-test assessments as measured by the test date compared to the intake form date. The AAE Office will review the processes used by AAE programs in orientation and placement in a review of the AAE Desk Monitoring Tools and through observations and interviews that are conducted during site visits. Professional development and technical assistance will be planned based on the findings.

Instruction: Benefits of instruction to the student will be assessed during a review of students' average attendance, post-test rate, educational functional level gain, and GED® completion during site visits, desk monitoring, and/or interviews with programs. Furthermore, postsecondary education outcomes and job attainment or advancement will be assessed annually based on National Reporting System (NRS) data. Observation of instruction and review of program materials during site visits will be noted during on-site visit tours, interviews, and material review. The AAE office will also assess the quality of professional development programs designed by eligible providers and presenters to improve instruction in the essential components of reading instruction; specific needs of adult learners; volunteers or paid personnel; and dissemination of information about models and promising practices.

Annual Conference and Program Coordinator Training: Alaska will continue to hold two annual meetings in Anchorage (with a virtual option), where staff will receive training. The annual conference will be open to adult education staff and will highlight best practices, instructional requirements, and Alaska-specific needs. The second meeting will be held for AAE management and program coordinators. These meetings will focus on the dissemination of information about models and proven promising practices in overseeing regional programs. The management team meetings will allow for networking and focus on holistic program change.

New Staff Training: This training will target new program coordinators and will focus on federal and state policies, the NRS tables and data collection, and resources needed to run effective programs. This training is housed in AspireAlaska and assigned to new staff upon hire.

Improvement of Program

Based on monitoring, data review, and observations, the AAE office will determine the course of action needed to address programmatic deficiencies.

Monthly Program Coordinator Teleconference: To maintain program improvements, the AAE Office will continue monthly technical assistance teleconferences with regional program coordinators to inform them of program changes, deliver training opportunities, and provide question and answer sessions.

Announcement Emails: To keep programs up to date with information from the AAE Office, announcement emails are sent out to program coordinators and staff. Announcements keep the team abreast of changes that may need to happen quickly. The announcements are also used as another medium for providing technical assistance to the group as a whole.

Corrective Action Plan (CAP): If non-compliance issues are identified, a CAP may be warranted. CAPs identify issues that need to be resolved and timelines for compliancy and are issued for programs that are not in compliance with state and/or federal regulations. Failure to comply or improve findings may result in additional monitoring, decline in grant funding, removal from grant, or exclusion from future grant solicitations. A final monitoring report will be issued.

Suspension or Termination: If an eligible provider violates or fails to comply with the terms and conditions of the grant agreement and is in noncompliance with the CAP, suspension or termination may be possible. Eligible providers must be unable to substantiate full compliance and pursue other remedies that are legally available. Eligible providers who are facing suspension or termination of the grant in whole or in part will be notified fifteen calendar days prior to the action.

Program Improvement Plan: To support ongoing program improvement, program operations, and student outcomes, the AAE Office's review process continually identifies matters needing attention or improvement. Based on the results of the findings, AAE programs will be given an audit report, and low-performing programs will be asked to submit a program improvement plan.

ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM CERTIFICATIONS

States must provide written and signed certifications that:	Included?
1. The plan is submitted by the State agency that is eligible to submit the plan;	Yes
2. The State agency has authority under State law to perform the functions of the State under the program;	Yes
3. The State legally may carry out each provision of the plan;	Yes
4. All provisions of the plan are consistent with State law;	Yes
5. A State officer, specified by title in the certification, has authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the plan;	Yes
6. The State officer who is submitting the plan, specified by the title in the certification, has authority to submit the plan;	Yes
7. The agency that is submitting the plan has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan; and	Yes
8. The plan is the basis for State operation and administration of the program;	Yes

ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include assurances that:	Included?
1. The eligible agency will expend funds appropriated to carry out title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) only in a manner consistent with fiscal requirements under section 241(a) of WIOA (regarding the supplement-not-supplant requirement);	Yes
2. The eligible agency will ensure that there is at least one eligible provider serving each local area, as defined in section 3(32) of WIOA;	Yes
3. The eligible agency will not use any funds made available under title II of WIOA for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are not “eligible individuals” within the meaning of section 203(4) of WIOA, unless it is providing programs, services or activities related to family literacy activities, as defined in section 203(9) of WIOA;	Yes
4. Using funds made available under title II of WIOA to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution, the eligible agency will give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program.	Yes
5. The eligible agency agrees that in expending funds made available under Title II of WIOA, the eligible agency will comply with sections 8301 through 8303 of the Buy American Act (41 U.S.C. 8301-8303).	Yes

AUTHORIZING OR CERTIFYING REPRESENTATIVE

CERTIFICATION REGARDING LOBBYING

Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements

The undersigned certifies, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

(1) No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the undersigned, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of an agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the making of any Federal loan, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.

(2) If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions.

(3) The undersigned shall require that the language of this certification be included in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers (including subcontracts, subgrants, and contracts under grants, loans, and cooperative agreements) and that all subrecipients shall certify and disclose accordingly. This certification is a material representation of fact upon which reliance was placed when this transaction was made or entered into. Submission of this certification is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required certification shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than \$10,000 and not more than \$100,000 for each such failure.

Statement for Loan Guarantees and Loan Insurance

The undersigned states, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

If any funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this commitment providing for the United States to insure or guarantee a loan, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions. Submission of this statement is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required statement shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than \$10,000 and not more than \$100,000 for each such failure.

Please download and sign the forms below. Please scan and return the forms to wioa@ed.gov at the same time you submit your State Plan via the portal.

1. SF424B - Assurances – Non-Construction Programs
(<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>)
2. Grants.gov - Certification Regarding Lobbying
(<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>)
3. SF LLL Form – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (required, only if applicable)
(<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>)

APPLICANT'S ORGANIZATION	Enter information in this column
Applicant's Organization	Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development
PRINTED NAME AND TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE	Enter information in this column
First Name	Catherine
Last Name	Munoz
Title	Commissioner
Email	Commissioner.Labor@Alaska.Gov

SECTION 427 OF THE GENERAL EDUCATION PROVISIONS ACT (GEPA)

EQUITY FOR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, AND OTHER PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES

OMB Control Number 1894-0005 Expiration 02/28/2026

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity. The State applicant is also responsible for ensuring that its subrecipient applicants complete the GEPA Section 427 form or a State developed form that sufficiently meets the GEPA Section 427 requirement for any local-level-project and activity and maintains the subrecipients' responses in the State office.

GEPA Section 427 Form Instructions for State Applicants

State applicants must respond to the following four questions:

1. Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.
2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?
3. Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?
4. What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?
 - Applicants identify any barriers that may impede equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity, including, but not limited to, barriers based on economic disadvantage, gender, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, disability, age, language, migrant status, rural status, homeless status or housing insecurity, pregnancy, parenting, or caregiving status, and sexual orientation.
 - Applicants use the associated text box to respond to each question. However, applicants might have already included some or all this required information in the narrative sections of

their applications or their State Plans. In responding to this requirement, for each question, applicants may provide a cross-reference to the section(s) in their State Plans that includes the information responsive to that question on this form or may restate that information on this form.

- Applicants are not required to have mission statements or policies that align with equity to apply.
- Applicants that have already undertaken steps to address barriers must still provide an explanation and/or description of the steps already taken in each text box, as appropriate, to satisfy the GEPA Section 427 requirement.
- Applicants that believe no barriers exist must still provide an explanation and/or description to each question to validate that perception, as appropriate, to satisfy the GEPA Section 427 requirement.

GEPA Section 427 Instructions to State Applicants for their Subrecipient Applicants

The State grantee provides a subrecipient applicant seeking Federal assistance instructions and guidance for how it must comply with the GEPA Section 427 requirement. The State grantee determines the form and content of the information a subrecipient applicant must include in its application regarding the steps it proposes to take to ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, its local-level project or activity. For example:

- The State grantee may require its subrecipient applicant to use and submit the GEPA Section 427 form that it is required to submit to the Department; or
- The State grantee may use a State-developed form that is sufficient to meet the GEPA Section 427 requirement.
- The State grantee maintains the subrecipient applicants' responses in the State office.

Please refer to GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for AEFLA Application Package

1. DESCRIBE HOW YOUR ENTITY'S EXISTING MISSION, POLICIES, OR COMMITMENTS ENSURE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO, AND EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION IN, THE PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY.

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity. The State applicant is also responsible for ensuring that its subrecipient applicants complete the GEPA Section 427 form or a State developed form that sufficiently meets the GEPA Section 427 requirement for any local-level-project and activity and maintains the subrecipients' responses in the State office.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for AEFLA Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The first of four questions is:

Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.

The State of Alaska, as an employer and service provider, recognizes the need to respect and treat equally all people it hires and serves. The State of Alaska's concept of diversity is broad, extending beyond those categories formally recognized and protected by law. The State Alaska Adult Education (AAE) Office, funded in whole or in part by Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) administrative and leadership funding, complies with all federal and state laws, regulations, and policies pertaining to state and local program staff to continue to work in a positive environment that is free from discrimination based on gender, race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, marital status, changes in marital status, pregnancy, and parenthood.

The Department of Labor and Workforce Development ensures equal opportunity for students, teachers, and eligible providers that participate in any project or program administered through the AAE Office. All grantees funded, either in whole or part, through AEFLA monies are required to comply with General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) section 427. Eligible providers are required to comply with Federal statutes and regulations on nondiscrimination outlined in 34 CFR § 76.500.

2. BASED ON YOUR PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY, WHAT BARRIERS MAY IMPEDE EQUITABLE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, OR OTHER BENEFICIARIES?

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity. The State applicant is also responsible for ensuring that its subrecipient applicants complete the GEPA Section 427 form or a State developed form that sufficiently meets the GEPA Section 427 requirement for any local-level-project and activity and maintains the subrecipients' responses in the State office.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for AEFLA Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The second of four questions is:

Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?

Alaska issues one Request for Grant Applications (RGA) for all AEFLA funded grants. The RGA includes information regarding the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) program and providing adult education services to correctional centers. Notice of availability of funds for Title II is published on the State of Alaska Public On-line Notice System and the Alaska Adult Education website to ensure equal access to application information. Parties who wish to receive notification of grant information via email may register for GovDelivery notification on grant and procurement opportunities.

As part of the initial RGA process and annual renewal application, eligible providers must complete a form indicating in what manner the program complies with General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) section 427. The form provides the Act for reference and allows the provider to describe the steps taken to ensure equitable access to, and participation in, federally assisted Alaska Adult Education (AAE) Programs. Providers must describe equitable access to, and participation in, the project or activity to be conducted, by addressing the access needs of students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries to overcome barriers, including barriers based on gender, race, color, national origin, disability, age, and other protected classes outlined in Alaska. Based on local circumstances, the

provider will determine whether these or other barriers may prevent students, teachers, etc., from such access or participation in the federally funded program. The Alaska AAE Office ensures eligible providers are providing equal opportunity for students, teachers, and eligible providers that participate in any project or program through monitoring and technical assistance procedures.

3. BASED ON THE BARRIERS IDENTIFIED, WHAT STEPS WILL YOU TAKE TO ADDRESS SUCH BARRIERS TO EQUITABLE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION IN THE PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY?

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity. The State applicant is also responsible for ensuring that its subrecipient applicants complete the GEPA Section 427 form or a State developed form that sufficiently meets the GEPA Section 427 requirement for any local-level-project and activity and maintains the subrecipients' responses in the State office.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for AEFLA Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The third of four questions is:

Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?

The Alaska AAE Office ensures equitable access and/or participation for gender, Race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, marital status, changes in marital status, pregnancy, and parenthood. through technical assistance, monitoring, and professional development activities. This includes addressing and promoting equity in recruitment, service design, implementation, and support services that aim to provide equitable access and outcomes to all communities seeking access to services. Alaska overall geographic size and connectivity issues are the biggest barrier that impeded equity of access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries. Although we cannot change the geographic size of the state or method of transportation, programs continue to find innovative ways to expand programmatic access. Connectivity issues rely on infrastructure changes that are beyond the scope of adult education. As the infrastructure grows to rural areas, programs continue to expand services beyond what they can currently provide.

The Alaska AAE Office utilizes state leadership funding to provide professional development to staff on topics such as implementing universal design strategies in the classroom environment, serving individuals with disabilities, serving the needs of English Language Learners, and aiding students with barriers to technological learning needs, including distance education. For example, the Alaska AAE Office worked with the Alaska Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and Mature Alaskans Seeking Skills Training (MASST) program, federally known as the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), to provide professional development opportunities during the statewide conference. The State AAE Office continues to work with WIOA core, required, and additional partners to provide pathways to remove or eliminate barriers based on gender, race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, marital status, changes in marital status, pregnancy, and parenthood.

4. WHAT IS YOUR TIMELINE, INCLUDING TARGETED MILESTONES, FOR ADDRESSING THESE IDENTIFIED BARRIERS?

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity. The State applicant is also responsible for ensuring that its subrecipient applicants complete the GEPA Section 427 form or a State developed form that sufficiently meets the GEPA Section 427 requirement for any local-level-project and activity and maintains the subrecipients' responses in the State office.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for AEFLLA Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The final of four questions is:

What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

The Alaska AAE Office will continue to address any barriers as they arise throughout each program year.

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (COMBINED OR GENERAL)

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan must include the following descriptions and estimates, as required by sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA.

A. STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL.

1. ALL VR AGENCIES, EXCEPT FOR THOSE THAT HAVE AN INDEPENDENT CONSUMER-CONTROLLED COMMISSION, MUST HAVE A STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL (COUNCIL OR SRC) THAT MEETS THE CRITERIA IN SECTION 105 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT. THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPLICABLE, HAS:

Select A or B:

(A) is an independent State commission

(B) has established a State Rehabilitation Council

(B) has established a State Rehabilitation Council

2. IN ACCORDANCE WITH ASSURANCE (A)(1)(B), IF SELECTED, PLEASE PROVIDE INFORMATION ON THE CURRENT COMPOSITION OF THE COUNCIL BY REPRESENTATIVE TYPE, INCLUDING THE TERM NUMBER OF THE REPRESENTATIVE, AS APPLICABLE, AND ANY VACANCIES, AS WELL AS THE BEGINNING DATES OF EACH REPRESENTATIVE’S TERM.

Council Representative	Current Term Number/Vacant	Beginning Date of Term Mo./Yr.
Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)	1	9/2023
Parent Training and Information Center	2	1/2022
Client Assistance Program	4	8/2022
Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor (Ex Officio if Employed by the VR Agency)	1	12/2023
Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider	1	11/2023
Business, Industry, and Labor	1	8/2022
Business, Industry, and Labor	1	9/2023
Business, Industry, and Labor	1	12/2022
Business, Industry, and Labor	1	11/2023
Disability Advocacy Groups	1	8/2022
Current or Former Applicants for, or Recipients of, VR services	2	8/2023

Council Representative	Current Term Number/Vacant	Beginning Date of Term Mo./Yr.
Section 121 Project Directors in the State (as applicable)	1	12/2022
State Educational Agency Responsible for Students with Disabilities Eligible to Receive Services under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	2	5/2027
State Workforce Development Board	1	7/2021
VR Agency Director (Ex Officio)	3	7/2019

3. IF THE SRC IS NOT MEETING THE COMPOSITION REQUIREMENTS IN SECTION 105(B) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT AND/OR IS NOT MEETING QUARTERLY AS REQUIRED IN SECTION 105(F) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, PROVIDE THE STEPS THAT THE VR AGENCY IS TAKING TO ENSURE IT MEETS THOSE REQUIREMENTS.

Alaska's SRC is meeting the composition requirements in Section 105(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.

4. IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS IN SECTION 101(A)(21)(A)(II)(III) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, INCLUDE A SUMMARY OF THE COUNCIL'S INPUT (INCLUDING HOW IT WAS OBTAINED) INTO THE STATE PLAN AND ANY STATE PLAN REVISIONS, INCLUDING RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COUNCIL'S ANNUAL REPORTS, THE REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER SATISFACTION AND OTHER COUNCIL REPORTS.

State Plan Recommendations: Alaska's State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee (SVRC) and DVR work together for strategic planning and program evaluation of the VR program as outlined in the SVRC Annual Report. The SVRC was provided with a copy of the VR Section of the WIOA Combined State Plan for review. One member had a question about the State Plan formatting; however, there were no formal recommendations proposed to DVR regarding the State Plan.

Strategic Plan Recommendations: Alaska's SVRC had two specific recommendations for DVR's Strategic plan including:

- Reduce internal DVR paperwork barriers for individuals seeking VR services.
- Provide Social Security benefit advice and skills to youth.
- Review Community Rehabilitation Program fee structure.

Annual Report Recommendations: Alaska's SVRC has 5 subcommittees including Executive; Program Evaluation; Assistive Technology, Planning and Recruitment; and Policy, Public Relations, and Resources. Input from the subcommittees included:

- Increasing promotion of SVRC meetings and public testimony.
- Increase outreach to potential new members to limit vacancies.
- Track recruitment strategies.

- Transfer funds sitting idle in the Assistive Technology Loan Fund to the Assistive Technology of Alaska. This recommendation requires a repeal to Alaska State Statute § 23.15.125.

Consumer Satisfaction: The SVRC oversees the on-going consumer satisfaction survey sent to DVR participants who were closed after an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) was developed.

DVR is a consumer-driven organization where a participant's self-involvement and informed choice during the vocational rehabilitation process are vital for success. The consumer satisfaction survey focuses on four points: Consumer and Staff Interaction, Consumer Involvement, Program Information, and Program Satisfaction.

Surveys are sent to participants' email addresses via the online survey tool, SurveyMonkey. The surveys are sent on a monthly basis to individuals who have exited the program after an IPE was developed. Currently, 95% of DVR participants who meet the established survey parameters have a valid email address, which is a 2% increase from last year. The average monthly response rate is 6.3%. Each area experienced an increase in positive responses from the previous year.

5. PROVIDE THE VR AGENCY'S RESPONSE TO THE COUNCIL'S INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS, INCLUDING AN EXPLANATION FOR THE REJECTION OF ANY INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

List each recommendation/input followed by the VR agency response

Alaska's SVRC did not propose any formal recommendations to DVR regarding the State Plan.

Based on input and recommendations for the Strategic Plan, DVR's responses are as follows:

- Input: Reduce internal DVR paperwork barriers for individuals seeking VR services.
 - This input is Priority 1.8 in DVR's strategic plan.
- Input: Provide Social Security benefit advice and skills to youth.
 - DVR will work with Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS) to accomplish this action step.
- Review Community Rehabilitation Program fee structure.
 - As an action step, DVR will evaluate the current fee structure to determine if it remains appropriate.

Based on input and recommendations from the SVRC Annual Report, DVR's responses are as follows:

- Input: Increasing promotion of SVRC meetings and public testimony.
 - Response: DVR Communications Lead will promote public testimony and meetings.
- Input: Increase outreach to potential new members to limit vacancies.
 - Response: DVR will provide ongoing staff support through use of the DVR Communications Lead
- Input: Track recruitment strategies.
 - Response: DVR will provide ongoing staff support through use of the DVR Communications Lead

- Recommendation: Transfer funds sitting idle in the Assistive Technology Loan Fund to the Assistive Technology of Alaska. This recommendation requires a repeal to Alaska State Statute § 23.15.125.
 - Response: DVR began the process to transfer funds sitting idle in the Assistive Technology Loan Fund to the Assistive Technology of Alaska and repeal to Alaska State Statute § 23.15.125 per the SVRC recommendation.

DVR staff continues to support the SVRC’s consumer satisfaction survey efforts including sending out surveys on a monthly basis and compiling and analyzing information for the SVRC annual report.

B. COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE NEEDS ASSESSMENT (CSNA).

Section 101(a)(15), (17), and (23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to provide an assessment of:

1. THE VR SERVICES NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES RESIDING WITHIN THE STATE, INCLUDING:

A. INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES AND THEIR NEED FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT;

According to DVR’s most recent Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) completed in December 2023, in which data sources and responses were analyzed, the most critical service needs of Alaskans with the most significant disabilities (MSD). The following seven service categories were identified across respondent groups as most important to being successful in employment.

- 1) Career Exploration – More than 20 respondents described the importance of conducting comprehensive career exploration and focusing on identifying jobs and careers that “fit” the participant’s unique needs and circumstances. This focuses attention on partnering with individuals to pursue career pathways over “just a job.” This can sometimes feel at odds with Supported Employment partner agencies who work with individuals who are MSD, however DVR remains feels strongly that meaningful careers should be available to all individuals.
- 2) Training and Education – The need to obtain education and employment training was identified as important to employment success, especially in the survey responses received from participants. Responses identified training in higher education, job-specific skills, and technology and computers as significant services for Alaskans with disabilities. This includes providing individuals who are MSD services under a place and train model to match individuals to jobs that are consistent with their unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice.
- 3) Transportation – In keeping with the barriers documented in the section below, transportation supports were pointed to as a significant, necessary service to successfully engage in employment, including Supported Employment for individuals who are MSD.
- 4) Employment-Specific Services – Numerous respondents emphasized the importance of participants receiving employment-specific services such as assistance competing job applications, interviewing skills, placement services, job coaching, and post-employment services.
- 5) Behavioral Health Services – The provision of behavioral and mental health treatment services and supports was mentioned by numerous respondents as a significant need in the vocational rehabilitation process in Alaska.

6) Independent Living Services – Several respondents pointed out that providing support to individuals to live independently in their communities, including services such as housing support and resources, time-management skills, self-advocacy skills, and other supports for activities of daily living are significantly important to address the whole person’s needs when it comes to successful employment.

7) Supported Employment – Finally, multiple data sources identified supported employment services for individuals who are MSD and supports as necessary for many participants to ultimately succeed in employment. This includes lack of available resources including access to long-term supports and the availability of providers.

Additionally, seven main themes emerged when examining the barriers that Alaskans with MSD, encounter when pursuing successful employment in partnership with DVR.

1) Lack of/Limited Community Resources and Funding - Among the various sources of collected information, 35 respondents referenced the need for increased community resources and funding for programs, including DVR, to directly assist individuals with disabilities. Areas of limited resources included supported employment supports for individuals with MSD, access to technology and associated training, employment opportunities in rural and remote areas, availability of medical specialist providers such as neuropsychologists, and an overall need for additional CRPs across the state. Also mentioned repeatedly was the need for DVR and Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) to address staffing shortages more effectively.

2) DVR/System Processes – Similarly, 31 of the data sources pointed to DVR’s process and larger system issues as barriers to engaging effectively and moving toward successful employment. Many of these respondents described DVR’s process as overly complex, lengthy, and focused on paperwork and oversight rather than the participant’s employment needs. Several respondents indicated that many applicants, especially those who may be MSD, are daunted by DVR’s documentation requirements and that DVR timelines do not align with participants’ needs, circumstances, and expectations. Several respondents pointed to an inconsistency among counselors and offices across the state with regard to relationships with both participants and community partners. One respondent indicated that the agency does not effectively support higher education options for clients.

3) Participants’ Personal Experiences with Disability – At least 9 respondents also highlighted an individual’s personal experience with disability as a common barrier to employment. They described situations in which individuals lack confidence and aren’t aware of what they might be capable of from an employment perspective, experience fear about what it will mean to be working and being “branded” as a person with a disability, or are worried about losing important benefits if they become employed, including access to Medicaid Waiver services for those who are MSD. Several respondents pointed to the need for individuals to be supported in learning skills of self-advocacy, as well as other soft skills that are critical for preparing for and obtaining employment, especially among youth with MSD.

4) Transportation – Given the infrastructure in Alaska and the many remote and rural areas across the state, the lack of available transportation in general, and accessible transportation specifically, was identified by numerous respondents as a considerable barrier to both accessing employment services and effectively engaging in employment.

5) Employer Issues – Many respondents identified barriers relating to the beliefs and attitudes of employers, citing inaccessible and rigorous application processes, lack of accommodation information and resources, ignorance about what people with disabilities can do, and generalized fear and stigma.

6) Housing/Homelessness – Data source commenters also described the many barriers related to the lack of access to stable, affordable, and accessible housing, without which it is very difficult for participants to address other existing barriers and move toward successful employment.

7) Education/Information Access – the final theme that emerged when analyzing responses focused on the observation that DVR is not necessarily a well-known resource across the state. It was stated that the general public and even many individuals with disabilities do not know what DVR is or what it does.

B. INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE MINORITIES AND INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM;

During DVR’s Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), in which DVR gathered and analyzed statistical and population data, DVR also conducted a variety of surveys, focus groups and interviews with key stakeholders to gather information about employment barriers experienced by Alaskans with disabilities, their VR service needs, populations in Alaska who are unserved or underserved, community resource availability, agency strengths and recommendations for agency improvement. A description of these activities and their details follows.

- DVR conducted six live focus groups with a total of 28 people representing the following groups of agency and community stakeholders. AK SVRC (2 participants)
 - Professionals serving individuals who are blind and visually impaired (7 participants)
 - Professionals serving individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing (4 participants)
 - Managers within ADVR (5 participants)
 - The Governor’s Council on Disabilities and Special Education (3 participants)
 - ADVR’s Client Services Group (7 participants)
- DVR distributed a written survey to approximately 1,150 VR participants and received 275 completed surveys for a response rate of approximately 24%.
- DVR received 12 written survey responses from various CRP partners.
- Six live key informant interviews were conducted with representatives from entities identified by DVR as important partners representing the workforce and mental health systems. Interviewees were informed that their input would be documented and aggregated in a final report alongside other collected data to preserve confidentiality. The key informant interview process used a systematically developed set of open-ended questions which were presented to interviewees in a semi-structured interview style by a single interviewer. The interviewer took detailed notes throughout the interviews, but the sessions were not recorded. Upon completion of the interviews, each session’s notes were transcribed, and reflexive thematic analysis was applied to the transcriptions.

Although the focus group and interview participants represent a broad range of partners and service providers, it should be noted that some community expertise may be missing from the results and Alaska should consider the results within this context. Reflexive thematic analysis including iterative review and coding was applied to the focus group transcripts and key informant interviews. This analysis resulted in the identification of common themes that were then compared with data collected from other sources including open ended question responses from the VR participant and CRP surveys

conducted by DVR. In total, responses from 321 surveyed or interviewed individuals (excluding employers) were aggregated and analyzed using these methods. One of the strengths of the process is that this methodology allowed for the synthesis of qualitative and quantitative data and further validated the results contained in the CSNA, leading to the identification of potential action strategies for DVR.

Focus group participants, clients, and key informant interviewees were also asked to identify groups of individuals who could benefit from VR services but who are not accessing them or are not accessing them at a rate that corresponds with their representation in their communities. The most common response pointed to the potential to reach many more youth, especially those who are considered at risk or who have involvement with the justice system. Numerous respondents also identified individuals who live in very rural and remote areas, including descriptions of areas that can only be accessed by sea or air, as being unserved or not adequately represented in DVR service delivery. These respondents cited the difficult geographic conditions that exist in much of the state, including descriptions of areas that can only be accessed by sea or air. The third most common response focused on individuals who are homeless and in poverty, describing difficulties in connecting people to stable and accessible housing.

Specific questions asked of respondents included:

1. In your experience, what groups or individuals are not using DVR's services but could benefit from them? (Who is currently unserved?)
2. In your experience, what groups or individuals could benefit more from DVR services? (Who is currently underserved?)
3. Are there any geographic areas you feel are unserved/underserved and why?
4. Are there any racial/ethnic minority groups unserved/underserved and why?
5. Are there any specific disability groups that are unserved/underserved and why?
6. How effective is DVR's outreach to these groups/areas? Do you have any recommendations to improve outreach to them?

Other groups identified as possibly being unserved or underserved by ADVR included individuals with significant mental health diagnoses, individuals with substance use issues, individuals who are indigenous, individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities, and individuals who are aging/older. Impressions shared by survey, focus group, and key informant interview respondents regarding potentially unserved and underserved individuals are anecdotal and do not necessarily reflect the actual statistics of those served by DVR and should be considered in the overall context of data and information gathered by the agency and the CSNA.

C. INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES SERVED THROUGH OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM; AND

According to DVR's Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), regarding other community partnerships, including other components of the workforce development system, key informants responded that DVR has strong relationships with both the Alaska Job Center Network and with many area employers, and that DVR is engaged with business and supports the Provisional Hiring program with state hiring managers.

Coordination with workforce partners is vital when addressing employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. In DVR's CSNA, employers were asked to identify concerns in hiring

persons with disabilities. One concern they expressed is that possible provision of accommodations may hinder hiring. More specifically:

- Most employers, especially smaller businesses, believe they lack capacity to handle accommodations.
- Current staffing shortages lead to “huge challenges” with providing appropriate accommodations, from training to placement.
- A few employers expressed fear in hiring, as they perceived accommodations may be expensive.

Another concern expressed by employers may be the fear of hiring persons with disabilities. Namely:

- Fear of the unknown and fear of how to interact with a person with disability.
- Worry about costs that could hinder the company’s performance.
- Lack of comfort in understanding the needs of persons with disabilities and concern about offending the person.
- Employers’ thoughts and biases and discomfort in hiring a person with a disability.

Finally, employers shared that there can be a perception of limited resources available to hire persons with disabilities. In other words, some employers may feel that staff shortages across the board may lead to reduced help and patience in training persons with disabilities.

Most employer survey respondents were concerned about hiring persons with disabilities and listed the following main reasons:

- Admit misunderstanding of what having a disability means
- Discomfort and fear for reasons such as uncertainty with how to interact with the person, in understanding their disability needs, and with self-reported biases
- Belief they lack the capacity to handle a person with disability needing any accommodations that can be risky and /or expensive
- Worry that staff shortages across the board have led to reduced personnel, resulting in hardship to take on additional training needed when hiring a person with a disability
- Additional supervision may be needed and have financial impact
- Fear of loss of productivity or lack of needed skills

Employers who reported successful hiring of persons with disabilities claimed the hiring process was the same as with any new hire. In part, they attributed the successful hire to applicants who disclosed their accommodation needs in the interview process, so that the accommodations were set up for the new employee’s first day. Additionally, employers who worked with a new hire established a mutual understanding of their learning and communication styles that lead to job success. When newly hired persons with disability did not disclose their accommodation needs, employers discovered problems and even failure with job performance.

D. YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR NEED FOR PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES. INCLUDE AN

ASSESSMENT OF THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES FOR TRANSITION
CAREER SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, AND THE
EXTENT TO WHICH SUCH SERVICES ARE COORDINATED WITH TRANSITION
SERVICES PROVIDED UNDER IDEA.

Under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (as amended by Title IV of WIOA), DVR must provide pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) or make arrangements so that Pre-ETS are provided. To receive these services, the individual must be 14 to 21 years old (or younger if determined appropriate by the transition team), currently enrolled in an educational program (such as high school or college), and eligible or potentially eligible for VR services. According to the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, on October 1, 2021, the Special Education Child Count of individuals aged 14 to 21 was 5,609. During the reporting period of July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022, DVR provided Pre-ETS to 976 individuals.

Based upon the results of DVR's Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), DVR's goal over the next three years is to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services to at least 1,000 students with disabilities annually. Over the last three years, DVR's average cost of Pre-ETS per student was \$1,523, therefore, DVR anticipates expending approximately \$1.523million on required Pre-ETS, utilizing the remaining funds to carry out Authorized Activities.

As part of DVR's CSNA to determine the VR service needs of youth with disabilities in transition, DVR solicited input from Pre-ETS staff, service providers, and collaborators, including educators and parents. A Special Education (SPED) Teacher Survey was distributed to 363 Alaska teachers, special education directors, and correspondence school directors in February 2022. Eighty-three respondents reported on the skill needs of students, as well as the barriers that youth face in pursuit of post-secondary goals.

Teachers were asked what skills students need in order to be successful in getting and keeping a job:

- Work Readiness (Soft Skills) 90%
- Problem Solving/Decision Making 81%
- Job Supports (Job Development and/or Coaching) 81%
- Work Experience 76%
- Literacy/Numeracy 61%
- Other 26%

After answers to questions given in focus groups, online surveys, and key informant interviews were gathered and sorted, the following themes emerge:

- There is a lack of employment opportunities for youth in their home communities,
- The needs of Alaska's youth with disabilities align with Pre-ETS (as listed above),
- DVR's Pre-ETS program is considered a strength of the agency; and
- There are ways in which DVR can improve its services to youth.

The highest reported skill that Alaska students need in order to be successful in getting and keeping a job is work readiness training and independent living. According to the National Technical Assistance

Center on Transition the Collaborative (NTACT-C) <https://transitionta.org/pre-ets-faqs/>, these are the skills employees need to have in order to meet employer expectations regarding workplace behavior and conduct. These skills, sometimes called soft skills, include social/interpersonal skills (such as acting professionally, interacting respectfully with others, being timely, and problem-solving), and independent living skills (such as showing good hygiene, dressing appropriately, meeting nutrition needs, and using transportation).

The survey responses also pointed out that many of Alaska's youth with disabilities do not have employment opportunities in their home communities and must leave their communities in order to transition from high school to employment. In fact, 44% of the respondents ranked these opportunities as poor, and reported that on average 23% of their students will leave their communities for vocational goals, such as education, training, or a job.

Regarding their needs in education after high school, the survey revealed barriers that hinder Alaska's youth from achieving their post-secondary goals. From a list of possible barriers, respondents were asked to select all barriers that they felt were relevant. Top barriers they selected are:

- Lack of family support,
- Transportation obstacles, and
- Unstable living situation.

Other barriers are lack of community resources, difficulty accessing or navigating statewide systems, and lack of existing programs to meet specific disability needs.

Taken together, the DVR client survey and focus group responses were helpful in identifying ways that DVR can increase the effectiveness of Pre-ETS to meet the needs of youth in Alaska who have disabilities and vocational goals. Based on the number of mentions, the following three general suggestions stand out among all others:

1. Tell more youth and students with disabilities (and parents) about Pre-ETS,
2. Make Pre-ETS more inclusive of and relatable to youth with disabilities; and
3. Enhance support to DVR counselors through skill- and morale-building measures.

According to data gathered from the CSNA, DVR can do more to inform people, especially high school students, graduates, and parents, about Pre-ETS. When clients were asked to name people or groups of people with disabilities who might not know about DVR, eight out of thirty-two respondents (or 25%) stated schools, kids, teens, students, or young adults.

2. IDENTIFY THE NEED TO ESTABLISH, DEVELOP, OR IMPROVE COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE.

When responding to questions about CRPs and other service provider partners in Alaska, CSNA survey and interview participants identified issues including a lagging economy and lack of financial resources to support service providers and the necessary overhead expenses of small organizations. Another identified problem is the low availability of qualified and trained staff, particularly in rural areas, as well as higher employee turnover within CRPs. Additionally, there are issues with limited available resources for supported employment service delivery.

When responding to questions about CRPs and other service provider partners in Alaska, survey and interview participants identified the following issues:

- A lagging economy and lack of financial resources to support service providers and the necessary overhead expenses of small organizations
- Low availability of qualified and trained staff as well as higher employee turnover within CRPs
- Insufficient referrals received from DVR
- A lack of available resources for long term supports in the area of supported employment service delivery
- A lack of availability of service providers in rural and remote areas

Innovation and Expansion funds were not expended on establishment or development of Community Rehabilitation Programs.

C. GOALS, PRIORITIES, AND STRATEGIES

Section 101(a)(15) and (23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to describe the goals and priorities of the State in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs. The goals and priorities are based on (1) the most recent CSNA, including any updates; (2) the State’s performance under the performance accountability measures of Section 116 of WIOA; and (3) other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the SRC and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under Section 107 of the Rehabilitation Act. VR agencies must—

1. DESCRIBE HOW THE SRC AND THE VR AGENCY JOINTLY DEVELOPED AND AGREED TO THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES AND ANY REVISIONS; AND

DVR is committed to the challenge of continuously improving both the organization’s systems and the delivery of services to those individuals receiving vocational rehabilitation services. DVR utilizes the strategic planning process to develop a plan of action for continuous improvement. DVR has an on-going three-year strategic planning process coinciding with the federally required triennial Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA). Based on the information collected and analyzed from the CSNA, analysis of current Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) regulations, Common Performance Measures (CPMs), and input from DVR staff and the Alaska State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee (SVRC), the strategic planning team identifies improvements in service delivery, staff development, organizational efficiencies, and DVR’s role in serving employers as the basis for the new strategic plan. A working version of the plan is updated biannually by the individuals responsible for specific activities. The information is utilized by the Leadership Team to determine if the agency is meeting its goals and priorities and if revisions are needed.

The strategic planning team is composed of the DVR management and leadership teams, the SVRC Executive Committee, including the representative from the Client Assistance Program (CAP) and the Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (TVR) 121 programs.

A summary of the goals and priorities:

- Delivery of high quality vocational rehabilitation services to all individuals with disabilities with priorities established for:
 - Transition age/at-risk youth involved in the Juvenile Justice System
 - Individuals with disabilities residing in rural Alaska

- Individuals who are individuals with the Most Significant disabilities who require Supported Employment
- Alaska Native/American Indian individuals with disabilities
- Reduction of system barriers
- Individuals who experience blindness or who have a visual impairment
- Individuals who experience deafness or are hard of hearing
- Staff development includes efforts in:
 - Training opportunities to maintain professional certifications and for staff development
 - Leadership development
 - Succession planning
- Organizational efficiencies and responsibilities:
 - Meet all Federal regulations
 - Report and meet negotiated Common Performance Measures
 - Utilize technology for system improvements
 - Ensure case management software is up-to-date and will generate federal reporting that meets the requirements of the RSA-911 data report
- DVR will prioritize the needs of Alaskan businesses:
 - Work with employers to expand employment opportunities
 - Collaborate with other core WIOA agencies to improve employment services to individuals with disabilities
 - Advocates for individuals with disabilities are represented on appropriate boards and committees

In January of 2024, DVR and the SVRC Executive Committee jointly developed, agreed to (and will review annually, as necessary) the goals and priorities as outlined in the 2024-2027 Strategic Plan. The goals, priorities, and strategies were based on an analysis of DVR's most recent CSNA and consideration of current and anticipated performance of CPMs as established under section 106 of WIOA as well as other goals and priorities that would improve services to and employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. Three weeks prior to meeting with the SVRC, the members were provided DVR's CSNA and the Executive Summary along with an annotated draft Strategic Plan. The annotated draft Strategic Plan outlined how each proposed goal and priority aligned with findings within the CSNA. SVRC members were provided ample time and opportunity to review, question, comment, or disagree on the goals and priorities within the Strategic Plan. Each goal and priority were reviewed during the Strategic Planning Sessions and all input from the SVRC was accepted and was added in as either a priority or will be added to the working plan as action steps to achieve the goal and priorities.

Alaska's SVRC had 5 subcommittees including Executive; Program Evaluation; Assistive Technology, Planning and Recruitment; and Policy, Public Relations, and Resources. Input from the subcommittees included:

- Increasing promotion of SVRC meetings and public testimony.
- Increase outreach to potential new members to limit vacancies.
- Track recruitment strategies.
- Transfer funds sitting idle in the Assistive Technology Loan Fund to the Assistive Technology of Alaska. This recommendation requires a repeal to Alaska State Statute § 23.15.125.

2. IDENTIFY MEASURABLE GOALS AND PRIORITIES IN CARRYING OUT THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS AND THE BASIS FOR SELECTING THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES (E.G., CSNA, PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES, SRC RECOMMENDATIONS, MONITORING, OTHER INFORMATION). AS REQUIRED IN SECTION 101(A)(15)(D), (18), AND (23), DESCRIBE UNDER EACH GOAL OR PRIORITY, THE STRATEGIES OR METHODS USED TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL OR PRIORITY, INCLUDING AS APPLICABLE, DESCRIPTION OF STRATEGIES OR METHODS THAT—

A. SUPPORT INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES;

B. OVERCOME BARRIERS TO ACCESSING VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

C. IMPROVE AND EXPAND VR SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THE COORDINATION OF SERVICES DESIGNED TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF SUCH STUDENTS FROM SCHOOL TO POSTSECONDARY LIFE (INCLUDING THE RECEIPT OF VR SERVICES, POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES); AND

D. IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS IN ASSISTING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES TO ACHIEVE QUALITY EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES.

List and number each goal/priority, noting the basis, and under each goal/priority, list and number the strategies to achieve the goal/priority

Goal 1 – Service Delivery: DVR will deliver high quality vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities to assist them in obtaining employment consistent with their employment goals.

This goal reflects DVR's focus on continuous improvement of the VR service delivery system based upon the needs of Alaskans with disabilities as identified by the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA).

Measures of success:

- Review RSA Quarterly Dashboards to measure progress towards achievement of negotiated Common Performance Measures and other Measures that Matter.
- Utilize SurveyMonkey monthly to survey to all clients who were closed after a plan was developed to measure customer satisfaction with a satisfaction goal of at least 80% in all areas.

- Chief to use AWARE Reports weekly to measure ongoing progress of federal and state goals.
- Chief to use AWARE Reports weekly to review regional budgets to ensure adequate funding to serve all individuals seeking VR services.
- Use of pre and post-surveys to survey students with disabilities who received Pre-Employment Transition Services to measure effectiveness of services provided.
- Transition Coordinator uses the TransitionAlaska.org list-serve to survey teachers and school administration staff annually to measure effectiveness of Pre-Employment Transition Services to their students.

Priority 1.1: Improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities, including services needed to achieve meaningful employment.

Strategies:

- Conduct and Review Labor Market Research protocol to ensure validity and that it is occurring in cases at Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) development, as appropriate.
- Continue to support consumer training, as appropriate, and utilize all training opportunities and systems (i.e., AVTEC, UAA, UAF, and UAS, apprenticeships, Job Corps, Military Youth Academy, etc.).
- Identify consumer's knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) to match with employer's needs and willingness to build upon those KSAs.
- Ensure vocational evaluation is used as a strategy for rapid engagement as well as career exploration to obtain meaningful employment.
- Ensure consideration of personal experience with disability and support skills in self-advocacy, especially for youth, including person centered planning.
- Provide pre-employment services, job supports, and other employment-specific services and financial life skills.

Performance Indicators:

- Case reviews indicate IPEs and documentation of case progress align with informed choice, knowledge, skills, and abilities, and support Labor Market Research.
- Increased percentage of individuals maintaining employment in same field 2 quarters after exit and 4 quarters after exit.
- Reduced number of IPEs per client.
- Continuous increase in hourly wages.
- Increases in credential attainment and measurable skill gains.
- Individuals receive career exploration services and secure meaningful employment.
- Plan development shows standards for best practices and self-advocacy.

Priority 1.2: Improve Supported Employment (SE) services to individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities, including youth with the Most Significant Disabilities.

Strategies:

- Determine ways DVR can improve services to individuals who require Supported Employment (SE).
- Increase understanding and knowledge regarding early engagement and available VR Services.
- Increase services to SE Youth, ensuring 50% of SE funds are expended on Youth
- Work with CRPs to increase staff available to provide SE Job Supports.
- Assure that staff are informed of available transportation options or potential complications that may exist.

Performance Indicators:

- DVR will provide training to Division of Senior and Disability Services (SDS) and long-term support providers.
- SDS will provide training to DVR staff.
- DVR and SDS will continue to meet quarterly to ensure quality services to this population.
- Technology will be explored and implemented as a way to provide distance delivery in circumstances where it may be appropriate.
- Ensure SE individuals have training on use of local transportation when appropriate.
- Increase Extended Services to MSD Youth.
- Individuals with MSD have higher hourly wages at exit.
- Individuals with MSD remain employed at 2nd and 4th quarter.

Priority 1.3: Continue to provide quality services to rural locations.

Strategies:

- Continue to support Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) travel to rural locations.
- Develop rural travel expectations to ensure staff time is effectively utilized.
- Expand services to underserved hubs, including increasing coordination with partners.
- Attend events such as Alaska Federation of Natives, Native Youth Olympics, Southcentral Foundation Health Fairs, ASSEC, etc., to market DVR services.
- Invite Alaska Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (TVR) representation to attend rural services meetings.
- Expand DVR's use of technology in rural areas.

- Develop strategies for taking advantage of telework opportunities where transportation and lack of local employment opportunities are barriers as access to high-speed internet improves throughout the state.
- Utilize subsistence IPEs as appropriate.

Performance Indicators:

- Travel approved for a minimum of two trips a year to rural areas and travel with partners when possible.
- Travel Expectations document is used and adhered to.
- More utilization of rural hubs for reaching rural clients.
- TVR representation at Rural Services meetings.
- Technology is implemented and utilized.
- Individuals living in rural locations are able to remain in their communities while earning livable wages or by decreasing the cost of living due to subsistence.
- Individuals living in rural locations have increases in credential attainment and measurable skill gains.

Priority 1.4: Continue to deliver Pre-Employment Transition Services with an increased focus on At-Risk youth exiting the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) system.

Strategies:

- Increase work experience activities and sites.
- Work closely with CRPs and Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) vendors to align work experiences with high demand jobs.
- Ensure that expected number of students participating in Pre-ETS matches CSNA goal.
- Continue to recruit CRPs to provide Pre-ETS services.
- Continue to ensure At-Risk-Youth, including those involved with the Juvenile Justice System, are included in Pre-ETS activities and expand Pre-ETS within detention facilities
- Continue to coordinate services to At-Risk youth with disabilities in shelters or transitioning from treatment facilities.
- Continue to support travel for Transition Coordinator to travel to rural areas to evaluate Pre-ETS programs and build/maintain programs.

Performance Indicators:

- Additional work experiences are available.
- Work experiences more closely mirror high demand job industries.
- Meet or exceed expected number of Pre-ETS students provided services in the CSNA.

- Additional CRPs are available to provide Pre-ETS services.
- Programs within Juvenile Justice Detention facilities will continue to increase.
- Transition Coordinator travel occurs.
- Pre and post surveys of students show learning objectives have occurred.
- Students receiving Pre-ETS receive work experiences in high-demand jobs.
- Students who have received Pre-ETS show wage earnings in subsequent years.

Priority 1.5: Enhance Collaboration with Tribal VR (TVR) Partners.

Strategies:

- Continue to participate in face-to-face meetings when invited.
- Invite TVR Directors to quarterly Rural Services Meetings on a rotating basis.
- Invite TVR to DVR training opportunities.
- Create collaboration plan to increase referrals and shared cases.
 - Identify contact in each region to share and communicate information.
 - Identify clear chain of command for reporting issues.
 - Review MOU and Contingency Plan and draft changes as agreed upon.

Performance Indicators:

- Increase in shared cases with TVR Partners.
- Increase in wages at exit for AN/AI.
- Increase in 2nd and 4th quarter employment retention for AN/AI.
- Increase in MSGs and Credential Attainment for AI/AI.
- Increase in knowledge of DVR staff to better serve AN/AI individuals.
- Meeting occurs annually.
- Creation of a collaboration plan.
- MOU revised as necessary.

Priority 1.6: Improve usage and quality assurance of CRP services in all regions.

Strategies:

- Work with CRP Coordinator to develop a comprehensive CRP monitoring plan.
- Ensure Managers are involved in vetting new CRP applicants and in creating corrective action plans.

- Increase the number of CRPs who can provide distance delivery by leveraging technology where available to increase services to rural Alaska as noted in the CSNA.
- Increase training available to new and existing CRPs including training on Supported Employment as noted in the CSNA.
- Provide templates and other supporting materials.
- Facilitate CRP Community of Practice in an effort to share information including recruitment and retention strategies as staffing shortages were a concern in the CSNA.
- Improve consistency of expectations/communication between VRCs and CRPs and understanding of each's role in VR process from referral through period of service.
- Explore technological avenues and assess the use of software in improving service delivery and reporting.

Performance Indicators:

- Adherence to timelines.
- Process developed and followed for new CRPs and determining corrective action plans.
- Increase number of CRPs who are able to provide virtual services.
- Quality of services provided is improved.
- Individuals referred to CRPs receive services that improve employment outcomes.
- Individuals referred to CRPs receive satisfactory services from CRPs.
- CRPs are able to increase staff numbers to adequately serve their communities.

Priority 1.7: Provide thorough information and referral services to ensure consumers are aware of how to access available community resources that increase probability of successful employment.

Strategies:

- Develop new avenues for providing Assistive Technology (AT) and other Technology Training to ensure appropriate AT is provided on the job.
- Cultivate relationships with specialist providers such as neuropsychologists for thorough diagnostics to determine rehabilitation needs.
- Assist individuals in seeking resources for Behavioral Health Services, including the most up-to-date long-term support services available, including those services offered that are beyond traditional sources, including 1115 Waiver Services.
- Referral to the PABSS agency, known as the Disability Law Center of Alaska, especially for youth with disabilities to better understand how work affects benefits.
- Refer individuals to appropriate Independent Living (IL) Services for any appropriate IL services.
- Assist individuals in securing transportation, including accessible transportation.

- Provide resources for individuals who are unhoused to increase access to VR Services, especially initial access to apply.
- Maintain seats on appropriate transportation boards to advocate for transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, especially in winter.

Performance Indicators:

- Participant income is greater at exit than at application, where measurable.
- Assistive Technology is secured and training is provided leading to improvements to 2nd quarter and 4th quarter after exit CPMs.
- Increased specialists are used as vendors for thorough eligibilities and appropriate rehabilitation needs identified.
- Develop and maintain VR presence on boards/other guiding entities such as the Statewide Independent Living Council and the Governor’s Council on Disabilities and Special Education Employment and Transportation Committee to advocate and educate on the employment needs of individuals with disabilities.
- VR staff increase knowledge of how to effectively work with the unhoused population to secure employment while being able to refer individuals to other necessary local resources leading to increase participant income at exit.

Priority 1.8: Reduce internal DVR paperwork barriers for individuals seeking VR services.

Strategies:

- Establish internal committee to conduct an in-depth review of VR processes to identify areas that could be streamlined or made more efficient.
- Improve on-line referral process to expand access.
- Inform participants and stakeholders of reasons for breadth of information gathering and assure there is an understanding of the process and timelines.

Performance Indicators:

- DVR will maintain 90% of cases to eligible within 60 days or less.
- DVR will maintain 90% of cases to plan within 90 days or less.
- DVR will see an increase in on-line referrals leading to an increase in orientations by at least 10% annually.
- Streamlining is implemented where feasible to decrease time from application to plan and promote rapid engagement.

Priority 1.9: Evaluate and improve services to individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

Strategies:

- Evaluate current program to determine gaps and improvements that can be made to better serve this population including increasing successful closure rate.

- Improve consistency of identification of needs related visual impairments in terms of VR, and development and delivery of services.
- Support Blind Services Team program development and training, including travel for in-person meetings.
- Develop tools for assessing pathways to success, including regular case reviews.
- Blind Services Coordinator hosts bi-annual training for Division Statewide Assessment Team to increase effectiveness of evaluation services.
- Inform all regional offices about the BEP and opportunities for referrals.
- Update administrative codes to ensure BEP meets all regulatory requirements.
- Modernize existing sites' Micro-Markets.
- BEP evaluates site equipment as needed.

Performance Indicators:

- VR Blind Services Program evaluation is completed with recommendations for improvement.
- Increase in wages at exit for individuals who are blind.
- Increase in 2nd and 4th quarter employment retention for individuals who are blind.
- Increase in MSGs and Credential Attainment for individuals who are blind.
- Blind Services Team meets regularly and travels for annual in-person meeting.
- VR staff are trained on recognition of Vision-related VR needs, available resources, and case process development.
- BEP site equipment is updated and modernized.

Priority 1.10: Continue to support the employment needs of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Strategies:

- Continue to evaluate current program to determine gaps and improvements that can be made to better serve this population.
- Ensure the Model State Plan (MSP) for the Deaf remains up-to-date (links and content).
- Maintain a presence on the Deaf Professionals Network.
- Increase utilizing staff interpreting for rural participants, including providing travel budget for DVR staff interpreter.
- Deaf Navigator performs bi-annual training for Division Statewide Assessment Team to increase effectiveness of evaluation services.
- Increase Pre-ETS opportunities for students who are Deaf.

Performance Indicators:

- Increase in wages at exit for individuals who are deaf.
- Increase in 2nd and 4th quarter employment retention for individuals who are deaf.
- Increase in MSGs and Credential Attainment for individuals who are deaf.
- Work with contractor to keep MSP links and content up-to-date.
- Program evaluation is completed with recommendations for improvement.
- Maintain relationships with community partners.
- Comprehensive services are included on IPEs.
- Pre-ETS are delivered to students who are Deaf.

Priority 1.11: Promote Employment for Senior Alaskans, 55 and older.

Strategies:

- Reestablish standing committee between Division of Employment and Training Services (DETS) and DVR to determine activities to improve senior employment rates.
- Promote consistent partnership with Mature Alaskans Seeking Skills Training statewide through joint cases and case staffing.
- Develop scorecard for measuring performance.
- Increase employer awareness of the value of seniors with disabilities within employment.
- Explore relationships with other partner agencies such as Senior and Disability Services and the Alaska Commission on Aging to maximize employment potentials for seniors with disabilities.

Performance Indicators:

- DVR/DETS committee meets regularly to review data.
- Scorecard for performance is developed and evaluation of success is ongoing and measurable.
- DVR collaborates with other agencies to promote Senior Employment such as the Alaska Commission on Aging.
- Increase in wages at exit for individuals who are seniors with disabilities.
- Increase in 2nd and 4th quarter employment retention for individuals who are seniors with disabilities.
- Increase in MSGs and Credential Attainment for individuals who are seniors with disabilities.

Goal 2 – Staff Development: DVR will recruit, employ, retain, and train the most qualified and highly skilled rehabilitation staff.

This goal reflects the value DVR places on well trained staff and the need for succession planning with the anticipated loss of key staff in the future.

Measures of success:

- Training Specialist uses SurveyMonkey to survey all staff post-trainings to measure overall effectiveness of training.
- Managers use a Competency Criteria Rating form for all VRA and VRC promotions with minimum score allowable in specific competency areas to achieve promotion.
- Training specialist maintains an employee list-serve and notifies management and staff of relevant training opportunities.
- Training Specialist maintains a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) list-serve and notifies agency CRCs of upcoming continuing education training to ensure all CRCs maintain their credentials.
- Case review results are compiled in aggregate form to determine staff training needs that are then provided during annual statewide training.

Priority 2.1: Ensure resources are available for hiring and retaining qualified staff.

Strategies:

- Schedule annual all-staff training sessions for professional staff.
- Utilize internship programs.
- Expand recruitment strategies to fill both VRC and VRA vacancies.
- Ensure all staff are aware of continuing education and advancement opportunities.
- Develop educational development plans for non-CRC VRCs.
- Stay abreast of changes to CRC requirements.
- Ensure all VRAs receive VRA Online Training.
- Support VRA higher education opportunities where feasible.

Performance Indicators:

- All-staff training occurs.
- Internship positions are utilized.
- Communication to staff occurs.
- All non-CRC VRCs have an Educational Development Plan.
- Training checklists are completed for all staff.

Priority 2.2: Ensure ongoing staff development and training.

Strategies:

- Stay informed on requirements for maintaining/obtaining CRC and make sure that candidates are informed of current requirements as part of hiring process.

- Provide specialized training: Field Administrative Support Team (FAST), Business Engagement Services Team (BEST), Blind Services, Deaf/Hard of Hearing, Division Statewide Assessment Team (DSAT), etc.
- Provide ongoing training opportunities for VRAs.
- Keep modules for VRC training up-to-date.
- Develop ongoing education for eligibilities, severity of disability, plans, closures, etc.
- Regional Managers provide training on software and reporting.
- Ensure staff have access to the most current job forecasts by developing a distribution plan for “Trends” economic forecast magazine, economic development corporation info, etc.
- Specialized Training:
 - Career pathways and expectations for employment and training outcomes.
 - Conduct and understand Labor Market Research.
 - Self-Advocacy including how to seek and benefit from training.
 - CRP and VRC relations understanding and consistency and documentation.
 - Behavioral Health best practices and where to find available resources.
 - Training for working with clients who are unhoused or in poverty including available resources for those individuals

Performance Indicators:

- Links are posted on SharePoint.
- Specialized training is developed and delivered.
- Opportunities are communicated to VRAs.
- VR Modules are updated and delivered.
- Quarterly training opportunities for staff are scheduled and available.

Priority 2.3: Continue mentoring and succession planning.

Strategies:

- Senior VRCs (CRCs) are given opportunities to be in Regional Manager acting status.
- Develop specialized desk manuals for unique job duties.

Performance Indicators:

- Regional Manager Acting Status is delegated equally to senior VRCs.
- Desk manuals for unique positions are created and easily accessible for successors.
- Continued development of Management Manual.

Goal 3 – Quality Assurance: DVR will continuously evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of organizational systems and identify opportunities to develop innovative solutions for necessary changes.

This goal reflects DVR's commitment to continuous programmatic improvement and organizational efficiency.

This goal reflects DVR's commitment to continuous programmatic improvement and organizational efficiency.

Measures of success:

- Case Review tool is used annually to measure quality of VR services provided.
- Mini-case review tool is used quarterly by Managers to spot-check quality of VR services.
- Use of SARA to follow up with all clients one year after exit to measure Credential Attainment after exit.
- Review of RSA Quarterly Dashboards to measure progress towards achievement of negotiated Common Performance Measures and other Measures that Matter.
- Utilize RSA's RSA-911 Edit tool quarterly to ensure 100% data accuracy is reported on the RSA-911.
- Use of monthly reports from SaraWorks to measure SARA usage by both clients and staff.
- Use of Counselor list-serve to send quarterly reminder emails to staff to update educational goals in order to accurately capture Measurable Skill Gains and Credential Attainment.
- Use of quarterly tableau reports to measure achievement of 90% of cases to eligible in 60 days.
- Use of quarterly tableau reports to measure achievement of 90% of cases to plan in 90 days.
- Fiscal tool is used for managers to review 10% of all AFPs monthly.

Priority 3.1: Provide on-going Quality Assurance (QA) and program evaluation activities to ensure integrity of VR Services.

Strategies:

- Program evaluation results are reviewed by administrative and management staff.
- Consumer satisfaction responses are analyzed and disseminated to SVRC on a quarterly basis and sent to Managers monthly.
- Internal case review process and tool is developed and implemented.
- Case reviews are both qualitative and quantitative in nature.
- Develop internal controls that ensure fidelity and accuracy of data submitted to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA).
- Create reports in Tableau for Managers to review cases frequently.

- Help Desk staff will provide on-going support and training by participating in staff meetings and flying to Fairbanks and Juneau semi-annually to meet with staff.

Performance Indicators:

- Internal documentation revised as necessary based on QA results.
- Staff training developed as deemed necessary based upon case review results.
- Results are shared with appropriate staff.
- Case reviews are completed and scheduled on a regular basis and incorporate internal controls.
- All staff are trained on new procedures.
- Regional Managers will have access and be able to run reports when needed.
- Staff meetings are scheduled with Help Desk Staff on an on-going basis.

Priority 3.2: DVR will meet or exceed state and federal Common Performance Measures (CPMs).

Strategies:

- Establish baseline data for all WIOA required data elements and negotiate with RSA on required CPMs.
- Monitor data collection processes to ensure program fidelity.
- Work with National Clearinghouse to obtain additional education information.
- Work with Leadership to determine appropriate State Goals known as Missions & Measures.

Performance Indicators:

- Negotiation with RSA completed.
- All required federal reporting submitted on time and is accurate.
- Schedule established for sending/receiving data from the National Clearinghouse.
- Meet or exceed State Missions and Measures.
- Meet or exceed Federal CPMs.

Priority 3.3: Continue to update the AWARE case management system to provide quality data while reducing system barriers.

Strategies:

- Help Desk team actively participates in all AWARE user groups and Community of Practice group to ensure DVR's workflows are considered when Alliance is creating enhancements to the software.
- Help Desk team meet and thoroughly analyze impact to field and accounting staff with each iteration of RSA-911 data manual, upgrades to the AWARE system, or clarification of current regulations by RSA.

