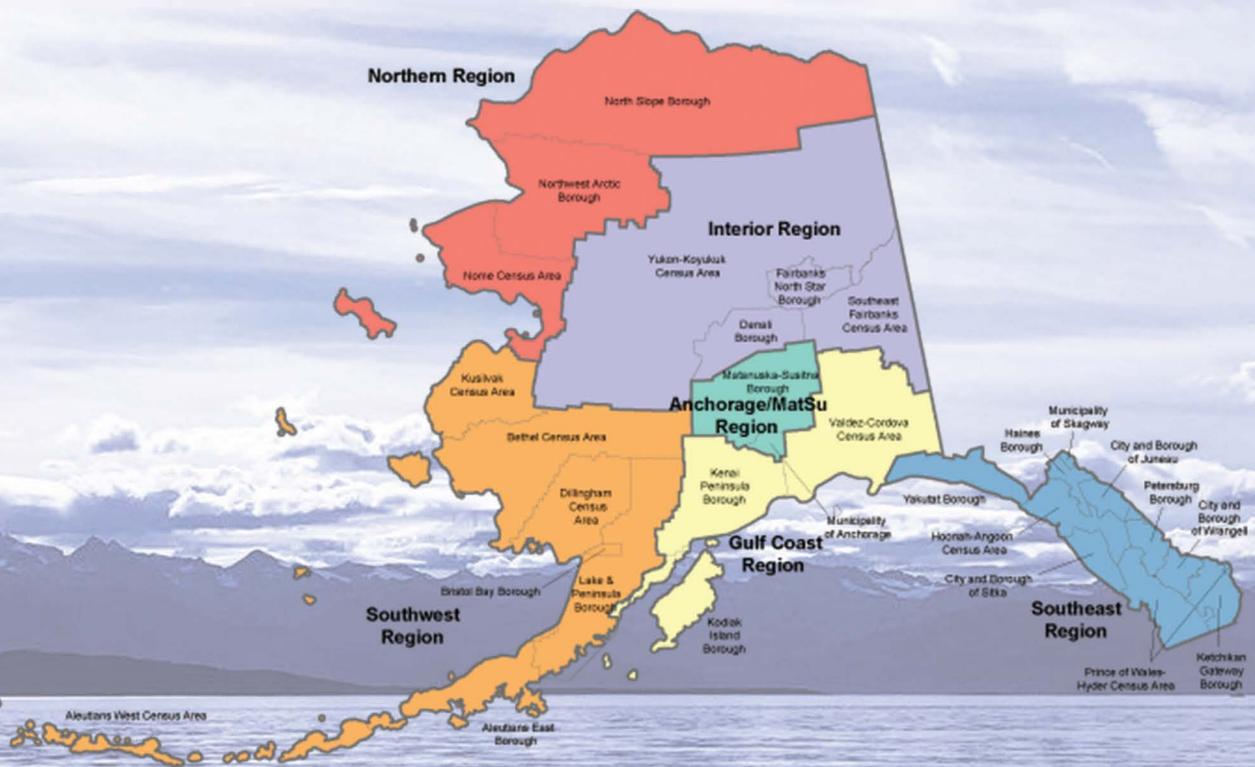


# State of Alaska Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Annual Report Narrative - Program Year 2017





THE STATE  
of **ALASKA**  
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

**Department of Labor and  
Workforce Development**

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November 30, 2018

The Honorable Alexander Acosta  
United States Secretary of Labor  
U.S. Department of Labor  
200 Constitution Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20210

Dear Secretary Acosta,

On behalf of Governor Bill Walker, the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, and the Alaska Workforce Investment Board, we are pleased to submit Alaska's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Annual Performance Report for Program Year 2017.

This report highlights the success of Alaska's workforce development system, provides insight into benefits received by program participants, and describes how the state is making progress on achieving the vision, strategies and goals outlined in the Alaska WIOA Combined State Plan.

WIOA funds are a significant contribution to our public workforce system and we continue to focus on making smart investments to revitalize our economy. Our priority is for Alaskans to have universal access to employment and training opportunities for jobs providing family sustaining wages and to meet our employer and industry needs.

We appreciate the ongoing federal/state partnership to develop our workforce. Thank you for your continued support of the people of Alaska.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Heidi Drygas in blue ink.

Heidi Drygas, Commissioner  
Department of Labor and Workforce Development

Handwritten signature of Larry Bell in blue ink.

Larry Bell, Chair  
Alaska Workforce Investment Board



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## Overview

During PY 2017, Alaska made great strides with the continued implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The Alaska WIOA Combined State Plan was updated in the spring and provided the opportunity to reflect on progress to date, identify new short and long term goals, and ensure our workforce development system provides multiple pathways to high skill, high wage jobs and careers, and includes worker access to education, training, and support services needed to prepare for high-demand occupations that pay family-sustaining wages. Additionally, other notable and exciting accomplishments include the completion of multiple workforce development plans, carving out a roadmap for Alaska's future.

After years of research, planning, engaging stakeholders and gathering input, the [Alaska Liquefied Natural Gas Project Workforce Development Plan](#) was finalized in April 2018. The proposed LNG project will commercialize natural gas resources on the North Slope by building an 807-mile LNG pipeline, gas treatment plant and LNG liquefaction plant, designed to move more than 20 million tons of natural gas per year. This project will create thousands of direct jobs and thousands more indirect jobs. The plan identifies the size and occupational makeup of the workforce needed to build and operate a project of this magnitude and provides a framework to maximize Alaska Hire, align our statewide training network and make investments into training for in demand occupations critical to the success of this project.

Alaska's [Career and Technical Education Plan](#) (CTE) was first developed in 2010 in a combined effort between the Departments of Education and Early Development and Labor and Workforce Development, the University of Alaska and other CTE professionals. Over the past year, the CTE plan was updated to reflect legislative changes in national and state education and economic landscapes, current workforce development needs, and state priorities. The addendum includes input from audiences ranging from educational professionals, CTE participants, the public, business, and industry.

CTE made significant progress which is reflected in an increase in graduation rates; regional training centers strengthening and expanding their CTE programs; more students earning postsecondary credit while still in high school; registered apprenticeship, a strong workforce development model; school districts working together to provide rural students with increased CTE opportunities; and the university system expanding CTE offerings and providing a tuition discount for CTE program students.

Registered apprenticeship has been a successful model in Alaska for more than 70 years. During PY 2017, Alaska created the [Alaska Apprenticeship Plan](#) knowing that a highly skilled and productive resident workforce is the backbone of Alaska's economy. Our labor force is essential for thriving businesses, safe and healthy communities, and a prosperous middle class.

The apprenticeship plan provides a framework outlining objectives, vision, goals, and strategies as well as the action steps needed for successful achievement of all these elements. Apprentices have a 93



percent employment rate after completion and work in all 26 boroughs and census areas in Alaska. It's clear that apprenticeship leads to well-paying jobs and careers with high lifetime earnings.

## Alaska's Economy

While Alaska ranks 48th among states by population, it is the largest geographically. The state accounts for 16 percent of the total land mass of the United States with an area of 570,641 square miles. Alaska's 2017 population is estimated at 737,080 with a working-age population – ages 18 to 24 – approximately 465,687.

Alaska has had the highest unemployment rate in the nation and the lowest rate of job growth for most of the last 18 months. July 2018 marked the 34<sup>th</sup> consecutive month the state registered over-the-year job losses. A steep drop in oil prices in 2014 drove the state's oil dependent economy into a broad economic recession. Nearly every sector of the state's economy has suffered job losses over that period — healthcare being the only major exception — and for the first time in the state's history, net migration to the state has been negative for five consecutive years, in other words, the number of people moving out of the state has been larger than the number of people moving into the state.

Although the state remains in a protracted recession with job losses continuing in 2018, we project Alaska will add roughly 17,000 jobs from 2016 to 2026, for a 5.1 percent growth.

The healthcare industry continues to be Alaska's largest job producer and is projected to grow 16 percent by 2024. Healthcare holds 47 of Alaska's top 50 growth occupations. Much of this projected growth is due to an aging population, which leads to greater demand for healthcare services. Alaska's 65-plus population will increase by an estimated 58.8 percent over the projection period, from 78,957 seniors in 2016 to 125,423 in 2026, as the large baby boomer generation continues to move into that age group. By 2026, senior citizens will represent 16 percent of Alaska's population, up from 11 percent in 2016. In addition to this rising demand for healthcare services, there is a need for additional workers to replace healthcare workers who are retiring from the industry.

