

# Alaska Unified Plan

## Executive Summary

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*For State Unified Plans  
Submitted under Section 501  
of the  
Workforce Investment Act of 1998  
State of Alaska  
for the period of  
June 2000 to June 2005*

**State of Alaska Unified Workforce  
Investment System**

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*“Building connections that put Alaskans into good jobs.”*

## **Executive Summary**

Federal legislation signed into law in 1998 mandates integration of national and state employment and job training programs, the first such major reform in more than 15 years. By rewriting these laws as the **Workforce Investment Act (WIA)**, the number of funding streams was reduced by Congress from seventy to three - to adults, dislocated workers and youth - and thus some sixty job training programs generated over the last six decades were consolidated.

The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (AKDOL) engaged a team of 18 writers representing each of the agencies involved in the unified planning process. Each program or agency is included in the workforce investment system, and writers developed content specific to their program requirements and regulatory or statutory stipulations.

Two principal changes occurred in the way state labor departments must conduct the business of preparing job seekers for work, actually assisting them in finding jobs, and getting employers the skilled workers they need:

- 1) **the WIA repeals the Job Training Partnership Act** and replaces it with an employment and training system that remains locally focused, but with increased flexibility in the use of program dollars; and
- 2) **a locally driven "one-stop" service delivery system is mandated**, integrating the broad array of employment and training programs.

The WIA also strengthens the focus on employment statistics at the local, state and national levels, which provides much sought-after labor market information about job vacancies, occupations in demand and the skills and earnings associated with them.

Several state initiatives have helped to implement the WIA in Alaska. The Alaska Job Center Network (AJCN), the result of a three-year, federal implementation grant, established the one-stop delivery system in the state. This grant simplified the employment and training services for both job seekers and employers at easy-to-reach sites; the ten full service job centers, and eleven satellite offices mostly in rural Alaska.

In 1999, House Bill 40 consolidated related employment, education, training and vocational rehabilitation programs into the renamed Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development. And Governor Knowles signed Administrative Order No. 182, designating the state workforce investment board and local workforce investment areas, all required under the federal WIA. Collectively, these measures codify the one-stop career center approach to ensure that

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Alaska can utilize the flexibility and innovation available under the federal Workforce Investment Act.

State and federal laws now permit one-stops to be run by the best available operator, who must see that the major elements of the WIA are incorporated.

**These mandated one-stop elements are:**

- A) Increased Coordination - to encourage joint ventures with emphasis on direct coordination of plans, programs and activities to thus improve services and avoid duplication.
- B) One-stop delivery systems - to conveniently deliver choice of workforce development services to participants and link the new system to employers.
- C) Universal access - to make assessment, counseling, job search assistance and information on jobs and job prospects available to everyone. Access to intensive services and job training is based on eligibility with priority given to veterans, low-income individuals and recipients of public assistance.
- D) Work first - to help individuals gain employment as the first stage of service delivery, prior to offering training.
- E) Empowered customers - to give customers the ability to make informed choices that meet their employment goals by providing easy access to a wealth of labor market information (LMI) on the performance of training providers, and the use of individual training accounts (ITAs), also known as vouchers.
- F) Increased flexibility - to meet local training needs and use available resources more creatively, through partnerships with local governments and boards, in order to develop systems that are responsive to the needs of the workforce and businesses in the local labor market.
- G) Business focused - to make business a critical partner in the development and design of service delivery systems with strong linkages to economic development.
- H) Increased accountability - to require state and local entities managing the system to meet core indicators of performance, or else suffer sanctions. Through ITAs or vouchers, participants choose training based on program outcomes. To survive in the market, training providers must make accountability for performance a top priority.

To put these themes into practice, long-term **strategic** and **unified** five-year plans have been formalized at both the local and state levels to maximize the use of employment and training resources and ensure results. The following is a summary of the Alaska Unified Plan, submitted and approved by the Secretary of

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Labor under section 501 of the Workforce Investment Act. The Alaska Unified Plan is approved for the federal program years 2000 through 2004.

**Note:** Some of the programs included in the Alaska Unified Plan were allowed to submit their annual plans through the unified plan, and therefore have more detailed sections within the full plan. These programs include:

- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Perkins III – Post-Secondary
- Wagner-Peyser
- Senior Community Service Employment Programs
- Adult Basic Education

The Housing and Urban Development (HUD) employment and training programs, Community Service Block Grant programs (CSBG), and the Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) are in the development and submittal process of their five-year plans and were not included in this Unified Plan at this time. A transition plan with those programs will be developed as part of the on-going process of planning and coordination in the workforce investment system and submitted next fiscal year.

The unified planning process balances Alaska's desire to achieve the WIA strategic planning objectives with the need to demonstrate compliance with the statutory and regulatory requirements for each of the individual programs in the unified plan. The unified plan provides several benefits to Alaska:

- **Improved customer service**, based on a holistic approach to serving customers which facilitates non-duplication of services and reaches new client groups
- **Improved strategic planning**, reflecting the sharing of knowledge at the State level concerning a wide range of programs and resources
- **Increased computer and information technology (IT) system networking**, providing the opportunity to learn about other and new IT systems and to promote the integrated use of technology
- **Burden reduction**, achieved through non-duplication of efforts and the need for less paper as opportunities for boilerplate language and certifications are identified
- **Increased coordination at the local level**, as the State fosters seamless services, through the coordination of education, training and employment resources and the provision of critical ancillary services

- **Improved use of State and Federal resources**, leading to greater effectiveness and efficiency.