- Help Desk team works with the management team to ensure on-going, accurate data collection by field staff.
- Help Desk team coordinates all training of field and other staff and provides training in timely manner.
- Help Desk team routinely runs QA on AWARE data to ensure accuracy and consistency.
- Policy, Planning and Program Evaluation team (PP&P) to evaluate processes for moving to a paperless system. This includes hardware and software purchases that may be necessary and staff training.
- Incorporate SharePoint in all policy and procedure development.

Performance Indicators:

- All AWARE updates are reviewed and installed as required.
- Federal reports are produced on time and accurately. Staff are notified and trained on any changes to AWARE.
- Required data is collected accurately.
- DVR services are not negatively impacted
- RSA-911 edit issues are resolved.
- Plan for moving to paperless is established with timelines and costs.
- Policies and Procedures are available on SharePoint.

Priority 3.4: Continue to support SARA communication system.

Strategies:

- Help Desk staff will continue to support and provide training for SARA.
- Finalize improved AWARE to SARA integration.
- Continue training on new features and technology as it becomes available.
- Electronic signatures
- Concurrent case-noting and calendaring
- Single-Sign-On
- Outlook calendar and SARA calendar integration
- Train BEP staff and BEP Vendors on use of SARA
- Begin soft onboarding and training with CRPs into SARA.

Performance Indicators:

- New SARA interface and new system functionality is in place.

- Follow-up training at VR statewide training performed annually.
- Survey BEP vendors semi-annually and then annually determine if SARA communication is useful or needs further refinements.
- Collaborate with CRP Coordinator and survey staff and CRP vendors regarding effectiveness of SARA use with CRPs.

Priority 3.5: Explore and improve technology usage.

Strategies:

- Explore an internal or State of Alaska “accessibility” position.
- Explore additional social media opportunities to increase awareness and information about DVR and its services statewide.
- Assist staff and managers with the hybrid teleworking staffing environment, which continues to improve distance delivery of services, increases communication between VR Staff and clients/case services partners, and gives VR clients the option to choose their preferred meeting and communication methods.
- Continue to coordinate support with Information Technology regarding AT Equipment and other technology available for use by participants in field offices.
- Implement a paperless/electronic case file which includes attaching documents from sources other than the AWARE case management system.

Performance Indicators:

- Accessibility hardware and software is supported and upgraded when applicable.
- Social media influence to show increased number of individuals served annually.
- VR offices transitioned to paperless/electronic case files by FY26.

Priority 3.6: Review existing Policies and Procedures.

Strategies:

- Revise existing policies.
- Obtain SVRC approval on policies related to service delivery.
- Revise client services procedures.

Performance Indicators:

- New policies written and all staff are trained.
- Policies are posted publicly.
- New procedures are written and all staff are trained on the procedures.

Priority 3.7: Review DVR case processes for efficiency and ease of navigation.

Strategies:

- Evaluate processes at each case status.
- Simplify documentation and promote a statewide path of workflow which all offices follow when possible.
- Improve guidance materials and implement staff training.
- Develop committee to evaluate and suggest improvements (see Priority 1.8).

Performance Indicators:

- Clients are able to quickly and easily access DVR services.
- Redundancy is reduced.
- Consistency among offices achieved.

Goal 4 – Alaska DVR will prioritize the needs of Alaskan businesses while leveraging other workforce partners.

This goal represents DVR’s responsibility to the dual customer model as well as ensuring employment services are provided through other components of the Workforce development system.

Measures of success:

- Utilize ETA-9169 to measure effectiveness in serving employers (awaiting baseline).
- Continue to use CSNA Employer Survey Tool to determine employer attitudes when hiring individuals with disabilities.
- Use SARA to measure number of co-enrolled clients who are also recipients of workforce services.
- Develop common referral tool for ease of use between workforce partners leading to an increase co-enrolled cases.

Chief to review monthly AWARE employer services reports to measure employer outreach goals.

Priority 4.1: Work with employers to ensure vast opportunities exist in meaningful employment.

Strategies:

- Work with employers to ensure opportunities for DVR clients to succeed in high-demand jobs.
- Provide training to in-house job developers.
- Develop YouTube channel.
- Develop standardized outreach materials for employers.
- Develop standardized and publicly available FAQs.
- The Business Engagement Services Team (BEST) will develop one-year plan for employer engagement and determine how to measure success.

- The BEST will develop an internal Strategic Plan to determine specific action steps required to achieve the goals of this section.

Performance Indicators

- Employers in high demand industries will hire DVR clients resulting in higher wages.
- Training program implemented for job developers.
- BEST will develop a one-year plan with goals and measures of success.

Priority 4.2: Work with WIOA Partners to strengthen services to individuals with disabilities.

Strategies:

- Develop a structured communication plan with Division of Employment and Training Services (DETS).
- Develop a structured communication plan within the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD).
- Advocate for VR representation on the Alaska Workforce Investment Board.
- Continue to co-enroll participants.

Performance Indicators

- Improved and increased communication, referrals, and cross agency collaboration.
- Improved and increased interdepartmental communication.
- SARA Communication System indicates co-enrolled participants.
- Develop a Universal Referral System.

Priority 4.3: Utilize “Employment First” initiative to promote hiring of individuals with disabilities across Alaska.

Strategies:

- Explore “rebranding” to increase the understanding of DVR and services provided.
- Increase Supported Employment opportunities.
- Increase the use of Provisional Hire within the State.
- Include training at the hiring manager level.
- Meet with other Division Directors to train on the Provisional Hire process.
- Create links to include Provisional Hire opportunities when new positions post.
- Use AWARE’s Job Ready page consistently in all regions and provide training, as needed.
- Create an employment related task-force.

Performance Indicators:

- DVR’s services are more easily recognizable.
- DVR Staff is successful in making connections to enhance employment opportunities for Alaskans with disabilities.
- Increased successful Supported Employment closures, including higher wages and retention of employment.
- Increased Provisional Hire requests and placements.

D. EVALUATION AND REPORTS OF PROGRESS: VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS

For the most recently completed program year, provide an evaluation and report of progress for the goals or priorities, including progress on the strategies under each goal or priority, applicable to that program year. Sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to describe—

1. PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED FOR THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS;

List the goals/priorities and discuss the progress or completion of each goal/priority and related strategies

Goal 1: Service Delivery; DVR will deliver high quality vocational rehabilitation services to people with disabilities to assist them in obtaining employment consistent with their career goals. – GOAL REVISED

- Priority 1.1: Improve employment outcomes to more closely align with high demand jobs – REVISED
- Priority 1.2: Evaluate services to individuals who are blind or visually impaired – REVISED
- Priority 1.3: Evaluate services to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing – REVISED
- Priority 1.4: Enhance communication with Tribal Partners – REVISED
- Priority 1.5: Continue to deliver Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) – CONTINUED
- Priority 1.6: Improve usage and quality of CRP services in all regions – CONTINUED
- Priority 1.7: Continue to provide quality services to rural locations – CONTINUED
- Priority 1.8: Utilize “Employment First” initiative and increase Supported Employment opportunities. – REVISED

Progress is measured quarterly by the Policy, Planning, and Program Evaluation Unit through the case management system to determine number of individuals served, employment outcomes, and achievement of performance indicators. This progress is updated internally using the working Strategic Plan document.

Goal 2: Staff Development; DVR will recruit, employ, retain, and train the most qualified and highly skilled rehabilitation staff. – GOAL CONTINUED

- Priority 2.1: Ensure resources are available for hiring and retaining qualified staff. – CONTINUED
- Priority 2.2: Ensure on-going staff development and training – CONTINUED
- Priority 2.3: Continue mentoring and succession planning – CONTINUED

Progress is measured by completion of graduate degree programs and obtaining certification. DVR's Training Specialist tracks all employee training, including graduate degree education and ongoing training for employees. The Training Specialist also coordinates leadership development training for both Regional Managers and Counselors who may be interested in leadership in the future. The Training Specialist meets weekly with the Chief and Deputy Chief to ensure continued training is available throughout the year.

Goal 3: Quality Assurance; DVR will continuously evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of organizational systems and identify opportunities to develop innovative solutions for necessary changes. – GOAL REVISED

- Priority 3.1: Provide ongoing Quality Assurance (QA) and program evaluation activities to ensure integrity of VR Services – CONTINUED
- Priority 3.2: DVR will meet or exceed state and federal common performance measures (CPMs) - CONTINUED
- Priority 3.3: DVR will continue to update the Case Management System (AWARE) to provide quality data. – CONTINUED
- Priority 3.4: Continue to support SARA communication system. – REVISED
- Priority 3.5: Explore and improve technology usage. – REVISED
- Priority 3.6: Review existing policies and procedures. – CONTINUED

Progress is measured by successful completion performance indicators as negotiated with Rehabilitation Services Administration and by successful quarterly data submission of the RSA-911 data report. The Policy, Planning, and Program Evaluation Unit meets weekly with the Chief to review performance and ensure DVR is meeting all Federal requirements.

Goal 4: Leadership in WIOA; DVR will provide leadership in the workforce development system. – GOAL REVISED

- Priority 4.1: Improve communication between the WIOA partners. – REVISED
- Priority 4.2: Increase OCS and DVR collaboration. – RETIRED
- Priority 4.3: Promote senior employment – REVISED

Progress is measured by successful coordination of activities with WIOA partners resulting in increased referrals, increased coordination of services to participants of the VR program, and appropriate competitive integrated employment outcomes. Advocacy will result in an increase of diversity, equity, and inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the workforce.

In order to be considered a successful closure when exiting the DVR, an individual must obtain competitive integrated employment and maintain that employment for a minimum of 90 days. In PY2022 the number of individuals who maintained competitive integrated employment increased to 292, including 250 in the private sector; 30 in Federal, State or Local Government; and 12 who were self-employed. Federal Common Performance Measures rate a state's success based upon employment retention and median wages at second quarter after exit and employment retention at fourth quarter after exit. DVR continues to place a heightened emphasis on the quality and appropriateness of an employment outcome rather than the number of individuals exiting the program to encourage long-term employment opportunities for clients. DVR has seen the quality and retention of an individual's employment to continue increase as shown by the increase in average wages at exit.

DVR assists individuals with disabilities by providing career and training services to alleviate and/or remove barriers to employment related to a disability and helps those individuals find competitive integrated employment that offers livable wages, benefits, and career pathways to create self-sufficiency. The average wage of individuals exiting DVR in FY2023 was \$18.66 per hour, an increase of \$1.79 from the prior year.

Determining the eligibility of an individual with a disability for vocational rehabilitation services within 60 days of application is required by federal regulation, and also represents responsive customer service. The determination of eligibility is the point at which counselors and individuals can begin vocational rehabilitation (VR) planning and determine the most appropriate employment goal. Decisions that cannot be made within the 60-day time period are often due to an individual's need to participate in a Trial Work assessment, which is an allowable reason for an eligibility extension beyond the 60 days. In PY2022 95.9% of eligibility determinations were made in 60 days or less.

An Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) is considered successfully completed when an individual receives the necessary rehabilitation services identified on the IPE, is able to obtain employment, and the employment is maintained for 90 days. This measure speaks to the efficiency and effectiveness of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) process.

IPEs are extremely comprehensive and must be developed thoughtfully and in conjunction with the individual or their representative. The IPE delineates the employment goal, the type of rehabilitation services required to reach the employment goal, the estimated costs of those services, who will provide the services, and the length of time anticipated for the individual to complete the plan. Successful plan implementation requires the expertise of qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors; active involvement by the individual; labor market research; and consideration of the individual's strengths, resources priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice. In the state of Alaska, the labor market, unemployment rate, access to healthcare, and overall economic trends can drastically affect this rate.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act of 2014 requires IPEs to be developed within 90 days unless the individual agrees to an extension. DVR has seen an increase in this percentage due to increased training of VR staff, and early assessments and evaluations to ensure the most appropriate vocational goal is chosen in a timely manner. DVR continues to provide training to all staff on strategies for developing IPEs within 90 days, including using specialized software designed to enhance communication and engagement. In PY2022 91.9% of all IPEs were developed in 90 days or less.

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), as required by the Workforce and Innovation Opportunity Act of 2014, are services designed to assist students with disabilities, ages 14-21, in preparing for the transition from secondary school into the workforce and/or post-secondary opportunities. Pre-ETS includes: (1) job exploration counseling; (2) work-based learning experiences;

(3) counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education; (4) workplace readiness training and independent living; and (5) instruction in self-advocacy and peer mentoring. DVR is required to expend 15 percent of its federal award on Pre-ETS. Alaska DVR has been at the forefront of Pre-ETS service delivery nationally. DVR was able to provide services to 1,368 students with disabilities in PY2022.

DVR has been able to make significant strides in providing Pre-ETS throughout the state of Alaska by building relationships with school districts and community partners. There are approximately 3,575 Alaskans ages 14-21 who experience a disability. In PY2022, DVR was able to serve 38 percent of this population with 75 percent of the Pre-ETS programs occurring in rural Alaska.

2. PERFORMANCE ON THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY INDICATORS UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA FOR THE MOST RECENTLY COMPLETED PROGRAM YEAR, REFLECTING ACTUAL AND NEGOTIATED LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE. EXPLAIN ANY DISCREPANCIES IN THE ACTUAL AND NEGOTIATED LEVELS; AND

Performance Indicators	PY 2022 Expected Level	PY 2022 Negotiated Level	PY 2022 Actual Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	51.7%	52.6%	53.9%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	47.0%	50.0%	49.8%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$4,570	\$4,635	\$5,450
Credential Attainment Rate	41.5%	42.0%	47.8%
Measurable Skill Gains	23.0%	61.4%	61.4%

DVR met, exceeded, or had minimal discrepancies of the performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA. Over the last four years, DVR has placed significant focus on the importance of Common Performance Measures (CPMs) and document collection. Increases in applications, eligibilities, and plans have led to overall improved numbers and percentages. Additionally meeting or exceeding state and federal CPMs was an identified priority in DVRs 2020-2023 Strategic plan. Strategies to achieve this priority included:

- Establish baseline data for all WIOA required data elements and negotiate with RSA on required CPMs.
- Monitor data collection processes to ensure program fidelity.
- Work with National Clearinghouse to obtain additional education information.
- Work with Leadership to determine appropriate State Goals known as Missions & Measures.

3. THE USE OF FUNDS RESERVED FOR INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES (SECTIONS 101(A)(18) AND 101(A)(23) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT) (E.G., SRC, SILC).

DVR sets aside a portion of funds allotted under Section 110 of the Act for development and implementation of innovative approaches to improve the provision of VR services, particularly for individuals with the most significant disabilities. For PY2024 through PY2025, DVR will use these funds to support the State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee (SVRC). The SVRC is a full and active partner in the development of agency policies, regulations, and procedures. The SVRC collaborates

with DVR to hold public meetings in different areas around the state each year. These meetings are another way for DVR to identify needs and to gather trend information for strategic planning.

DVR no longer supports the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) due to the move of the SILC to Senior and Disabilities Services, who has assumed the responsibility to fund the SILC beginning in PY2021.

SVRC PY2022 funds were used for expenses related to quarterly meetings and for a member to attend the virtual portion of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation’s Fall conference. Four quarterly meetings were held via video conference. Prior to the pandemic, the SVRC would meet face-to-face at least once during the year. However, due to COVID-19, all meetings were virtual in PY2022. Meeting costs included the use of a court reporter and the provision of accessibility options for the public and members with disabilities.

Innovation and Expansion Activities budgeted for PY2022:

- Support of the SRC: \$38,590

Innovation and Expansion Activities budgeted for PY2023:

- Support of the SRC: \$38,590

Innovation and Expansion Activities budgeted for PY2024:

- Support of the SRC: \$38,590

Innovation and Expansion Activities budgeted for PY2025:

- Support of the SRC: \$38,590

PY2024 and PY2025, Resource Plan funds will be used to support the SVRC’s quarterly meeting expenses, including one face-to-face meeting to be held in Anchorage, Alaska. This will involve travel and accommodations for members and staff, a court reporter, a sign language interpreter for public testimony, conference room rental, and meeting accessibility needs of the public and members. Funds will also be used to pay for travel, room and board, and conference registration for two members to attend a National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils conference.

PY2024 Estimated budget includes:

	Travel	Contractual	Commodities	Totals
Kenai Peninsula Reporting		\$ 15,000.00		
Fall CSAVR	\$ 2,800.00			
Fall CSAVR Registration		\$ 500.00		
Spring CSAVR	\$1,500.00			
Spring CSAVR Registration		\$ 250.00		
Annual Report		\$ 200.00		
Teleconferences (zoom)		\$ 1,500.00		
Quarterly Meetings				\$ 13,7000

	Travel	Contractual	Commodities	Totals
Interpreters		\$ 2,640.00		
Supplies			\$ 500.00	
Totals	\$ 4,300.00	\$ 20,090.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 38,590.00

Alaska’s SVRC has 5 subcommittees including Executive; Program Evaluation; Assistive Technology, Planning and Recruitment; and Policy, Public Relations, and Resources. PY2024 and PY2025 goals of the subcommittees include:

- Increasing promotion of SVRC meetings and public testimony.
- Increase outreach to potential new members to limit vacancies.
- Track recruitment strategies.

E. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES, DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS, AND ARRANGEMENTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES.

1. ACCEPTANCE OF TITLE VI FUNDS:

(B) VR agency does NOT elect to receive title VI funds and understands that supported employment services must still be provided

2. IF THE VR AGENCY HAS ELECTED TO RECEIVE TITLE VI FUNDS, SECTION 606(B)(3) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT REQUIRES VR AGENCIES TO INCLUDE SPECIFIC GOALS AND PRIORITIES WITH RESPECT TO THE DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS RECEIVED UNDER SECTION 603 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES. DESCRIBE THE USE OF TITLE VI FUNDS AND HOW THEY WILL BE USED IN MEETING THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES OF THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM.

Over the last 3 years, Alaska DVR has relinquished the full amount of title VI funds back to Rehabilitation Services Administration, therefore, DVR does not elect to receive title VI funds and understands that supported employment services must still be provided under title I.

The Alaska State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee (SVRC) was provided with opportunity for input on the decision to not receive title VI funds through review of the VR Portion of the WIOA State Plan from January 19, 2024 through February 1, 2024.

Additionally, the entire Alaska WIOA Combined State Plan was available for public comment through the Online Public Notice System from January 25, 2024 through February 5, 2024.

There was no public comment nor feedback from the SVRC disagreeing with DVR’s decision not to elect to receive title VI funds.

3. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES MAY BE PROVIDED WITH TITLE 1 OR TITLE VI FUNDS FOLLOWING PLACEMENT OF INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES IN EMPLOYMENT. IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(22) AND SECTION 606(B)(3) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, DESCRIBE THE QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES,

INCLUDING YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES; AND THE TIMING OF TRANSITION TO EXTENDED SERVICES.

Supported Employment (SE) is a specialized service delivery system specifically designed for individuals with the most significant disabilities who require assistance in acquiring and maintaining the work-related skills necessary for competitive, integrated employment or to become self-employed. SE is for individuals who have not historically had stable competitive integrated employment and, because of the severity of their disability, need ongoing intensive supports, such as Extended Services, in order to maintain employment.

Under Title I and Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act, special funding is available to provide SE services to those eligible individuals who, because of the significance of their disability, require intensive services to obtain employment and require Extended Services to maintain employment.

The critical identifier in SE is the need for Extended Services, which are long-term supports in the community, beyond Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) case closure. The essential aspect of the Supported Employment model is that without intensive support services, these individuals with a most significant disability would be unable to obtain and maintain competitive integrated employment.

Once an individual has reached job stabilization, DVR transitions the individual from Ongoing Support Services to another agency or a natural support source that will provide the Extended Services needed to maintain employment. The DVR case remains open for at least 90 calendar days after stable employment is achieved, and the case is closed at the transfer to long-term Extended Services, funded by an entity other than DVR, to ensure a smooth transition. If long-term supports are not available to a youth with a most significant disability, DVR may provide Extended Services to the youth for up to 4 years or until the youth turns 25, whichever occurs first.

Ongoing Support Services are time-limited services, up to a maximum of 24 months, which are identified and included on an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). Comparable benefits for Ongoing Support Services are taken into consideration, and if no other funding source is available, are funded by DVR from the time of job placement until the transition to Extended Services. Ongoing Support Services shall include an assessment of employment stability and provision and coordination of specific services at or away from the worksite that are needed in order for the individual to maintain stability. This is based on a minimum of twice-monthly monitoring at the worksite of an individual, or if under specific circumstances, off-site monitoring. Off-site monitoring may occur at the request of the individual, but meetings between the individual and the counselor should occur at least twice a month.

At times and under special circumstances, the individual and the VR Counselor, along with VR Manager approval, may jointly agree to extend the 24 months to achieve the employment outcome identified in the IPE.

Supported Employment has been referred to as a 'place and train' model, whether with job coaches or through natural supports. Individuals who may not possess all the necessary work or social skills required for immediate employment success are placed into employment. The 'place and train' model matches individuals to jobs that are consistent with their unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice. Placement is more rapid as there is no delay due to pre-placement training or skill requirements; however, vocational assessment activities should still occur to help determine the most appropriate vocational goal.

Providers develop the best job match for an individual, using flexible strategies to meet the individual's needs and the employer's unmet business needs. Providers then provide ongoing supports and training at the work site on the specific skills and/or behaviors required for the job so that the individual can develop the skills needed to maintain long-term employment with the use of Extended Services.

For those individuals who require Extended Services to successfully maintain employment but do not have those supports in place at the time of application, the expectation is that the individual or the individual's parent/guardian will actively pursue the necessary supports needed to ensure sustained employment beyond DVR case closure. DVR will assist the individual and/or parent/guardian in accessing Extended Services to apply for, and get on, the waitlist for waiver-based employment services through referral to Home and Community Based Waiver, or other appropriate service providers.

Supported Employment (SE) services can be provided to any individual if that individual has been determined eligible for VR services, has a most significant disability, and for whom SE has been identified as the appropriate service delivery method on the basis of a comprehensive assessment of rehabilitation needs.

DVR should also have a reasonable expectation that the individual will require Extended Services in order to maintain employment, whether the individual is currently receiving such services or not.

When developing the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), DVR must have a reasonable expectation that Extended Services are available or will become available to the individual in order to designate the IPE as an SE plan. Whenever possible, the source for these services should be identified as part of the IPE development; however, the provision of services cannot be delayed or denied if a source for Extended Services cannot be identified in the IPE. In the instance of an individual living in a community in which no long-term service providers exist, DVR should first:

1. Work to identify natural supports prior to plan development.
2. If not successful, proceed with a non-Supported Employment IPE in which DVR can provide the full spectrum of VR services but is unable to provide SE services.

Placement on a waiver waitlist creates a reasonable expectation that Extended Services will become available to the individual, as does the intention of the individual to pursue such resources.

Once an individual is employed, a Supported Employment Long-Term Support Agreement must be completed between DVR and the Extended Service provider. The Long-Term Support Agreement must include the name of the Extended Service provider, the name of the individual, the funding source, and access to financial reports, and must be signed by the Extended Service provider and DVR. The provider can utilize DVR's Supported Employment Long-Term Support Agreement or provide the required information in another format.

Supported Employment (SE) cases are closed as successfully employed when the individual:

- Is working in their chosen employment goal
- Has met or is reasonably expected to meet their goal for hours of employment as stated in the criteria for evaluate progress section of the IPE
- Is earning minimum wage or above in an integrated setting
- Has achieved job stability
- Has the necessary supports in place

- Is receiving Extended Services through a source other than DVR.

Alaska law prohibits subminimum wage; therefore, DVR does not support individuals working on a short-term basis as defined in 34 CFR § 363.1(c). Short-term basis only applies to individuals with the most significant disabilities working temporarily at a wage that is below minimum wage; it does not apply to any other type of employment.

4. SECTIONS 101(A)(22) AND 606(B)(4) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT REQUIRE THE VR AGENCY TO DESCRIBE EFFORTS TO IDENTIFY AND ARRANGE, INCLUDING ENTERING INTO COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS, WITH OTHER STATE AGENCIES AND OTHER APPROPRIATE ENTITIES IN ORDER TO PROVIDE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES. THE DESCRIPTION MUST INCLUDE EXTENDED SERVICES, AS APPLICABLE, TO INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THE PROVISION OF EXTENDED SERVICES TO YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH 34 C.F.R. § 363.4(A) AND 34 C.F.R. § 361.5(C)(19)(V).

DVR has a Cooperative Agreement with the Division of Senior and Disabilities Services (SDS), Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) Unit. This agreement was renewed in September of 2021 to reflect regulatory changes to employment services provided under the Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Waivers and DVR’s updated Supported Employment (SE) policy. This partnership enhances coordination, increases referrals, and improves quality of services provided to individuals receiving SE services, independent living, and other waiver-based services to increase employment outcomes for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. DVR and SDS have a taskforce that meets quarterly to discuss employment issues impacting individuals who experience I/DD. Additionally, the taskforce developed a DVR/SDS crosswalk to ensure field staff from both agencies have a better understanding of terminology and service delivery of each other’s programs. DVR and SDS have provided cross training to each other’s staff, most recently in January 2024, to improve service delivery and increase understanding of both programs.

Extended Services are long-term support services and other appropriate services that are needed to support and maintain an individual with a most significant disability (including a youth with a most significant disability) in supported employment. They are provided and funded by an entity or person other than DVR, which may include Senior and Disability Services, mental health providers, private nonprofit organizations, the employer/co-workers, or any other appropriate resource including family members. When no other funding source is available, DVR may fund Extended Services for a youth with a most significant disability for a period of time not to exceed four years, or until such time that a youth reaches the age of 25, thus no longer meeting the definition of a ‘youth with a disability,’ whichever occurs first. In all other situations, funding for Extended Services shall come from sources other than DVR.

DVR may provide referral and VR services not covered by HCBS Waiver, such as Job Search/Placement with Title I funds. DVR services will be provided to the extent they are required for successful transition to stable employment. Time-limits of services provided will be determined on an individual case by case basis but will typically not exceed 24 months. All efforts will be made by the VR Counselor to identify and utilize long-term supports at the earliest point possible in order to maximize supported employment funds to all eligible individuals. DVR provides vocational rehabilitation services for eligible VR clients focused on competitive, community-based integrated employment.

DVR considers an individual to be successfully employed when the individual:

- 1) has been working for 90 days and is stable in a job that is satisfactory to both the individual and the employer;
- 2) has met the goal for hours of employment as stated in the IPE;
- 3) is earning minimum wage;
- 4) is working in an integrated setting; and
- 5) has extended supports in place through SDS or other identified long-term funding sources.

F. ANNUAL ESTIMATES

Sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act require all VR agencies to annually conduct a full assessment of their resources and ability to serve all eligible individuals before the start of the Federal fiscal year. In accordance with 34 C.F.R. § 361.29(b), annual estimates must include the following projections:

1. ESTIMATES FOR NEXT FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR—

A. VR PROGRAM; AND

Priority Category (if applicable)	No. of Individuals Eligible for Services	No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under VR Program	Costs of Services using Title I Funds	No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable)
MSD	1,216	1,216	\$1,620,000	N/A
SD	846	846	\$972,000	N/A
D	60	60	\$108,000	N/A

B. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM.

Priority Category (if applicable)	No. of Individuals Eligible for Services	No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under Supported Employment Program	Costs of Services using Title I and Title VI Funds	No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable)
MSD	186	186	\$770,000	N/A

G. ORDER OF SELECTION

1. PURSUANT TO SECTION 101(A)(5) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, THIS DESCRIPTION MUST BE AMENDED WHEN THE VR AGENCY DETERMINES, BASED ON THE ANNUAL ESTIMATES DESCRIBED IN DESCRIPTION (F), THAT VR SERVICES CANNOT BE PROVIDED TO ALL ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE STATE WHO APPLY FOR AND ARE DETERMINED ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES.

* VR agencies may maintain an order of selection policy and priority of eligible individuals without implementing or continuing to implement an order of selection.

The VR agency is not implementing an order of selection, and all eligible individuals will be served.

2. FOR VR AGENCIES THAT HAVE DEFINED PRIORITY CATEGORIES DESCRIBE—

A. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ORDER

No order of selection is being implemented at this time.

B. THE ORDER (PRIORITY CATEGORIES) TO BE FOLLOWED IN SELECTING ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS TO BE PROVIDED VR SERVICES ENSURING THAT INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES ARE SELECTED FOR SERVICES BEFORE ALL OTHER INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES; AND

No order of selection is being implemented at this time.

C. THE VR AGENCY'S GOALS FOR SERVING INDIVIDUALS IN EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY, INCLUDING HOW THE AGENCY WILL ASSIST ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS ASSIGNED TO CLOSED PRIORITY CATEGORIES WITH INFORMATION AND REFERRAL, THE METHOD IN WHICH THE VR AGENCY WILL MANAGE WAITING LISTS, AND THE PROJECTED TIMELINES FOR OPENING PRIORITY CATEGORIES. NOTE: PRIORITY CATEGORIES ARE CONSIDERED OPEN WHEN ALL INDIVIDUALS IN THE PRIORITY CATEGORY MAY BE SERVED.

No order of selection is being implemented at this time.

3. HAS THE VR AGENCY ELECTED TO SERVE ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS OUTSIDE OF THE ORDER OF SELECTION WHO REQUIRE SPECIFIC SERVICES OR EQUIPMENT TO MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT?

No order of selection is being implemented at this time.

H. WAIVER OF STATEWIDENESS.

The State plan shall be in effect in all political subdivisions of the State, however, the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (Commissioner) may waive compliance with this requirement in accordance with Section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act and the implementing regulations in 34 C.F.R. § 361.26. If the VR agency is requesting a waiver of statewideness or has a previously approved waiver of statewideness, describe the types of services and the local entities providing such services under the waiver of statewideness and how the agency has complied with the requirements in 34 C.F.R. § 361.26. If the VR agency is not requesting or does not have an approved waiver of statewideness, please indicate "not applicable."

Not applicable.

I. COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT.

In accordance with the requirements in Section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act, the VR agency must develop and maintain annually a description (consistent with the purposes of the Rehabilitation Act) of the VR agency’s comprehensive system of personnel development, which shall include a description of the procedures and activities the State VR agency will undertake to ensure it has an adequate supply of qualified State rehabilitation professionals and paraprofessionals that provides the following:

1. ANALYSIS OF CURRENT PERSONNEL AND PROJECTED PERSONNEL NEEDS INCLUDING—

A. THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL CURRENTLY NEEDED BY THE VR AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY; AND

B. THE NUMBER AND TYPE OF PERSONNEL THAT ARE EMPLOYED BY THE VR AGENCY IN THE PROVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES, INCLUDING RATIOS OF QUALIFIED VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELORS TO CLIENTS;

C. PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY, WHO WILL BE NEEDED BY THE VR AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES IN 5 YEARS BASED ON PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED, INCLUDING INDIVIDUALS WITH SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL EXPECTED TO RETIRE OR LEAVE THE FIELD, AND OTHER RELEVANT FACTORS.

Personnel Category	No. of Personnel Employed	No. of Personnel Currently Needed	Projected No. of Personnel Needed in 5 Years
Director	1	1	1
Chief	1	1	1
Deputy Chief	1	1	1
VR Manager	5	5	5
VR Counselor	33	35	40
VR Assistant	20	23	28
BEP Staff	3	3	3
Transition Coordinator	1	1	1
CRP Specialist	1	1	1
In-house ASL Interpreter	1	1	1
Client Services Admin.	6	7	8
Client Services non-Admin	6	8	8

D. RATIO OF QUALIFIED VR COUNSELORS TO CLIENTS:

Ratio of qualified VR counselors to clients: 1:53

E. PROJECTED NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED IN 5 YEARS:

Program Year	Number of Client Served
2028 Projected	2,105

2. DATA AND INFORMATION ON PERSONNEL PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT, RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION, AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING:

A. A LIST OF THE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE STATE THAT ARE PREPARING VR PROFESSIONALS, BY TYPE OF PROGRAM; THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED AT EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS, BROKEN DOWN BY TYPE OF PROGRAM; AND THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO GRADUATED DURING THE PRIOR YEAR FROM EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS WITH CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, OR WITH THE CREDENTIALS FOR CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, BROKEN DOWN BY THE PERSONNEL CATEGORY FOR WHICH THEY HAVE RECEIVED, OR HAVE THE CREDENTIALS TO RECEIVE, CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE.

Institute of Higher Education	Type of Program	No. of Students Enrolled	No. of Prior Year Graduates
Idaho State University	MCoun in Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling	20	5
Portland State University	MS in Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling	36	10
Portland State University	Graduate Certificate in Orientation and Mobility	29 (9 from WA)	19 (includes 8 full MS + O&M cert)
Western Oregon University	MS in Rehabilitation Counseling	47	12 (plus 4 more in Dec 2023)
Western Washington University	MA in Rehabilitation Counseling	36	14

B. THE VR AGENCY'S PLAN FOR RECRUITMENT, PREPARATION AND RETENTION OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL, WHICH ADDRESSES THE CURRENT AND PROJECTED NEEDS FOR QUALIFIED PERSONNEL; AND THE COORDINATION AND FACILITATION OF EFFORTS BETWEEN THE VR AGENCY AND INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS TO RECRUIT, PREPARE, AND RETAIN PERSONNEL WHO ARE QUALIFIED, INCLUDING PERSONNEL FROM MINORITY BACKGROUNDS AND PERSONNEL WHO ARE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.

Alaska does not have any postsecondary institutions that offer Rehabilitation Counseling Programs; therefore, Alaska DVR utilizes opportunities with out-of-state institutions.

Alaska DVR had three (3) VR counselors enrolled for the graduate-level programs from 2022 to 2023. Two graduates earned their CRC certification: one with a Master's Degree in Clinical Counseling; one with a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. In addition, fifteen (15) VR counselors renewed their CRC certification.

DVR evaluates its personnel needs annually as part of the strategic planning process. The recruitment of qualified rehabilitation personnel has been historically challenging in Alaska due to lack of Rehabilitation Counseling programs within Alaska's university system, as well as the Division of Personnel regulations, which mandate that several unsuccessful in-state recruitment searches occur prior to out-of-state recruitment efforts becoming an option. To overcome these difficulties, DVR developed positive relationships with several Rehabilitation Counseling Education programs to enable entry level and journey level counselors to obtain the necessary qualifications through distance education and intensive on-the-job supervision. This strategy is effective with paraprofessional staff as well. DVR recruits from various entities, including tribal vocational rehabilitation and human service agencies, and offers paid and non-paid internships to rehabilitation counseling graduate students who are interested in relocating to Alaska.

In accordance with Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), DVR offers preferential hire to individuals with disabilities to enhance their access to meaningful and gainful employment and to ensure that individuals with disabilities receive employment services in the most community integrated setting. Alaska relies upon educational institutions that deliver curriculums via distance education. Relationships with educational institutions fluctuate based on availability of long-term training grants and staff needs. However, DVR has developed a strong working relationship with Virginia Commonwealth University, University of Kentucky, University of Washington, University of Massachusetts Boston, and West Virginia University. Although DVR does not always have active students at these universities, DVR's Training Specialist maintains relationships for future needs. To reach a wider applicant market outside of the traditional in-state recruitment, DVR vacancies are advertised at the UAA Career Development Center, University of Washington Center for Continuing Education in Rehabilitation (CCER), and other university partners. Qualified individuals are identified through the on-going relationship with academic programs throughout the nation.

C. DESCRIPTION OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND ACTIVITIES THAT ENSURE ALL PERSONNEL EMPLOYED BY THE VR AGENCY RECEIVE APPROPRIATE AND ADEQUATE TRAINING AND CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS:

I. PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO ASSESSMENT, VOCATIONAL COUNSELING, JOB PLACEMENT, AND REHABILITATION TECHNOLOGY, INCLUDING TRAINING IMPLEMENTED IN COORDINATION WITH ENTITIES CARRYING OUT STATE PROGRAMS UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998; AND

II. PROCEDURES FOR THE ACQUISITION AND DISSEMINATION OF SIGNIFICANT KNOWLEDGE FROM RESEARCH AND OTHER SOURCES TO VR AGENCY PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS AND FOR PROVIDING TRAINING REGARDING THE AMENDMENTS TO THE REHABILITATION ACT MADE BY THE WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT.

In 2023 and 2024, Alaska DVR provided the following training to its employees, including:

Annual Statewide Training, such as –

- The use of Evaluation in Rehabilitation Planning
- Career Pathways to assist both the client and the counselor in identifying skills needed in the workplace
- Accessibility functions on iPhones
- Ableism and the Importance of Accessibility
- Service Animals
- Generational Diversity
- Supported Employment
- Economic Forecasts
- Team Building
- Business Engagement

Continuing Education, such as -

- National Certificate in Employment Services. The course concentrates on practical employment strategies for people with disabilities and provides an overview of significant disabilities, strategies for career development, job development, job support, and rehabilitation issues and trends.
- Specifically for Blind Services Team members, such as Assistive Technology for Individuals who are Blind or Visually Impaired in the Workplace.
- Specifically for Deaf Team members, such as Deaf 101, Finding Data About Deaf People.
- Specifically for Assessment Team members, such as Woodcock-Johnson IV Training. This workshop teaches administration, scoring, and interpretation of all of the tests of achievement/cognitive abilities, emphasizing the new tests and the changes from the Woodcock-Johnson III.
- Windmills, the disability inclusion training teaching employers how to change perceptions of individuals with disabilities.

DVR's Training Specialist seeks out and disseminates training related to amendments to WIOA such as Rapid Engagement, Section 511 training, Apprenticeship training, WIOA Desk Reference, and WIOA Youth .

DVR coordinates training with the Assistive Technology of Alaska (ATLA) to provide Assistive Technology (AT) training to DVR in areas such as an overview of AT for employees with disabilities, how to conduct an AT needs assessment, and common cognitive barriers and AT strategies. Training on Rehabilitation Technology is frequently provided to staff in conjunction with much of the AT training, including topics such as "Independent Living through AT" which describes how AT can aid someone in transitioning to independent living.

3. DESCRIPTION OF VR AGENCY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF PERSONNEL STANDARDS CONSISTENT WITH SECTION 101(A)(7)(B) TO ENSURE THAT VR AGENCY PROFESSIONAL AND PARAPROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL ARE ADEQUATELY TRAINED AND PREPARED, INCLUDING—

A. STANDARDS THAT ARE CONSISTENT WITH ANY NATIONAL OR STATE-APPROVED OR -RECOGNIZED CERTIFICATION, LICENSING, REGISTRATION, OR OTHER COMPARABLE REQUIREMENTS THAT APPLY TO THE PROFESSION OR DISCIPLINE IN WHICH SUCH PERSONNEL ARE PROVIDING VR SERVICES; AND

B. THE ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(7)(B)(II) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, TO ENSURE THAT THE PERSONNEL HAVE A 21ST CENTURY UNDERSTANDING OF THE EVOLVING LABOR FORCE AND THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.

The State of Alaska does not currently mandate licensure for rehabilitation counselors. As a result, DVR has adopted the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) academic degree requirements as its standard. Strategies that DVR employs to ensure an adequate supply of qualified vocational rehabilitation professionals are:

- Participating in local job/career fairs.
- Formation of an in-house training and staff development team.
- Offering paid and non-paid graduate internships.
- Supporting rehabilitation counseling as an employment goal for DVR participants.
- Supporting staff in fulfilling academic requirements to qualify for Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) certification.
- Seeking out training to help staff achieve CRC recertification and professional growth.
- Utilizing training resources and support of CCER.
- Arranging presentations to graduate-level counseling students at the local university.
- Developing a career advancement system that integrates education, training and credential requirements for initial hire and future promotion.

The Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification requires a Master's Degree in Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling or Rehabilitation Counseling to sit for the CRC exam. The program must be accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs. The Commission also accepts Master's degrees in related fields with additional courses along with a period of time working under a CRC to sit for a CRC exam.

All non-CRC counselors receive Requirements for Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) packet, including a memo issued by the Chief of Rehabilitation Services, during the Alaska DVR New Hire Orientation. The memo clearly states that the Alaska DVR has adopted the standard of competency established by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC). The staff must read and fully understand their educational responsibilities and must sign the

Acknowledgement of Requirement for the CSPD. Copies are stored in the agency personnel file, the agency Training Specialist staff training record, and the staff's office.

DVR's training policy ensures that staff are provided with training and education to assist them in carrying out the mission of DVR. DVR recognizes the importance of its employees and supports the continuing education of all its employees, including academic courses.

Employees are eligible for receiving educational benefits provided that:

1. They are regular full-time employees who are scheduled to work 37.5 or 40 hours per week, Monday through Friday, on a regular basis; and
2. They have been employed for at least 180 days at the time of enrollment in the course or program; or
3. They are required to complete a master's degree program or additional graduate-level courses to meet the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) standards.

Guidelines & Approval:

1. Employees must obtain their supervisor's approval for the program/course they wish to pursue, including the total cost and begin/end dates, prior to enrollment or registration.
2. The employee will complete and submit the Training Request and Academic Reimbursement Forms to the Training Specialist for budget approval. Budget approval is at the discretion of the Chief of Vocational Rehabilitation Services for academic and Continuing Education programs, regardless of whether the cost is paid by the Division, another outside agency (e.g., Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority), or university (e.g., covered through the RSA scholarship).
3. Employees are expected to take courses outside working hours. If this is not possible due to limited course schedule, the employee must obtain their supervisor's consent.
4. If travel is required to attend on-campus courses, travel must be approved based upon the process outlined in the Alaska Administrative Manual.

DVR Funded Program & Reimbursement:

1. If employees must complete the academic program/course to meet CSPD standards, they must have an Employee Development Plan (EDP) to indicate the training needs. The EDP will be developed and prepared by the Training Specialist and should be signed and dated by the employee and their supervisor.
2. To qualify for education reimbursement, the program/course –
 - is required to meet CSPD standards, or
 - is required for the employee to sit for the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) Exam, or
 - must directly relate to the employee's current field of work, or benefit the division and its operation; or
 - will allow the employee to perform the essential functions of the job, will enhance the employee's job performance, or will prepare the employee for a promotion to the next classified position within the Division.

3. Nonjob-related prerequisite courses for a degree program are not eligible for reimbursement. Examples are classes in History of Philosophy and Algebra.
4. Employees will apply for the RSA scholarships through the university if available, for the required master's degree program. They must notify the Training Specialist when they have applied for the RSA scholarship and state how much funding is being awarded, including stipends. Any grant, scholarship, and other sources of financial aid will be applied to the bursar's bill. If an RSA scholarship is available and the employee chooses another school that does not offer an RSA scholarship, the employee is responsible for the incurred tuition and fees.
5. For employees who are required to enroll in a master's degree program under CSPD, the Division will pay employee training expenses, including registration fees, tuition and fees, required textbooks, program-related costs, and travel when on-campus courses are required by the university.
6. The Division will pay the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) fees for those employees eligible to sit for the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) exam, including application, exam, certification, and re certification fees. When employees need to travel to take the exam, the Division will cover their travel expenses.
7. The Division will not pay for academic education if employees have defaulted on their state or federal student loan. The employee must make a good faith effort to rectify their default status, as determined by the National Student Clearinghouse or the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education. Employees will need to sign an Academic Reimbursement form, which includes a statement that the employee is not in default on student loan(s).
8. If the training is required by the Division, and the training time occurs during an employee's regular shift, then the employee may use work time and equipment to accomplish approved coursework, provided that such use of time and/or equipment does not interfere with customer service or the overall mission of the Division, and is approved by their supervisor. The maximum weekly training time is 3.75 hours.
9. If employees choose not to attend the training after registration, they must inform the Training Specialist immediately so the Division can cancel the registration and stop payment or reschedule the training. In cases of extenuating circumstances, and at the discretion of the Chief, employees may be reimbursed if they have already paid training fees.
10. If training funds are insufficient to meet all training requests, the Division will give priority to employees who are required to complete a full master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling and additional graduate-level courses in compliance with the CSPD requirements.

4. METHOD(S) THE VR AGENCY USES TO ENSURE THAT PERSONNEL ARE ABLE TO COMMUNICATE IN APPROPRIATE MODES OF COMMUNICATION WITH OR IN THE NATIVE LANGUAGE OF APPLICANTS OR ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE LIMITED ENGLISH SPEAKING ABILITY.

DVR employs a full-time American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreter who is fluent in ASL to facilitate communication with participants and staff who use ASL. The agency supports employees who are interested in becoming proficient in ASL to increase communication with hard of hearing and deaf participants. Tele-interpreting is widely used. VR counselors who serve this population can use the text messaging software, SARA, as a form of accommodating their participants' needs.

For individuals with limited English proficiency, the Department of Labor maintains a roster of employees fluent in various languages; staff may utilize the services of professional interpreters when

needed. DVR relies heavily on Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation programs to educate state staff regarding culturally appropriate methods of communication with Alaska Native participants.

Other tools used to address individual communication needs include:

- IP-Relay: TTY/TDD system connects callers to an operator who then reads their messages to the recipients and transcribes their messages back to the callers.
- Video Phone allows users to access videos, IP Relay services, and instant messaging services.
- Captel Phone allows users to see the text of a phone call in real-time while hearing it.
- Communication Access Real-time Translation (CART) to provide real-time captioning.
- Fring allows users to make voice/video calls and IM chats from an iPhone/iPod.
- JAWS, Dragon, Fusion, CCTV Readers allow users to access screen content.
- Zoom video conferencing offers a closed caption feature.

5. AS APPROPRIATE, DESCRIBE THE PROCEDURES AND ACTIVITIES TO COORDINATE THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT WITH PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT.

DVR consistently collaborates with the State of Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) on numerous staff development and training initiatives.

DVR reaches out to students with disabilities throughout Alaska to foster a smooth transition from secondary school into vocational/academic training and into the world of work. VR counselors within each regional office are assigned to specific schools to streamline the referral process, ensure counselor participation in Individual Education Plan (IEP) development, and ensure that all schools are informed of DVR services. Contact with schools is carried out, at a minimum, on a monthly basis. Rural and village schools communicate with DVR through their special education staff, as well as DVR staff who are assigned and travel to that particular rural region. The Transition Coordinator holds bi-monthly teleconferences with all VR counselors involved in transition initiatives. These teleconferences allow staff to share information, brainstorm ideas, and develop effective strategies for service delivery.

DVR field staff are carrying out Pre-ETS activities for students with disabilities age 14 to 21 (up until the student's 22nd birthday) the following services:

- Job exploration counseling;
- Work-based learning experiences;
- Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education;
- Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living;
- Instruction in self-advocacy includes peer mentoring.

DVR staff also provides pre-employment transition coordination, including attending Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings for VR applicants and attending person-centered planning meetings for individuals receiving services under Title XIX of the Social Security Act.

Alaska Statewide Special Education Conference: DVR requires VR Counselor attendance and active participation in this annual conference to establish/maintain an ongoing dialogue with school districts and stay abreast of new developments in the field of special education (e.g., disability issues, AT, classroom accommodations, new legislation, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act requirements, etc.). The DVR Transition Coordinator participates in this conference annually as a presenter and vendor. In 2024, DVR's Transition Coordinator again presented at the Special Education conference, providing instruction through breakout sessions on implementing Pre-Employment Transition Services for students and preparing students for post-secondary education. Through breakout sessions, the Transition Coordinator provides pertinent information on how DVR is expanding the coordination of Pre-ETS in school districts across the state.

The conference also introduces, through agency presentations, teachers, and VR Counselors to additional postsecondary resources for transition planning. Teachers receive in depth training in: core areas of assessment, job development, job accommodations, and job supports; development of functional transition plans that meet indicator 13 requirements; statewide resources for connections with postsecondary resources like Social Security work incentives and SDS waiver services; and transition support services such as Transition Camps, JOBZ Club, and Phlight Club that enhance transition services already being provided in the schools.

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J. COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS.

In accordance with the requirements in Section 101(a)(11)(D) of the Rehabilitation Act—

1. DESCRIBE PLANS, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES FOR COORDINATION BETWEEN THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND EDUCATION OFFICIALS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PUBLIC EDUCATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, THAT ARE DESIGNED TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF THE STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM THE RECEIPT OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES IN SCHOOL TO THE RECEIPT OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES.

As required under 34 CFR 361.22 (b)(1), DVR is available to provide consultation and technical assistance to the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development (DEED), Division of Innovation and Education Excellence (IEE) as needed throughout the year. IEE may request consultation and technical assistance by phone, video conferencing, e-mail, mail, or on a peer-to-peer basis. DVR and IEE agree to provide cross-training as needed. DVR may provide consultation and technical assistance to the IEE staff in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including pre-employment transition services.

Consultation and technical assistance may be provided by the administrative, supervisory, and direct service delivery levels of ADVR and will occur formally and informally throughout the school year.

During the school year, the DVR Statewide Transition Coordinator will arrange an annual meeting co-facilitated by the IEE Statewide Educational Specialist. Areas of consultation and technical assistance may include the following information:

- Description of ADVR services, including pre-employment transition services
- Special Education- Vocational Rehabilitation annual reports

DVR Statewide Transition Coordinator will, on an annual basis, attend the Alaska Statewide Special Education Conference and maintain a presence on the Alaska Interagency Transition Council.

DVR may provide consultation and technical assistance to IEE Special Education (SE) and transition personnel at the district and school levels, to assist IEE transition teachers and staff plan for transition activities. Areas of consultation and technical assistance may include information related to:

- ADVR service descriptions including pre-employment transition services.
- ADVR referral procedures
- ADVR eligibility criteria
- Assistive technology needs and assessments
- Social Security benefits planning

ADVR staff may provide consultation and technical assistance on an ongoing basis to IEE SE and transition personnel at the school level, in planning activities for students with disabilities. In addition to the areas cited above, consultation and technical assistance may include information on the following:

1. Pre-employment transition services
2. Assistive technology
3. Work experience development
4. Strategies for successful job placement
5. Career exploration
6. Local resources for transition in addition to ADVR
7. Assistance in obtaining federal financial aid for postsecondary education

DVR and IEE agree to work collaboratively to assist students with disabilities in development and completion of their IEP as required under section 614(d) of the IDEA.

Transition planning will include but is not limited to:

ADVR, in collaboration with IEE, will provide or arrange for the provision of pre-employment transition services to all students with disabilities identified as requiring these services.

1. Pre-employment transition services:
 - Job exploration counseling
 - Work-based learning experiences
 - Workplace readiness training and independent living
 - Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or post-secondary educational programs at institutions of higher education
 - Instruction in self-advocacy and peer mentoring
2. The above services can be delivered in a variety of ways to best meet the needs of the individual. These may include but are not limited to:
 - VR counselors providing said services either in-person or in a group setting.
 - Hiring qualified vendors with approved Provider Agreements to deliver pre-employment transition services one-on-one, or in a group setting.
3. DVR may be invited to participate in IEE IEP development meetings for shared students with disabilities, depending on availability. DVR may participate in person or through the use of alternative means such as conference calls or other methods. When DVR is unable to attend the IEP meeting, IEE and DVR will communicate regarding IEP goals and needed transition services as soon as possible after the IEP meeting.
4. DVR's collaboration with and assistance to IEE SE teachers in transition planning for students with disabilities, to facilitate the development and completion of their IEPs as required under section 614(d) of IDEA. DVR will inform IEE SE Teachers of community events, such as job fairs, transition fairs, and career days to introduce and expose students with disabilities to possible career goals and objectives.
5. Introduction and guidance of students with disabilities to post-school alternatives which include, but are not limited to employment, post-secondary education, vocational training, and adult education, by IEE transition coordinators and DVR staff. Planning may also include coordination of social or vocational experiences for students with disabilities in real life work settings to improve competitive integrated employment outcomes.

The DVR Transition Coordinator will plan for statewide implementation of pre-employment transition services and transition services in keeping with this interagency agreement, policies, procedures, and guidelines. The DVR Transition Coordinator will assist staff with issues and concerns related to the coordination and implementation of pre-employment transition services and transition services in schools.

If roles and responsibilities for the provision of pre-employment transition services and transition services are unclear, the DVR Transition Coordinator will contact the appropriate IEE staff to clarify the roles and responsibilities of each entity.

IEE and DVR designated staff will assist their respective partner on issues and concerns related to the coordination and implementation of pre-employment transition services and transition services.

IEE will support and encourage Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to identify appropriate school personnel who will initiate the referral process of students receiving special education services, students with disabilities (e.g. physical, medical, visual) who are not eligible for special education services, and students who have a 504 Plan (Rehabilitation Act of 1973), to DVR for identification and need of Pre-Employment Transition Services.

Working in partnership with DVR, IEE will support and encourage LEAs to:

1. In partnership with DVR, will facilitate individual Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) between school district personnel and regional DVR office personnel for the provision of services to students with disabilities transitioning from school into adulthood.
2. Ensure, through continuous monitoring practices, that individuals identified as IEP students, who are at least 16 years of age, will have a secondary transition plan.
3. Ensure, through continuous monitoring practices and Local Education Agency grant annual reports that all procedures related to the provision of Free Appropriate Public Education for students with disabilities are carried out by school districts by age 16.
4. Designate a person for districts to contact to clarify questions, concerns, dispute resolution or issues related to the implementation of the MOU with regional Vocational Rehabilitation offices.
5. Designate a lead person to ensure that communication between IEE, DVR, and School District is maintained, and policies are developed and revised, at the state department level, to promote effective transition for students with disabilities from school into adulthood.
6. Encourage students with disabilities and their families to engage in the transition planning, including the provision of pre-employment transition services, in coordination with VR transition staff.
7. Invite VR transition staff to participate in the IEP meetings and transition planning process and refer all students with disabilities who are in need of and or interested in VR services including pre-employment transition services.
8. After receiving parental consent, provide a copy of the IEP and any amendments, including the Present Level of Education Performance and Exit Summary-Summary of Performance to the VR transition staff for all students with disabilities who are interested in and or in need of DVR services including pre-employment transition services.
9. When pre-employment transition services are provided by the IEE, within 30 days of service delivery, documentation of service delivery and completion will be provided to DVR, including for each student: name, birth date, race, ethnicity, specific Pre-ETS activity provided, date of the activity, and any costs associated with the activity.

10. Provide or make available documentation that the student satisfies the definition of a student with a disability under IDEA or for the purposes of section 504 for potentially eligible students with disabilities.
11. For students applying for VR services, provide any additional relevant information including medical, psychological, and audiological assessments to DVR to facilitate the application, eligibility determination, and IPE planning process.
12. Provide technical assistance through the state office, or their federal technical assistance providers, to DVR regarding the provisions and implementation of IDEA '04 as it applies to the students that qualify for DVR services.
13. Promote and provide assistance and training regarding the use of the Alaska Career Information Systems for all students' e-Portfolio system.

Working in coordination with IEE, DVR is responsible for:

1. Facilitating an individual MOU between school districts and regional DVR offices for the provision of services to students with disabilities transitioning from school into adulthood post-school activities.
 2. Designate a contact person responsible for clarifying questions, concerns, dispute resolution, or issues related to the implementation of the MOU with local school districts.
 3. Designate a staff member responsible for the continuation of communication and policy development between DVR, IEE, and school districts to improve transition services statewide to students with disabilities.
 4. Support training for all VR counselors, district teachers, paraprofessionals, school nurses, school counselors, and other personnel to increase their knowledge of rehabilitation services and support.
 5. Ensure that personnel will participate in and be involved with the student's educational program planning process including the IEP meeting.
 6. Upon request from school district staff, and with the parent's, guardian's or adult student's written consent, distribution of general information related to services, consultation, and TA, attend transition fairs and other forums to provide information about Pre-ETS and VR services to parents and school personnel, attend IEP meetings, provide Pre-ETS, referral to VR for services, eligibility determination, IPE development and VR services, pursuant to 34 C.F.R. §300.321(b)(3).
 7. Accept referrals of students with disabilities during the transition planning process for the provision of pre-employment transition services.
 8. Provide consultation with school district staff on transition planning to prepare a student to move from school to work or post-secondary education in accordance with the student's unique needs as determined through the IEP process and provision of pre-employment transition services.
- Assess, plan, develop, and provide VR services for eligible individuals with disabilities who have been referred for VR services, consistent with their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice, so that such individuals may prepare for and engage in competitive, integrated employment.

- Develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), which is consistent with, and which takes into consideration the student-client's Individualized Education Plan (IEP), within 90 days of DVR eligibility determination, unless an extension is approved and prior to the student graduating.
- Provide consultation to assist in the identification of eligible and potentially eligible students with disabilities and assessment of their individual needs for pre-employment transition services.
- Provide or arrange for the provision of services required by the IPE goal, when the student has been determined eligible for VR and the services are specific to his/her employment outcome and are not services customarily provided to the student by the LEA under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- Provide information to parents and/or guardian(s), student/clients regarding VR eligibility, vocational assessment for employment and postsecondary planning, and Client Assistance Program (CAP).
- Obtain written consent for the release of confidential information, pursuant to DVR policy and procedures, federal and state laws, and regulations regarding confidentiality.
- Share information regarding policies, procedures, guidelines, programs, and services for the purpose of improving the access to, and availability of, transition services.
- Provide brochures and materials about the VR process and services to the school districts for distribution to the students, parents, legal guardians, teachers, and others.
- Promote employer participation in providing opportunities for work-based learning for students with disabilities.
- As new federal or state requirements or initiatives are identified, DVR will participate with the IEE on joint training of school district and VR staff whenever possible.
- Coordinate the provision of pre-employment transition services.

DVR has a Transition Services policy in place outlining services to be provided to students transitioning from education to employment. DVR has prioritized that Individualized Plans for Employment are developed within 90 days, or prior to graduation if an applicant is in the final semester of their final year.

DVR has a Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) policy and staff have been provided training on the delivery of Pre-ETS required activities and pre-employment transition coordination. DVR continues to coordinate with state and local education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities, from education services to the provision of VR services. This includes a referral process from education agencies to DVR for Pre-ETS for students with disabilities, and to VR Services to ensure a smooth transition. The Transition Tools for Teachers, Parents and Students website includes a DVR referral guidance, including a fillable referral form and FAQs. The site also provides a School District Contact page for direct access to the DVR counselor serving each school.

DEED and DVR have a long history of coordination in the implementation and growth of Pre-Employment Transition Services. Over the years, this has resulted in a number of joint endeavors to promote higher graduation rates through the widespread incorporation of Pre-ETS. This has been accomplished through the Alaska Interagency Transition Council (AITC), a multi-agency group of

stakeholders involved in improving secondary transition outcomes, including secondary transition teacher training, data gathering, and widespread implementation of Pre-ETS.

This collaboration has resulted in:

- Quarterly AITC Newsletter
- Joint agency teacher trainings
- Data sharing agreement
- Shared input into goal development and planning
- Support of joint initiatives

This collaborative partnership was also an essential reason for the success DVR has had in continuing to deliver Pre-ETS via distance over the last three years, as both agencies braided funding to create virtual content and a delivery system to continue delivering teacher training and Pre-ETS.

The DVR Transition Coordinator or Chief of Rehabilitation Services regularly presents at the Special Education Director Annual Conference, which offers special education professionals from Alaska's 54 school districts the opportunity to learn about DVR services. AITC maintains a list of special education directors and markets directly to them for:

- Presentations of DVR and DVR services at orientation and throughout the year
- IEP participation and referral guidance
- Availability for technical assistance for implementing Pre-Employment Transition Services
- Secondary transition training for teachers

DVR's Transition Coordinator participates in several regional and state initiatives: University of Alaska Anchorage Center for Human Development (Tapestry Project), Alaska Interagency Transition Council, Statewide Independent Living Council, and the Alaska Mental Health Trust's Employment Initiative. These boards develop initiatives and activities that improve the transition outcomes of students with disabilities, however, it is the responsibility of DEED to disseminate the information to school districts and special education officials and recommend involvement. DVR disseminates initiatives to regional managers and counselors to ensure they can assist with carrying out agreed upon initiatives on a local level.

Additionally, DVR has implemented Project Search in three regions in the state (Fairbanks, Anchorage, and Mat-Su). The goal for each student is competitive employment. They are provided real-life work experiences and training in employability and independent-living skills. The program involves an extensive period of skills training and career exploration, innovative adaptations, job coaching, and continuous feedback from teachers, skills trainers, and employers. As a result, at the completion of the training program, students with significant intellectual disabilities are employed in nontraditional, complex, and rewarding jobs.