## WIOA Area and Planning Regions

Alaska has a single local WIOA area, encompassing the entire state. Operationally, however, Alaska has 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.

**Anchorage/Mat-Su Region** - The Anchorage/Mat-Su Region is the population center of the state and one of the only parts of the state where workers commute from one borough to another daily. The mix of employment and industries in the region is roughly reflective of those across the state. The region has about 33,000 government jobs, most of them in Anchorage. The Mat-Su Borough has grown faster than any other part of the state for decades, and has noticeably less job loss during the current recession than elsewhere in the state.



**Gulf Coast and Southeast Regions** - Although parts of the Gulf Coast and Southeast Regions are isolated and rural, they contain a mix of jobs that are not dramatically different from statewide trends. Coastal areas have more opportunities in the maritime industry such as fishing and fishing-support sectors, but strong healthcare growth has occurred wherever there are stable or growing populations. Similarly, the mix of government and private sector support jobs in retail, hospitality, construction, and transportation do not differ markedly among areas with population centers of 10,000 or more.

**Interior Region** - The Interior Region has a mix of resource industries including large coal and gold mines, and is also home to Denali National Park, which generates a large number of seasonal jobs and a handful of year-round jobs. Fairbanks, with a borough population of nearly 100,000, depends heavily on the military and the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. Both the military and the university produce a number of jobs specific to national defense and educating students, but also create significant demand for goods and services in the community and state. At both the industry and occupational levels, existing demand would be similar to the statewide pattern, an exceptionally high demand for healthcare workers; and demand across the rest of the industry and occupational spectrum that is roughly similar to population trends.

**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 significant portion of statewide construction and transportation jobs that are needed to support these industries. North Slope workers typically work schedules of two weeks on-two weeks off, or some variation thereof. A substantial number of food services, healthcare, and custodial jobs are generated when oil and gas activity increases. Corresponding reductions occur in times of decreased activity. The deep job losses in the oil and gas industry have had a broad impact across the state because such a high percentage of the oil and gas workers commute from other parts of Alaska or from outside the state.

**Southwest Region** - The Southwest Region of the state is heavily dependent on the fishing industry. 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 caught in the region 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 both permit holders and their crews are considered self-employed, and therefore not generally subject to state unemployment insurance coverage and the mandatory reporting from which the most reliable employment data are collected. Employment data shows many seafood processing jobs and a typical mix of government, healthcare, retail, construction, and hospitality employment that result from economic base industries associated with the area's fisheries.

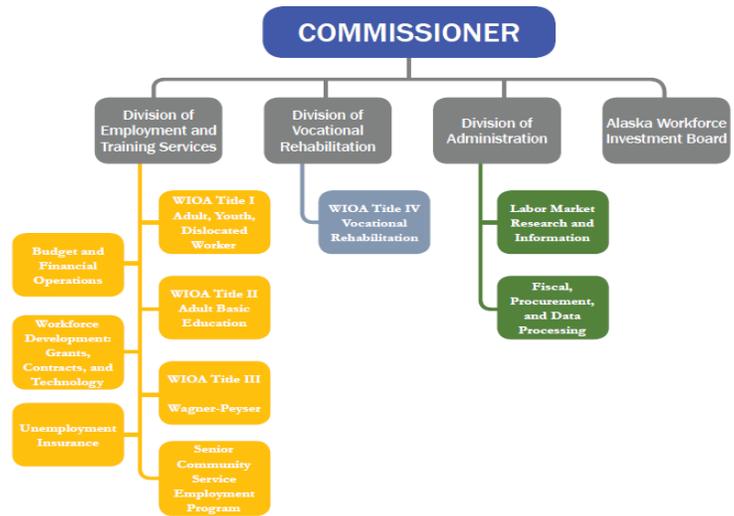
## Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development

As the state's lead entity for workforce development, the department, through the Division of Employment and Training Services (DETS), administers Title I, II, and III of the WIOA programs. Title IV is administered by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

The department also supports the Alaska Workforce Investment Board, which provides policy and oversight of the state’s workforce investment activities.

## Alaska Workforce Investment Board

As the governor’s lead workforce policy entity, the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) develops a statewide workforce investment policy framework and drives coordination and collaboration among programs and agencies to ensure Alaska’s workforce system is useful, accessible, and understandable to all customers. This includes businesses seeking qualified workers, unemployed Alaskans looking for jobs, and incumbent workers wanting to upgrade their skills to meet the demands of a changing work environment.



The governor appoints AWIB members, and the AWIB is supported by an Executive Director, one full-time program coordinator, and one administrative assistant. The AWIB operates according to Alaska statutory requirements and Board bylaws. A chair and vice-chair are elected annually and serve for one year. The AWIB makes formal decisions during its full board meetings. In between those meetings, the Executive Committee, composed of the Chairs of each standing committee and the current and past Chair and current Vice-Chair, are authorized by its bylaws to make decisions on behalf of the AWIB.

Organizationally, the AWIB is housed under the Commissioner of the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD). The vision of the AWIB is “to build connections that put Alaskans into good jobs.” The AWIB achieves this vision by utilizing labor market data and regional and sector stakeholder input to guide in continuous improvement of Alaska’s workforce system.

During the program year, the AWIB was engaged and provided input to the update of the state’s WIOA Combined State Plan. The full AWIB discussed the plan update at the February 2018 meeting and included external stakeholder feedback. The Board’s Executive Committee approved the plan update at the March 2018 meeting.

Additionally, the AWIB has been proactive in utilizing labor market data to identify priority industries to target for employment training and investment, which leads to workforce plan development, and supports Registered Apprenticeship and Career and Technical Education as proven training models.

In 2017, AWIB staff developed, through partnership and negotiation, the Alaska Job Center Network One Stop Operator Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the AWIB, the One-Stop



Operator, and WIOA required partners. The MOU was executed during the first quarter of PY 2018 and includes all core and non-core partner approvals with the exception of four of the fourteen WIOA sec. 166 Alaska grantees, which are targeted for agreement and approval during PY 2018.

The AWIB actively engaged in training programs targeted for youth and other Alaska residents and evaluates competitive training and education grants. Through this process, emphasis is placed on investment in training for individuals who experience barriers to employment, and utilizing labor market analysis to recommend investment in programs that prepare Alaskans for high-demand occupations in priority industries. To fulfill its role of guiding Alaska's workforce development through oversight of training programs and core program success, AWIB members receive regular program updates from all WIOA core programs at their business meetings.

During PY 17 the AWIB adopted the following resolutions:

- 17-05 Resolution in support of the Alaska Completion and Access Network's 65 by 2025 goal
- 17-06 Resolution in support of Federally Registered Apprenticeship
- 17-07 Resolution in support of One Stop Memorandum of Understanding
- 17-08 Resolution supporting the repeal of 8AAC 15.120 Minimum Wage Exemption for Persons with Disabilities
- 18-01 Resolution in support of the Early Care and Learning in Alaska
- 18-02 Resolution to endorse the Alaska Performance Scholarship
- 18-03 Resolution in support of the Alaska LNG Project Gasline Workforce Plan

## State Strategic Vision and Goals

Alaska's strategic vision for developing Alaska's workforce and meeting employer needs:

“Alaskans have multiple pathways to high skill, high wage jobs and careers.”

In PY 2017, coordinated efforts among workforce partners improved the efficiency and performance of Alaska's workforce system. Accountability was strengthened across the system by focusing on education and competency attainment, individual progress, career advancement, and participant employment and earning outcomes through coordination and resource leveraging. This served to increase access to career pathway programs and lead to self-sustaining employment while avoiding duplication of services.

Alaska's goal to **build clear routes to careers for students, youth, and adults** advanced throughout PY 2017. A means to achieve this goal was through a renewed focus on Career and Technical Education (CTE) and associated update to the CTE plan. CTE is multi-dimensional and designed for all learners, not a separate system that limits educational or occupational options. CTE engages modern learners by offering diverse options that emphasize hands-on, project-based learning resulting in learner engagement that pairs rigorous academic and technical standards with higher order thinking



skills, ultimately leading to improved high school graduation rates. Both high school and postsecondary CTE programs provide technical skills as well as academic and personal skills to ensure workforce readiness. About 65 percent of jobs require some training beyond high school. In fact, many of Alaska's highest paying occupations require postsecondary education or training that is less than a four-year degree.