### **Programs & Activities Covered by the WIA**

The State Unified Plan addresses the service provisions from a multitude of federally funded, state funded, and locally implemented programs. A listing of the programs and activities covered in Section 501 of the WIA is presented below:

#### **Section 501 Programs and Activities of the WIA**

- Perkins III/Secondary - Secondary Vocational Education programs. Administered by Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education
- Perkins III/Postsecondary - Postsecondary Vocational Education programs. Administered by Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education
- Title II of Perkins III - Tech-Prep Education. Administered by Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education
- Workforce Investment Activities for Adults, Dislocated Workers and Youth, or the WIA Title I - Activities authorized under Title I, Workforce Investment Systems. Administered by Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration
- Adult Education and Family Literacy Programs - Activities authorized under Title II of the WIA, Adult Education and Family Literacy. Administered by Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education
- Food Stamp Employment and Training Program, or FSET. Administered by USDA, Food and Nutrition Service
- Trade Act Programs - Activities authorized under chapter 2 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974. Administered by Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration
- Employment Service (ES) - Programs authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act. Administered by Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration
- Vocational Rehabilitation - Programs authorized under Part B of title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, other than §112 of such Act. Administered by Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration
- Veterans Programs, including Veterans Employment, Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program, and Local Veterans' Employment Representative Program - Programs authorized under chapters 41 & 42 of Title 38, USC,

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- and 20 CFR 1001 and 1005. Administered by Department of Labor, Veterans' Employment and Training Service
- Unemployment Insurance (UI) - Programs authorized under State unemployment compensation laws. Administered by Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration
  - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Welfare-to-Work (WtW)) - Programs authorized under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act. TANF administered by Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families; WtW administered by Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration
  - Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) - Programs authorized under title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965. Administered by Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration
  - Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and Public Housing Programs - Training activities funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development
  - Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) - Programs authorized under the Community Services Block Grant Act. Administered by Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families

### Unified Plan Design

The Alaska Unified Plan is divided into specific sections, as determined by the Guidance Instructions and Questions (GIQ) issued in early 2000 by the U.S. Department of Labor. The content and format of the plan follow the GIQ and address the instructions given and answer the additional questions regarding specific program inclusion in the plan. The GIQ addresses 14 content areas in alphabetical order from A-N. The individual program sub-sections for each question under A-N are listed within the full plan document for easy identification of specific program information. The following are narrative summaries of each A-N section, as submitted in the Alaska Unified Plan.

### A. Vision and Goals

The vision for Alaska's Workforce Investment System is "**building connections that put Alaskan's into good jobs.**" A good job is described as one that has adequate pay, benefits and career advancement opportunities that can sustain an individual and their family economically without reliance on public subsidy.

This comprehensive vision will guide the workforce investment system. The system will provide employment education, training and support services to

assure Alaska employers have a skilled workforce and Alaska workers have employment choices. The system will promote a healthy economy and strong communities by increasing employment opportunities through improved access to government, education and private sector activities that develop, strengthen, stimulate and diversify Alaska's economic base.

### **Statewide Primary Workforce Development Goals**

- Strengthen the involvement of business, industry, and economic development to build Alaska's workforce.
- Ensure access to quality employment education, training and employment services statewide, particularly to rural areas and for the economically disadvantaged.
- Evaluate programs of the workforce investment system to optimize customer employability.
- Advocate for Alaska's human resource investment programs and promote continuous improvement.
- Promote the full integration of Alaskans with disabilities into all aspects of the workforce development system to put people with disabilities into good jobs.
- Strengthen the involvement and ability of Alaska's Education system to develop Alaska's workforce.

In order to achieve workforce investment system improvements over the five-year period, cross system measures will be used to gauge progress of the Plan. The measures will assist in understanding if the goals and strategies are effective in achieving the following broad results:

- Increasing the number of jobs held by Alaska residents.
- Reducing unemployment by economic region in Alaska.
- Decreasing welfare dependence by economic region in Alaska.
- Gaining income for Alaskans as compared to non-resident workers.
- Enhancing and increasing the supply of trained and credentialed workers for good jobs in demand.
- Retaining skilled workers in vital Alaskan industries.
- Gaining of skills and technical knowledge in Alaska's emerging and current workforce that meets the requirement of industry-based, nationally recognized skills standards.

### Contributions of Unified Plan Partner Programs

**Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)** is contributing to the goals of a workforce investment system by concentrating on preparing low-income older adults for transitioning into the workforce. The focus is on coordinating services with workforce development partners through integration of services via co-location and electronic connections with the AJCN, as well as educating the partners on older worker issues, and being an advocate for seniors' inclusion in the workforce.

**Adult Basic Education (ABE)** program is contributing to the WIA goals by focusing and concentrating on preparing adult learners for transitioning into jobs, vocational training, or higher education. This is accomplished through instruction in basic reading, writing, and mathematics, in GED preparation and in the teaching of ESL. Family Literacy programs, funded through Even Start also have an adult education component.

