

Alaska Workforce Investment Board Strategic Intent

Mission Statement:

“To provide leadership, recommend policy, direction and accountability standards to get Alaskans into jobs.”

Alaska’s workforce development system has made great progress since transitioning from JTPA to WIA but still needs improvement. Innovation and continuous improvement is essential to the success of any enterprise, including Alaska’s workforce development enterprise. As fiscal constraints continue and the cost of preparing and improving our workforce increases the Alaska Workforce Investment Board should set the pace in creating a meaningful and innovative workforce development plan that will fulfill the economic and labor requirements of the future. The plan must serve as the translation of research findings into practical but innovative strategies to deliver a prepared workforce to Alaska’s employers.

Fully realizing the intent of the *Jobs are Alaska’s Future* initiative requires a workforce development system that is responsive to the needs of business, industry and workers. Alaska faces several challenges in addressing these needs, including:

- An aging workforce that will result in the need to replace significant numbers of skilled workers in all occupations and industries.
- An aging population that will require the provision of additional services.
- A gap, both basic and occupation-specific, between the skills business and industry need and those possessed by the labor force.
- A highly competitive market for skilled workers.
- Additional jobs being created by a promising economy and comparatively few qualified Alaskans to fill them.
- Increasing access to jobs by targeting employment training to fit development.

The AWIB’s role is very broad; it spans the responsibilities under the federal Workforce Investment Act and those authorized under state law. These responsibilities include:

- Serving as an ambassador for the workforce investment system to the public.
- Providing outreach to business and industry for their participation in the system.
- Acting as a catalyst for continued improvement of the workforce investment system.
- Continuously seeking development of a more efficient and cost-effective employment and training system for Alaska employers and job seekers.
- Serving as the lead planning and coordinating entity for the development of a collaborative, statewide system of activities and services that includes mandatory and optional partners of the One-Stop delivery system.

Critical success factors which lie within a strategic framework are based upon two priorities: 1) workforce preparation and employment, and 2) collaboration.

1. Workforce Preparation and Employment

Alaska is experiencing a skills gap, evidenced by the combination of labor surpluses and employers' inability to fill many high-skill jobs with qualified Alaskans.

The economy is dependent on an available and well-qualified labor force with skills relevant to the needs of Alaska's employers. Identifying these skills is the first step in closing any possible skills gap and ensuring that Alaskans are well positioned to benefit from the *Jobs are Alaska's Future* initiative. The top skill needs identified in all categories are similar. Good jobs, regardless of industry sector, require a strong foundation of basic skills. In order to perform their job tasks workers must possess strong reading, listening, communication, critical thinking and social skills.

The AWIB recognizes the importance of realigning secondary education in a way that is meaningful to students and integrated with the good paying jobs of Alaska's promising job market. Career clusters are groups of sixteen broad industries and occupations that provide a versatile organizational tool for schools. Career clusters will link academic basics with specific skills needed to ensure success in the workplace. The goal is that students will graduate prepared to make career adjustments called for by an evolving economy. Vocational and technical education must increasingly focus on professional certifications and established entry-level guidelines for apprenticeships. We must seek to ensure that graduates are placed in jobs for which they are trained.

The AWIB advocates for a seamless continuum of educational and career development opportunities and incentives that will assist Alaska's youth in selecting, pursuing and obtaining good jobs that result in careers and a stable, self-sufficient future.

Strategies:

- Define priority industries and occupations.
- Identify skills gaps and work toward narrowing them by providing relevant training, promoting basic skill attainment, and promoting career awareness.
- Promote industry skill standards.
- Promote youth employability standards.
- Ensure statewide access to effective employment education, training and employment services, particularly to rural areas and for the economically disadvantaged (including a commitment to strengthening families and communities and addressing barriers to employment).
- Evaluate programs of the workforce investment system maximizing workforce investments that produce a high return.
- Increase the participation and ability of the education system to develop the workforce.