Additionally, progress was made on Alaska's goal to **support and grow learning opportunities for workers at all stages of life**, through a variety of means. Alaska's ten WIOA youth programs focused on providing support for youth ages 14 to 24 by providing 14 basic elements that include adult mentorship, transition services to post-secondary education, and a variety of work based learning opportunities. WIOA adult and dislocated worker programs are available for workers entering the workforce or who need to re-train for occupations best suited for them during any stage of life. The departments' Senior Community Service Employment Program fosters economic self-sufficiency and offers training and work experience opportunities for unemployed low-income persons who are age 55 or older, particularly persons who have poor employment prospects.

Serving individuals with disabilities is a priority. Both youth and adults received basic, career and training services through the Alaska Job Centers and the Disability Employment Initiative. Ticket to Work services including career counseling, support services and tailored job seeker services were provided throughout the program year.

Alaska continues to foster and promote the recognition of military credit and transfer credits earned in high school to apprenticeships and post-secondary education. The University of Alaska system and Regional Training Centers throughout the state have a military credit policies in place for the acceptance of credit or hours toward a degree or technical program, and articulation agreements under which high school students may earn dual credit upon completion of a vocational education course.

Lastly, the goal for **meeting the skilled workforce needs of employers** continues to be a priority. The Job Center Business Connection staff, the department apprenticeship coordinator and apprenticeship specialists all increased their outreach to employers to identify and address their workforce needs. Labor market research is used to determine where there are significant labor shortages and determine in-demand occupations, while effectively cross-matching and identifying current worker skills, including military experience, to fill those occupations.

## Sector Strategies and Career Pathways

The AWIB and department engaged industry sector partners to fill in-demand industries including healthcare, construction, maritime, oil and gas, transportation, technology, education, and mining. 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) are ongoing. These sector-specific partnerships help ensure that education and training investments are prioritized and focused on and responsive to employer needs.



The Alaska Job Center Network also maintains strong relationships with key contacts in these industries through employer services. These relationships allow the department to effectively connect job seekers, through one-stop programs, and to training and employment placements. In addition, within the new MOU executed by the AWIB with the One-Stop Operator and WIOA required partners, there is an Alaskan Job Center Network advisory council that will further facilitate program and regional information sharing about how partners are successfully connecting with industries and employers.

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

The expansion of Registered Apprenticeship (RA) by employers will lead youth and adults, including those with disabilities and those who have multiple barriers to employment, into good paying jobs with career opportunities, while providing employers with new workers to fill in-demand occupations.

The department currently has three federal apprenticeship grants: the American Apprenticeship Initiative Grant, the State Apprenticeship Expansion Grant, and the Apprenticeship Accelerator Grant. The Apprenticeship Accelerator grant was used to create the aforementioned statewide apprenticeship plan. The grant ends November 30, 2018.

The department's Apprenticeship Coordinator, along with the US DOL Office of Apprenticeship, works with a variety of healthcare providers to establish RA programs to expand several occupations. Currently, Alaska has established programs with Alaska Pioneer Homes, Alaska Native Healthcare Consortium, Alaska Primary Care Association, Regional Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counseling Training and other individual employers across the state. Alaska is also working with school districts on school to apprenticeship programs and with Alaska Job Corps to place their graduates into apprenticeship positions.

Registered Apprenticeships are an important part of the state's workforce development plans, supported by the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) through Resolution No. 15-15, and by Governor Walker through Administrative Order No. 278. As of October 2018, Alaska had 2,241 registered apprentices training in nearly 100 occupations, with 340 program sponsors and more than 700 employers that hire and provide on-the-job training. Construction accounts for 65 percent of apprentices, 15 percent are in healthcare, and 10 percent work in natural resources, including mining and oil and gas. The remaining 10 percent are in maritime, aviation, culinary, building maintenance, and other industries.

Approximately 300 to 500 apprentices begin training annually, depending on the economy and demand for new workers. Around 200 to 250 apprentices complete training each year. Apprentices have a 93 percent employment rate after completion and work in all 26 boroughs and census areas in Alaska. Those that complete an apprenticeship have much higher earnings than non-apprentice workers. For example, in 2014, apprentice completers ages 18 to 34 earned about \$80,000, while all Alaskans of the same age earned, on average, \$51,000.



Besides the strong labor union engagement with apprenticeship in the construction industry, Alaska created many programs in the private sector healthcare industry due to the lack of skilled workers, mainly in the rural areas. There are many RA programs in development and current programs include:

- Chiropractic Clinical Assistant
- Behavioral Health Counselor
- CNA–Dementia and Acute care specialty
- Medical Assistant
- Dispensing Optician
- MRI Tech Surgical Tech
- Medical Coder-Biller
- Pharmacy Tech
- Veterinary Tech
- Medical Office Assistant
- Central Sterile Processing Tech
- Phlebotomy Tech

Additionally, three intermediaries provide RA opportunities. The Alaska Native Tribal Healthcare Consortium provides apprenticeships for Behavioral Health Aides. Alaska Primary Care Association provides healthcare apprenticeship to rural tribal clinics for medical assistant, community health worker, medical coder and biller, medical office assistant, and medical records. The Regional Alcohol Drug and Counseling Training Center provides Behavioral Health Counselor apprenticeships. There have been additional apprenticeships created in maritime, mining, aviation, education, and transportation industries.

The profound employer engagement has been our biggest success, especially in our recent apprenticeship focus industry - healthcare. Under the American Apprenticeship Initiative grant, we set a very ambitious goal. Alaska proposed to indenture 450 apprentices, graduate 380, and train 750 pre-apprentices between the fall of 2015 and the fall of 2020. This process seemed daunting but thanks to the tremendous support of the US DOL Office of Apprenticeship team, the leadership of Alaska's apprenticeship coordinator, and the willingness of both large and small employers to give apprenticeship a try, we are well on our way towards accomplishing these goals.

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

The services provided through Alaska Job Centers (AJCs) utilizes a delivery system that maximizes web-based information and increases the mobility of case managers to provide assistance and services at various locations in communities. Each AJC tailors services in collaboration with community partners, allowing for a systematic approach to reduce long-term operational costs for office leases, for example, and transition to a more cost-effective approach.

The department has procured a new online labor exchange and case management system to enhance user experience, co-locate data, and provide a single sign-on between the employment services, WIOA Title I, and Unemployment Insurance programs. This will allow individuals to enter core information into one system, rather than in three separate systems, when applying for various programs and benefits. This new system will go live in PY 2019.



**Strategy: Prioritize services to target populations.**

AJC services focus on serving WIOA priority populations and connecting residents to career pathways leading to employment and career opportunities. Outreach was expanded through regional workforce partners to inform persons 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. Alaska's high priority target populations 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

In PY 2017 priority populations were served through multiple employment and training programs and various grants including the WIOA core programs, Fidelity Bonding, Foreign Labor Certification, State Monitor Advocate, Integrated English Language and Civic Education, Linking Employment Activities Pre-Release (LEAP), Senior Community Service Employment Program, Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA), and Veterans Programs.

Alaska's Linking to Employment Activities Pre-release (LEAP): Bridge to Success program focused on providing career services before and after release from incarceration. By utilizing LEAP funding, Alaska was able to create two jail-based job centers and located staff at two facilities; Hiland Mountain Correctional Center and Goose Creek Correctional Center. The goal was to assist 600 inmates with access to career services prior to release with 200 inmates receiving additional, individualized career services. Through intensive one-on-one support, jail-based staff worked with pre-release individuals at-risk for re-offense. Individual Employment Plans (IEPs) were carefully developed for each participant and reflected all needs identified through assessment.

LEAP ended September 30, 2018 and to ensure sustainability, LEAP staff worked with the Department of Corrections (DOC) to incorporate the Bridge to Success curriculum into the DOC Re-entry Manual.

## WIOA Title I

WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker and National Emergency Grant participant services are provided through the Division of Employment and Training Services, Career Support and Training Services (CSTS) case managers in One-Stop Job Centers across the six economic regions. CSTS staff work one-on-one with participants to provide individualized assessments and determine the appropriate range of goals, services, and support to meet the participant's needs. This entails providing comprehensive assessments, reviewing labor market information with the participant, career



counseling, creating individual employment plans and if needed, making referrals to other resources outside the agency. Case managers focus on transitioning workers into high-wage, high-growth, and demand-driven jobs and ensuring that participants who exit our programs will be successful.

## Adult

The WIOA Adult program improves the quality of the adult workforce, reduces welfare dependency, and enhances the productivity and competitiveness of Alaska's workforce. Staff work with individuals who are low income, in need of workforce services, training or retraining to secure unsubsidized employment. Priority is given to veterans and other covered persons, individuals who experience disabilities, low-income individuals, and recipients of public assistance.

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.