**Adult and Dislocated Worker** programs are contributing to the WIA goals by providing core, intensive, and training services to persons seeking work. The programs direct training services towards attainment of nationally recognized certifications in industries and occupations that are in demand, based on state, regional, and/or local labor market information. The focus is on coordination of services through numerous partnerships, as specified in the Governor's Coordination and Special Services Plan (GCSSP), and through integration of services via co-location and electronic connection with the AJCN. When feasible, a peer worker model is utilized to facilitate outreach to dislocated workers.

**Alaska State Employment and Training Program (STEP)** is contributing to the WIA and complimenting the adult and dislocated worker programs by offering training and employment assistance to adult workers. It is integrated into the workforce development system and has the AHRIC oversight authority through the Legislature.

**The Youth** program is contributing to the WIA by providing comprehensive services to eligible in-school and out-of-school at-risk youth within a planned statewide workforce investment system. The program is focused on designing, enhancing, and reinforcing youth activities that connect youth with a full range of services and community resources that lead to academic and employment success. Youth benefit from services in both urban and rural areas creating an effective leveraging of resources through partner agencies under the umbrella of the One-Stop system. Capacity building within individual communities is an initial step in developing youth potential for a future in the State and in the global economy. The ultimate goal is to create and maintain a seamless continuum of educational and career development opportunities and incentives that will assist youth in selecting, pursuing and obtaining careers that result in self sufficiency. Services will include academic, occupational, vocational, work readiness and life skills training to



enable our youth to achieve appropriate credentials and contribute effectively as productive members of Alaska's economy.

**Alaska Temporary Assistance Program (ATAP)** is contributing to the WIA goals by moving Alaskans from welfare into jobs so they can support their families, and to maintain a safety net for those in need by providing temporary assistance through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant. There is a strong emphasis on work and job readiness, on planning for self-support, on pursuing child support, and on preventing unplanned and out-of-wedlock pregnancies.

**Welfare to Work** is contributing to the WIA goals by providing services to hard-to-serve recipients of the ATAP to enable eligible Alaskans to become economically independent of public assistance before they reach their five-year lifetime assistance limit. While services are similar to ATAP, the target groups are long-term welfare clients who have significant barriers to employment.

**Wagner-Peyser Program (W-P)** is contributing to the WIA goals by developing and maintaining a self-service, automated public labor exchange. This exchange provides the most complete, current, and extensive listing of job openings in the State. Using in-house and Internet-based technology, Alaska employers and job seekers now have desk-top access to career information, resume preparation, local or expanded recruitment, job search assistance, labor market information, veterans services and benefits information, instant access to job training resources, and temporary public assistance. W-P staff are developing and expanding skills in case management to more effectively deliver W-P services to priority populations; veterans and UI claimants. W-P resources are also used to help with vocational assessment and counseling services in the Job Centers. In addition, W-P is an advocate for the business customer.

**Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998** is contributing to WIA goals by providing support to secondary and postsecondary vocational education programs. These programs help students achieve challenging academic, vocational and technical standards, be prepared for further learning, and attain the skills needed to pursue high-skill, high-wage careers, not just entry-level jobs.

## B. One-Stop Delivery System

### THE INTEGRATED SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM

#### Alaska's Delivery System

In 1996 the US Department of Labor awarded the state \$5.4 million to implement the one-stop career center system plan. Alaska's one-stop delivery

system is now known as the Alaska Job Center Network (AJCN). The AJCN began as a collaborative effort of the State divisions of Employment Security, Community and Rural Development, Vocational Rehabilitation, Public Assistance, the Private Industry Councils (now known as Local Workforce Investment Boards - LWIB) and the Alaska Human Resource Investment Council (AHRIC). In 1999, Administrative Order No. 182 officially designated the AJCN as the State's one-stop career system. A state level agreement signed in 1999 commits the state partners of the one-stop system to continue working together towards the goals of WIA.

The Alaska Job Center Network is a broad umbrella encompassing all aspects of the delivery system for employment, training and temporary assistance opportunities. The network includes the Job Centers (Alaska's name for One-Stops), affiliated agencies and temporary or "transitions" centers. In addition, it includes the electronic or virtual delivery systems that are accessible from the Job Centers, but also through anyone's home or business computer or through one of the tribal Employment and Training agencies throughout rural Alaska.

Administrative Order No. 182 also designated the AHRIC as the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB). The order designated the Anchorage/Mat-Su Local Workforce Investment Area (Local WI Area) and the Anchorage/Mat-Su Local Workforce Investment Board (LWIB) and the Balance of State Local Workforce Investment Area (BOS Local WI Areas) and Balance of State Local Workforce Investment Board (BOS LWIB), respectively. The AHRIC was charged with ensuring that there is adequate regional representation on the BOS LWIB, and with developing criteria for additional geographic regions that wish to apply for their own area designation under the Act.

The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (AKDOL), the primary one-stop system administrator, and the SWIB, in accordance with the Act, delegate to each Local WIB the flexibility needed in managing their system. The SWIB will serve, when requested, as a mediator to provide remedies for differences that arise from operating and improving one-stop service.

There are Job Centers in both workforce investment areas: Anchorage, Mat-Su & Eagle River; and Juneau, Fairbanks, Yukon Kuskokwim, Ketchikan, and the Kenai Peninsula. It is anticipated that additional Job Centers, Satellite Job Centers and Affiliated sites will join this system and that it will grow in effectiveness and breadth as a result of the implementation of the WIA.

