

Rapid Response

www.jobs.state.ak.us/RR

Rapid Response is a Federal program under the Workforce Investment Act designed to offer high quality services to communities, businesses and individuals who are addressing economic impacts, industry changes and natural disasters that may lead to worker layoffs.

Rapid Response services are flexible and strategically designed to bridge economic and workforce development. The program brokers partnerships and tailors solutions for businesses and workers during any stage of the business cycle. By maximizing resources, Rapid Response helps businesses and individuals in transition, succeed.

Rapid Response is a business service that helps business avert layoffs by connecting them with state or local economic development agencies, conduct prefeasibility studies to explore employee purchase of the business, or to upgrade workers skills in order to align with business needs. A current project that rapid response is coordinating with the Small Business Development Centers is ROPE. Rural Outreach Program for Entrepreneurs. www.alaskarope.org The goal of ROPE is to help grow small businesses and provide information and resources to help them remain competitive and sustainable.

When layoffs are unavoidable rapid response provides support to the employer, union (if applicable) and workers to assist with an orderly and legal layoff. Information on the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act (WARN) may be provided and services are tailored to the layoff. Services may include:

1. On-site employee meetings with the workers regarding services to assist with re-employment.
These meetings typically include representatives from Unemployment Insurance, Employment Services and Career Support and Training that provide information on the services and benefits that are available to laid off employees. Employees are encouraged to keep their options open and not to quit before the layoff date as this will affect eligibility for programs such as job training and Unemployment Insurance.
2. On-site workshops tailored to employee needs.
Depending on employer and employee interest, potential workshops may include topics such as resume preparation, interviewing skills, labor market

information, and making a career change. Employees of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development including employment counselors are available to lead the workshops. Other workshops may include financial planning, and stress management.

3. Facilitation of Labor-Management Committees.

In the context of a layoff, Labor-Management Committees provide the voice of the worker to program services. Rapid response can provide guidance and/or financial assistance in establishing a labor-management committee voluntarily agreed to by labor and management, or a workforce transition committee comprised of representatives of the employer, the affected workers and the local community. The assistance to this committee may include:

- The provision of training and technical assistance to members of the committee.
- Funding the operating costs of a committee to enable it to provide advice and assistance in carrying out rapid response activities.
- Providing a list of potential candidates to serve as a neutral chairperson of the committee.

4. Peer Support.

One or more individuals from the affected dislocation group are hired in a temporary position (through a grant) based on the recommendation of fellow laid off workers and an interview. Peers, who share the experience of the layoff, are experts on the specific conditions and needs of the workforce. This expertise fills a vital role in developing service delivery systems by providing on-going feedback about emerging needs and service effectiveness.

Peers:

- Establish a bridge to services providing community assistance and program information to the dislocated worker when the individual is ready to use the information. This effectively helps workers explore and access their options.
- Assist those who enter unfamiliar systems be better prepared to navigate and meet the related challenges.
- Assist dislocated workers with information about services such as tax or credit counseling to find and access these services.

5. Transition centers.

Transition centers are specifically designed to meet the needs of the impacted workers. The center may be located at the worksite or off. Many of the services that are located at a Job Center are provided at the transition center as well as peer support to assist the workers through the traumatic layoff event.