2. DESCRIBE THE CURRENT STATUS AND SCOPE OF THE FORMAL INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE VR AGENCY AND THE STATE EDUCATIONAL AGENCY. CONSISTENT WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE FORMAL INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT PURSUANT TO 34 C.F.R. § 361.22(B), PROVIDE, AT A MINIMUM, THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION ABOUT THE AGREEMENT:

- A. CONSULTATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, WHICH MAY BE PROVIDED USING ALTERNATIVE MEANS FOR MEETING PARTICIPATION (SUCH AS VIDEO CONFERENCES AND CONFERENCE CALLS), TO ASSIST EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES IN PLANNING FOR THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL TO POST-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES AND OTHER VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES;
- B. TRANSITION PLANNING BY PERSONNEL OF THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND EDUCATIONAL AGENCY PERSONNEL FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES THAT FACILITATES THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THEIR INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS (IEPS) UNDER SECTION 614(D) OF THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT;
- C. THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, INCLUDING FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES, OF EACH AGENCY, INCLUDING PROVISIONS FOR DETERMINING STATE LEAD AGENCIES AND QUALIFIED PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR TRANSITION SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES;
- D. PROCEDURES FOR OUTREACH TO AND IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES WHO NEED TRANSITION SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES. OUTREACH TO THESE STUDENTS SHOULD OCCUR AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE DURING THE TRANSITION PLANNING PROCESS AND MUST INCLUDE, AT A MINIMUM, A DESCRIPTION OF THE PURPOSE OF THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM, ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS, APPLICATION PROCEDURES, AND SCOPE OF SERVICES THAT MAY BE PROVIDED TO ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS;
- E. COORDINATION NECESSARY TO SATISFY DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS SET FORTH IN 34 C.F.R. PART 397 REGARDING STUDENTS AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE SEEKING SUBMINIMUM WAGE EMPLOYMENT; AND
- F. ASSURANCE THAT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH 34 C.F.R. § 397.31, NEITHER THE SEA NOR THE LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY WILL ENTER INTO A CONTRACT OR OTHER ARRANGEMENT WITH AN ENTITY, AS DEFINED IN 34 C.F.R. § 397.5(D), FOR THE PURPOSE OF OPERATING A PROGRAM UNDER WHICH YOUTH WITH A DISABILITY IS ENGAGED IN WORK COMPENSATED AT A SUBMINIMUM WAGE.

DVR's current interagency agreement with the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) requires updating; however, the current agreement covers significant responsibilities of each agency including:

Responsibilities of Each Agency:

1. DEED Division of Student Learning:

1. DEED, in partnership with DVR, will facilitate individual Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) between school district personnel and regional DVR office personnel for the provision of services to students with disabilities transitioning from school into adulthood.
2. DEED will ensure, through continuous monitoring practices, that each eligible student will have a secondary transition plan in his or her IEP, beginning not later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child turns 16, or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP Team, or as otherwise required by 34 CFR 300.320(b).

3. DEED will ensure, through continuous monitoring practices and Local Education Agency grant annual reports that all procedures related to the provision of free appropriate public education for students with disabilities are carried out by school districts.
4. DEED will designate a person for districts to contact to clarify questions, concerns, dispute resolution or issues related to the implementation of the MOU with regional Vocational Rehabilitation offices.
5. DEED will designate a lead person to ensure that communication between DEED, DVR, and School District is maintained and policies are developed and revised, at the state department level, to promote effective transition for students with disabilities from school into adulthood.
6. DEED will provide technical assistance through the state office, or their federal technical assistance providers, to DVR regarding the provisions and implementation of IDEIA '04 as it applies to the students that qualify for DVR services.
7. DEED will promote and provide assistance and training regarding the use of the DEED AKCIS (Alaska Career Information Systems) for all students' e-Portfolio system.

2. AKDOLWD Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR):

1. DVR, in partnership with DEED, will facilitate an individual MOU between school districts and regional DVR offices for the provision of services to students with disabilities transitioning from school into adulthood post-school activities.
2. DVR will refer students with a disability, under the age of 22, who are not receiving educational services under an IEP, to the local school district in accordance with the child find provisions required by Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004.
3. DVR will designate a regional DVR contact person responsible for clarifying questions, concerns, dispute resolution, or issues related to the implementation of the MOU with local school districts.
4. DVR will designate a staff member responsible for the continuation of communication and policy development between DVR, DEED, and school districts to improve transition services statewide to students with disabilities.
5. DVR, in partnership with DEED, will support training for all VR counselors, district teachers, paraprofessionals, school nurses, school counselors, and other personnel to increase their knowledge of rehabilitation services and support.
6. DVR will ensure that regional DVR personnel will participate in and be involved with the student's educational program planning process including the IEP meeting.
7. DVR, in partnership with DEED, will incorporate the core tenets, principles, and career goals stated in each student's IEP into the development of their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).
8. DVR will ensure that existing policies and procedures for the provision of service delivery will be applied equitably to transitioning students.
9. DVR will ensure the development and implementation of an IPE for each student determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services before the student leaves the school setting.

DVR has a formal Policy and Procedures Manual in place that describes in detail how the agency will deliver Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), including a section on Service Provision and Pre-Employment Transition Services Collaboration with Local Education Agencies. DVR's Online Policy Manual is available to the public at <https://labor.alaska.gov/dvr/policies/index.html>.

To highlight coordination with education officials at DEED and the 54 Local Education Agencies, DVR's Policy and Procedures Manual outlines how it implements Pre-ETS Required, Authorized, and Coordination activities.

DVR works collaboratively with DEED to maximize opportunities for students with disabilities to participate in Pre-ETS activities. DVR and DEED co-chair the Alaska Interagency Transition Council (AITC), a statewide stakeholder group with representatives from Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation, Statewide Parent Training and Information Center, Southeast Regional Resource Center, Career and Technical Education, and urban and rural school districts.

Through the AITC, DVR and DEED coordinate the delivery of Pre-ETS services and, in some instances, braid funding to ensure the delivery of transition services statewide. Part of the collaboration is the delivery of face-to-face Transition Camps and virtual Pre-ETS webinars through TransitionAlaska.org.

DVR and DEED also have a data-sharing agreement for the exchange of information and data on Pre-ETS activities. This is instrumental in both agencies' planning and reporting activities. Both agencies coordinate outreach and identification of students with disabilities who need pre-employment transition services. DEED and DVR maintain a mailing list of special education professionals, teachers, and stakeholders who receive updates on upcoming pre-employment transition services available locally and statewide.

The AITC produces a quarterly newsletter highlighting transition events, training, and pre-employment transition services activities for teachers and students.

DVR and DEED promote and conduct an annual Secondary Transition Teacher Training in early fall that instructs teachers on transition planning, postsecondary resources, and the availability of pre-employment transition services. DVR and DEED are both sponsors of the Alaska Statewide Special Education Conference. This provides both agencies the opportunity to deliver a coordinated series of breakout sessions on transition planning and pre-employment transition services.

DVR shall provide transition planning services to eligible students with disabilities through the VR program to facilitate the transition from receiving special education services in secondary school to receiving VR services oriented toward an employment outcome. The services will help minimize potential delays in service delivery during the transition from school to competitive employment. The Individualize Plan for Employment (IPE) for students transitioning from special education services must be developed in consideration of the student's individual education plan and in accordance with any cooperative agreements between the school systems and DVR. The development and approval of an IPE for students transitioning from school must be completed as early as possible during the transition process but, at the latest, by the time the student leaves the school setting.

Subminimum wage is not legal in Alaska, and AS 23.10.070, which allowed for the Commissioner of the Department of Labor and Workforce Development to create new regulations to allow for subminimum wage, was repealed in 2022.

K. COORDINATION WITH EMPLOYERS

In accordance with the requirements in Section 101(a)(11)(E) of the Rehabilitation Act, describe how the VR agency will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities in order to facilitate the provision of VR services; and transition services for youth and students with disabilities, including pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities.

DVR pursues businesses by prioritizing federal contractors and high need industries, reviewing the Job Ready module in AWARE, and utilizing Job X weekly meetings (which provide employers an opportunity to talk about their employment needs, culture, and process to hire). In Job X meetings, employers share information with regional job developers, ensuring a captive audience of multiple agencies seeking to help individuals with disabilities secure employment. DVR's Business Engagement Services Team (BEST) works closely with CRPs to identify businesses that could benefit from trainings to increase opportunities for people with disabilities and provide technical assistance on the benefits of expanding their hiring pool to include people served by DVR. BEST staff are required to reach out to 10 new businesses a month and provide services that enhance opportunities for the individuals served by DVR. The BEST team is connected with chambers and economic development corporations, and they attend job fairs throughout the year to enhance opportunities for businesses and job seekers. Provisional Hire and Schedule A opportunities are pursued by working closely with State of Alaska HR and the Federal HR teams.

DVR coordinates with employers to enhance the delivery of pre-employment transition services by providing students with disabilities access to insight, instruction, and experiences into the real "world of work."

Students with disabilities have access to Alaska businesses for career exploration, work readiness training, and work-based learning through participation in a number of Pre-ETS activities provided across the state.

Employers participate in both face-to-face and virtual transition camps with students. These opportunities allow students to hear directly from businesses about what they are looking for in an employee, workplace expectations, workplace requirements, and rewards for employment in a certain field. A number of local Alaska businesses also provide worksite tours when the activities are conducted in their communities.

Alaska businesses provide students in DVR in-school work experience programs and summer work programs with work-based learning opportunities. Programs work directly with local businesses to identify appropriate candidates and coordinate the details of the work experience to ensure both the student and the business understand their responsibilities.

DVR contracts with employer-funded trade organizations to provide specific short-term training in specific careers and trades. Students with disabilities explore careers and experience real workplace expectations and work-based learning through hands-on learning activities. These opportunities provide students with a pathway towards postsecondary education and apprenticeship opportunities within the industry sponsoring the training provider.

L. INTERAGENCY COOPERATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES

In accordance with the requirements in Section 101(a)(11)(C) and (K), describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the services and facilities of agencies and programs that are not carrying out activities through the statewide workforce development system to develop opportunities for

community-based employment in integrated settings, to the greatest extent practicable for the following:

1. STATE PROGRAMS (DESIGNATE LEAD AGENCY(IES) AND IMPLEMENTING ENTITY(IES)) CARRIED OUT UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998;

DVR continues to maintain a Collaborative Agreement with the Assistive Technologies of Alaska (ATLA) to carry out the required activities of the Assistive Technology (AT) Act of 1998. As the AT Act lead agency, DVR performs administrative functions for ATLA, which is the AT Act implementing agency. ATLA's role in providing assistive technology services to DVR participants is vital in ensuring individual success.

As part of its administrative role, DVR facilitates an AT Advisory Council within the State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee, which is required by the AT Act. DVR staff hold a videoconference every two months, attended by DVR, AT Council members, and ATLA's Director. DVR staff also facilitates a half-day video conference with the AT Council and the ATLA Director once a year. The purpose of these meetings is to provide consumer input and oversight of ATLA's AT Act activities.

2. PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT BY THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE;

DVR does not coordinate with any programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the Department of Agriculture, as many of these programs support home loans, community facilities, and energy assistance.

3. NON-EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES SERVING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH;

DVR works with the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) and the Office of Children's Services (OCS) aimed at improving employment outcomes of youth exiting the DJJ and foster care systems. Although there is not a written cooperative agreement in place, team members have a referral system in place to appropriately connect youth with opportunities for success. DVR also partners with WIOA Youth programs such as Nine Star Enterprises and Covey Academy. DVR also collaborates with Covenant House, a shelter for run-away/homeless youth, including maintaining a weekly presence at the facility.

4. STATE USE CONTRACTING PROGRAMS;

DVR does not have any state use contracting programs.

5. STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR ADMINISTERING THE STATE MEDICAID PLAN UNDER TITLE XIX OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT (42 U.S.C. 1396 ET SEQ.);

DVR has a current MOU with the Division of Public Assistance, describing how both agencies will work towards achieving competitive integrated employment outcomes for beneficiaries. This MOU was scheduled to be updated; however, DPA had to prioritize significant backlogs and changes to leadership. DVR has developed a draft of the agreement, which includes strategies, including best practices, for assisting Medicaid recipients' transition into meaningful employment while ensuring informed choice in determining their employment goals. DVR is currently focusing on improving partnerships to achieve competitive integrated employment.

Additionally, through an MOU and a Reimbursable Services Agreement, DVR's Disability Determination Services Unit processes eligibility for Medicaid's Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act cases.

6. STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES;

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and Division of Senior and Disabilities Services (SDS), located in the Department of Health (DoH), was completed on May 3, 2017 and updated in September of 2021. The goal of the agreement was to clarify roles and responsibilities of DVR and SDS concerning common consumers. Areas addressed in the agreement include purpose, philosophy, terms, authority and funding, responsibilities, confidentiality, and referral. The agreement will remain in effect until amended or terminated by either party.

Additionally, SDS and DVR developed a task force that combines DVR's expertise as it relates to employment and SDS's expertise as it relates to serving individuals with I/DD. The taskforce has developed and delivered tangible goals outlining how both agencies will provide technical assistance and support to one another. SDS presented Waiver programs to all DVR staff during statewide training in January 2024, including services offered and processes. DVR's Chief of Services has, and continues to, present to SDS staff and providers on specific topics such as trial work experiences and assessments. Additionally, SDS and DVR work together on shared forms to ensure they meet the requirements of both programs.

7. STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES; AND

There is a current MOU between DVR and the Division of Behavioral Health (DBH), which was signed in August 2018; however, an updated MOU has been drafted and should be effective in spring 2024. The purpose of the agreement is to establish the terms and conditions that will guide the partnership between DVR and DBH and reaffirm the collaborative framework for developing, expanding, and improving opportunities for competitive, integrated employment for individuals with disabilities who are served by both entities, including individuals with the most significant disabilities associated with behavioral health conditions.

Both agencies agree to engage in ongoing systemic strategic planning, troubleshooting, consultation, and technical assistance to ensure successful implementation of this agreement. Additionally, the agencies shall establish a work group that is comprised of representatives from DVR, DBH, and the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (AMHTA) that shall meet at least quarterly to discuss policy and procedural issues relative to eligibility determination, agency roles, customer flow, program services, funding, special projects, best practices, and exchange of information. Services to this population include serving adults and youth who are unhoused or at risk of becoming homeless.

The agreement assures services are provided in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and as required under WIOA.

8. OTHER FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS OUTSIDE THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM.

Returning Citizens: DVR works with the Department of Corrections, Division of Probation and Parole, to provide vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities exiting the correctional system. Additionally, DVR works with individuals who are assigned to the Anchorage Mental Health or Wellness Court. These courts are designed to divert people with psychiatric or addiction related disabilities, who are charged with misdemeanor or felony offenses, from incarceration and into community treatment and services such as mental health counseling and vocational rehabilitation, as appropriate.

DVR field offices informally work with re-entry initiatives implemented in Juneau, Fairbanks, Anchorage, and the Mat-Su Borough, as well as the statewide Re-Entry Committee. These efforts are intended to improve the transition of inmates returning to their community and focus on finding and retaining sustained employment. The goal is to prevent recidivism and promote socioeconomic health. Although there are no official cooperative agreements in place, the collaboration and coordination efforts occur in each region.

At-Risk Youth: DVR, along with the Division of Juvenile Justice, will work to increase services to at-risk youth in or exiting the juvenile justice system. DVR will take a lead role in ensuring vocational rehabilitation services are provided to these youth who experience disabilities to increase the likelihood of success and independence through employment.

The Tapestry Program: Administered through the University of Alaska's Center for Human Development, this program caters to young adults with intellectual disabilities with the goal of teaching them appropriate personal, social, and vocational skills in fostering a successful transition to employment. DVR actively collaborates with the Center for Human Development, the Anchorage School District, and other community agencies to ensure that these young individuals with disabilities access the full array of vocational rehabilitation services.

Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation: DVR is a partner with the Alaska Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (TVR) Consortium, composed of the 11 American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services (AIVRS) grant recipients. There is a current MOU in place with the Consortium that outlines coordinated services and shared resources, joint planning and evaluation, technical assistance, and staff development. DVR and the AIVRS programs also have a Contingency Plan in place; both the MOU and Contingency Plan are anticipated to be revisited in 2023. Additionally, a member from the TVR Consortium serves on the SVRC as the Section 121 representative.

State Council on Developmental Disabilities: DVR actively participates, and has a cooperative agreement, with the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education. The DVR Director is a Council member and also serves on the Employment and Transportation Committee, which consists of a consortium of agencies committed to working together to improve employment outcomes for youth and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and the Employment First Initiative. The cooperative agreement outlines the goals and collaboration needed to successfully achieve increased employment outcomes for youth with I/DD.

DVR's Leadership continue to work with I/DD and behavioral health providers, advocates, employers, the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, and state agency staff to strengthen efforts to educate and employ Alaskans with disabilities and/or behavioral health disorders. DVR continues to promote the Disability, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) movement by focusing on how employers can enhance their workforce by hiring individuals with disabilities.

Independent Living: DVR continues to work with Access Alaska, which runs Independent Living Centers in Anchorage and Fairbanks, to coordinate case management services for individuals who experience Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). DVR also collaborates with the Alaska Brain Injury Network to achieve the most successful employment outcomes possible for individuals with TBI. There is no MOU in place; however, DVR provides a letter of support outlining the anticipated coordination of services to Access Alaska to secure the TBI grant. DVR also works with Southeast Independent Living Center located across Southeast Alaska, as well as Independent Living Center across the Kenai Peninsula, and Arctic Access in Nome. DVR's Transition Specialist represents DVR on the Statewide Independent Living Council.

Veterans Affairs: DVR continues to have an Interagency Agreement in place with the Department of Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation & Education (VR&E) to cooperate, coordinate, and collaborate to increase vocational opportunities for veterans of the United States military service, regardless of the level of disability. By including DVR as a partner in a comprehensive system of case management, both DVR and VR&E can maximize benefits to veterans to better ensure the likelihood of employment outcomes. DVR has assigned a VRC to attend monthly meetings with VR&E to strengthen collaboration and coordination of services for this population.

9. OTHER PRIVATE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS.

DVR has signed agreements with non-profit Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) to provide specific vocational rehabilitation services. Only CRPs who meet the qualifications described in DVR's Standards for CRPs and the CRP application, and have a signed agreement with DVR, are eligible to provide such services. CRP applications may be submitted at any time and must be renewed every two years.

A CRP structure has been implemented for new applicants, providing clear definitions of the probationary requirements, standardizing the service rating structure, and giving more control and flexibility to DVR Counselors (VRCs) and Managers (VRMs). The probationary requirements have changed from experience and college degree to a combination of education, experience, training, and performance. There are also clear definitions of Standard, Exception, and Provisional CRPs.

DVR and the University of Alaska, Anchorage (UAA) Center for Human Development have partnered to ensure ongoing training is available to CRPs throughout the state. UAA has received national accreditation from the Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE) to provide employment services training. DVR requires CRPs complete a minimum of 40 hours of ACRE-accredited training to meet the minimum requirements to provide basic vocational rehabilitation services. Additional resources are provided for CRPs to obtain additional certifications to deliver advanced services.

The service provider application and agreement:

Requires a background check for all CRP staff who may have unsupervised contact with DVR consumers, as well as a summary of their education and employment experience;

- Establishes specific fees for each service at two probationary levels and a standard level. Exceptions and Provisional Status rates are negotiable depending on DVR's needs (i.e., cost of living differentials for CRPs that may be needed in remote areas).
- Outlines the conditions and guidelines under which the division and the CRP will provide services for individuals with disabilities, specifying the responsibilities of each party, the scope of services, the evaluation criteria, and reporting and billing requirements.
- Outlines standards for service providers including organizational structure; personnel; fiscal management; health, safety, and accessibility; and indemnity and insurance requirements.

DVR's CRP Specialist is responsible for approving the agreements and updating the AWARE Management Information System. Changes in key personnel and fees are reported to and negotiated with DVR. Following the principles of informed choice, information on the CRPs, including their services and fees, are available to DVR's consumers.

CRPs are monitored throughout the duration of each agreement. At a minimum, monitoring consists of a thorough review of the following documents submitted by the CRP:

- Written narrative reports (VRC reviews the content and verifies if specific service and information was provided as requested).
- Prior to approving invoices for payment, the Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant (VRA) or VRC confirms receipt of the report and verifies information on the invoice. The invoice information (service category, hours, rates, dates of service, etc.) must correspond with the Authorization for Payment.
- Fiscal staff in Central Office review all CRP invoices before certifying them for payment.
- Timeliness of reports.

DVR conducts biannual case reviews and includes a sample of cases that have utilized CRP services. The referral process and the quality of services provided by the CRP are reviewed.

The CRP Specialist periodically reviews CRP data from the case management system to verify timeliness and confirm CRPs are providing only the services they are approved to provide, at the approved rate. To keep informed on CRP performance and regional service needs, the CRP Specialist maintains regular communication with the VR Managers.

When a CRP has been identified as having performance issues, the CRP Specialist is informed by the referring VRC. If performance issues continue or are significant, they are contacted by the CRP Specialist and steps are identified to resolve the performance issue. Depending on the circumstances, DVR may immediately suspend or terminate a CRP Agreement, or place the CRP on a Corrective Action Plan. DVR may decide not to approve an agreement with a CRP that has repeatedly been out of compliance or has a history of poor performance. DVR may impose additional reporting and internal control processes on CRPs that have past compliance and performance issues.

Data on CRPs are collected from staff and from the CRPs themselves for incorporation into the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA). The surveys address the need to establish, develop, or improve CRPs within the State. The CRP Specialist has updated the website and online training and anticipates creating a “Lunch and Learn” environment to create a community of practice. DVR continues to look for innovative ways to keep and nurture CRPs as they provide valuable services to the program.

CRPs are able to deliver distance services to parts of the state where services were limited or non-existent; using technology to assist participants with resume writing, business plans, or other services was advantageous to both consumers and CRPs. DVR provides CRPs with a list of suggested activities for remote services that kept the consumer engaged and the CRP active in their community.

ASSURANCES

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate and identified in the State certifications included with this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, through signature of the authorized individual, assures the Commissioner, that it will comply with all of the requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, as set forth in sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act. The individual authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement makes the following assurances:

The State Plan must include
1. Public Comment on Policies and Procedures: The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.
2. Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Its Supplement: The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a Unified State plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.
3. Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan: The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to:
3.a. the establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.b. either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.c. consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.d. the financial participation by the State, or if the State so elects, by the State and local agencies, to provide the amount of the non-Federal share of the cost of carrying out the VR program in accordance with section 101(a)(3).
3.e. as applicable, the local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.f. as applicable, the shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.g. statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.h. the requirements for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11) and (24)(B); and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.i. all required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act.

The State Plan must include
3.j. the requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.k. the compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.l. the reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities as set forth in section 101(a)(18)(A).
3.m. the submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4. Administration of the Provision of VR Services: The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:
4.a. comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(E) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.b. impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.c. provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services or, if implementing an order of selection, in accordance with criteria established by the State for the order of selection as set out in section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.d. determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.e. comply with the requirements for the development of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.f. Comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act
4.g. provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.h. comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual reviews, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as required by sections 101(a)(14) and 511 of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.i. meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs.
4.j. With respect to students with disabilities, the State,
4.j.i. has developed and will implement,

The State Plan must include
4.j.i.A. strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and
4.j.i.B. strategies to achieve the goals and priorities identified by the State, to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities on a statewide basis; and
4.j.ii. has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15), 101(a)(25) and 113).
4.j.iii. shall reserve not less than 15 percent of the allocated funds for the provision of pre-employment transition services; such funds shall not be used to pay for the administrative costs of providing pre-employment transition services.
5. Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement to the State plan:
5.a. The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act.
5.b. The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act.
6. Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program (Title VI):
6.a. The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the designated State agency or agencies will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(H) and (I) of the Rehabilitation Act.
6.b. The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act.
7. Provision of Supported Employment Services:
7.a. The designated State agency assures that it will provide supported employment services as defined in section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act.
7.b. The designated State agency assures that the comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act an individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the

The State Plan must include

Rehabilitation Act, which is developed and updated with title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(7)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act.

Do you attest that these assurances will be met?

Yes

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (COMBINED OR GENERAL) CERTIFICATIONS

States must provide written and signed certifications that:

1. THE (ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPROPRIATE,) IS AUTHORIZED TO SUBMIT THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 (REHABILITATION ACT), AS AMENDED BY TITLE IV OF WIOA⁸, AND ITS STATE PLAN SUPPLEMENT UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT;

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT,
AS APPROPRIATE

Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

2. IN THE EVENT THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY IS NOT PRIMARILY CONCERNED WITH VOCATIONAL AND OTHER REHABILITATION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES, THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY MUST INCLUDE A DESIGNATED STATE UNIT FOR THE VR PROGRAM (SECTION 101(A)(2)(B)(II) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT). AS A CONDITION FOR THE RECEIPT OF FEDERAL FUNDS UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES, THE (DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WHEN THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY HAS A DESIGNATED STATE UNIT)⁹ AGREES TO OPERATE AND IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE STATE VR SERVICES PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN¹⁰, THE REHABILITATION ACT, 34 CFR 361.13(B) AND (C), AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS¹¹, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED BY THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION. FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE TO STATES UNDER SECTION 111(A) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT ARE

⁸ Public Law 113-128.

⁹ All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

¹⁰ No funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

¹¹ Applicable regulations, in part, include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 76, 77, 79, 81, and 82; 2 CFR part 200 as adopted by 2 CFR part 3474; and the State VR Services program regulations at 34 C.F.R. part 361.

USED SOLELY FOR THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY

Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

3. AS A CONDITION FOR THE RECEIPT OF FEDERAL FUNDS UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES, THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY, OR THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WHEN THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY HAS A DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AGREES TO OPERATE AND IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN¹², THE REHABILITATION ACT, AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS¹³, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED BY THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION. FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER TITLE VI ARE USED SOLELY FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;
4. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT OR, IF NOT APPLICABLE, THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY HAS THE AUTHORITY UNDER STATE LAW TO PERFORM THE FUNCTIONS OF THE STATE REGARDING THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT AND IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE VR PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH 34 CFR 361.13(B) AND (C);
5. THE STATE LEGALLY MAY CARRY OUT EACH PROVISION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT.
6. ALL PROVISIONS OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT ARE CONSISTENT WITH STATE LAW.
7. THE (ENTER THE NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW) HAS THE AUTHORITY UNDER STATE LAW TO RECEIVE, HOLD, AND DISBURSE FEDERAL FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT;

ENTER THE NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW

Director of the Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

¹² [No funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supported employment supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

¹³ Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in footnote 4, as well as Supported Employment program regulations at 34 C.F.R. part 363.

8. THE (ENTER THE TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW) HAS THE AUTHORITY TO SUBMIT THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND THE SUPPLEMENT FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

ENTER THE TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW

Director of the Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

9. THE AGENCY THAT SUBMITS THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT HAS ADOPTED OR OTHERWISE FORMALLY APPROVED THE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT.

CERTIFICATION SIGNATURE

Signatory information	Enter Signatory information in this column
Name of Signatory	Duane Mayes
Title of Signatory	Director, Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Date Signed	March 1, 2024

GEPA 427 FORM INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPLICATION PACKAGE - VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

EQUITY FOR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, AND OTHER PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES

OMB Control Number 1894-0005 Expiration 02/28/2026

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA Section 427 Form Instructions for State Applicants

State applicants must respond to the following four questions:

1. Describe how your entity’s existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.
2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?
3. Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?
4. What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?
 - Applicants identify any barriers that may impede equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity, including, but not limited to, barriers based on economic disadvantage, gender, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, disability, age, language, migrant

status, rural status, homeless status or housing insecurity, pregnancy, parenting, or caregiving status, and sexual orientation.

- Applicants use the associated text box to respond to each question. However, applicants might have already included some or all this required information in the narrative sections of their applications or their State Plans. In responding to this requirement, for each question, applicants may provide a cross-reference to the section(s) in their State Plans that includes the information responsive to that question on this form or may restate that information on this form.
- Applicants are not required to have mission statements or policies that align with equity to apply.
- Applicants that have already undertaken steps to address barriers must still provide an explanation and/or description of the steps already taken in each text box, as appropriate, to satisfy the GEPA Section 427 requirement.
- Applicants that believe no barriers exist must still provide an explanation and/or description to each question to validate that perception, as appropriate, to satisfy the GEPA Section 427 requirement.

Please refer to GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

1. DESCRIBE HOW YOUR ENTITY’S EXISTING MISSION, POLICIES, OR COMMITMENTS ENSURE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO, AND EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION IN, THE PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY.

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The first of four questions is:

Describe how your entity’s existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.

SECTION 427 OF THE GENERAL EDUCATION PROVISIONS ACT (GEPA) The State of Alaska, as an employer and service provider, recognizes the need to respect and treat equally all people it hires and serves. The State of Alaska's concept of diversity is broad, extending beyond those categories formally recognized and protected by law. The Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), funded in whole or in part by US Department of Education Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) administrative and leadership funding, complies with all federal and state laws, regulations, and policies pertaining to state and local program staff to continue to work in a positive environment that is free from discrimination based on gender, race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, marital status, changes in marital status, pregnancy, and parenthood.

The Department of Labor and Workforce Development ensures equal opportunity for customers, paraprofessional staff, and providers that participate in any project or program administered through

DVR. DVR ensures equitable access and/or participation for gender, race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, marital status, changes in marital status, pregnancy, and parenthood.

The mission of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) is to assist Alaskans to assist individuals with disabilities obtain and maintain employment. Alaska takes steps to identify barriers to equitable access by gathering information for the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment through focus groups, surveys, and by reviewing population data and prevalence information.