In PY 2017, there were 1,737 participants in Adult programs, with 1,350 of those receiving self-services only. Case managers actively worked with 387 participants, of which 328 were new registrants. Program exits increased from 137 in PY 2016 to 160 in PY 2017 as case managers prioritized timely exits.

## Dislocated Worker

The WIOA Dislocated Worker Program provides employment and training services to workers who have been impacted by business closures, workforce reductions, and natural disasters that lead to job loss. This includes individuals who have lost their jobs, displaced homemakers, and employed workers who have received a notice that they will lose their jobs unless additional training or credentials are secured. The program enhances the quality, productivity, and competitiveness of Alaska's workforce while meeting the needs of Alaska's employers.

PY 2017 saw a slight increase in enrollments from 349 in PY 2016 to 400 in PY 2017. The program experienced 210 exits during the year.

Leveraging resources resulted in a 100 percent co-enrollment between the Dislocated Worker program and the Sector Partnership Dislocated Worker Training-National Emergency Grant (SP-NEG), which enabled more opportunities for unemployed workers to obtain employment and training services.

## Sector Partnerships – National Emergency Grant

Alaska's Sector Partnership National Emergency Grant (SP-NEG) focused on two strategies, serving dislocated workers, with an emphasis on veterans and transitioning service members (TSMs) and the long-term unemployed; and regional sector partnership planning where sector groups review current workforce development plans, labor market information, and employment trends for their region, as well as analyzing workforce supply and demand gaps to assess regional capacity to attract, educate, and train jobseekers.



During the span of the project, which ended on June 30, 2018, Alaska served 642 dislocated workers who needed good jobs, and employers that needed a larger supply of qualified job applicants. Alaska targeted three industry sectors: healthcare, construction, and maritime. Each with a workforce development plan endorsed by the AWIB. Training and work-based training models focused on pre-employment and pre-apprenticeship training linked to Registered Apprenticeships, by direct referral.

The grant allowed for increased capacity to serve dislocated workers and the ability to hold multiple regional planning meetings. Grant resources contributed towards the Alaska LNG Workforce Plan, Alaska Process Industry Careers Consortium, Maritime Works, Maritime industry curriculum updates, and implementation of healthcare apprenticeship workforce coalition planning.

## Youth

The Alaska's WIOA Youth program is delivered through youth projects that are competitively solicited. It promotes economic development and stability through comprehensive employment, vocational, academic, and support services to eligible In School Youth (ISY) and Out-of-School Youth (OSY).

In PY 2017, Alaska awarded \$2,145,000 to 10 subrecipients for the delivery of comprehensive Youth services. Of the award, 81 percent or \$1,748,753 was expended. Of that amount, 17 percent went ISY activities and 83 percent to OSY activities, with a 41 percent work experience expenditure rate which is double the required federal target of 20 percent. The program provided services to 698 youth experiencing barriers to employment and academic progression, serving 435 OSY and 263 ISY respectively.

Sub-recipients included: a rural based organization serving youth in remote locations that provided much needed work experience and support services; the state's Juvenile Justice system delivered secondary school completion and prepared youth for successful reentry into their local communities; a Military Youth Academy fostered high school completion and occupational skills training; non-profit organizations that provided comprehensive education, training and employment services; and vocational and technical educational institutions that prepared youth for in-demand careers. The program targeted eligible youth populations statewide, including the harder to serve, youth populations in rural Alaska. Because Alaska's rural youth are at high risk of dropping out of high school and suicide, they remain a priority demographic.

The state continued its focus on neediest youth populations of incarcerated, homeless, transient, and youth with disabilities. In PY 2017 it expanded opportunities within the in demand healthcare industry. Additionally partnerships were developed to support Alaska's fight against opiate addiction which was declared a public health crisis by the governor in 2017. Through high concentration of eligible youth project, a partnership was developed with a regional medical center that features youth workforce development activities and a collection of community treatment partners to provide wraparound services, with the use of an innovative Bridge Auricular Stimulator that supports successful treatment by reducing the pain levels of those going through withdrawals.



Additionally the program partnered with WIOA Adult program, the Disability Employment Initiative, and American Apprenticeship Initiative projects to leverage resources and increase funding availability for participants served.

## Rapid Response

Alaska's Rapid Response program promotes economic recovery and vitality by developing ongoing, comprehensive approaches to identifying, planning for or responding to layoffs and dislocations, as well as preventing or minimizing the impact on workers, businesses, and communities.

Alaska has a rapid response coordinator located in the central office and rapid response specialists housed in Job Centers throughout the state. This team works together on layoff aversion strategies to address layoffs and business closures. Notification of possible layoffs or business closures are received through a variety of means including workers filing unemployment insurance claims, contact from impacted employers and workers, media announcements, fluctuations in employer tax contributions, and WARN notices.

Ongoing engagement, partnership, and relationship-building with businesses in the community are essential to ensure that businesses understand rapid response services are available as well as the multiple ways the program can help during all stages of the business cycle.

Rapid response meetings are tailored to each dislocation and begin with a thorough assessment of the unique characteristics of the impacted workforce including the types of positions impacted, worker skills, educational levels, length of service, and wage ranges. The meetings include unemployment insurance information, locations and array of services available at Job Centers, on-line resources, health insurance and COBRA option, veteran benefits, job fairs or specialized recruitments for the impacted workers, and community services. Additionally, mental health assistance, legal aid, and financial advice may be made available to the workers.

During PY 2017 the rapid response team worked with 76 affected business and assisted hundreds of workers.

## Statewide Activities

In addition to the required activities as outlined in 20 CFR Part 682.200, Alaska utilized statewide activity funds for a designated grant to SeaLink. SeaLink is an organization that provides specialized outreach, recruitment and assessment activities to identify and refer appropriate participants to Seafarers International Union (SIU), Paul Hall Center for Maritime Training and Education.

This federally certified unlicensed apprenticeship training program provides direct employment dispatch as a merchant marine aboard deep-ocean going commercial transport vessels both abroad and in Alaska.



Alaskans have proven to be particularly successful in this training program and career. Local Alaskan economies benefit from this career choice as the workers maintain their home and family in Alaska, returning between periods of dispatch.

## Adult Basic Education – Title II

The Adult Basic Education (ABE) program provides adult learners with instruction in the basic skills of reading, writing, mathematics, English as a Second Language, or GED preparation. The intent is to prepare adults for transition into the labor market or higher academic or technical training. ABE and GED services are provided by multiple grant recipients located throughout the state.

During the program year, ABE admitted 3,149 students seeking educational assistance. Of this number, 61 percent (1,917) studied in the programs for 12 or more hours and were considered full-time students. Of the 1,917 full-time students:

- 1,097 (57 percent) tested as having reading and/or math skills at the 8th grade level or below.
- 151 (8 percent) tested as having reading and/or math skills at the 9th to 12th grade level.
- 669 (35 percent) tested on the Basic English Skills Test (BEST) and studied English as a Second Language.
- 714 were post-tested and 56 percent showed educational gain.

The State of Alaska awarded 704 GED diplomas during PY 2017.

## Wagner-Peyser Act, Employment Services - Title III

Wagner-Peyser labor exchange services are delivered through 14 Alaska Job Centers (AJCs) located across the state, collectively known as the [Alaska Job Center Network](#) (AJCN). The AJCN collaborates with multiple partner agencies to provide universal access and services to employers, job seekers and workers under one roof in easy-to-find locations. Job Centers house all the resources job seekers and employers need to meeting their employment and training needs.

Labor exchange services including job search assistance, job referral, job placement, re-employment services to unemployment insurance claimants, and recruitment services for employers are delivered through either self-service, facilitated self-help services, or staff-assisted services. Additionally job seeker assessments of skill levels and abilities, aptitude testing, and career guidance are available. Regular workshops include job seeking tips, resume writing, cover letters, interviewing skills, and the annual free IRS-certified tax services, provided through My Free Tax Initiative. Referrals to partner agencies, veteran's representatives, and WIOA Title I programs for assistance with customizing individual employment plans including training and support are routinely provided.

Employer services expand beyond the basic entry of job orders. Staff focus on and emphasize intensive outreach and regular follow-up to discern employer needs, conducting job fairs, promote hire incentives, and provide information that helps ensure compliance with state and federal laws.



Additional significant services include the matching of job seeker experience, skills, and other qualifications with job requirements and assisting employers with special recruitment needs.

Employers are provided Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) information on valuable hiring incentives for specific target groups, including those long term unemployed. Alaska is working to streamline the application process by allowing employers and consultants to submit their certification requests online ten of the current WOTC target groups. In PY 2017, 1,253 WOTC applications were processed, 559 certifications issued and employers were eligible to claim \$1,996,600 in tax credits.