- Develop succession strategies that will ensure a seamless transition as the state faces a labor shortage due to an aging workforce, with particular emphases on the construction and healthcare industries.
- Establish industry-based skills standards in high growth industries that can easily be adopted by all training providers.

Measures:

- Increase the percentage of people who enter employment in a field related to their training by at least one percent annually.
- Increase the percentage of workforce investment participants who enter employment by at least two percent annually.
- Decrease the ratio of non-residents to residents working in Alaska by at least two percent per year.
- Prioritize job training grant awards of at least 60 percent annually for priority and targeted industry training.

2. Collaboration

In order to prepare Alaskan workers with skills needed to be successful in the labor market there must be strong collaboration between government agencies and the private sector, including agency-to-agency, agency-to-business, and business-to-business relations.

AWIB initiatives and resolutions strengthen and support elimination of duplication and reinforce the need for efficient and effective use of resources at all levels of the system. The Operators' MOU complements AWIB commitments and implements the respective controls and oversight of administrative resources at the local level.

Partnership in the workforce system occurs at several levels. The needs of business and industry drive the design of workforce solutions. At the statewide level government needs to continue to work with business and industry to deliver appropriate training of new workers in high growth demand industries. With apprenticeships the state is able to leverage union and non-union training with a real job at the end of training. At the community level Job Center partners conduct joint planning and case management to maximize resources to provide individuals with the most comprehensive services.

Alaska's One-Stop Operator, the Employment Security Division, in partnership with other agencies, has been systematically redesigning the Alaska Job Center Network to improve coordination of services. The focus of this effort is the improvement of partner collocation, accessibility, and the development of a common intake process.

The workforce investment system works closely with the education system to expand the flow of skilled workers into Alaska's high growth industries. The state supports the use of work-based learning and applied learning to cultivate student awareness and interest in high demand industries. The state will also reinforce education efforts in school-to-work and industry led school-to-work business partnerships.

Alaska has improved and will continue to improve the quality and integration of service delivery. The *Statewide Unified Plan*, the current One-Stop Operator MOU, and the agreed upon Cost Allocation Methodology, guide the service delivery and administration of the Alaska Job Center Network. Integrated services are also provided with the intent and in the spirit of the state's *One-Stop Operating Principles*. These principles include streamlining services through integration, promoting universal access, empowering individuals, promoting state and local flexibility, engaging the private sector, and improving youth programs.

The current, integrated partnership includes the agencies responsible for the following programs under WIA: Adult, Dislocated Worker, Rapid Response, and Youth Programs; Wagner-Peyser; TAA/NAFTA; Worker Opportunity Tax Credit; ABE/GED; Veterans Employment and Training Services; Vocational Rehabilitation; Senior Community Services Employment Program; Employment and Training Programs under the Food Stamp Act, Tribal and Native Employment and Training Programs; and the Alaska Job Corps. Additional partners include the State Training and Employment Program; Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); and a wide variety of community and private, non-profit service and training providers. The partnership continues to make improvements in providing superior customer service and making services accessible to consumers.

Strategies:

- Market penetration with employers.
- Embed Job Center principles of integration, customer service, and universal access.
- Rural and Alaska Native connections.
- Connect with economic development.
- Business and industry outreach.
- Linkages with Regional Advisory Councils.
- Increase industry and private sector investments in workforce development.
- Cultivate and leverage partnerships between business, industry, education, organized labor, Native organizations, and economic and workforce development entities to foster cooperation, communication, and coordination with all stakeholders.
- Leverage all sources of funding for employment training (WIA, STEP, TVEP, HGJTI, DTF, TANF, etc.) at every possible opportunity by aligning investments with priority industries and occupations, seeking matching funds from partners, local partnering at the One-Stop Operator level, securing new investments from high growth industries, and seeking legislative support through increased general fund allocations to promote Alaska Hire and high-growth job training.
- Develop meaningful, innovative uses for WIA statewide activities funds.

Measures:

- Increase market share among employer customers by at least 2% per year.