DVR is proactive in ensuring equitable access for individuals with disabilities seeking services. DVR has implemented a one page online self-referral portal that connects individuals to their local offices, which is one of the many ways individuals can connect with DVR services.

DVRs application policy states “Any individual with a disability who is physically present in the state of Alaska and wants to work has the right to apply for VR services with the Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (ADVR). ADVR does not have a duration of residency requirement. ADVR cannot deny an individual the right to apply for any reason, including homelessness, financial status, criminal history, or sobriety length. None of these circumstances are used to assume that an individual would not be an appropriate candidate for VR services. ADVR has an obligation for the prompt and equitable processing of applications.”

2. BASED ON YOUR PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY, WHAT BARRIERS MAY IMPEDE EQUITABLE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, OR OTHER BENEFICIARIES?

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The second of four questions is:

Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?

Geographical diversity is the overarching lens for understanding barriers to equitable access to and participation in DVR state of Alaska. The concept of geographical diversity considers factors such as the vast geography of our state and travel challenges that accompany this, significant local and regional differences in culture and values, diversity in race/ethnicity, challenges of poverty, access to affordable foods and/or subsistence foods, variability in community infrastructure such as utilities, suitable housing, access to broadband, and governance. Values related to disabilities and participation in service delivery systems vary widely among families, cultural groups, and communities. Based upon DVRs most recent Comprehensive Statewide Need Assessment three main groups summarize potential barriers to equitable access to DVR services in Alaska:

- At Risk Youth, especially those exiting the Juvenile Justice system.
- Individuals living in rural/remote Alaska.
- Individuals who are homeless or in poverty.

3. BASED ON THE BARRIERS IDENTIFIED, WHAT STEPS WILL YOU TAKE TO ADDRESS SUCH BARRIERS TO EQUITABLE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION IN THE PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY?

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The third of four questions is:

Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?

DVR's 2024-2027 Strategic Plan identifies steps the agency will take to reduce barriers to equitable access and participation as outlined in priorities 1.3, 1.4, and 1.7 of Section (c)(2)(D) of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan.

DVR continues to work with WIOA core, required, and additional partners to provide pathways to remove or eliminate barriers based on gender, race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, marital status, changes in marital status, pregnancy, and parenthood.

4. WHAT IS YOUR TIMELINE, INCLUDING TARGETED MILESTONES, FOR ADDRESSING THESE IDENTIFIED BARRIERS?

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The final of four questions is:

What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

Targeted milestones and timelines are:

- At Risk Youth, especially those exiting the Juvenile Justice system.
 - Additional work experiences are available. (July 2025)
 - Work experiences more closely mirror high demand job industries. (July 2025)
 - Meet or exceed expected number of Pre-ETS students provided services. (July 2025)
 - Additional CRPs are available to provide Pre-ETS services. (Dec. 2025)

- Programs within Juvenile Justice Detention facilities will continue to increase. (June 2026)
- Transition Coordinator travel occur (July 2025)
- Individuals living in rural/remote Alaska.
 - Travel approved for a minimum of two trips a year to rural areas and travel with partners when possible. (July 2025)
 - Travel Expectations document is used and adhered to. (July 2025)
 - More utilization of rural hubs for reaching rural clients. (July 2026)
 - TVR representation at Rural Services meeting. (July 2025)
 - Technology is implemented and utilized. (Dec. 2026)
- Individuals who are homeless or in poverty.
 - VR staff increase knowledge of how to effectively work with the unhoused population and are able to refer individuals to necessary local resources. (July 2025)
 - Participant income is greater at exit than at application, where measurable. (July 2026)

**GEPA 427 FORM INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPLICATION PACKAGE - SUPPORTED
EMPLOYMENT**

EQUITY FOR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, AND OTHER PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES

OMB Control Number 1894-0005 Expiration 02/28/2026

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA Section 427 Form Instructions for State Applicants

State applicants must respond to the following four questions:

1. Describe how your entity’s existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.
2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?
3. Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?
4. What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?
 - Applicants identify any barriers that may impede equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity, including, but not limited to, barriers based on economic disadvantage, gender, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, disability, age, language, migrant

status, rural status, homeless status or housing insecurity, pregnancy, parenting, or caregiving status, and sexual orientation.

- Applicants use the associated text box to respond to each question. However, applicants might have already included some or all this required information in the narrative sections of their applications or their State Plans. In responding to this requirement, for each question, applicants may provide a cross-reference to the section(s) in their State Plans that includes the information responsive to that question on this form or may restate that information on this form.
- Applicants are not required to have mission statements or policies that align with equity to apply.
- Applicants that have already undertaken steps to address barriers must still provide an explanation and/or description of the steps already taken in each text box, as appropriate, to satisfy the GEPA Section 427 requirement.
- Applicants that believe no barriers exist must still provide an explanation and/or description to each question to validate that perception, as appropriate, to satisfy the GEPA Section 427 requirement.

Please refer to GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

1. DESCRIBE HOW YOUR ENTITY’S EXISTING MISSION, POLICIES, OR COMMITMENTS ENSURE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO, AND EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION IN, THE PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY.

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The first of four questions is:

Describe how your entity’s existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.

SECTION 427 OF THE GENERAL EDUCATION PROVISIONS ACT (GEPA) The State of Alaska, as an employer and service provider, recognizes the need to respect and treat equally all people it hires and serves. The State of Alaska's concept of diversity is broad, extending beyond those categories formally recognized and protected by law. The Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), funded in whole or in part by US Department of Education Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) administrative and leadership funding, complies with all federal and state laws, regulations, and policies pertaining to state and local program staff to continue to work in a positive environment that is free from discrimination based on gender, race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, marital status, changes in marital status, pregnancy, and parenthood.

The Department of Labor and Workforce Development ensures equal opportunity for customers, paraprofessional staff, and providers that participate in any project or program administered through

DVR. DVR ensures equitable access and/or participation for gender, race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, marital status, changes in marital status, pregnancy, and parenthood.

The mission of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) is to assist Alaskans to assist individuals with disabilities obtain and maintain employment. Alaska takes steps to identify barriers to equitable access by gathering information for the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment through focus groups, surveys, and by reviewing population data and prevalence information.

DVR is proactive in ensuring equitable access for individuals with disabilities seeking services. DVR has implemented a one page online self-referral portal that connects individuals to their local offices, which is one of the many ways individuals can connect with DVR services.

DVR's application policy states "Any individual with a disability who is physically present in the state of Alaska and wants to work has the right to apply for VR services with the Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (ADVR). ADVR does not have a duration of residency requirement. ADVR cannot deny an individual the right to apply for any reason, including homelessness, financial status, criminal history, or sobriety length. None of these circumstances are used to assume that an individual would not be an appropriate candidate for VR services. ADVR has an obligation for the prompt and equitable processing of applications."

2. BASED ON YOUR PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY, WHAT BARRIERS MAY IMPEDE EQUITABLE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, OR OTHER BENEFICIARIES?

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The second of four questions is:

Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?

Geographical diversity is the overarching lens for understanding barriers to equitable access to and participation in DVR state of Alaska. The concept of geographical diversity considers factors such as the vast geography of our state and travel challenges that accompany this, significant local and regional differences in culture and values, diversity in race/ethnicity, challenges of poverty, access to affordable foods and/or subsistence foods, variability in community infrastructure such as utilities, suitable housing, access to broadband, and governance. Values related to disabilities and participation in service delivery systems vary widely among families, cultural groups, and communities. Based upon DVRs most recent Comprehensive Statewide Need Assessment three main groups summarize potential barriers to equitable access to DVR services in Alaska:

- At Risk Youth, especially those exiting the Juvenile Justice system.
- Individuals living in rural/remote Alaska.
- Individuals who are homeless or in poverty.

3. BASED ON THE BARRIERS IDENTIFIED, WHAT STEPS WILL YOU TAKE TO ADDRESS SUCH BARRIERS TO EQUITABLE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION IN THE PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY?

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The third of four questions is:

Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?

DVR's 2024-2027 Strategic Plan identifies steps the agency will take to reduce barriers to equitable access and participation as outlined in priorities 1.3, 1.4, and 1.7 of Section (c)(2)(D) of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan.

DVR continues to work with WIOA core, required, and additional partners to provide pathways to remove or eliminate barriers based on gender, race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, marital status, changes in marital status, pregnancy, and parenthood.

4. WHAT IS YOUR TIMELINE, INCLUDING TARGETED MILESTONES, FOR ADDRESSING THESE IDENTIFIED BARRIERS?

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The final of four questions is:

What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

Targeted milestones and timelines are:

- At Risk Youth, especially those exiting the Juvenile Justice system.
 - Additional work experiences are available. (July 2025)
 - Work experiences more closely mirror high demand job industries. (July 2025)
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 - TVR representation at Rural Services meeting. (July 2025)
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- Individuals who are homeless or in poverty.
 - VR staff increase knowledge of how to effectively work with the unhoused population and are able to refer individuals to necessary local resources. (July 2025)
 - Participant income is greater at exit than at application, where measurable. (July 2026)

VII. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS

States choosing to submit a Combined State Plan must provide information concerning the six core programs—the Adult program, Dislocated Worker program, Youth program, Wagner-Peyser Act program, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act program, and the Vocational Rehabilitation program—and also submit relevant information for any of the eleven partner programs it elects to include in its Combined State Plan. When a State includes a Combined State Plan partner program in its Combined State Plan, it need not submit a separate plan or application for that particular program.¹⁴ If included, Combined State Plan partner programs are subject to the “common planning elements” in Sections II-IV of this document, where specified, as well as the program-specific requirements for that program.

SENIOR COMMUNITY SERVICE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (SCSEP)

(OMB Control No. 1205-0040)

A. ECONOMIC PROJECTIONS AND IMPACT

1. DISCUSS LONG-TERM PROJECTIONS FOR JOBS IN INDUSTRIES AND OCCUPATIONS IN THE STATE THAT MAY PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR OLDER WORKERS. (20 CFR 641.302(D)) (MAY ALTERNATIVELY BE DISCUSSED IN THE ECONOMIC ANALYSIS SECTION OF STRATEGIC PLAN.)

See full discussion in the economic analysis section of this Alaska WIOA Combined State Plan.

The Older Americans Act, Title V maintains the dual purposes of promoting community service and work-based training activities for unemployed low-income persons ages 55 and older with poor employment prospects. In Alaska, automation, artificial intelligence, global competition, and an evolving workplace are all factors changing the way of work for seniors. SCSEP utilizes Alaska Labor Market Information (LMI) to identify occupations most likely to hire older workers and prepare participants for those jobs. All SCSEP staff works in coordination with DVR and AJCN staff to develop employment opportunities for older workers who are skilled and experienced but need current skills and abilities that are growing in demand. Occupations that are tied to technology and specialized services will be in high demand. Seniors have the core skills of communication, problem-solving, ability to meet deadlines, individualized problem solving. Yet, many local jobs are being taken over by technology.

Alaska is blessed to have seasonal employment in tourism and related areas, and job growth will be strong for many years. The issue in Alaska is the lack of a workforce. Employers are having difficulty in filling many open positions, which means for seniors looking for work there is opportunity in the WIOA workforce development system to help them overcome barriers to employment to get jobs and receive all the correlated benefits of being included in the workforce.

¹⁴ States that elect to include employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.) under a Combined State Plan would submit all other required elements of a complete CSBG State Plan directly to the Federal agency that administers the program. Similarly, States that elect to include employment and training activities carried by the Department of Housing and Urban Development would submit all other required elements of a complete State Plan for those programs directly to the Federal agency that administers the program.

SCSEP is using WIOA and Alaska's Virtual One-Stop System, AlaskaJobs, to open the door to new opportunities by using workforce development tools to help better match employers with possible workers, or to more effectively inform participants about the benefits and advancement opportunities in those industries. Senior employment services are designed around the needs and job goals of the individual. Staff help the individual decide what services are right for them.

In a continuous effort to expand and develop employment opportunities, the department's senior management marketing team is working on outreach, and local partners are working together to develop training to enhance employment opportunities for seniors. The program continues to assist eligible seniors in developing skills and experiences to facilitate their transition back to unsubsidized employment. It is noted that many participants do not have access to a computer, iPhone, internet, or Wi-Fi due to the cost of these services. Thanks to AJCN and DVR, resource rooms are open and available.

2. DISCUSS HOW THE LONG-TERM JOB PROJECTIONS DISCUSSED IN THE ECONOMIC ANALYSIS SECTION OF STRATEGIC PLAN RELATE TO THE TYPES OF UNSUBSIDIZED JOBS FOR WHICH SCSEP PARTICIPANTS WILL BE TRAINED AND THE TYPES OF SKILL TRAINING TO BE PROVIDED. (20 CFR 641.302(D))

Alaska continues to develop the state's resources and maximize its human capital through ongoing collaboration with AWIB, ACoA, local industries, state universities, vocational educational centers, organized labor, economic development representatives, educators, tribal entities, and community and faith-based organizations, as well as regional and local officials. Alaska employers continue to hire older workers with a firm foundation of basic employability skills and specific technical knowledge for occupations at all levels of education and training. SCSEP participants are employed in health care, retail, leisure and hospitality, transportation, warehousing, social assistance, food services, administrative, and support services.

SCSEP workforce development activities include skill assessments, development of Individual Employment Plans, employment counseling, civic engagement planning, and workforce preparation. SCSEP skills training for local employment is gained by the participant providing community service and earning a minimum wage. Host site training combines workplace training with related skill building, job readiness, adult education, or literacy activities. The program works with the University of Alaska Center for Human Development and Alaska Adult Education as training partners to assist participants in obtaining credentials.

SCSEP is assisting seniors to gain skills in digital communication, collaborative problem solving, critical thinking, and software competency. Alaska is aware of the need to improve training and preparation for jobs that are in demand. Training strategies include identifying competencies that workers must have to do their jobs effectively, helping participants build these specific skills, and assessing their work to ensure they have the capacity to perform the duties or tasks. Alaska's long-term strategy is to ensure that job opportunities are available to older workers and that the program continues to engage workforce development partners, the business community, and senior service partners to provide successful employment outcomes for seniors and Alaskan businesses alike.

3. DISCUSS CURRENT AND PROJECTED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE STATE (SUCH AS BY PROVIDING INFORMATION AVAILABLE UNDER §15 OF THE WAGNER-PEYSER ACT (29 U.S.C. 491-2) BY OCCUPATION), AND THE TYPES OF SKILLS POSSESSED BY ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS. (20 CFR 641.325(C))

Every Alaska industry is forecasted to either grow or hold steady in 2024. Labor shortages continue to be a challenge due to a smaller and older population, so Alaska is targeting efforts to ease those effects. SCSEP, along with WIOA partners, are pursuing a multi-pronged effort to address Alaska’s labor shortages, including greater investments in industry-recognized trainings, targeted media campaigns, and partnerships with industry. The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates Alaska has two job openings for every unemployed person seeking work. This makes recruitment and retention a challenge for employers but also gives workers more opportunities than we have seen in decades as more Alaskans are aging out of the workforce. Current and projected employment opportunities are found in health care, community and social services, personal care, e-commerce, and transportation. Other employment opportunities include management, professional, and information occupations. The skills that need to be developed and possessed by work-ready SCSEP individuals are verbal communication skills, teamwork skills, analytical skills, computer skills, initiative, and a strong work ethic. For the full discussion regarding our annual employment forecast in Alaska, Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Southeast, see Alaska Economic Trends Magazine, <https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/trends-magazine/2024/January/outlook-for-alaska-jobs-in-2024> .

B. SERVICE DELIVERY AND COORDINATION

1. A DESCRIPTION OF ACTIONS TO COORDINATE SCSEP WITH OTHER PROGRAMS. THIS MAY ALTERNATIVELY BE DISCUSSED IN THE STATE STRATEGIES SECTION OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN, BUT REGARDLESS OF PLACEMENT IN DOCUMENT, MUST INCLUDE:

A. PLANNED ACTIONS TO COORDINATE ACTIVITIES OF SCSEP GRANTEES WITH WIOA TITLE I PROGRAMS, INCLUDING PLANS FOR USING THE WIOA ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM AND ITS PARTNERS TO SERVE INDIVIDUALS AGED 55 AND OLDER. (20 CFR 641.302(G), 641.325(E))

On October 30-31, 2023, AWIB held a Workforce Development Convening to provide guidance in developing this Combined WIOA Plan and in response to specific Alaska workforce challenges and needs for the present and the future. Representatives from business and regional workforces identified short-term and mid-term priorities for workforce development in various industries and discussed the current challenges and potential solutions. These discussions gave AWIB clear direction to develop this plan and coordinate activities to develop human capital (including older workers), invest in education with skills development, support job creation, good wages, job transitions, and an equitable future of work.

Alaska SCSEP has been an active partner and is collocated within the One-Stop delivery system for the past 19 years and works to improve coordination among SCSEP, WIOA, and its Older American Act partners at regional meetings. SCSEP staff meets with WIOA program coordinators to ensure advancement of employment services and discuss enhancement among each other’s services. WIOA program staff assist participants with additional services to leverage resources and funding for credential attainment. Co-enrollment with WIOA also ensures access to a wide array of comprehensive, vitally important services like in-depth assessments, interest inventories, reviews of transferable skills, or vocational training. These partnerships generate positive outcomes resulting in meaningful, sustainable employment. Seniors can also participate in self-service activities through AlaskaJobs, including job search, labor market information, and orientation to AJC services. Participants receive updated information about job trends and opportunities, training academies, and upcoming career fairs throughout the state.

SCSEP fosters coordination by working directly with WIOA subrecipients operating within the state and facilitates joint services to participants to assist them to accomplish their employment goals. Working directly within the WIOA One-Stop delivery system will provide referrals both to older individuals who are not eligible for SCSEP and to those who are eligible but need the career services or vocational rehabilitation that SCSEP is unable to provide.

SCSEP staff works directly within the Alaska Job Center Network and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) with mandated partners to co-enroll participants in state training and employment programs. This ensures that SCSEP is an integrated, effective, job-driven workforce program. DOLWD continues to solidify its commitments to public/private partnerships to refine strategies and increase the responsiveness of SCSEP by providing oversight and technical assistance activities to improve program performance.

SCSEP local staff coordinates with program partners to ensure that participants understand the services available from WIOA programs. WIOA staff has developed an integrated system of case management plans that are collocated inside AlaskaJobs to address the requirements of grant funds and needs of participants and employers. All partners accept each other's paperwork and case notes to assist the participant. SCSEP staff works with participants and employment service partners to develop individual training plans, contributing to the overall enrichment of communities across Alaska.

B. PLANNED ACTIONS TO COORDINATE ACTIVITIES OF SCSEP GRANTEES WITH THE ACTIVITIES BEING CARRIED OUT IN THE STATE UNDER THE OTHER TITLES OF THE OLDER AMERICANS ACT (OAA). (20 CFR 641.302(H))

SCSEP continues to have a strong working relationship between the Older Americans Act (OAA) and its OAA subrecipients regarding the long-term projections for employment opportunities for older workers, as Alaska's senior population continues to grow along with the needs of employers for older workers in health care and social services. Both the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) and the Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) continuous improvement strategies assist with workforce needs through planning, advocacy, public awareness efforts, and ongoing collaboration with other organizations focused on the well-being of older Alaskans.

SCSEP service delivery is integrated into the state's workforce investment system and the senior service system. Skilled SCSEP staff provide quality services to older workers, and employers have reported high satisfaction levels with participants who have entered unsubsidized employment with them. Alaska's strategy is to continue to reach out to workforce development partners, local business and military communities, and senior service partners to ensure successful outcomes for older workers and Alaskan businesses.

Joint actions that coordinate activities of SCSEP subrecipients include following labor directives and OAA Senior Plan guidance in developing the workforce needs. SCSEP is aligned with the state's commitment to economic development, and its workforce development programs rely on the broad strategic policy decisions of the AWIB and ACoA to clarify the relationship between programs and economic development efforts. The State Plan on Senior Services under the Older Americans Act, with SCSEP as an active partner in developing and updating, has been approved for the period from October 1, 2023, through September 30, 2027

https://health.alaska.gov/acoa/Documents/AK_State_Plan_for_Senior_Services_FFY_2024_FFY_2027.pdf. The Alaska State Plan for Senior Services is the roadmap that guides the provision of senior services in Alaska over the next four years. It provides a comprehensive plan for senior services including meals, transportation, safety and protection, adult day services, senior housing, vocational training, legal assistance, the Senior Voice newspaper and more. This plan also satisfies a federal

requirement for all states receiving federal funds under the Older Americans Act for their senior programs and services. It includes a vision statement, a core set of goals, objectives, and strategies, and an intrastate funding formula for federal funds and the State of Alaska General Fund. Through this effort, the Alaska Commission on Aging aims to keep pace with senior needs through planning, advocacy, and public awareness efforts, in collaboration with all organizations focused on the well-being of older Alaskans. The State Plan for Senior Services is the product of a planning process beginning in 2021 that included more than 40 facilitated conversations with seniors in Kenai, Anchorage, Southeast Alaska, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Fairbanks, Kodiak, and Nome. These sessions included assessment questions to identify opportunities and gaps in services for seniors in Alaska communities. The planning process also included a survey of Alaska's seniors and a survey of organizations providing senior services to identify the top issues of concern to seniors. The seven goals were identified by the needs assessment activities and the key topic areas identified by the US Department of Health & Human Services Administration for Community Living, providing guidance to Alaska's senior agencies, advocates, and service providers for the next four years:

1. Promote healthy aging in place and provide access to comprehensive and integrated health care.
2. Encourage seniors to be financially secure.
3. Promote opportunities to protect vulnerable seniors from abuse, neglect, self-neglect, and exploitation in home, community, and long-term care facilities.
4. Promote improved access for seniors to quality, affordable, accessible, safe, and appropriate housing, including senior housing, across the continuum of care.
5. Promote opportunities for meaningful aging, intergenerational connectivity, and civic engagement, and address impacts from social isolation, particularly due to COVID-19.
6. Promote person-centered, quality, and affordable home-based and community-based support services that provide seniors with the highest quality of life, targeted to individuals with the greatest economic and social need.
7. Promote opportunities to support family caregiving to provide care and support to seniors without putting their own physical, emotional, and financial well-being on hold and at risk.

This OAA plan was developed alongside several existing and collaborating planning efforts: Call to Action to Address Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias; Alaska Core Competencies for Direct Care Workers in Health and Human Services; State Plan for Independent Living; Comprehensive Integrated Mental Health Program Plan; Alaska Health Workforce Coalition Action Agenda; and Alaska Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Plan.

SCSEP's service delivery plan and coordination include working directly with other OAA partner agencies in providing services to those seniors most in need or by giving seniors a referral to OAA Titles III (Supportive Services, Nutrition, Disease Prevention/Health Promotion and Caregiver Programs); VI (Native American Programs and Elder Services); and VII (Elder Rights Programs). While multiple state agencies provide services to Alaska seniors, the Department of Health is Alaska's designated state unit on aging. The program works directly with the ACoA to plan and coordinate services with all other OAA programs and staff to better support not only employment, but also health, wellness, and independence for seniors. Partners will continue to work together on our state plan goals and needs assessment.

For example, each quarter at ACoA meetings, the SCSEP coordinator meets with other state directors and local coordinators to ensure that SCSEP activities are leveraging partnerships with: Aging and Disability Resource Centers, Senior Home and Community Based programs, Nutrition, Transportation, Support Services, Adult Day Service, National Family Caregiver Support programs, the Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorder Education and Support programs, Senior Residential Services, Medicare Information services, Legal Assistance, Alaska Legal Services, Consumer Choice, Medicaid Waiver programs, Nursing Facility Transition programs, Health and Disease Prevention programs, Adult Protective Services, AARP, etc.

Referrals are made to all appropriate services to assist the participants as needed. These open public meetings are held statewide in different locations and via audioconference to ensure ongoing collaboration and communication with key organizations.

C. PLANNED ACTIONS TO COORDINATE SCSEP WITH OTHER PRIVATE AND PUBLIC ENTITIES AND PROGRAMS THAT PROVIDE SERVICES TO OLDER AMERICANS, SUCH AS COMMUNITY AND FAITH- BASED ORGANIZATIONS, TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMS, AND PROGRAMS FOR THOSE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS OR DISABILITIES. (20 CFR 641.302(I))

Planned actions of staff include continuing to post flyers within host agencies and local community sites to advertise for new participants in their areas. Staff encourage host sites to share this information with their community members and the families they serve. Staff also continue to recruit participants from area nonprofits via local listservs for nonprofit community outreach. Local coordination with partners, such as the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, TANF, Alaska Native entities, prison release programs, faith-based organizations, and regional training centers, happens every day to promote cross-referrals to services that may address barriers to employment and facilitate attachment to employment or further training. SCSEP coordinates with open host sites to use program resources to ensure successful community service for participants who need skill building activities. SCSEP is also of enormous value for seniors experiencing isolation and loneliness. The program works statewide with food banks, Alaska Disability and Resource Centers, housing and transportation agencies, public assistance, faith-based organizations, and many non-profits to reach those most in need and to provide wrap-around services.

D. PLANNED ACTIONS TO COORDINATE SCSEP WITH OTHER LABOR MARKET AND JOB TRAINING INITIATIVES. (20 CFR 641.302(J))

SCSEP staff continues to coordinate with other labor programs, initiatives, and entities in an ongoing effort to train Alaska participants. These ongoing partnerships have yielded important training resources for older adults who wish to enter or re-enter the workforce. Actions to coordinate initiatives begin with planning and delivery of services at Veterans Job Fairs or Disability Job Fairs, or by working directly with the Business Employment Services Team for provisional hires. The program requires that all participants attend job fairs in their communities so they are aware of local employment opportunities or job training initiatives and skills needed to obtain local positions. SCSEP participants are also encouraged to prepare themselves in the areas of math, reading, writing, communication, and computer skills to become work ready. If more than self help is needed, Alaska Adult Education or the University of Alaska aids in developing these skills based on the individual's skill level and learning capacity. Additional online learning is available within the AlaskaJobs database. Other training available includes use of job search tools, resume writing, interviewing, and job placement through referral and application or job development.

The state provides a wide range of programs and services to seniors, spanning multiple divisions and other private and public entities. Funds from the Older Americans Act (OAA) are leveraged with WIOA, other federal programs, and resources from the Alaska State Training and Employment Program (STEP), assuring coordination and avoiding duplication of services or activities. The programs provide local training in priority industry sectors by placing participants in community work-based training sites at non-profits, faith-based organizations, transportation and public facilities, governmental offices, senior centers, schools, and food banks.

E. ACTIONS TO ENSURE THAT SCSEP IS AN ACTIVE PARTNER IN THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM AND THE STEPS THE STATE WILL TAKE TO ENCOURAGE AND IMPROVE COORDINATION WITH THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM. (20 CFR 641.335)

SCSEP is administered by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and collocated within Employment and Training Services (DETS), which administers WIOA Titles I, II, and III to deliver services in 13 AJCs. SCSEP has been fully integrated into the AJCs for more than 19 years, and the close relationship between its core and required partners is seamless. These partnerships ensure access to other employment services both to individuals and communities throughout the state. SCSEP collocation within each AJC allows referrals among all programs, as older workers often need additional assistance with resume and interview workshops, mock interviews, assessments, testing for credentials, and other community resources for successful job placement.

The state recognizes the need for reliable older workers in the workforce and ensures that SCSEP is an active partner in the One-Stop delivery system. Key organizations utilize Alaska Job Centers for meeting areas, training needs, employment searches, individual employment plan development, and general communication at partner meetings. Positive coordination continues within the One-Stop delivery system with core and required agencies delivering training and employment services to seniors.

The referral process among the programs is implemented on an individualized basis depending on the specific needs of the person. All DOLWD staff are trained and expected to be knowledgeable in the requirements and eligibility of other One-Stop programs to ensure an appropriate program referral, which are necessary to leverage resources and maximize service delivery to individuals while ensuring non-duplication of services. For example, AJC staff who provide initial intake and career services have been trained to appropriately identify and refer individuals to disability services such as the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation, and other supporting entities. Cross training in each other's programs has provided a high level of thoughtfulness to the reason for each referral, increasing the success for the participant when obtaining needed services.

F. EFFORTS TO WORK WITH LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICES IN RURAL LOCATIONS.

SCSEP is aligned with the state's commitment to local economic development, and its workforce development programs rely on the broad strategic policy decisions of the AWIB and Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA). Partners collaborate to develop policies, procedures, and best practices to facilitate the integration of services to ensure job seekers' needs are being met and referrals to other resources are successful. Local SCSEP staff continuously seek new host agencies and potential employers in their communities as resources for SCSEP participants. They maintain strong relationships with local employers to enhance collaboration with workforce partners and promote employment opportunities for older workers.

There are ongoing statewide marketing efforts to local nonprofit host sites to help them understand and provide needed services to participants within the community. Through these new assignments,

participants are engaged in community service activities and receive work experience and job skills training that should lead to unsubsidized employment. Participants gain valuable skills, increase their confidence to re-enter the workforce, and earn income while assisting local organizations to provide civic engagement within the community.

SCSEP service-delivery model, staff, and host sites have modified some community service models to include remote or telework arrangements while ensuring development of needed skills, training aligned to participants' Individual Employment Plans, and access to any hardware and connectivity necessary for the work assigned. The program notes that not all community service assignments can be modified due to the nature of the training required.

Alaska's marketing efforts to reach out to and engage employers in the development and promotion of opportunities to participants are accomplished by working with them directly or through AJC Business Connection services. Program staff present at local chambers of commerce, senior centers, partner meetings, and other local organizations that serve seniors. Local organizations are very important to SCSEP and provide many employment opportunities in health care, tourism, and other growing employment sectors.

2. THE STATE'S LONG-TERM STRATEGY FOR ENGAGING EMPLOYERS TO DEVELOP AND PROMOTE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE PLACEMENT OF SCSEP PARTICIPANTS IN UNSUBSIDIZED EMPLOYMENT. (20 CFR 641.302(E)) (MAY ALTERNATIVELY BE DISCUSSED IN THE STATE STRATEGIES SECTION OF STRATEGIC PLAN.)