Another service provided through the AJCN is the Alaska Career Ready program includes the WorkKeys® assessments. This provides job seekers opportunities to earn the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC). In PY 2017, WorkKeys assessments were given to 2,631 job seekers in the Job Centers and partner agencies, leading to 692 NCRCs earned.

The AJCN also houses apprenticeship specialists to provide information to employers on sponsoring an apprenticeship program. Registered Apprenticeships allow employers to establish the standards of proficiency while developing a local and loyal workforce.

Reducing recidivism continues to be a priority and a focus on prisoner re-entry services has proven successful for citizens transitioning back into communities by partnering with the Department of Corrections (DOC) to coordinate and develop both pre-release and post-release job placement assistance and services.

As the AJCN is generally the first line for receiving information about labor market conditions and employer activity including layoffs and business closures. This network of responders ensures immediate action is taken to assist impacted employers and workers by providing a variety of local and state services tailored to each unique business need. Rapid Response and Trade Adjustment Assistance staff foster a team approach throughout process.

The Alaska Labor Exchange System (ALEXsys) is an online, no-fee job bank that connects job seekers with employers looking for skilled workers and is available throughout the AJCN as well as accessible on-line 24 hours per day.

AJCN highlights and key accomplishments for PY 2017 include:

- 1,002,756 online access of ALEXsys by 327,103 individual users;
- 151,561 job center visits by 32,633 individuals, who received 40,725 countable services;
- 86,834 job listings posted in ALEXsys; and
- 992,076 total services provided - both staff-assisted and online self-services.

## Veterans Services

Alaska is home to over 68,000 veterans who make up 12 percent of the state's adult population, the highest per capita veteran population in the nation. Veterans and eligible spouses are offered



specialized programs and opportunities to maximize training potential, employment, and retention. Veterans receive priority of services in all Job Centers and are assisted by specialized staff funded through the Jobs for Veterans Statewide Grant (JVSG).

AJC staff receive training on the Jobs for Veterans Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and other legislation that impacts veteran priority, preference, and employability. Staff focus on the assessment of veterans to facilitate delivery of service; and conducting outreach to employers to promote hiring veterans. 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.

Four 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.

Alaska's Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) establishes relationships with employers and facilitated the placement of veterans in meaningful employment. Since the passage of the Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act, regulations prohibit federal contractors and subcontractors from discriminating against veterans. The Alaska LVER is a bridge between employers and veterans to recruit, hire, promote, and retain veteran hire. One way this is done is through the annual Veterans and Military Spouses Job Fair which was held in November 2017. Approximately 120 employers, education, training, and apprenticeship providers attended the event, which served nearly 740 participants. Employers collected 294 resumes, conducted 75 interviews, made 38 provisional job offers, and estimated that 160 hires would occur over the next year as a result of the job fair.

In PY 2017, Alaska's Job Centers and online labor exchange served 10,780 Veterans with over 720 of those receiving in-depth, one-on-one support by one of the four DVOPs in the state.

### **Disability Employment Initiative**

Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) has been active in Alaska since 2010 to build a cohesive system in which to support individuals with disabilities. Alaska is now administering a DEI Round VI grant focusing on building partnerships to meet the needs of youth with disabilities, aged 14 to 24, by expanding access to employment and career pathways to prepare for in-demand careers.

DEI has made significant progress to increase access to career pathways for eligible youth by implementing work experiences and work-based learning. DEI partnered with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) to design a summer work program to assist student's transition from school to work, postsecondary education, or training. The project allowed school districts and agencies around the state to combine workplace experience with an instructional component that exposed



youth to career pathways and workplace expectations. During PY 2017, over 180 students and 130 business were engaged with the DEI - DVR summer work experience partnership.

In November 2016, DEI began a youth work-based learning pilot project in five of the Alaska Job Centers. The positions are short term and available to youth ages 16 to 24. Youth worked alongside job center staff to build skills and explore careers pathways. In PY 2017, the project expanded to seven projects. Additionally, through partnerships with the University System, DVR, mental health agencies, independent living centers, and others, 18 individuals completed work-based learning experiences and more than half went on to obtain employment or enter post-secondary education.

As part of the DEI program, Alaska incorporated Disability Resource Coordinator (DRC) training into mandatory new hire professional development plans for all job center staff. All new staff, managers, and technical unit staff undergo rigorous instruction on working with individual with barriers to employment. This strategy has increased services to at-risk populations in the Job Centers and ensured sustainability of the program.

## Unemployment Insurance

Alaska's Unemployment Insurance (UI) program remains one of the top in the nation to issue timely first payments of UI benefits and remains committed to implementing strategies to speed unemployment insurance claimants' return to work. To this end, the UI program continues to partner with Job Center staff to assist unemployed Alaskans in gaining employment.

Alaska continues to prioritize the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program that was launched January 2016. All full service job centers participate in RESEA with the UI program as an active partner. Services continue to focus on two groups of unemployed workers: unemployment insurance claimants most likely to exhaust benefits and all recently separated military personnel. These two groups of job seekers stand to benefit significantly from the goal of this highly-individualized program.

UI highlights for PY 2017 include:

- total UI benefit dollars paid was \$110,627,408;
- total number of Alaska workers who received at least one week of benefits was 34,117;
- average weekly benefit amount paid was \$249;
- a total of \$1,879,253 in fraud overpayments, \$1,784,169 in fraud penalties, and \$1,117,771 in non-fraud overpayments were collected;
- 98 percent of all UI claimants used automated systems to file their bi-weekly claims; and
- UI claim centers responded to 142,792 phone calls.



## Waivers for Program Year 2017

Alaska requested a waiver to WIOA Section 107(b), to allow the State Board to carry out the roles of a Local Board. The US DOL Employment and Training Administration determined that the requirements requested to be waived impede the ability of Alaska to implement its plan to improve the workforce development system. Alaska's need to establish a single regional planning area is essential to offset excessive administrative costs, thwart inconsistencies in services, and the desire to improve overall performance.

In an effort to include local participation and points of view, local elected officials from Alaska's boroughs and cities were consulted in planning efforts and invited to participate in the Regional Advisory Councils as well as being included in the state combined planning process. The quality of dialogue by the AWIB has been raised with more focus on statewide strategies and their linkage to regional economic and workforce development needs.

The impact of functioning as a single regional planning area has streamlined the process and timeliness of awarding grants by the elimination of multiple layers of administrative entities, it has allowed consistent eligibility standards across the state, and improved both visibility and accountability of workforce investment programs.

Additionally, the waiver allows for the Alaska Workforce Investment Board to foster and create regional collaborations among job centers, education institutions, labor, and non-profits. Even though Alaska is a very large state geographically, it is certainly small when it comes to working closely with stakeholders. This provides opportunities to work with employers to determine local or regional hiring needs and design responsive training programs.

## Effectiveness in Serving Employers

Alaska chose Retention Rate and Penetration Rate as pilot measures for determining Effectiveness in Serving Employers performance. As this is a new performance indicator, a system had to be developed to capture this information. Alaska benefits from a well situated Research and Analysis (R&A) section at the department who has access to employment, unemployment, wage data and training provider information. R&A plays a critical role in identifying and analyzing information needed to report on these measures. Representatives from the WIOA core programs and R&A met on several occasions to map out options and brainstorm additional ideas for measuring effectiveness, before ultimately reaching a consensus on a methodology to use.

Wagner-Peyser staff were selected to collect and report on the measures across the core programs as employer services are provided predominantly through employer services located in the Job Centers and available through ALEXsys. PY 2017 data confirmed that over 95 percent of employer services were provided under the Wagner-Peyser program, primarily in the Workforce Recruitment Assistance and Employer Information and Support Services categories. The remaining 5 percent was shared by the WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth programs; Adult Basic Education; and Vocational



Rehabilitation. Alaska reported results for the two chosen pilot measures on the ETA-9169 for PY 2017. The data revealed a 54.7 percent Retention Rate and a 13.2 percent Penetration Rate.

The Retention rate (*how many workers continue to work for the same employer six months after their hire date*) was influenced by many factors including Alaska's economic climate, the high rate of seasonal and transitional workers, challenges stemming from geographical barriers, and one of the highest ratios of nonresident to resident workers in the nation.