### **Job Center Management**

Center management, data processing, marketing, training, performance measures and other operational issues and policy decisions have been made with the assistance of standing and ad hoc committees. The committee members are from the partner agencies, as well as from other agencies, both governmental and non-profit. During One-Stop implementation, a state-level steering committee governed the AJCN. Following the WIA implementation, the LWIBs will locally guide the Job Centers and the State WIB will continue to ensure equity across Alaska.

Each Job Center uses Advisory Committees to advise the staff on development and operations of the Job Center. The Advisory Committees emphasize efficiencies that help to assure employers and jobseekers satisfaction with Job Center services. They also provide recommendations to the LWIB regarding the employment and training needs of the community.

By the WIA implementation, Alaska will have eight full service Job Centers across the State as well as three satellite Job Centers where some, but not all of the services, are available. Nine Affiliates are already recognized by the SWIB with the expectation that this group may be 150 to 200 sites over the coming years. They include some small community Job Centers (with perhaps only one ES staff), as well as sites like the Palmer Senior Center where employment services are available for seniors and whose program manager regularly participates in AJCN training and networking opportunities.

All of the Job Centers and Satellite Job Centers are a part of a computer network, with standardized software, that has been installed as an expansion of the state's Wide Area Network (WAN). This provides a platform for future implementation of an integration of a truly integrated electronic case management system, as planned by the AJCN partner agencies.

## **C. Plan Development and Implementation**

### **JOINT PLANNING AND COORDINATION**

The State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) and Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (AKDOL) used a broad public process for developing the Unified Plan. The initial elements for plan development were outlined at a public meeting in November 1998. The SWIB approved a WIA implementation plan and provided the plan to agencies, Local Workforce Investment Boards (LWIBs - formerly Private Industry Councils) and the public. Two directives were implemented under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA).

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One was for the state to submit a Unified Plan that included all the programs under the Act. The second was to establish public Policy Workgroups to ensure broad involvement by the public in the plan development. The Workgroups assisted the SWIB and LWIBs with policy direction. The WIA Policy Workgroups also help develop broad consensus for activities under the unified plan.

The WIA Policy Workgroups involved over one hundred volunteer citizens from every region of Alaska working in seven groups to provide the SWIB WIA policy guidance. The majority of Work Group members were from business and private sector employers, with representatives from organized labor, education, community based organizations, Alaska Job Corps, US DOL ETA Alaska Bureau of Apprenticeship, Alaska Natives, persons with disabilities, tribal and community colleges, the University of Alaska, and state agencies among others. Private Industry Council members (future LWIBs) also participated on the work groups. The Alaska Native Coalition for Employment and Training (thirteen federal WIA Native grantees), the Alaska AFL-CIO and the University of Alaska all developed internal WIA policy teams and provided input in policy discussions and plan development. All state agencies representing one-stop partners and special populations provided input and assistance to the policy work groups and helped write the plan as part of the state's interagency coordinated effort to produce the plan.

The final draft of the Unified Plan was submitted to Region X, DOL for review in March 2000. Individual Plan writers who needed to make changes were contacted and the changes were submitted to Region X.

The proposed plan was circulated to the sub-state governance bodies for endorsement or further comment. The plan was then finalized and submitted to the AHRIC for endorsement before the State DOL submitted it to the USDOL for approval. In April 2000, the final version of the Unified Plan was submitted to the USDOL and USDOE for final approval, and the Alaska Unified Plan was formally approved on June 29, 2000.

### **D. Needs Assessment**

#### **EDUCATIONAL AND JOB TRAINING NEEDS FOR ALASKA'S WORKFORCE**

For years, Alaska's resource-based economy was able to provide high-paying jobs to workers with only a high school education. But traditional sources of high-wage/low-skill work have limited growth prospects. The challenge is to identify the high-wage jobs of the future and ensure that Alaskans have the skills those occupations require.

The results of Alaska's most recent long-term occupational forecast, for the 1996 – 2006 period, indicate that although jobs will continue to be available at all levels of educational attainment, trends favor jobs requiring more education or training. One quarter of the "new" jobs – jobs that will be created due to growth in the economy – will require a bachelor's degree or above. Another quarter of new jobs will require specialized training ranging from medium term to an associate degree or postsecondary vocational training. About 42 percent of the new jobs, usually low paying, will require less than one month's training and experience.

Occupational growth will be very concentrated. Ten out of the more than 450 detailed occupations are projected to account for 25 percent of total employment growth over the forecast period. Eight of these high-growth occupations (based on numerical change) are found in the service industry sector and are on the middle or lower end of the skill spectrum.

Driven by economic growth, Alaska's fast-growing occupations (based on percentage change) will provide excellent employment opportunities. In general, the occupations with high growth rates will require higher skill levels than those occupations with high numeric increases. Of the 10 fastest-growing occupations, five are associated with health services and three with computer technology.

In an effort to identify Alaska's good jobs, AKDOL targeted occupations based on anticipated employment opportunity and desirable earning potential. Based on the 1996 – 2006 occupational projections, "hot occupations" were defined as those with a higher than average projected growth rate combined with a higher than average estimated wage. Although many industries are represented in the occupations on the full hot careers list, occupations in health care services, transportation, education, engineering and business services dominate the list.