SCSEP's long-term strategy for engaging the State of Alaska as an employer is increasing the use of Provisional Hire within the state as recommended in "Alaska Work Matters Task Force Final Report." DVR and SCSEP staff continue to train hiring managers and other division directors in the Provisional Hire process. DOLWD leadership is also working with the military bases to fill 450 employment opportunities that are currently open. Jobs are available in Alaska if a senior can pass a background check, has a valid driver license and a working car, and can perform the essential tasks required. SCSEP is focused on workforce skills training and serving the most vulnerable through employment.

Alaska's long-term strategy for engaging employers to develop and promote opportunities for the placement of SCSEP participants in unsubsidized employment is to foster collaboration among job centers, education institutions, labor, and non-profits, and to work with employers to determine local or regional hiring needs that inform responsive training programs that lead to employment. Alaska's strategy for engaging employers in the development and promotion of opportunities for seniors is to work directly with them and train local participants to be hired.

The program remains focused on service delivery that is integrated into the state's workforce investment system and senior service system. Skilled DVR, AJC, and SCSEP staff provide quality services to older workers. This strategy of working directly with employers to increase the hiring of seniors has been a win-win-win for participants, employers, and program outcomes. Employers have reported high satisfaction levels with SCSEP participants who have entered unsubsidized employment with them. These new employees bring great work habits, problem solving skills, the ability to work with others, and adaptability to change with business needs. Without SCSEP services, many of our eligible seniors would not have achieved employment. According to employers, once trained, these older workers are better educated. They also bring vast experience, high work ethics, low turnover rates, and knowledge.

3. THE STATE'S LONG-TERM STRATEGY FOR SERVING MINORITY OLDER INDIVIDUALS UNDER SCSEP. (20 CFR 641.302 (C))

The Alaska workforce, like its population, is culturally and racially diverse. Our population growth has brought a shift in our demographics resulting in the growth of minority populations. This knowledge of the state's workforce gives us an awareness of how and where to continue to change or to increase participation of minority individuals. A barrier to receiving program services is their modest incomes that place them just above the SCSEP income eligibility limit, as this program is not able to enroll them for assistance regardless of their need. Alaska strives to provide services to the greatest possible number of eligible participants, regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, political affiliation, belief, marital status, changes in marital status, pregnancy, past incarceration, or parenthood under a state administered program.

SCSEP's long-term strategy is to ensure that Alaska's job opportunities are available to older workers and that the program continues to engage workforce development partners, the business community, and senior service partners to provide successful outcomes for seniors and Alaska businesses alike. SCSEP fosters individual economic self-sufficiency and promotes useful part-time opportunities in community service assignments.

Another strategy is to focus outreach efforts on community groups that have frequent contact with older adults in the target populations. All partners are working together and using a referral process with the partners of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, State Training Employment Program, Public Assistance, Public Housing, Corrections, and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. WIOA Title III staff usually work with the person first to see if they can place them in an open employment position based on their job skills. SCSEP continues to operate the program through DVR, AJCs, subrecipients, and local staff to extend employment services to eligible seniors.

Below are Alaska race population estimates for 2022 and the percentage of enrollment based on race. All data are from the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development Research & Analysis Section.

Alaska Race	2022 Populations over 55 years old	2022 Percent of SCSEP Enrollment	PY 2022 Served
White (non-Hispanic)	74.43%	50.00%	67
Black/African American	2.98%	15.67%	21
American Indian/Alaska Native	14.36%	20.90%	28
Asian	7.17%	1.49%	2
Hispanic	3.57%	0.00%	0
Pacific Islander	1.06%	1.00%	1
Two or More Races	3.57%	6.72%	9

Below is a breakdown of Alaskan seniors by age in July 2022.

Age	Total	Male	Female
55-59	44,583	22,756	21,827
60-64	47,358	24,176	23,182
65-69	41,165	20,799	20,366
70-74	29,378	14,843	14,535
75-79	18,029	9,053	8,976
80-84	9,650	4,525	5,125
85-89	4,849	2,037	2,812
90+	2,538	894	1,644
Total	197,550	99,083	98,467

There has been an increase in total state population, which is now about 736,556, up from 732,734 in 2020. Seniors continue to increase in Alaska; in 2020, there were about 190,154 seniors 55 and over compared to 197,550 in 2022, an increase in senior population of 7,396.

4. A LIST OF COMMUNITY SERVICES THAT ARE NEEDED AND THE PLACES WHERE THESE SERVICES ARE MOST NEEDED. SPECIFICALLY, THE PLAN MUST ADDRESS THE NEEDS AND LOCATION OF THOSE INDIVIDUALS MOST IN NEED OF COMMUNITY SERVICES AND THE GROUPS WORKING TO MEET THEIR NEEDS. (20 CFR 641.330)

The types of seniors who are most in need of the SCSEP are widowed and divorced persons, minorities, high-school dropouts, Veterans, those who are not eligible for Social Security benefits or with a limited work history, formerly incarcerated individuals, or those on a fixed low income. SCSEP operates where there is the greatest need relative to participants, host agencies, and employers. The issue remains that the services most participants need are a laptop, iPhone that can be used as an Internet hotspot, and FaceTime/TEAMS/Zoom access that will provide interaction with the participant's SCSEP supervisor.

SCSEP-funded community services remain available statewide via DVRs, AJCs, and subrecipients but without the basic tools of a computer, Internet, and a supervisor, the program fails. These older workers need to find information and support to help them adapt to changing work arrangements and acquire digital literacy skills to use new technology. Other community services needed are mental health and financial literacy. Everyone enrolled needs assistance in gaining employment. The areas with the greatest need for SCSEP-funded services are in rural Alaska, Kenai Peninsula, Fairbanks, Anchorage, Matanuska-Susitna, and Juneau, as so many seniors relocate to these regions to be near medical care. In addition, these older individuals may not have access to public transportation. Private transportation issues are compounded by fuel costs, vehicle maintenance costs, and the time and/or distance involved in traveling between a participant's home and the training site. SCSEP staff must consider these additional factors when a participant is assigned to a host agency.

Regional economic challenges facing older Alaskans include income insecurity, the need for more reliable access to health care and long-term care supports, a shortage of sufficient senior services and health care services workforce, and the need for emergency preparedness for a wide range of potential

disasters. The supportive services needed for SCSEP participants are employment assistance, training in use of emerging technologies, resource rooms with computer access, transportation, congregate meals, information referrals, housing, health care, utility bill assistance, food assistance, and eyeglasses.

The groups working with SCSEP on meeting senior needs are the AWIB, WIOA partners, all titles of the Older American Acts housed under the Department of Health, Alaska Commission on Aging, Senior and Disabilities Services, Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education, Alaska Mental Health Trust, faith-based organizations, food banks, senior centers, vocational training centers, and the University of Alaska.

5. THE STATE'S LONG-TERM STRATEGY TO IMPROVE SCSEP SERVICES, INCLUDING PLANNED LONG-TERM CHANGES TO THE DESIGN OF THE PROGRAM WITHIN THE STATE, AND PLANNED CHANGES IN THE USE OF SCSEP GRANTEEES AND PROGRAM OPERATORS TO BETTER ACHIEVE THE GOALS OF THE PROGRAM. THIS MAY INCLUDE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE DEPARTMENT AS APPROPRIATE. (20 CFR 641.302(K))

Alaska's long-term strategy to improve SCSEP is to work with seniors' passions and skill sets to use current technology, specialized online training, and hands-on support that develop them with the skills needed to find new jobs due to automation that is changing the world of work and the emerging employment opportunities presented. Thank you to SCSEP for the opportunity to purchase computers for the GPMS database. These new computer stations are being placed within Job Centers to assist SCSEP participants with adaptive equipment and software to help them with required entry into WIOA Title III, and other technological changes required to finding work.

SCSEP is working with WIOA partners and the Alaska Mental Health Trust to improve educational and training opportunities, as well as strengthening our social safety nets for those who would otherwise be worse off. Staff are assisting and transitioning seniors to be engaged in work that is supplying interpersonal services that can only be provided by humans, including tutoring, life coaching, disability support workers, home health aides, and other community-building jobs.

These long-term strategies to improve program goals and services give the program an opportunity to work directly with its partners in education, industry, workforce development, economic development, and the public. SCSEP strategies include identifying competencies that workers must have to do their jobs effectively, helping workers build specific skills, and assessing their work to ensure that they have the capacity to competently perform duties or tasks. Many of the participants' former work skills are transferable; however, most participants need computer training to be able to apply for work and transition into today's workforce. The long-term strategy to improve SCSEP services is to link course work and training to ensure that participants understand what is expected in the workplace and the type of work demands that are required of the body.

The WIOA Combined Plan for Alaska's long-term strategy to improve SCSEP services emphasizes sector partnerships, career pathways, cross-program data and measurement, and job-driven investments with workforce partners. Alaska's WIOA Plan stresses the importance of education, training, credentials, and skill attainment. This combined plan addresses economic self-sufficiency of workers by aligning workforce development with education and economic development.

Another long-term strategy to improve SCSEP services is to include discussion with participants on financial and work incentives, to provide information on Social Security 1619b Medicaid While Working, and to explore specialized work incentives through programs including Ticket to Work, Impairment-Related Work Expenses, Blind Work Expenses, and Plan to Achieve Self-Support, and

to provide referrals to DVR or Alaska Aging and Disability Resource Centers for those in need of these services.

6. THE STATE’S STRATEGY FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN THE LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE FOR SCSEP PARTICIPANTS’ ENTRY INTO UNSUBSIDIZED EMPLOYMENT, AND TO ACHIEVE, AT A MINIMUM, THE LEVELS SPECIFIED IN OAA SECTION 513(A)(2)(E)(II). (20 CFR 641.302(F))

The state’s strategy for continuous improvement includes collaboration and integration into the state’s larger workforce development system and other program data to drive decisions on services offered and industries targeted. Incorporating these elements into program planning and operations prepares SCSEP participants for self-sustaining employment and economic stability after program exit. Other strategies include strengthening initial assessments of participant skills, knowledge, interests, aptitudes, and qualities, and defining career objectives that are relevant for the participant’s interests and abilities and local business needs.

C. LOCATION AND POPULATION SERVED, INCLUDING EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION

1. A DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCALITIES AND POPULATIONS FOR WHICH PROJECTS OF THE TYPE AUTHORIZED BY TITLE V ARE MOST NEEDED. (20 CFR 641.325 (D))

The census regions most in need of Title V services are Anchorage, Fairbanks, Matanuska-Susitna, Kenai Peninsula, and Juneau. Training is available statewide based on an open host site and a willing supervisor to train the participant. The community service training projects most needed are in government, senior centers, transportation, education, health services, retail trade, and leisure and hospitality. Alaska seniors’ skills are vast: they possess curiosity and lifelong learning skills; they are resilient and flexible even while growing older; they have the ability to understand, write, and do mathematics; and they have skills in living off the land. A senior’s ability to use analytical thinking, creative thinking, and learn computer technology to use AI will be key to working longer. Seniors exhibit rational reasoning and decision making in the types of training and jobs that they can do.

2. LIST THE CITIES AND COUNTIES WHERE THE PROJECT WILL BE CONDUCTED. INCLUDE THE NUMBER OF SCSEP AUTHORIZED POSITIONS AND INDICATE WHERE THE POSITIONS CHANGED FROM THE PRIOR YEAR.

The State of Alaska uses the federal equitable distribution as the basis for authorized positions.

FIPS	Alaska Census/Borough	2023	2022	Change
2013	Aleutians East	1	1	0
2016	Aleutians West	2	2	0
2020	Anchorage	53	53	0
2050	Bethel	7	7	0
2060	Bristol	0	0	0
2063	Chugach	0	0	0
2066	Copper River	2	1	1
2068	Denali	2	2	0

FIPS	Alaska Census/Borough	2023	2022	Change
2070	Dillingham	2	2	0
2090	Fairbanks North Star	15	15	0
2100	Haines	1	1	0
2105	Hoonah-Angoon	1	1	0
2110	Juneau	6	6	0
2122	Kenai	22	22	0
2130	Ketchikan	4	4	0
2150	Kodiak	3	3	0
2158	Kusilvak	4	4	0
2164	Lake and Peninsula	1	1	0
2170	Matanuska-Susitna	31	31	0
2180	Nome	3	3	0
2185	North	2	2	0
2188	Northwest	3	3	0
2195	Petersburg	1	1	0
2198	Prince of Wales-Hyder	3	3	0
2220	Sitka	2	2	0
2230	Skagway	0	0	0
2240	Southeast Fairbanks	2	2	0
2261	Valdez-Cordova (see Chugach/Copper River)	0	0	0
2275	Wrangell	0	0	0
2282	Yakutat	0	0	0
2290	Yukon-Koyukuk	3	3	0
	Total Slots	176	175	1

No enrollee will be displaced in his/her position due to efforts to resolve equitable distribution problems, as the state has the flexibility to assist participants no matter where they live. No enrollee will be terminated simply because of the equitable distribution requirement.

3. DESCRIBE CURRENT SLOT IMBALANCES AND PROPOSED STEPS TO CORRECT INEQUITIES TO ACHIEVE EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION.

SCSEP continues to reach out to all regions and is open for enrollment statewide. SCSEP enrollment is affected by seasonal employment and the fact that many Alaska seniors are work-ready or over income limits. The Alaska SCSEP front door is through our job centers or vocational rehabilitation. Before any person enters SCSEP, WIOA or VR staff work with them to see if there is an available job based on their skill set and assist them to get the best available wages. A good salary in Alaska depends on various factors, such as the cost of living, location, and occupation. As of November 18, 2023, the average hourly pay for a worker in Alaska was \$27.29 an hour and the average household income is \$91,547 per year.

The factors seniors considered before entering SCSEP are:

1. Pay and benefits.
2. Flexibility to train at a nonprofit when and where they want.
3. Challenging and impactful work.
4. Opportunities for career growth within the field or organization.
5. Opportunities to learn and develop new skills.

The possible reasons for significant variances in Alaska SCSEP under-enrollment in most census areas are low training wages, the cost of getting to host sites due to the lack of transportation or road system, or the lack of local community host sites willing to supervise and train SCSEP participants.

4. THE STATE'S LONG-TERM STRATEGY FOR ACHIEVING AN EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF SCSEP POSITIONS WITHIN THE STATE THAT:

A. MOVES POSITIONS FROM OVER-SERVED TO UNDERSERVED LOCATIONS WITHIN THE STATE IN COMPLIANCE WITH 20 CFR 641.365.

SCSEP services are available in all regions. The program is fully integrated into all AJCs and DVR sites with the assistance of subrecipients and local host sites. The program continues to advertise at its AJC and DVR team meetings, informing community partners what this program can do for older Alaskans and for employers. This proactive approach empowers seniors to connect with AJCs or SCSEP. DOLWD is continuing its campaign that "Work Matters" and "Strengthen Alaska Workforce by Employing the Older Worker" to raise awareness of the valuable resources older workers provide. These campaigns foster innovative strategies to assist seniors to obtain employable skills and find suitable work in today's local job market.

B. EQUITABLY SERVES RURAL AND URBAN AREAS.

Alaska's SCSEP continues to be available to all eligible participants statewide. The state's long-term strategies to equitably serve both rural and urban areas are: 1) to award subrecipients who are capable project operators of the state; 2) to operate the program with staff in AJCs and DVRs; and 3) to continue to make program services available to both urban and rural areas of the state. It is noted that the pandemic has materially impaired the ability of Alaska SCSEP to meet its equitable distribution of service objective. The challenge is finding community service training opportunities for participants wishing to learn office skills or needing to improve computer skills amid the changes in office staffing and capacity, as many government and nonprofit organization staff are working remotely; finding open host sites to assist those in need is becoming the biggest challenge.

**C. SERVES INDIVIDUALS AFFORDED PRIORITY FOR SERVICE UNDER 20 CFR 641.520.
(20 CFR 641.302(A), 641.365, 641.520)**

The state understands that pursuant to regulations prescribed by the Labor Secretary, an eligible individual shall have priority for the community service assignment and other authorized activities provided under the OAA Amendments of 2006, Title V - SCSEP if the individual is 65 years of age or older or:

1. has a disability;
2. has limited English proficiency or low literacy skills;
3. resides in a rural area;
4. is a veteran;
5. has low employment prospects;
6. has failed to find employment after using services provided under Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act;
7. is homeless or at risk for homelessness;
8. has been incarcerated within the last five years or is under supervision following the release from prison or jail within the last five years.

5. THE RATIO OF ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS IN EACH SERVICE AREA TO THE TOTAL ELIGIBLE POPULATION IN THE STATE. (20 CFR 641.325(A))

Below is Alaska Population 55 or older Age, Sex and Borough/Census Area 2022

State of Alaska	Total	Male	Female
July 2022 Estimate	197,550	99,083	98,467

Census Area	Total	Male	Female	Percentage
Aleutians East Borough	991	593	398	0.50%
Aleutians West Census Area	1,299	879	420	0.66%
Anchorage Municipality	73,773	35,508	38,265	37.34%
Bethel Census Area	3,483	1,836	1,647	1.76%
Bristol Bay Borough	280	154	126	0.14%
Chugach Census Area	2,008	1,040	968	1.02%
Copper River Census Area	954	540	414	0.48%
Denali Borough	538	329	209	0.27%
Dillingham Census Area	1,137	601	536	0.58%
Fairbanks North Star Borough	24,275	12,266	12,009	12.29%

Haines Borough	1,075	538	537	0.54%
Hoonah-Angoon Census Area	1,010	554	456	0.51%
Juneau City and Borough	9,654	4,774	4,880	4.89%
Kenai Peninsula Borough	21,116	10,724	10,392	10.69%
Ketchikan Gateway Borough	4,423	2,210	2,213	2.24%
Kodiak Island Borough	3,432	1,753	1,679	1.74%
Kusilvak Census Area	1,289	678	611	0.65%
Lake and Peninsula Borough	379	212	167	0.19%
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	29,802	14,906	14,896	15.09%
Nome Census Area	1,900	999	901	0.96%
North Slope Borough	2,212	1,424	788	1.12%
Northwest Arctic Borough	1,412	764	648	0.71%
Petersburg Borough	1,220	621	599	0.62%
Prince of Wales-Hyder Census Area	1,982	1,092	890	1.00%
Sitka City and Borough	2,737	1,330	1,407	1.39%
Skagway Borough, Municipality	336	167	169	0.17%
Southeast Fairbanks Census Area	2,096	1,156	940	1.06%
Wrangell City and Borough	869	451	418	0.44%
Yakutat City and Borough	214	113	101	0.11%
Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area	1,654	871	783	0.84%
Total	197,550	99,083	98,467	100%

Sources: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics Occupation.

6. THE RELATIVE DISTRIBUTION OF ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHO:

A. RESIDE IN URBAN AND RURAL AREAS WITHIN THE STATE

- 62.32% of the enrolled participants reside in an urban area and 37.68% of the enrolled participants reside in a rural area.

B. HAVE THE GREATEST ECONOMIC NEED

- 67.16% of the enrolled participants are at or below the poverty level.
- 80.6% of the enrolled participants are receiving public assistance.
- 42.03% of the enrolled participants are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- 18.12% of the enrolled participants are veterans or eligible spouses of a veteran.

C. ARE MINORITIES

- 50.0% of the enrolled participants are minorities.

D. ARE LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT

- 7.97% of the enrolled participants have low literacy skills.
- 39.86% of the enrolled participants have limited English proficiency.

E. HAVE THE GREATEST SOCIAL NEED. (20 CFR 641.325(B))

- 30.43% of the enrolled participants have severely limited employment prospects in areas of persistent unemployment.
- 13.77% of the enrolled participants have low employment prospects.
- 23.19% of the enrolled participants have disabilities.
- 13.77% of the enrolled participants are individuals aged 75 and over.
- 13.77% of the enrolled participants have a severe disability.
- 6.52% of the enrolled participants are frail.

F. FORMERLY INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS, AS DEFINED IN TEGL 17-20

- 15.94% of the enrolled participants are formerly incarcerated individuals.

7. A DESCRIPTION OF THE STEPS TAKEN TO AVOID DISRUPTIONS TO THE GREATEST EXTENT POSSIBLE, WHEN POSITIONS ARE REDISTRIBUTED, AS PROVIDED IN 20 CFR 641.365; WHEN NEW CENSUS OR OTHER RELIABLE DATA BECOME AVAILABLE; OR WHEN THERE IS OVER-ENROLLMENT FOR ANY OTHER REASON. (20 CFR 641.325(I), 641.302(B))

Disruptions in service have not historically been a problem in Alaska's SCSEP. Yet this past three years, the program had many disruptions around COVID, which affected participant services, as participants were asked to shelter in place, host agencies were closed, or due to being in close contact participants were infected numerous times. The starts and stops are still ongoing. Under-enrollment continues to be a significant issue statewide due to agency shutdowns, lack of in-person supervisors, and senior concerns about their health by being in public settings. To prevent disruptions in service, the AJCs, DVRs, and SCSEP staff will continue to assist those participants affected by disruptions of services.

When disruption of services occurs, meetings with affected local host sites and participants are scheduled to outline possible scenarios for minimizing potential impacts. Budget revisions could be made to subrecipients' funding allocations to alleviate under- or over-funding. This process also occurs at mid-year to adjust regions with the greatest needs from those regions that do not need the funding awarded. This effort, if necessary, would occur immediately, depending on the specific situation. The determination of where positions need to be relocated and how urgent the situation is will be the basis for the state's decisions. To address the issues of disruption of service, teleconferences with all affected parties would be scheduled to discuss the issues and to keep all parties informed. Alaska SCSEP and job centers are open to the public and provide a wide array of employment and training services designed to get job seekers the jobs they want and employers the workers they need whether in person or via the telephone.

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR APPENDIX

ALL WIOA CORE PROGRAMS

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments will continue piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs are expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.

Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

For Program Year (PY) 2016-2019 plans, the Departments used the transition authority under section 503(a) of WIOA to designate certain primary indicators of performance as “baseline” indicators to ensure an orderly transition from the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to those under WIOA. A “baseline” indicator was one for which states did not propose an expected level of performance and did not come to agreement with the Departments on negotiated levels of performance because sufficient data was not available to establish such performance levels. As a result, “baseline” indicators were not used in the end of the year adjustment of performance levels and were not used to determine failure to meet adjusted levels of performance for purposes of sanctions. The Departments designated indicators as “baseline” based on the likelihood of a State having insufficient data with which to make a reasonable determination of an expected level of performance.

For PYs 2020-2023 Plans, Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) and the Title II program (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act) will have two full years of data available to make reasonable determinations of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Credential Attainment Rate; and
- Measurable Skill Gains

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program, authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III of WIOA, will have two full years of data available to make a reasonable determination of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit); and
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)

The Credential Attainment Rate and Measurable Skill Gains indicators do not apply to the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program; therefore, this program will not submit expected levels of performance for these indicators.

For the first two years of PYs 2020-2023 Plans, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA, will have two full years of data available for the Measurable Skill Gains indicator only. Therefore, the Departments will designate the following indicators as “baseline” for the VR program for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit); and
- Credential Attainment Rate

VR agencies must continue to collect and report on all indicators, including those that have been designated as “baseline, pursuant to section 116(d) of WIOA.” The actual performance data reported by these programs for indicators designated as “baseline” for PY 2020 and PY 2021 will serve as baseline data in future years. The Departments will require VR agencies to submit expected levels of performance for these indicators for PY 2022 and PY 2023.

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments will continue piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs are expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.

Each core program must submit an expected level of performance for all of the other indicators, as applicable, with the exception of the four indicators designated as “baseline” for the VR program in PY 2020 and PY 2021. The Departments will work with states during the negotiation process to establish negotiated levels of performance for each of the primary indicators for the core programs not listed as “baseline.” Each state must update its plan to include the agreed-upon negotiated levels of performance before the Departments approve a state’s plan.

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES -
ADULT PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	79.0%	80.0%	79.0%	80.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	77.0%	80.5%	77.0%	80.5%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	10,500.00	11,500.00	10,500.00	11,500.00
Credential Attainment Rate	69.0%	69.5%	69.0%	69.5%
Measurable Skill Gains	65.0%	68.9%	65.0%	68.9%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES
DISLOCATED PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	85.0%	88.0%	85.0%	88.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	83.0%	83.0%	83.0%	83.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	12,500.00	13,500.00	12,500.00	13,500.00
Credential Attainment Rate	60.0%	62.2%	60.0%	62.2%
Measurable Skill Gains	72.0%	75.0%	75.0%	75.0%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES
YOUTH PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	60.0%	60.0%	60.0%	60.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	57.0%	59.5%	57.0%	59.5%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	4,150.00	4,500.00	4,150.00	4,500.00
Credential Attainment Rate	56.7%	56.7%	56.7%	56.7%
Measurable Skill Gains	71.0%	71.0%	71.0%	71.0%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹ The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

WAGNER-PEYSER ACT - WAGNER PEYSER PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	58.0%	66.0%	58.0%	66.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	54.7%	65.0%	54.7%	65.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	5,650.00	7,000.00	5,650.00	7,000.00
Credential Attainment Rate	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Measurable Skill Gains	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹ The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM - ADULT EDUCATION
AND LITERACY PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	40.0%	40.0%	43.0%	43.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	40.0%	40.0%	43.0%	43.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$5,000	\$5,400	\$5,200	\$5,450
Credential Attainment Rate	30.0%	35.0%	32.0%	37.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	20.0%	20.0%	23.0%	23.0%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹ The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM (COMBINED OR GENERAL) -
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Each State VR program must submit expected levels of performance in its Unified or Combined State Plan and in the two-year modification of that plan. Expected levels of performance for the first two years of a state plan must be submitted in the initial submission of the Unified or Combined State Plan and in the initial submission of the two-year modification of that Plan, for years three and four, as described in 34 CFR § 361.170(a). Expected levels of performance must be stated to the nearest tenth of a percent (XX.X %) or to the nearest whole dollar for median earnings. State VR programs are reminded that the expected levels of performance must be published for public comment prior to plan submission in accordance with state law, regulation, and policy.

After the Unified or Combined State Plan submission, each State VR program must reach agreement with RSA on the negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the Unified or Combined State Plan (or for the third and fourth years of the Unified or Combined State Plan during the required two-year modification process) in accordance with WIOA section 116(b)(3)(A)(iv).

RSA will use its statistical adjustment model to derive pre-program year estimated levels of performance for each indicator. Each State VR program and RSA will consider the negotiation factors outlined in WIOA section 116(b)(3)(A)(v) during the negotiation process. Once negotiated levels of performance are agreed upon, each State VR program must incorporate the negotiated levels of performance into the Unified or Combined State Plan and the two-year modification of that plan prior to the plan's approval (section 116(b)(3)(A)(iv) of WIOA).