The Penetration Rate (*how many employers being served through the AJCN compared to how many employers are in the state*) is also indicative of a downturn in the economy and illustrates the lower number of recruitments by Alaskan employers in recent years. However, Alaska also shares concerns about low penetration rates raised by other states' early adopters of the measure. We realize it's not possible to serve all employers and our efforts will continue to focus on the quality of services we are providing. Job Center staff are well-trained in serving employers and our five largest Job Centers have dedicated Business Connection staff. Our approach to serving employers emphasizes proactive, staff-initiated outreach designed to meet the current and future employment and training needs of our employers. This focus will facilitate long-term business relationships built on confidence and trust.

## State Evaluation Activities

**ETA Monitoring of Alaska** - During PY 2017, Alaska's WIOA Youth program and American Apprenticeship Initiative Discretionary grant was monitored by US DOL Employment and Training Administration. These reviews identified best practices, challenges, recommendations for improvements and technical assistance needs.

The WIOA Youth monitor resulted in correctable findings in the areas of career pathway development, monitoring practices, out of school youth expenditure levels, and program publication attribution statement. Additionally, there were two areas of concern, service provider contract details, and eligibility documentation for citizenship.

Alaska began immediate actions to correct the findings and improve upon the areas of concern. A more robust career pathway development process was incorporated by mandating the use of an online career development resource – the Alaska Career and Information System, and improved monitoring practices were adopted with the addition of worksite and participant interviews. The out of school expenditure discrepancy was the result of an error in the ETA 9130 report and was promptly corrected. Attribution statements were included on all program publications and reinforcement of eligibility documentation requirements, and service provider contracts now clearly identify service provider ability to make available all 14 Youth program elements.

The AAI monitor resulted correctable findings in program and grant management processes, performance accountability, accrual reporting and financial management systems. Alaska thoroughly reviewed the findings and immediately created an action plan to resolve them. Policies and procedures were updated and Financial Monitoring Guide specific to discretionary grants was created. A budget



modification was submitted to bring in alignment with the scope of work. Additionally, a staff training handbook was developed, and internal processes to share financial data between budget, fiscal and program staff established.

A noted best practice is Alaska’s strong and mutually beneficial relationship with industry partners and the US DOL Office of Apprenticeship, and that participants greatly benefit from the efforts to develop diverse apprenticeships.

**AWIB monitoring of subrecipients** - Evaluating and identifying best practices and areas for improvement is a top priority for the AWIB, and it is active in the assessment and evaluation of Alaska Job Centers. In PY 2017, the AWIB monitored AJC sites assessing the delivery of WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, Dislocated Worker Training-National Emergency Grant, and Sector Partnership-National Emergency Grant funds.

Evaluations of job center services and subrecipient activity is an important component used by the state to provide oversight, guidance, technical assistance. They also influence the development or updating of policies and procedures that assist in achieving the goals and objectives of WIOA.

In PY 2017, the AWIB evaluated ten subrecipients for WIOA Youth; the job center delivery of the Adult and Dislocated worker program; and the activities of subrecipients of the ApprenticeshipUSA State Expansion (ASE) grant. The goal was to identify how effectively the vision, strategies, and procedures of both the US DOL, Employment and Training Administration and the state were being achieved.

A comprehensive review was conducted to ensure the subrecipients were operating in compliance with federal and state laws and regulations; the terms and conditions of the grant; the state’s policies and procedures; participant program eligibility; and performance accountability. Additionally, work experience employer and participant interviews were conducted. This aided in the identification of areas of program strength as best practices as well as those areas in need of improvement.

**Organizations evaluated in PY 2017:**

Program	Organization	Date
WIOA Youth	Nine Star Enterprises	January 8, 2018
WIOA Youth	Yukon Delta Fisheries Development Association	February 20, 2018
WIOA Youth	Alaska Primary Care Association	February 27, 2018
WIOA Youth	Alaska Military Youth Academy	March 5, 2018
WIOA Youth	Adult Learning Programs of Alaska	March 19-20, 2018



WIOA Adult & Dislocated Worker	Alaska Job Center - Fairbanks	March 21-22, 2018
WIOA Youth	Northwest Arctic Borough School District – Alaska Technical Center	April 5-6, 2018
WIOA Youth	Alaska Vocational Technical Center	June 7–8, 2018
ASE	Alaska Primary Care Association	October 27, 2018
ASE	Alaska Air Carriers Association	November 2, 2018

### Self-Appraisal System Review

During PY 2017, quarterly record reviews on Wagner-Peyser staff entered services were performed as per Federal regulations 20 CFR 658.60. State Employment Service agencies (ES) are required to develop a self-appraisal system to determine success in reaching goals and to correct deficiencies in performance. The Job Center Self-Appraisal System (SAS) is based on this State and Federal program requirements and measures.

The criteria used to evaluate records include the following:

- Appropriateness of services provided to applicants and employers
- Timely delivery of services to applicants and employers
- Staff sensitivity to individual applicant and employer needs
- Thoroughness and accuracy of records prepared in the course of service delivery
- Effectiveness of Job Center interface with external organizations, i.e., other ETA funded programs, community groups, etc.

The evaluation process ensures that staff are providing services that are both interactive as well as providing an assessment to the job seeker or employer.

The goal of the review is to identify how effectively and accurately the staff are providing Wagner-Peyser services. A 90% approval rating is established for all job center record reviews. If a job center fails to achieve this rating, a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) is written. Quarterly field staff training is offered and provided to job centers where a CAP is required.

In PY 2017, there were 40,725 staff-assisted services provided to job seekers and entered into ALEXsys. 1,066 job seeker records were reviewed for accuracy. Of those records reviewed, the PY 2017 Statewide Job Seeker Record accuracy was 92.1%. With four quarters reviewed, four job centers were required to have CAPs written during the program year for failing to reach the 90% accuracy rating.

There were 54,189 job orders posted in ALEXsys of those 583 were reviewed for accuracy. Eight job centers were required to have CAPs written due to the accuracy rating falling below 90% at some time during the reviews. The PY 2017 Statewide Job Order accuracy rating was determined to be 96.1%.



## Customer Satisfaction

Measuring customer satisfaction allows the state to understand the effectiveness of service delivery. Feedback is collected and analyzed to assist in improving services to better meet the needs of job seekers and employers.

Customer satisfaction surveys are sent to all participants in WIOA Title 1 programs through email. The customer satisfaction survey is a set of eight questions that gauge the level of satisfaction with the employment and training services received by the participants. The survey is broken into two parts: satisfaction with services, including assessments and support services; and satisfaction with training services. Along with the standard questions, participants are encouraged to submit additional feedback on the services received and provide ideas on improvements to the program. Participants have the option of providing feedback through a hyperlink to Survey Monkey, or by replying to the survey by email.

During PY 2017 our overall customer satisfaction rate was 85 percent. Of the 1,586 surveys sent out, 177 responses were received, an 11.2 percent response rate. The department saw a slight decline in overall satisfaction from the previous year which was attributed to resource issues for data collection, that impacted the overall targeted group, and software changes. Issues discovered during analysis of the overall process and return rates have been resolved.

The data gathered through customer satisfaction surveys is useful to state administrators, local offices, and training providers, and is used throughout the year to improve services to better meet the needs of businesses and job seekers. In the coming year, Alaska will focus on strategies to increase the response rate to determine customer satisfaction.

## Performance Accountability System

Alaska's has historically met or exceeded performance measures for WIOA Title I, II, III, and IV; which illustrates the state's capacity to provide successful workforce development programs and activities. Performance outcomes reflect the department's commitment to continuing improvement of its coordinated and comprehensive workforce development system, and the hard work and dedication of department leadership and program staff. Participants who exit our systems are work-ready and obtain and retain self-sufficient wages.

One tool Alaska uses to assess the overall effectiveness of the workforce investment system and individual core programs is the performance accountability measures in Section 116 of WIOA. These measures align well with the strategic vision and goals and the participant outcome data and labor market conditions provide a solid understanding of how the workforce development is performing as a whole.



### Program Year 2017 Performance Indicator Results

Program	Performance Indicator	PY 2016 Negotiated Level	PY 2016 Actual Level
Adult	Employment 2nd QTR after Exit	71%	77.3%
Adult	Employment 4th QTR after Exit	71%	77.4%
Adult	Median Earnings 2nd QTR after Exit	\$7,600	\$7,642
Adult	Credential Attainment Rate	63%	65.7%
Dislocated Worker	Employment 2nd QTR after Exit	72%	83.5%
Dislocated Worker	Employment 4th QTR after Exit	71%	76.7%
Dislocated Worker	Median Earnings 2nd QTR after Exit	\$9,700	\$10,175
Dislocated Worker	Credential Attainment Rate	64%	64.2%
Youth	Placement in Employment, Education or Training 2nd QTR after Exit	54%	56.4%
Youth	Placement in Employment, Education or Training 4th QTR after Exit	56%	57.6%
Youth	Credential Attainment Rate	50%	42.4%
Wagner-Peyser	Employment 2nd QTR after Exit	58%	56%
Wagner-Peyser	Employment 4th QTR after Exit	61.5%	55.6%
Wagner-Peyser	Median Earnings 2nd QTR after Exit	\$5,749	\$5,516

The department and AWIB analyze the data from these 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 policy makers, the public, and the AWIB to further assess programs and comparative outcomes to determine in greater detail the services and interventions that work and those that are less effective.