"Building the connections that put Alaskans into good jobs" will require a workforce information system that is accessible and understandable to all of our customers. Alaska's career planners and jobseekers need to know, for example, the occupations and industries that are expanding and declining, the earnings and benefits associated with different types of work, where training is available, where the jobs are, and the related nationally recognized standards and occupational requirements which must be satisfied. Meeting these needs are the primary goals of Alaska's workforce information system.

**Adult Workers.** Adult participants are often low income, low skilled individuals. Their needs include assistance to determine an appropriate vocational goal, develop appropriate vocational plans, securing the resources to implement their vocational plans, and identify appropriate industry-based certifications for them to achieve. Because of barriers to employment they may experience they often require supportive services in the form of transportation assistance, purchase of equipment and supplies, assistance in securing housing, and child care. In

addition they may need counseling to address issues related to substance abuse and or criminal convictions.

**State Training and Employment Program (STEP).** The State Training and Employment Program (STEP) offers training and employment assistance services to adult workers. The regulations for administering this program state that persons shall not be served by STEP when they can be served through other programs, which ensures that it complements and does not duplicate the Title I adult and dislocated worker programs. Funding for the program comes from .01% of employee contributions to the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund.

To be eligible for STEP, persons must be unemployed have worked for a job covered by unemployment insurance within the past three years. Services also can be provided to incumbent workers who will be displaced within six months if their skills are not updated. STEP is a flexible program in that industry specific training can be provided to meet the needs of a particular industry or employer and it can include seasonal employment. Dislocated Workers are often individuals with established occupations. They are frequently skilled in a specific occupation but lack the expertise to generalize their skills to other areas of employment.

**Dislocated Workers** are anxious to return to work and require some assistance in adjusting to the loss of employment. Their training needs are targeted toward specific skill development to rapidly return to the world of work. Dislocated Workers frequently benefit from vocational counseling to identify their transferable skills and develop a plan to activate those skills.

A lack of specific skill development and a limited knowledge of the world of work characterize the **Older Youth** worker. Older Youth are enthusiastic about work but often set unrealistic expectations about work. The skills necessary to be work ready are often undeveloped and as a consequence additional barriers are often created. Older Youth require comprehensive training that results in skill development and possible credentials. Older Youth benefit from vocational counseling regarding the world of work, use of judgement and decision making skills.

The **Younger Youth** worker is focused on developing basic work maturity skills, creating an understanding of the world of work and developing appropriate universal work habits. Younger Youth often begin with unrealistic expectations that can be addressed through work experience opportunities. Training services target on development of work maturity skills including communication and problem solving skills. Younger Youth frequently benefit from a wide opportunity for vocational exploration. Through vocational exploration Younger Youth can practice the skills necessary to be a successful worker without significant risk of resources in a specific career direction.

The **Disabled Worker** possesses the characteristics of their primary group i.e. youth, Adult Dislocated Worker, etc. as well as specific needs relative to communication, decision making skills, problem solving skills and use of judgement. Effectively communicating with employers about disability related needs is one of the highest needs. In addition, the disabled worker must be effective at problem solving to meet performance goals of employers in a way that may not be readily apparent to the employer. The disabled worker requires training in occupations that emphasized their strengths and avoids their functional limitations.

### E. State and Local Governance

#### **ORGANIZATION, STRUCTURE, AND ROLE/FUNCTION**

There are four principal types of entities that will govern the activities of the Unified Plan. These are State-level boards, State agencies, local-level boards and local agencies.

#### **State Governance**

The structure of Alaska's workforce development is built upon the core federal employment education and job training programs developed by Congress and administered by state agencies.

In 1995, the Alaska Legislature created the Alaska Human Resource Investment Council (AHRIC), consolidating three employment and training councils. The purpose was to develop a more efficient and cost-effective employment and training system for Alaska's employers and job seekers. As part of the consolidation, the AHRIC will be transferred from the Office of the Governor to the AKDOL at the beginning of State fiscal year 2001.

The AHRIC was identified by administrative order 182 as the state's State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB), and Senate Bill 334 amended the Act that created the AHRIC in 1998. The new law gave business and industry a stronger voice in workforce development policy, making programs more accountable for customer results and annual evaluation of programs. The AHRIC was mandated to develop standards for evaluating training programs based on job retention, wage levels, and customer satisfaction. The AHRIC was also given more authority over system improvements and given oversight authority for the planning and coordination of employment-related education training programs operated by the State or operated under contract with the State.

**THE AHRIC Mission**

**Mission**

"...To facilitate the process necessary to create and maintain an efficient, effective, and integrated human resources investment system. This comprehensive system will provide employment education and training services to assure Alaska employers have a skilled workforce and Alaska workers have employment choices."

Within its role as the Governor's workforce advisory board, the SWIB has the responsibility to develop policy to implement the Workforce Investment Act. The SWIB's duties under the Act, in addition to assisting the Governor to develop a five-year strategic plan as outlined above, are to recommend policy to:

- develop and continuously improve a WIA service delivery and One-Stop system,
- develop and improve linkages to assure coordination and non-duplication of services,
- review and approve local plans,
- coordinate the measures taken pursuant to the Carl Perkins Act,
- designate local areas,
- develop allocation formulas for the distribution of WIA program funds,
- develop and continuously improve levels of performance for the WIA performance measures,
- prepare an annual report to the Secretary of the US Department of Labor,
- develop a statewide employment statistics system as required in the Wagner-Peyser Act, and
- develop an application for an incentive grant as required in Section 503 of the WIA.