Effectiveness in Serving Employers

In the final rule implementing WIOA, the Departments indicated that they would initially implement this indicator in the form of a pilot to test the feasibility and rigor of three proposed approaches. During Program Year (PY) 2022, the Departments initiated the rulemaking process to establish a standard definition of Effectiveness in Serving Employers. States will continue to report two of three proposed approaches until the Departments issue the final rule and implement the indicator.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	54.0%	54.9%	54.1%	55.9%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	49.8%	50.3%	49.8%	51.3%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$5,252.06	\$5,473.00	\$5,252.06	\$5,505.00
Credential Attainment Rate	43.3%	48.0%	43.3%	48.5%
Measurable Skill Gains	60.3%	63.4%	60.3%	63.9%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹ The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

ADDITIONAL INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Additional Indicators of Performance
1. Retention with Same Employer in the 2nd and 4th Quarters After Exit Rate
2. Employer Penetration Rate

OTHER APPENDICES

ACRONYMS

Acronym	Definition
AAE	Alaska Adult Education
ABLE	Achieving A Better Life Experience Act
ACA	Alaska Construction Academy
ACoA	Alaska Commission on Aging
ACPE	Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education
ACRE	Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
AEFLA	Adult Education and Family Literacy Act
AIR	American Institute for Research
AITC	Alaska Interagency Transition Council
AIVRS	American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services
AJC	Alaska Job Center
AJCN	Alaska Job Center Network
AKCIS	Alaska Career Information System
ANCET	Alaska Native Coalition for Employment and Training
AOP	Agricultural Outreach Plan
ARDOR	Alaska Regional Development Organization
ASL	American Sign Language
AT	Assistive Technology
ATLA	Assistive Technologies of Alaska
ATOP	Alaska Transition Outreach Project
AVTEC	Alaska Vocational Technical Center
AWARE	DVR's case management software
AWIB	Alaska Workforce Investment Board
BEP	Business Enterprise Program
BEST	Business Employment Services Team

Acronym	Definition
CAP	Corrective Action Plan
CASAS	Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System
CCER	Center for Continuing Education in Rehabilitation at University of Washington
CCR	College and Career Readiness
CDL	Commercial Driver's License
CRC	Certified Rehabilitation Counselor
CPM	Common Performance Measures
CRCC	Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification
CRP	Certified Rehabilitation Provider
CSBG	Community Services Block Grant
CSNA	Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment
CSPD	Comprehensive System of Personnel Development
CSTS	Career Support and Training Services
CTE	Career and Technical Education
CWIC	Community Work Incentives Coordinator
DBH	Division of Behavioral Health, under DoH
DCCED	Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development
DCRA	Division of Community and Regional Affairs, under DCCED
DEED	Department of Education & Early Development
DEI	Disability Employment Initiative
DETS	Division of Employment and Training Services, under DOLWD
DoH	Department of Health
DJJ	Division of Juvenile Justice, under Department of Family and Community Services
DOC	Department of Corrections
DOLWD	Department of Labor and Workforce Development
DOT	Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
DPA	Division of Public Assistance, under DoH
DRC	Disability Resource Coordinator
DSDS	Division of Senior and Disability Services, under DoH

Acronym	Definition
DVOP	Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program
DVR	Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, under DOLWD
EDP	Employee Development Plan
EGrAMS	Electronic Grants Administration and Management System
ES	Employment Service
ESL	English as a Second Language
ETA	Employment and Training Administration, under USDOL
ETPL	Eligible Training Provider List
FASD	Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FFY	Federal Fiscal Year
GED®	General Educational Development
GEPA	General Education Provisions Act
GPMS	Grantee Performance Management System
GPRA	Government Performance and Results Act (Employment and Training Administration)
HCBS	Home and Community Based Services
HUD	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
I/DD	Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
IDEIA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act 2004
IELCE	Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education
IEP	Individual Employment Plan or Individual Education Program
IET	Integrated Education and Training
IJA	Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021
IL	Independent Living
IPE	Individualized Plan for Employment
ISS	Individual Service Strategies
ITA	Individual Training Account
IWT	Incumbent Worker Training

Acronym	Definition
JBER	Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson
JVSG	Jobs for Veterans State Grant
KSA	Knowledge, skills, and abilities
LEA	Local Education Agency
LVER	Local Veterans' Employment Representative
MASST	Mature Alaskans Seeking Skills Training
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSD	Most Significant Disabilities
MSFW	Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker(s)
NAICS	North American Industry Classification System
NFJP	National Farmworker Jobs Program
NRLI	National Rehabilitation Leadership Institute
NRS	National Reporting System
OA	USDOL Office of Apprenticeship for Alaska
OAA	Older Americans Act
OCS	Office of Children's Services
OJT	On-the-Job Training
PETS	Pre-Employment Transition Services
PFD	Permanent Fund Dividend
PH	Provisional Hires
PIRL	Participant Individual Record Layout
POS	Priority of Service
PY	Program Year
Pre-ETS	Pre-Employment Transition Services
RA	Registered Apprenticeship
R&A	Research and Analysis Section of DOLWD
REF	Renewable Energy Fund
RESEA	Re-employment Services and Eligibility Assessment

Acronym	Definition
RSA	Rehabilitation Services Administration
RTC	Regional Training Center
SAE	State Apprenticeship Expansion Grant from USDOL
SAEEI	State Apprenticeship Expansion, Equity, and Innovation Grant
SARA	Semi-Autonomous Research Assistant
SBE	Significant Barriers to Employment
SCSEP	Senior Community Service Employment Program
SCAHEC	South Central Area Health Education Center
SE	Supported Employment
SFY	State Fiscal Year (July 1 to June 30)
SMA	State Monitor Advocate
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
STEP	State Training and Employment Program
SVRC	State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee
SWA	State Workforce Agency
TAA	Trade Adjustment Assistance
TAARA	Trade Adjustment Assistance Reauthorization Act
TABE	Test of Adult Basic Education
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
TBI	Traumatic Brain Injury
TTY	Text Telephone
TVEP	Technical Vocational Education Program
TVR	Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation
UA	University of Alaska System
UAA	University of Alaska Anchorage
UAF	University of Alaska Fairbanks
UAS	University of Alaska Southeast
UI	Unemployment Insurance
USDOL	United States Department of Labor

Acronym	Definition
VI	Visually Impaired
VOS	Virtual One-Stop
VR	Vocational Rehabilitation
VR&E	Vocational Rehabilitation & Education
VRC	Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
WIA	Workforce Investment Act of 1998
WIB	Workforce Investment Board
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

CORE AND PARTNER PROGRAM INFORMATION

WIOA Title I – Adult and Dislocated Worker
Organization: Department of Labor and Workforce Development; Division of Employment and Training Services
Website: http://labor.alaska.gov/dets/wioa_adult.htm http://labor.alaska.gov/dets/wioa_dislocated.htm Contact : James Harvey, Division Operations Manager Phone: (907) 465-4891 Email: james.harvey@alaska.gov
Program Authority: WIOA Chapter 1, Sec. 121, (b) One-Stop Partners, (1)
<p>The Adult program improves the quality of the adult workforce, reduces welfare dependency, and enhances the productivity and competitiveness of Alaska’s workforce. The program provides adults with workforce preparation; career services, training services and job placement assistance needed to increase occupational skill attainment, obtain industry-recognized credentials, and secure a good job that provides earnings that lead to self-sufficiency.</p> <p>The Dislocated Worker Program provides a variety of services to workers who have been impacted by plant closures, workforce reductions, and natural disasters that lead to job loss. The goal is to provide dislocated workers with the tools and support needed to obtain credentials and occupational skills leading to jobs in high growth industries and high demand occupations. The program enhances the quality, productivity and competitiveness of Alaska’s workforce while meeting the needs of Alaska’s employers.</p>

WIOA Title I – Youth Program
Organization: Department of Labor and Workforce Development; Alaska Workforce Investment Board
Website: https://awib.alaska.gov/training-programs/wioa_youth.htm Contact: Jeff Steeprow, Assistant Director Phone: (907) 269-3569 Email: Jeffrey.steeprow@alaska.gov
Program Authority: WIOA Chapter 1, Sec. 121, (b) One-Stop Partners, (1)
The WIOA Youth program is designed to help disadvantaged or disconnected in-school youth ages 14-18 and out-of-school youth ages 16-24, gain access to employment, education, training, and support services needed to succeed and compete in today’s global economy. WIOA Youth projects provide a variety of services and activities leading to: the attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, or a recognized postsecondary credential; postsecondary education and training opportunities; academic and vocational instruction; attainment of an industry recognized occupational credential; preparation for unsubsidized employment opportunities; connections to employers, in in-demand industry sectors and local and regional labor markets; and supportive services.

WIOA Title II – Alaska Adult Education

Organization: Department of Labor and Workforce Development; Division of Employment and Training Services

Website: <http://jobs.alaska.gov/aae/>

Contact: Windy Swearingin, AAE Program Director

Phone: (907) 465-8714

Email: windy.swearingin@alaska.gov

Program Authority: WIOA Chapter 1, Sec. 121, (b) One-Stop Partners, (1)(B)(iii) Adult Education and Literacy activities authorized under WIOA Title II

The Alaska Adult Education Program (AAE) is a statewide instructional program for adults seeking to enhance their postsecondary education skills in order to transition into employment. The goal of the AAE is to identify student’s educational level and facilitate a successful transition to postsecondary education, training, or employment. Adult Education Programs instruct student in basic skills, high school equivalency diploma attainment, English language acquisition, and workforce preparation courses.

The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) and WIOA Title II require the State of Alaska to provide eligible agencies a multiyear grant award. The competitive three-year grant cycle enables eligible providers to develop, implement, and improve adult education and literacy activities within Alaska. Eligible providers must use funds to establish or operate programs that provide adult education and literacy activities, including programs that provide these activities concurrently.

The Division annually receives general funds from the State of Alaska and a grant from the U.S. Department of Education to fund adult education regional programs. These programs provide foundational skills and English literacy instruction to assist students who are studying to improve their reading, writing, and math skills. Alaska Adult Education includes 13 regional education grants, an integrated correctional system, and a grant for Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE).

WIOA Title III – Wagner Peyser Employment Services

Program: Department of Labor and Workforce Development; Division of Employment and Training Services

Main Websites: <https://jobs.alaska.gov/>

Job Seeker Resources: <https://labor.alaska.gov/landing-pages/job-seekers.html?site=job>

Business Connection for Employers: <https://labor.alaska.gov/landing-pages/employers.html?site=job>

Contact: James Harvey, Division Operations Manager

Phone : (907) 465-4891

Email: james.harvey@alaska.gov

Program Authority: WIOA Chapter 1, Sec. 121, (b) One-Stop Partners, (1) Amendments to the Wagner-Peyser Act Programs (29 USC 49 et seq.)

The One-Stop delivery system collaborates with partners to create a seamless system of service delivery that will enhance access to services and improve long-term employment outcomes for individuals receiving assistance.

Employment and training services are delivered by the Alaska Job Center Network One-Stop delivery system, which provides universal access to workers, job seekers, and employers under one roof from easy-to-find locations as well as online via AlaskaJobs. The in-person delivery points for these services are through 13 job centers located throughout the state. Services include labor exchange, labor market information, job search, job referral and placement assistance, re-employment services to unemployment insurance claimants, and hiring incentive, job fair and recruitment services to employers. More intensive services can include job seeker assessment of skill levels, abilities and aptitudes, career guidance when appropriate, job search workshops, referral to Title I training and supportive services, and referral to partner agencies for additional assistance for individuals. Rapid Response, Incumbent Worker Training, and Registered Apprenticeship assistance are available for employers.

Services are delivered in one of three modes including self-service, facilitated self-help services, and staff-assisted service delivery.

WIOA Title IV – Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Organization: Department of Labor and Workforce Development; Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Website: <https://labor.alaska.gov/dvr/>

Contact: Duane Mayes, Division Director, DVR

Phone: (907) 334-5963

Email: duane.mayes@alaska.gov

Program Authority: Rehabilitation Act, Title I, Parts A & B – Rehabilitation Services Commission (29 USC 720); WIOA Chapter 1, Sec. 121, (b) One-Stop Partners, (1)(B)(iv) programs authorized under Title I of Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 USC 720)(other than section 112 or part C of title I of such Act (29 USC 732, 741).

DVR operates a statewide comprehensive, coordinated, effective, efficient, and accountable vocational rehabilitation program as an integral part of a statewide workforce development system; and to assess, plan, and provide vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities so that those individuals may prepare for and engage in competitive integrated employment consistent with their unique strengths, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice.

Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)

Organization: Department of Labor and Workforce Development; Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Website: <https://labor.alaska.gov/masst/>

Contact: Margarita (Rita) Gray, MASST Program Coordinator

Phone : (907) 465-4872

Email: rita.gray@alaska.gov

Program Authority: Older Americans Act, Title V – Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) (42 USC 3056)

WIOA Chapter 1, Sec. 121, (b) One-Stop Partners, (1)(B)(v) activities under title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 USC 3056)

The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), known in Alaska as Mature Alaskans Seeking Skills Training (MASST), supports individual economic self-sufficiency and promote useful opportunities in community service activities that shall include community service employment for unemployed low-income persons who are age 55 or older, particularly persons who have poor employment prospects, and to increase the number of persons who may enjoy the benefits of unsubsidized employment in both the public and private sectors.

The intent of this program is to place older individuals in community service positions and provide job training to help them become self-sufficient, provide much needed support to organizations that benefit from increased civic engagement, and strengthens the communities that are served by such organizations. This program helps Alaska retain the valuable resources of older workers while enabling this population to maintain an independent lifestyle and make meaningful contributions to their communities.

The program provides services through the job centers and subrecipient organizations. Each site works with host agencies to develop community service employment assignments, which provide participants with needed on-the-job training and skill development. This added expertise allows participants to pursue local employment opportunities.

Jobs for Veterans Statewide Grant (JVSG)
Organization: Department of Labor and Workforce Development; Division of Employment and Training Services
Website: http://jobs.alaska.gov/veterans Contact: Nakita Mongar, Program Coordinator I Phone: (907) 269-3016 Email: nakita.mongar@alaska.gov
Program Authority: WIOA Title I – Veteran’s Workforce Programs – (29 USC 2913, 29 USC 2919, 38 USC 41)
<p>Veterans and other eligible persons are offered specialized programs and opportunities to maximize training potential, employment, and retention. Veterans receive priority of services in all job centers. Veterans and other eligible persons with significant barriers to employment (SBE) and are assisted by specialized staff funded through the Jobs for Veterans Statewide Grant (JVSG).</p> <p>The Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists are housed in job centers located in areas with the highest veteran populations and provide in-depth interviewing and comprehensive assessments to identify employment goals, interim objectives, and appropriate services that will enable the veteran to meet his or her employment goals. If DVOP services are not available, referrals are made to appropriate partner programs such as Career Support and Training Services and Vocational Rehabilitation.</p> <p>The Local Veterans’ Employment Representative (LVER) establishes relationships with employers and facilitate the placement of veterans and other eligible persons in meaningful employment. The LVER is a bridge between employers and veterans to recruit, hire, promote, and retain veteran hire.</p>

Trade Adjustment Assistance
Organization: Department of Labor and Workforce Development; Division of Employment and Training Services
Website: https://jobs.alaska.gov/TAA/index.html Contact: Andrea Mogil, Program Coordinator I Phone: (907) 465-6275 Email: andrea.mogil@alaska.gov
Program Authority: WIOA Chapter 1, Sec. 121, (b) One-Stop Partners, (1)(B)(vii) activities authorized under Chapter 2 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 USC 2271 et seq.); Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) (19 USC 2317) and North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (19 USC 2271); Trade Act of 1974 (19 USC 2101 et seq.), Title II, Chapter 2, as amended in 2002, 2009, 2011 and Trade Adjustment Assistance Reauthorization Act (TAARA 2015) , TAA Final Rule, 20 CFR 618, TAA Reversion 2021 (TEGL 24-20); Ongoing Operations of the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) for Workers Program During Phase-Out Termination (TEGL 07-23).
The Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program provides training and employment services to workers who were laid-off or had a reduction in hours or pay due to the impacts of foreign trade including competition from imported goods or work outsourced to a different country. In coordination with Rapid Response services, Unemployment Insurance, and Wagner-Peyser staff, the program identifies trade-affected worker groups and coordinates with stakeholders to provide qualified individuals with employment, training, and support services; job search and relocation allowances; weekly income support when unemployment insurance is fully exhausted, and workers who are 50 years of age and older with a wage subsidy to help bridge the salary gap between old and new employment. In Alaska, those workers eligible for TAA benefits have been workers in petroleum, timber, or fishing industries, as well as telecommunications customer support.

Unemployment Insurance
Organization: Department of Labor and Workforce Development; Division of Employment and Training Services
Website: http://labor.alaska.gov/unemployment/ Contact: Clifford Napier, Assistant Director, Phone: (907) 269-3742 Email : clifford.napier@alaska.gov
Program Authority: WIOA Chapter 1, Sec. 121, (b) One-Stop Partners, (1)(B)(xi) programs authorized under state unemployment compensation laws (in accordance with applicable Federal law).
Alaska's UI Program is committed to providing support to Alaska's One-Stop job centers through referrals to Re-employment Services Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) activities and with dedicated UI staff available to respond to the needs of unemployed workers visiting job centers. Alaska UI already requires mandatory individual registration in AlaskaJobs and provides Rapid Response program activities jointly with job center staff.

RurAL CAP

Organization: Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development; Division of Community and Regional Affairs

Website: <https://ruralcap.org/>

Contact: L. Tiel Smith, Chief Executive Officer

Phone: (907) 279-2511

Email: tsmith@ruralcap.org

Program Authority: RurAL CAP is the only eligible Community Action Agency in the State of Alaska that is eligible to receive CSBG funds. State Assurance '676(b)(5); WIOA Chapter 1, Sec. 121, (b) One-Stop Partners, (1)(B)(ix) employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 USC 9901 et seq.).

State Assurance '676(b)(5): . . . The eligible entities in the state will coordinate, and establish linkages between, governmental and other social services programs to assure the effective delivery of such services to low-income individuals and to avoid duplication of such services, and state and the eligible entities will coordinate the provision of employment and training activities in the state and in communities with entities providing activities through statewide and local workforce investment systems under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. RurAL CAP works extensively with state-related entities that receive funding under the Workforce Investment Act. The Anchorage Services Division works with Nine Star, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, State Training and Employment Program, all GED® completion programs, CITC, etc. to assist resident participants in reaching their employment goals. DOLWD assists with job applications.

Residents are provided employment classes and internet access to private companies that may be hiring. They are also provided transportation to employment-related activities and access to “day labor” jobs. The Planning and Construction Division hires individuals for the weatherization projects who have completed USDOL workforce training programs. DOLWD allows RurAL CAP to provide the necessary training and technical assistance to their service partners and within their organization to meet the new standards in the CSBG program.

Alaska Housing Finance Corporation
Organization: Alaska Housing Finance Corporation; Jumpstart Program (Moving to Work)
Website: https://www.ahfc.us/publichousing/jumpstart Contact: Amanda (Mandi) Manning, Resident Services Manager Phone : (907) 330-6185 Email: amanning@ahfc.us
Program Authority: WIOA Chapter 1, Sec. 121, (b) One-Stop Partners, (1)(B)(x) employment and training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
<p>AHFC is a Public Housing Division participating in the Moving to Work (MTW) Demonstration Program. As a Moving to Work Agency, AHFC has the flexibility to design and test various approaches for providing and administering housing assistance that reduce cost and achieve greater cost effectiveness in federal expenditures; give incentives to families with children whose heads of household are either working, seeking work, or are participating in job training, educational, or other programs that assist in obtaining employment and becoming economically self-sufficient; and increase housing choices for low-income families.</p> <p>With this MTW designation, AHFC's FY2024 MTW Annual Plan continues to carry out its Reasonable Rent and Family Self-Sufficiency initiative. Under this program, families are divided into three classifications: Step, Classic and Set-Aside (vouchers designed to help designated groups such as veterans.) Families in the Classic program pay an income-based rent and see no time-limits on assistance. Families in the Step Program contain a workable adult and do not meet the criteria for the Classic program. Under the Step program, families are limited to five (5) years of rental assistance and under the Step Rent/Subsidy schedule, the family's share of rent increases annually as AHFC's subsidy decreases.</p> <p>To serve participating families, AHFC expanded and improved its Family Self-Sufficiency Program by creating the Jumpstart Program. The Jumpstart Program provides financial incentives for participation and/or completion of employment, education, and long-term financial activities along with intensive case management for families identified as having a high shelter burden (the cost of rent plus utilities). The objective of Jumpstart is to reduce the dependency of low-income families on welfare assistance and on Housing Choice Voucher, Public Housing, or any Federal, State, or Local rent or homeownership subsidies. AHFC measures the success of Jumpstart not only by the number of families who achieve self-sufficiency, but also by the number of Jumpstart families who, as a result of participation in the program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have family members who obtain their first job;

- have family members who obtain higher paying jobs;
- no longer need benefits received under one or more welfare programs;
- obtain a high school diploma, General Educational Development (GED[®]) certificate, or higher education degree; or
- accomplish goals that assist the family in obtaining economic independence.

AHFC case managers work with families to develop individualized goals, introduce or direct them to resources and support services that can assist in their progress toward meeting these goals, and follow-up on the family's progress. Local AHFC offices (16 locations statewide) regularly assist families in immediate need by referring them to resources and services.

Referrals for employment assistance to One-Stop centers are a priority to assist with job training, preparation, and counseling; job development and placement; and follow-up assistance after job placement and completion of the contract of participation. AHFC coordinates closely with U.S. DOL to ensure non-duplication of services. AHFC also offers a suite of job readiness classes on-site at its Anchorage location through the Gateway to Education, which include multi-class occupational endorsements, computer lab classes, and other foundational courses to assist in gaining skills for immediate job placement.

Organization: Department of Education & Early Development; Career and Technical Education; Perkins Postsecondary Competitive Grant

Website: <https://education.alaska.gov/cte>

Contact: Deborah Riddle, Division Operations Manager

Phone : (907) 465-2892

Email : deborah.riddle@alaska.gov

Program Authority: Postsecondary Vocational Education – Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act (20 USC 2301)

WIOA Chapter 1, Sec. 121, (b) One-Stop Partners, (1)(B)(vi) career and technical education programs at postsecondary level authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006.

DEED actively participates through the Perkins Postsecondary program, which is carried out in Alaska through a competitive grant process open to all eligible postsecondary partners. Perkins-funded postsecondary programs have in the past focused mainly on professional development for CTE instructors. The current focus is on partnerships between secondary and postsecondary programs and industry, targeted at one or more of the high-priority industries. Programs either 1) provide secondary students with content-specific access to postsecondary career and technical education as dual-credit classes (at no cost to either the student or district) and make substantive links between secondary and postsecondary education and the workforce; or 2) provide professionals transitioning from the field into education with instructional skills specific to the secondary CTE classroom and are based on a clear program of study that results in participants receiving an industry certification upon completion

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

Organization: Department of Health; Division of Public Assistance

Website: Division of Public Assistance (alaska.gov)

Contact: Deb Etheridge, Director

Phone: (907) 465-2680

Email: deb.etheridge@alaska.gov

Program Authority: Social Security Act – Welfare to Work Programs (42 USC 603(a)(5)); WIOA Chapter 1, Sec. 121, (b) One-Stop Partners, (1)(B)(xiii) programs authorized under part A of Title IV of the Social Security Act (42 USC 601 et seq.), subject to subparagraph (C).

DPA provides TANF case management, referrals to community agencies, and financial supportive services. Items such as tools, scrubs, medical equipment, background checks and licenses can be purchased. Supportive Services may continue for 12 months post Temporary Assistance for Needy Families if the client has earnings at the time of closure.

Alaska Job Corps Center

Organization: Alaska Job Corps Center

Website: <https://alaska.jobcorps.gov/>

Contact Name: Malyn Smith, Director

Phone: (907) 861-8801

Email: smith.malyn@jobcorps.org

Program Authority: WIOA Public Law 113-128, Chapter 4, Subtitle C Job Corps, Section 148 Program Activities

Alaska Job Corps offers hands-on career technical training as well as academic training. Career technical training is available in the following industries: Hospitality, Construction, Health and Community Services. Academic training includes basic reading and math. Courses in independent living, employability skills, and social skills are offered to help students transition into the workplace. There are also several academic programs to help our students achieve their full potential. One of the top goals at the Alaska Job Corps is to ensure that every qualified student obtains his or her GED®/high school diploma prior to leaving the center.

Students who do not already have a high school diploma upon their arrival at Alaska Job Corps Center are automatically enrolled into our GED® program. Students who complete this program's core classes may participate in the high school diploma program, which is an on-center program. Pre-requisites for the high school diploma program are the student must have fifteen or more credits, and the student must have passed at least two high school qualifying exams (HSQEs). Driver's education is available to all students needing an Alaska driver's license.

Permits and licensing fees for students are paid for by the center. Arrangements for students to take the written and road examinations are also handled by the center. The Alaska Job Corps Center also offers a college program where students can enroll in Advanced Career Training (ACT) and attend the Mat-Su College in Palmer.

Alaska Native Coalition on Employment and Training (ANCET)

Organization: Coalition of 10 Alaska Native organizations, Alaska Native Coalition on Employment and Training, representing DOL-WIOA Funded Federally Recognized Tribes and Alaska Native Entities Participating in Public Law 102-477. See list below

Website: <https://www.doi.gov/ocl/tribal-477-programs>

Program Authority: WIOA Subtitle D National Programs, Section 166 Native American Programs, includes grantees of Public Law 102-477 Indian Employment, Training, and Related Services Demonstration Act of 1992, as amended by Public Law 106-568, the Omnibus Indian Advancement Act of 2000. 29 USC 3221 – Native American programs (all programs under this section administered consistent with 25 USC 450 et seq. Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act)

The majority of the Alaska Native partners participating in employment and training workforce development activities (pursuant to WIOA Subtitle D, Sec. 166 Native American Programs; Public Law 102-477 Indian Employment Training, and Related Services Demonstration Act of 1992, as amended by Public Law 106-568, the Omnibus Indian Advancement Act of 2000), provide these services:

Job Seeker Services – Emphasis on self- service, staff assisted career services including resume and cover letter, interview skills, careers, jobs, labor market information, workshops, labor exchange, education programs, support, Unemployment Insurance (UI), eligibility screening and referral process. Eligible individuals have access to case management for services such as intake and registration testing and assessment, Individual Employment Plans (IEPs), vocational counseling, short term pre- vocational services, training services, adult education and literacy activities, scholarships, and supplemental training funds for eligible individuals for supportive services, e.g., childcare, transportation, and clothing.

Services to Employers – Labor exchange, marketing, and workforce information.

Purpose: To support employment and training activities for Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian individuals in order to:

Develop more fully the academic, occupational, and literacy skills of such individuals;

Make such individuals more competitive in the workforce and to equip them with the entrepreneurial skills necessary for successful self-employment;

Promote the economic and social development of Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian communities in accordance with the goals and values of such communities.

Identify the education and employment needs of the population to be served and the manner in which the activities to be provided will strengthen the ability of the individuals served to obtain or retain unsubsidized employment leading to self-sufficiency;

Consider the needs of the groups served by this section, including differences in needs among such groups in various geographic service areas; and the economic circumstances of the communities served, including differences in circumstances among various geographic service areas.

<i>Additional ANCET workforce development partners and activities (as shown on their public web pages) include but are not limited to:</i>		
Aleutian-Pribilof Islands Assn., Inc. (APIA)	https://www.apiai.org/	AANG Program assists eligible individuals prepare for, gain, or retain employment scholarship opportunities to individuals attending a college or university full-time, working towards a 2 or 4- year degree; training scholarships for non-degree training, vocational training and certification courses.
Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP)	https://www.avcp.org/child-care/	The Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP), Education, Employment, Training and Child Care Department's (EET & CC) outreach is a key component to informing and educating member tribes of the programs they have available, and for any Native American living in the AVCP region, who is enrolled in a federally recognized tribe. AVCP's EET & CC Department also maintains a regional Talent Bank, a file of individuals from within the region. When a project comes to a village, they encourage local hire by looking through the Bank and identify any individuals from that community who might be qualified and appropriate for hiring on to specific jobs.
Bristol Bay Native Association (BBNA)	https://www.bbna.com/our-programs/workforce-development/	Training assistance grants are available for adults attending a vocational or technical training certificate program ranging in length from 6 months to 2 years, for a wide variety of fields working towards a career goal. These include Driver's Education to achieve a Driver's License, Heavy Equipment Operating, Commercial Truck Driver License (CDL), Certified Nurse's Aide, Child Care Associate Certificate or other short term occupation training leading directly to employment upon completion of the training.
Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes (CCHITA)	http://www.cchita.org/services/employment/overview/index.html	Employment Services provides eligible participants who complete career assessment testing, motivational training, and job skills workshops with an employment portfolio to use while actively seeking employment. The Job Placement program within the Employment & Training (E&T) Division offers motivational, cultural, and basic office skills trainings to TANF, TVR, ES, and AVT clients. The program offers educational, training and employment opportunities to assist in finding meaningful employment and maintaining a healthy

		<p>lifestyle independent of program services. Computer classroom training and vocational courses are offered to both tribal citizens and the general public through the Vocational Training & Resource Center (VTRC).</p> <p>The Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (TVR) program with the State of Alaska (SOA), Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) jointly serves eligible applicants with disabilities in Southeast Alaska. Because TVR and DVR work together to provide joint services, tribal citizens are actively referred to the SOA/DVR offices.</p> <p>The Youth Employment Services (YES) program assists eligible tribal youth between the ages of 14- 21 to obtain summer employment in their community and provides participating youth with Job & Life Skills Workshops including Job Hunting Tips, Completing an Application, Cover Letter, Resume, Interview Techniques, Surviving the Job, and Power of Choices.</p>
Chugachmiut, Inc.	http://www.chugachmiut.org/health-social-services/social-services/vocational-training/	Chugachmiut offers tuition assistance regarding vocational training to eligible Alaska Natives and American Indians. Applicants must reside in Chenega, Nanwalek, Port Graham, Seward or Tatitlek and demonstrate financial need due to unemployment or underemployment. The goal is to assist residents in obtaining long-term employment.
Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC)	https://citci.org/employment-training-services/	CITC's Employment Training and Services Department assists participants in achieving self- sufficiency by helping them enhance their communication, life management, vocational and academic skills. CITC also provides vocational rehabilitation services and operates a One- Stop called Alaska's People Career Development Center. CITC's comprehensive wrap-around services include GED®, TANF, GA, childcare, and career training. The DOLWD is co-located at the CITC Career Development Center and partners with CITC staff to offer services to assist job seekers with training and employment.

Kawerak, Inc.	https://kawerak.org/	<p>The Kawerak Direct Employment (DE) Program provides a one- time grant to eligible tribal members who reside in the Bering Strait- Norton Sound region to assist with employment-related needs and start-up living expenses in order to retain full-time employment.</p> <p>The Higher Education Program provides semester and quarterly scholarships to tribal members of the Bering Strait region that are enrolled at an accredited college or university.</p> <p>Kawerak Native Employment Work Services (KNEWS) provides Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). KNEWS partners with the Division of Public Assistance to provide services to the villages in the Bering Strait Region. Because there is a shortage of paid positions in village communities, KNEWS works with local organizations to provide volunteer work opportunities for clients to gain job skills.</p> <p>Kawerak offers village-based carpentry and heavy equipment training programs. These 2-4 week programs are designed for apprentices who are registered by the USDOL. Each training program uses a standard curriculum that is approved by the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER).</p> <p>Participants earn college- credit through Northwest College/Universi ty of Alaska. Training programs are not limited to carpentry and heavy equipment and are determined on a village-by- village basis. Village Based Training works with the IRAs of each village to determine what job opportunities are coming to the village or what skills need to be upgraded to increase or keep village residents employed in the near future. Training is then recommended. Funding sources, trainers and other resources are prioritized to the best advantage of the region. Village Based training and all of EET work to keep each village in the rotation of ongoing training, without favoritism.</p>
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Kodiak Native Association (KANA)	https://kodiakhealthcare.org/what-we-do/community-services/workforce-development/	<p>Kodiak Area Native Association (KANA) operates the KANA Employment Center, which offers access to computers to search for jobs, create resumes, information on college, trade schools and apply for scholarships. Life and employment skills workshops are offered.</p> <p>The Supplemental Youth Employment Training Program (SYETP) provides practical work experience for Kodiak area Native youth, aged 14-24, to build strong communities by providing the life experience they need. Youth placed in a successful match with a business are added to KANA's payroll for up to 100 hours, also making them eligible for a half work Co-op credit at Kodiak High School. The Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Program (TVRP) assists Alaska Native and American Indian individuals who are members of a federally recognized tribe that experience disabilities prepare for, achieve, and maintain employment.</p>
Maniilaq Association	https://www.maniilaq.org/	<p>The goal of Maniilaq Employment & Training Program is to assist in providing training to the people of the Northwest Arctic region into gainful employment and to be economically self-sufficient. Case workers assist each client in funding resources and case management, need assessments, and training needs to achieve employment, apprenticeship, on-the-job training, or supportive services.</p>
Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC)	https://www.tananachiefs.org/job-seekers/job-training/	<p>In addition to workforce development activities listed above, TCC also has AmeriCorps and VISTA programs. TCC announces job openings, trainings, and other job openings around the state of Alaska. The TCC Youth Employment Program offers year-round and summer-only work experience opportunities for 14-21 year-olds. TCC operates a Tribal Employment Rights Office (TERO) through adoption of local village ordinances and helps ensure maximum Native hire on or near Indian Lands. TCC Youth Employment Services empowers Native youth facing barriers to employment by providing work experience, training and educational opportunities designed to foster world-of- work skills.</p>