Alaska’s policy on common exit includes the WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser and the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program. Program staff use a shared tool to coordinate participant services and exit dates to ensure a common exit takes place.



## Data Validation Methodology

Due to the implementation of WIOA performance accountability provisions, ETA allowed states to create their own methodology provided they utilize a thorough data validation strategy. Alaska developed its own data validation methodology for PY 2017, ensuring quality standards of performance data were met as outlined in ETA Training and Employment Guidance Letter 22-15.

To develop the methodology, an analysis was conducted to determine the volume of files to review and identification of data elements to be validated. Data elements selected for validation were identified by reviewing the past two years of validation worksheets, the pass/fail rates, and taking into account any concerns brought forward by WIOA program coordinators.

A random sample of 584 files across all programs were identified and a determination made to validate 379 of the files as an adequate number for the size of Alaska and the amount of participants in the WIOA programs. Files from six Job Centers and nine youth subrecipients were reviewed.

Upon completion of the project, a comprehensive report with the results of the validation including best practices and recommendations for improvement, was provided to each program operator and US DOL. The overall results identified technical assistance needs in the areas of the lack of back-up documentation to support the data elements and correct data entry into the Individual Case Management System (ICM).

## Technical Assistance Needs

None at this time. In PY 2017, Alaska requested federal financial training and received this training in September 2018. The onsite training allowed multiple department staff the opportunity to learn together and more clearly understand each other's roles and responsibilities.

## Promising Practices

Alaska promotes continuous learning for AJCN staff. A means to achieve this is through "One-Stop Academies". In PY 2017, academies were held in all comprehensive AJC communities. The goal of the academies is to bring together all workforce and support related programs and service providers in each area to allow for partner education and referral training. Fairbanks, Anchorage, Mat-Su (Wasilla), Peninsula (Kenai), and Juneau Job Centers led these local efforts. Planning for PY 2018 academies is underway to enshrine this as an annual practice to encourage and support communication and collaboration among AJCN partners.

Each AJC location continues to evaluate current lease space and realize efficiencies through customer flow and redesign. During PY 2017 six of the fourteen Alaska Job Centers realized cost savings through lease space reductions. Several other locations have identified reductions to be realized as operational cost savings during PY 2018 and forward.



Most rural Alaska Job Centers have the capability to use video conferencing for job seeker interviewing for positions in other locations, e.g. a pre-scheduled Skype interview for a job on the North Slope. Partner programs such as DEI have iPads that are used to Skype or employers can email links to hosted webinars.

Out of the 11 states that applied, Alaska is one of three states selected for the SARA (Semi-Autonomous Research Assistant) software pilot. The primary purpose of the pilot is to show that through SARA, it is possible to connect different agencies and exchange cross-agency client information and performance reporting. This virtual assistant software conducts agency specific client follow-up, data entry and documentation using intelligent, two-way communications between job center staff and WIOA participants. This allows staff more time for direct client engagement, better client service and improved compliance.

Job Center staff participate in Community Service Provider groups and outreach events for vulnerable populations on a regular basis. For example, Homeless Connect events where providers meet to provide information about housing, domestic violence, job search assistance, and services on site such as dental exams, haircuts, etc.

Designated job center staff participate in Reentry Task Force/Coalitions where communities discuss challenges and opportunities for prisoner reentry into the workforce and communities.

The seafood employment office at the Anchorage Job Center partners with the Foreign Labor Certification Program to recruit Alaskans for seafood processing jobs to reduce the number of foreign workers requested through H-2B job orders. In addition, the department coordinates with the Alaska Department of Corrections' Transitional Work Opportunities (TWO) work release program to allow selected inmates the opportunity to work in seafood processing after their release.

## Challenges

The Alaska Job Center Network closed the Glennallen Job Center as part of a multi-year cost-reduction strategy. This affiliate job center served Glennallen (population est. 483) and surrounding communities as an access point to WIOA services and an available internet access point. Considerable local partner planning, partner co-enrollment outreach and a commitment to itinerant service delivery from the Fairbanks Job Center (comprehensive one-stop) has been adopted to provide services.

Geographic size, slow and intermittent internet service, and diverse population in Alaska make access to education, training and apprenticeships a unique challenge. A large portion of the state is accessible only by air or water, and travel is expensive and time-consuming. There is often the additional challenge of cultural differences for people coming from villages to urban areas. Those challenges create a unique need for distance delivery of employment and training services and, in many cases, for funds to cover travel and housing when training can only be completed in-person.

# Appendix



## Success Stories

## Appendix – Success Stories

### Successful Partnerships to Transcend Geographic Challenges



A resident of the rural village of Ambler, Alaska, Michelle applied for assistance with Career Support and Training Services (CSTS) through the Fairbanks Job Center to attend the Alaska Technical College (ATC) in Kotzebue. Her goal was to obtain her Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA) certificate. Michelle was enrolled into the WIOA Adult program and with collaboration with the native organizations, Maniilaq Association Employment and Training Program, Aqqualuk Trust she enrolled in October 2017. This collaboration covered the \$11,090 cost of training, room and board.

Michelle successfully completed her training and was able to obtain her State of Alaska CNA license on January 25, 2018. She obtained employment with Maniilaq Regional Hospital in Kotzebue in March 2018 as a CNA earning \$19.23 per hour.

Michelle is appreciative of the assistance provided through the CSTS program and native organizations. She is enjoying her new job and would like to continue her education in the healthcare field with a goal to become a registered nurse.

### Returning Citizen Obtains Great IT Career

David was incarcerated since the age of sixteen and released on parole after nineteen years in custody. He was eager to make up for lost time. He had studied business while in prison and continued those studies at the University of Alaska, Anchorage. He came to CSTS for assistance through the WIOA Adult Program. After discussions with his CSTS case manager, he decided to switch from a business to Information Technology (IT) as his chosen career field based on labor market research. He was also referred to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) for additional assistance.



David displayed a positive attitude and follow through in achieving his goals. He worked part-time jobs while receiving high grades in his training program, allowing him to get higher paying jobs as his skills increased. Shortly before he graduated with an Associate's degree in Networking Technology, he got a job as an IT Director making \$22 per hour for a social service agency. He is grateful for all the assistance he received.

## From CNA to Registered Nurse!

Ruth, originally from Kenya, is a permanent resident of the US, a military spouse and mother of two. When she applied with Career Support and Training Service (CSTS) to assist her with her last two semesters of college, her husband was deployed and she was working on-call as a Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA) with the Fairbanks Memorial Hospital earning \$21.60 per hour. She needed assistance to complete her Bachelor of Science in Nursing at University of Alaska Fairbanks.

In August 2017, CSTS Ruth was enrolled in the WIOA Adult Program. Due to her limited income and student loan, WIOA funding helped meet her tuition and fees, books, and some supportive service needs.

Ruth graduated in April 2018. She passed her NCLEX on June 8, 2018. She applied and obtained a promotion on June 17, 2018, as a Registered Nurse with Foundation Health Partners in the same Cardiology Clinic she had worked at as a CNA, earning \$29.80 an hour.

Ruth is very happy to make her dream come true and is thankful for CSTS support to complete her education. Her degree led to a promotion and increased economic self-sufficiency.



## Solid State of Alaska Career

Matthew had been working in the construction field in a variety of different positions for multiple years before being laid off. Although he had extensive experience with a wide assortment of heavy equipment machines, he lacked certifications and commercial driving experience.



When he applied for an operator position with the State of Alaska, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) in Cordova, the superintendent took the initiative to contact CSTS and advised that once Matthew obtained his commercial driver's license, they would consider him for the position.

Through the WIOA Dislocated Worker Program, Matthew received assistance with training, room and board. As he had hoped, once he obtained his CDL-A, Matthew gained full time employment with Alaska DOT&PF earning \$27 per hour. He is thankful for the assistance and is looking forward to working in the career of his choice.