**By statute the SWIB has the following additional responsibilities:**

- deliver the five-year unified state plan with quantifiable measures to the Alaska Legislature;
- include quantifiable goals that will empower Alaskans to gain independence from public assistance and move up the socioeconomic ladder;



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- develop Alaska's workforce investment system; ensure timely consultation and collaboration with chief elected officials, local workforce investment boards, and other workforce stakeholders;
- designate the duties and responsibilities of state agencies to implement the Federal Act, and to capitalize on experience developed by workforce partners;
- participate in the development of a coordinated statewide system of activities and services that includes both mandatory and optional partners of the One-Stop delivery system; and
- provide for the development, accountability and continuous improvement of comprehensive workforce performance measures to assess the effectiveness of the workforce investment activities in the state.

### Local Governance

**Local Workforce Investment Boards:** Local Elected Officials requested, and the SWIB certified, two Workforce Investment Areas in the state. Each of these has a Local Workforce Investment Board (LWIB) constituted according to the WIA.

Each LWIB has direct purview, along with the chief elected officials, for Title I of the WIA and the local One-Stop system. These LWIBs do not have legal authority over the other funding streams participating in this Unified Plan. However, through governance of the One-Stop system and through partnerships and collaborations, LWIBs influence a wide array of local workforce development activities and programs.

**Local Agencies:** Many local agencies, whether they are independent agencies, community-based organizations or local offices of state agencies, have a role in carrying out this Unified Plan. This role may come as part of their regular responsibilities, as members of local boards, and/or through One-Stop operator status or other contractual or service-provider relationships.

## F. Funding

### ALLOCATION CRITERIA

Allocation of the WIA Title I funds is the responsibility of the Alaska Workforce Investment Office (AWIO). In November 1999, the State Board determined the full 15% allowed by federal regulation should be reserved under the youth and the adult funding streams for statewide projects and state administration.

Similarly, the State Board decided to reserve under the dislocated worker funding stream, 5% for state administration, 10% for statewide projects and 25% for rapid response activities.

- The State Board also approved that the allocation of funds to the Local WIBs should be made in accordance with the mandatory formulas specified in the regulations. That is, the State Board did not adopt a discretionary allocation formula. In an effort to minimize any dramatic shift in funding at the local level, the State Board adopted the 'hold harmless' for youth and adult WIA funds as policy issued by the U.S. Secretary of Labor.

The state criteria to allocate funds for each of the programs included in the unified plan will remain the same as under the former JTPA allocations as the system transforms under the workforce Investment Act (WIA). Each program has made significant adjustments in the past two years as reforms such as one-stops, welfare, and school-to-work continued, and the Legislature and Congress changed workforce investment policy. In 1998, State law instituted performance and accountability measures and broadened the scope of the SWIB. In 1999, a new state law consolidated most workforce programs under the AKDOL, which has created even greater change within the main administrative agency.

The WIA creates a new system for the exchange of information among customers, agencies and service providers. It creates a new system for certifying vendors, a new system for delivering services to individuals, and a new system for governance. Many system activities are considered administrative costs. The Act caps all administrative fees for Title I (employment services and job training) at ten percent (previously 15-20%), with the intent that ninety percent of resources will reach customers. This is a thirty-three percent drop in funding for administration activities.

Programs can meet the challenge of serving the customer's needs and adapt to a new public workforce system by continuing the high degree of collaboration with the activities outlined in the plan. Collaboration has leveraged other state, federal, local and private resources. Programs have been effective in finding additional resources and new ways to serve their customers.

Efforts to create multi-firm **Business Learning Consortia and Business Education Partnerships** are increasing the involvement of employers in creating both policy and best practice approaches for adults and students. This will be enhanced by AHRIC's partnership with the **National Skill Standards Board** and the State's active participation in the evolving Voluntary National System of Skill Standards. Changes in technology are providing an information framework to expand core services to remote

communities. **The Denali Commission** provides a new opportunity to plan and coordinate employment, education and training activities with federal, state, and local community and economic development opportunities in rural Alaska, and to leverage new federal funds for training.

**The Governor's Discretionary Funds** are the most flexible resources for ensuring services for dislocated workers, building the information exchange system for both Youth and for Adults services, and for innovative demonstration projects that can lead the system to higher performance. The SWIB, LWIBs and AKDOL will provide collaborative guidance for the expenditure of the WIA Title I and the State Training and Employment Program Governor's Discretionary Funds. The SWIB has determined first year priorities for the of WIA as serving rural youth and adults, meeting the demand for educated and skilled workers, and strengthening the involvement of education in workforce development.

### G. Activities to be Funded

Detailed Program Descriptions are contained under G in the full Alaska Unified Plan.