## Single Mother Provides For Her Family with a New Career

Misty, a single mother of two was laid off in October 2017. She was referred to Career Support and Training Services (CSTS) by Alaska Works Partnership and the Diesel & Heavy Equipment Program staff at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks (UAF). At application, Misty had completed her first semester UAF, was receiving UI benefits, food stamps, and had applied for cash assistance with Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC).



CSTS enrolled Misty into the WIOA Dislocated Worker Program in November 2017. With TCC and CSTS collaboration, and a Pell Grant, Misty was able to cover the cost of tuition, fees, tools, her Class A CDL, and living expenses while attending training.

Misty obtained her Diesel/Heavy Equipment Mechanic Certification in May 2018. Shortly after, she was accepted into Local 71 and received a job offer to work full time for the Department of Transportation as a heavy equipment mechanic at \$25 an hour. Misty is excited to be able to provide for her family. She is grateful and thankful for all the assistance provided through the CSTS program.

## Increasing Skills Training Leads to Job Security

Garth came to the Peninsula Job Center in March 2017 looking for employment assistance due to a layoff from an oil industry related drilling company. He had exhausted his unemployment benefits, his savings, and had begun accumulating credit card debt.

Garth was referred to CSTS in for support to gain additional skills to reenter the workforce. He had a lead on a job with Kuukpik Drilling. To boost his resume and potential employment with Kuukpik, he needed to complete Well Driller training and Well Supervisory training provided by the Mining and Petroleum Training Program (MAPTS).



Garth gained interim employment with Kuukpik and after completing training, he advanced to a full time permanent two weeks on/off rotation schedule earning \$31 per hour. Garth is happy and thankful to be working in this self-sustaining industry once again.

## See the World through Maritime Industry Careers

At enrollment, Mykel was unemployed, homeless, with income derived from Unemployment Insurance and public assistance benefits. Mykel lacked a clear career plan and needed relevant labor market information to locate high demand careers. He discovered that sailors and marine oilers have a nationally projected “faster than average growth” with a 9-13% change. Mykel heard about the Seafarers International Union (SIU) apprenticeship program and felt this path could help him gain a suitable career. His Career Support and Training (CSTS) career planner had him complete Career Ready 101 which would prepare him to do well on the SIU apprenticeship reading and math entrance exams.



Support services were provided to assisted Mykel in obtaining pre-employment credentials and licenses, transportation to training, clothing and medical care.

Mykel was successfully indentured into the maritime apprenticeship after passing all pre-requisite US Coast Guard credentials. The SIU dispatched him throughout his training phases and provided an internship onboard a deep-sea vessel.

Now in his fourth phase, Mykel will be dispatched to work a full 120 day contract aboard one of the many SIU member vessels earning \$4,500-\$6,500 per contract period.

## From Military to Apprenticeship

Chris Huling was a Corrections Specialist in the U.S. Army. During his transition from military to civilian life, he decided construction would be an enjoyable second career. A partner, Alaska Works Partnership was able to offer Chris a variety of training, and the Operating Engineers of Alaska Local 302 chose to add Chris to the apprenticeship program. A program at which he excelled.

Chris recently returned home from Austin, Texas where he had been called out to help lead a team on Austin’s Onion Creek Restoration Project, transforming a flooded subdivision into a city park with trails and pavilions.

He is now back home in Alaska, participating in training classes at the Alaska Operating Engineers/Employers Training Trust in Palmer.



## Local Hire for Local Jobs

George, from the small village of Quinhagak in Western Alaska, wanted to work on the Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation Hospital expansion project in Bethel and pursue a career with the Plumbers and Pipefitters – Local 367. He was required to interview for the apprenticeship in Anchorage.

George was referred to the Peninsula Job Center Career Support and Training (CSTS) staff who initially assisted with his transportation costs from Quinhagak to Anchorage for the interview.

After completing the interview process and was invited to join Local 367. CSTS continued to support George by providing support services while in the Local 367 training including meals, tools, clothing, state licensing fees, and transportation to Bethel for his first work assignment.

George successfully completed his training program and accepted employment in May 2018. He works 60 hours per week with eight weeks on the job and one week off for Mechanical Construction and Consulting Inc. earning \$23.16 per hour.



## From Seasonal Part-time Work to Full-time, Family Sustaining Income

Marisa, a single mother, possessed a Commercial Drivers License (CDL) type B and was a seasonal school bus driver. To make ends meet, she had obtained a second job as a yard laborer with Crowley.



Her supervisor at Crowley recognized her hard work ethic and offered her an opportunity to advance into a full time, year round fuel truck driver position if she was able to obtain her CDL A with Hazmat Endorsement and Transportation Worker Identification Card (TWIC).

In April 2018, Marisa contacted the Valdez Job Center for assistance and was referred to CSTS. After researching available training options and locations, Marisa selected Alaska Driving Academy in Soldotna. She received case management and assistance with tuition, TWIC and Hazmat licensing costs, transportation, meals, and lodging during training.

In May 2018, as soon as her seasonal school bus driving position ended, she drove from Valdez to Soldotna for a one-week CDL training program. In June 2018, Marisa officially started her position with Crowley as a fuel truck driver. She was able to more than double her annual salary and gained an excellent benefit package with her new job in a non-traditional industry. She expressed her gratitude and let her case manager know she could not have made this important career move without the financial assistance and moral support of CSTS.

## Persistence Leads to Great Career

Russell had worked in the Maritime Industry for over 35 years and found himself unemployed in December 2015, due to a layoff from Blue Water Navigation LLC. Due to the current labor market and new Coast Guard requirements (in effect 2017), he needed to complete three classes at AVTEC to maintain his Merchant Mariner Document.



As Russell's annual income went from sixty thousand to zero, AVTEC referred him to the Homer Job Center and Career Support and Training Services (CSTS).

CSTS determined Russell was eligible and enrolled him to attend AVTEC to receive training in Leadership and Managerial Skills, Electronic Chart Display and Radar.

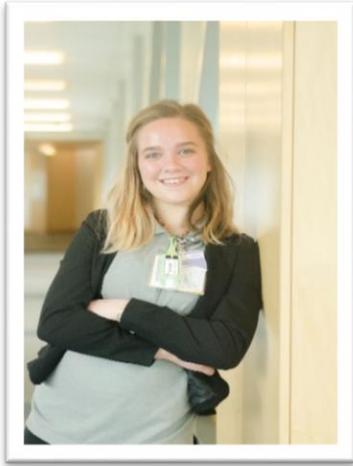
Russell started his training in May 2016, but had to reschedule one of his training dates in order to accept interim employment to help sustain his family. During this period, his case manager maintained contact and received updates on when Russell would be able to return to AVTEC.

In November 2017, Russell completed all of his required training and received his endorsements from the US Coast Guard.

On April 19, 2018, Russell began employment as an Able Bodied Seaman with Maritime Helicopters aboard the Maritime Maid. He is earning \$250.00 per day.

## Youth are our Future

Megan Hayden had a substance use disorder, was a high school dropout and had low-income barriers coming into the WIOA Youth Program. As a result of the career awareness services, Megan returned to high school and had identified specific work experiences to take her down her chosen career pathway.



Megan took advanced placement courses during her final year of high school. With an interest in nursing, Megan completed work experience at a family medical center and received high praise for her work ethic and attitude from her supervisor. She also completed work experience at an assisted living facility, where she was enthusiastic about learning the roles and responsibilities of caregivers.

In a letter of appeal wherein she cited her participation in the WIOA Youth Program and industry training experiences, she was granted admission into the nursing program at Seattle Pacific University. Very few students receive admission into this competitive program directly from high school; a testament to Megan's tenacity and determination to succeed and the impact of timely delivery of program services.

"I gained an education and I gained my spirit back a little bit, because I knew that I had support, not just emotional support, but I had financial support and career support". -Megan Hayden

## Employment through Internship

Melissa Paradis had been working part time at a pawn shop, but her long-range goal was to work for the State of Alaska in a career that provided healthcare and pathways for advancement. She went on several interviews, but could not figure out why they did not translate into employment. Her Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) counselor reached out to the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) Project Coordinator and asked for help.

In December 2017, the DVR referred Melissa for a three-month internship at the department's central office. The training provided a balance between soft skill development, general office skill knowledge, and job search skills. During the course of her internship, Melissa worked with staff at the job center, the disability resource coordinator, and her DVR counselor on identifying suitable employment.



In February 2018, Melissa completed her internship and by April she had accepted a position as an Office Assistant I with the Alaska Department of Administration. She went from working part-time making \$11 per hour to a full-time benefitted position making over \$17 per hour. She recently had her six-month review and successfully completed her probationary period. Melissa still stops by to say hello and tell us how much she appreciates all the assistance she received.