### H. Coordination and Non-Duplication

#### COORDINATED AND INTEGRATED SERVICES

The State has made significant progress for efficient coordination and non-duplication of services as envisioned by the Act. Consolidating most employment, education, and training programs under one division of the AKDOL in 1999 began the process of integrating program services, collecting and evaluating data, and administrating programs. Continuous improvement will reveal duplications and provide remedies. The development of Alaska's one-stop career center system is well underway as WIA begins and benefits both the State and Local Workforce Investment Area customers. With three prior years of coordination and collaboration experience, there will be expansion and greater access to system services. Partnering with Alaska Native WIA grantees will provide greater coordination across the state.

**Alaska's Job Corp's Center (AJCC)** programs and services are included as part of Alaska's Workforce Investment System. AJCC participated in the development of the state plan as part of the WIA Policy Work Groups, and have representative seats on each local area Youth Policy Council. The specific activities of AJCC and how the coordinate with services provided by

each local area are described within the local plans as submitted to the SWIB and the Secretary of Labor.

The state will issue regulations and directives for delivering program services, including the administration of services after consultation with Local WIBs, agencies and one-stop system partners to develop common definitions and policies to eliminate barriers for coordination. The 1999 consolidation of programs under one department (AKDOL&WD) has significantly improved such coordination among the majority of programs already, and processes are in place for annual performance review and continued planning to identify barriers to coordination and provide strategies to overcome such barriers. Annual working meeting between the SWIB and LWIB's will further statewide efforts to develop common definitions and policies that improve the system and services.

### I. Special Populations and Other Groups

#### PROGRAM STRATEGIES FOR SPECIAL POPULATIONS

The WIA places Title I employment and job training service at the core of the Unified Plan. The Act provides program's flexibility to improve special population service with partners in the workforce system or as individual programs. This is critical because all programs must remain in compliance with federal and state rules. Special populations and other group services are evaluated as part of overall system performance. The SWIB, LWIBs and Youth Policy Councils will provide broad leadership for strategy development. Special Populations program strategies are developed by the responsible program staff and the appropriate federal-state designated leadership board. These strategies are developed through a public process that provides opportunities for interested parties to interact with program administrators and public policy boards.

Alaska's Workforce Investment Boards recognize the efforts of Alaska Native organizations to provide a full range of services to our mutual clients in communities across the state, as well as efforts at assisting Alaska Native welfare recipients in making the transition from welfare to self-sufficiency. Many state agencies and Alaska Native workforce grantees have already embraced WIA concepts.

**The Alaska Native Coalition of Employment and Training (ANCET)** is a coalition of non-profit organizations that receive federal grants to provide services to Alaska Natives. It is a requirement of the Workforce Investment Act that the Local Board enter in to an agreement with the 12 WIA mandated

partner agencies, of which ANCET represents one mandated partner: the Alaska Native grantee.

In recognition that those services are an important component in rural service provision, the Balance Of State (BOS) LWIB participated in multiple meetings over the last year to ensure the Memorandum of Understanding required between the BOS LWIB and the Alaska Native grantee partners was supported by all parties. Those meetings included the Balance of State Workforce Investment Board Chair, the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development Commissioner, AKDOL Employment Security Division Deputy Director, AKDOL Employment Security Division Assistant Deputy Director and various staff. Discussions focused on the state's One Stop service delivery area and how it will translate in to rural services, universality of service, technical needs, sharing resources and information, and ensuring access to rural clients.

As a result, Alaska Native grantees shall participate as partners in the Alaska Job Centers Network through a negotiated memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the state and LWIBs. This MOU stipulates how the state and Alaska Native organizations will work together to provide services and expand access for services to remote communities through mutual networks, staff and Alaska's one-stop systems.

**The top concerns of the Alaska Native grantees provided to the SWIB were:**

- direct involvement as one-stop partners
- improving universal access for services
- program integration with Alaska Native workforce grantees.

Fourteen specific recommendations were provided to the SWIB and agreement has been reached upon these points between the state, ANCET and LWIBs.

The Governor has directed that representatives of local area Native Organizations will have designated seats on LWIBs. ANCET has a designated seat on the SWIB, and an ad-hoc committee involving all ANCET members has been established by the AHRIC to assist with continued advise and information about the needs of Alaska Native people.

### J. Professional Development and System Improvement

#### PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

The State AWIO programs have the benefit of a history of successful service provision that provide a solid foundation for the State Board and Local Boards. Both the Balance of State PIC and Municipal PIC are currently applying for certification as Local WIBs and each group brings a wealth of experience and history to adult and dislocated worker issues.

The State Board has also adopted the **Malcolm Baldrige continuous improvement model** as the foundation of the State Unified Plan and for services from the Job Center delivery system. In the Spring of 2000 State Board members and Local WIB members may receive training on the Malcolm Baldrige Principles. Furthermore, State personnel will be provided the skills and training necessary to maintain an on-going-in-house model of continuous improvement utilizing the same principles.

### K. Performance Accountability

#### PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND MEASURABLE GOALS

The state will develop personnel to achieve the performance indicators for programs by improving communications between staff and service providers, and providing training for Baldrige and Continuous Improvement for staff, workforce boards and service providers. The AKDOL and the SWIB will coordinate training for staff, boards and affected partners drawing on technical assistance from the USDOL, quality workforce experts, and as appropriate from the National Skills Standards Board, an AHRIC partner.. The AKDOL, SWIB and University of Alaska are exploring the feasibility of creating a **Workforce Excellence Institute** to assist personnel with training and to develop the state's capacity for delivering training.

Efforts to achieve performance indicators are underway. Implementing the state's one-stop system over the previous three years helped form workgroups on customer issues within state programs. The one-stop workgroups with oversight by state and local boards, created a process among program personnel and one-stop center partners that has helped identify areas that need improvement. Several **Local Advisory Committees (LAC)** for co-located community one-stop centers have been established. The LACs provide input to the center managers and to the LWIB for one-stop system improvement.

### L. Data Collection

#### STATE COLLECTION AND VALIDATION OF DATA

The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section currently conducts performance measures analyses of Alaska training programs and providers as required by AS 44.19.626. Employment status and earnings of program participants before and after completion of the programs are calculated using Alaska UI wage records. A report showing the percent of program participants that are working and their total, average and median earnings is prepared. In future years, this same system will monitor the performance outcomes of each individual public and private training provider for any quarterly time period before and after training.

Two annual reports have been prepared to date and provide performance outcome information for:

- The Alaska Technical Center in Kotzebue
- The Alaska Vocational Technical Center in Seward.
- All University of Alaska Vocational Education Programs throughout Alaska.
- All JTPA programs.
- The Alaska State Training and Employment Program (STEP), funded by a percentage of employee contributions to the Alaska unemployment insurance trust fund
- The NAFTA/TAA program
- The Alaska Work Search Program, a four-week program intended to help Temporary Assistance (ATAP) clients in their efforts to obtain and keep a job.

Other administrative records, such as Alaska unemployment insurance claims, Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend files, voter registration files, and driver's license records are available in order to determine whether unemployed program participants are still in Alaska. In addition, a data sharing agreement is in place with Washington State in order to track training program participants that move to Washington State.

Data for each workforce development partner is maintained in the AWIO management information system. Selected data elements for each program participant exiting programs will be transmitted to AK DOL Research and Analysis on a quarterly basis from the AWIO for matching with UI wage records and for calculation of performance measures. Data elements transmitted to Research and Analysis include: participant SSN, program title, exit date, termination reason, activity code, labor force status, and age at time of enrollment.

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Matched records will be returned to the AWIO for inclusion in its management information system along with relevant items for the WIASRD.

Historical Alaska UI wage records files are maintained at Research and Analysis along with employer reported occupation, place of work and other administrative records that will assist in identifying program participants that are still living in Alaska. Research and Analysis will also conduct matches of wage records with other states or agencies as required.

The One-Stop partners have identified eleven common data elements. These elements include:

- Last Name
- First Name
- Middle Name
- Social Security Number
- Date of Birth
- Gender
- Race/Ethnicity
- Address
- City
- State
- Zip

Each of these data elements will be collected and shared by all the partner agencies. Additional data elements necessary to a specific program will be collected by that program at the point of registration and eligibility. **The MetSYS system is the WIA core case management and reporting system for WIA Title I programs.** It will be used for data collection by WIA Title I. Research and Analysis of the Department of Labor will provide data analysis support to state Labor programs identified in the plan.

At this time there is no common reporting process developed. The SWIB will work with the partners to design a broad system compatible to the basic needs of all the partners.



## **COMMON DATA ELEMENTS AND REPORTING SYSTEMS**

### **State System**

The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section maintains a comprehensive UI wage record and Alaska administrative record data base. All data elements are linked by social security number. All training provider records contain the start and ending date of the training or service provided along with demographic characteristics of the program participant. The type of training provided is currently being collected.

The implementation of the new Management Information system (METSYS) should provide the State with more timely and focused information related to performance. Staff will routinely monitor the performance of the Local Boards to identify performance and activities that are not reaching expectations. In this way, the AWIO will endeavor to identify and resolve performance deficiencies prior to them becoming significant problems. Staff will work with appropriate persons within the local boards to identify the factors that might be adversely affecting performance and will assist in developing alternative courses of action to resolve the problems. Additionally, staff will provide follow-up oversight to ensure the actions taken have had the desired effect upon performance.

**Alaska Senate Bill 334, State Training Programs** (Chapter 85, SLA98, 6/11/98), identifies the Research and Analysis unit of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development as the designated data collection and reporting entity.

## **M. Corrective Action**

### **State Corrective Actions**

Alaska law and the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) provide sanctions and incentives to improve program and vendor performance. The Act outlines corrective action procedures for the Governor, Boards and responsible agencies. The State and Local Boards provide oversight and will make corrective recommendations to the appropriate program for improvement. Corrective actions will be taken to improve program performance by the responsible state agency. Corrections may involve requesting waivers from the Secretary. If performance falls short of expectations the remedies outlined in the Act will be followed. Incentives will be developed to reward good performance. If program performance can not be achieved the SWIB will

provide recommendations to the Governor and Legislature for necessary changes.

Under Title I of the WIA, on site technical assistance will be provided by the Alaska Workforce Investment Office, as needed. AWIO performed similar activities under the former Job Training Partnership Office and are knowledgeable and versed in providing technical assistance to the local organizations. Additionally, the State will call on the resources of the regional federal office, as necessary, to provide technical assistance in more challenging situations.

#### **N. Waiver and Work-Flex Requests:**

The state may request waivers as part of the unified plan in the future. Initial waiver requests have not been identified or developed.

**END OF EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**