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Press Release

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STEP Grant Application Available Online

JUNEAU, Alaska – More than \$4 million is available for worker training and employment projects under the State Training and Employment Program. STEP, which helps thousands of Alaskans upgrade their job skills and get them into higher paying jobs in critical demand occupations, is administered on behalf of the Alaska Workforce Investment Board by the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Division of Business Partnerships.

"STEP has trained close to 30,000 Alaska workers over the last 19 years," Labor Commissioner Click Bishop said. "The Alaska Legislature recognized that this program works by reauthorizing STEP for another two years, through 2010."

STEP grants are awarded in priority industries, such as health care, construction, information technology, education, natural resource development, transportation, hospitality and tourism, and seafood harvesting and processing.

According to the latest outcome data from the program's 2006 performance period, about 94 percent of STEP trainees are employed within 12 months, with participants earning more than \$71 million in Alaska wages in the year following their training. More than 90 percent of STEP participants remain in Alaska.

"We're funding quality training programs for quality jobs," Business Partnerships Director Corine Geldhof said. "We encourage nonprofit and for-profit organizations, educators, industry trainers, employers and agencies with the capacity to meet both the legal and policy STEP requirements to apply."

Grants are awarded through a competitive process, with members of the Alaska Workforce Investment Board assisting the Labor commissioner in determining the final projects.

STEP funds target training for individuals who contributed to the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund and are drawing or have exhausted their unemployment insurance benefits, or are employed but likely to lose their job within six months due to a work force reduction or conditions requiring they learn substantially different job skills.

The program also targets training projects that will increase participant earning potential in areas of the state where there are documented employment opportunities due to either labor shortages or rapidly expanding job opportunities, in occupations that have a high number of non-residents; and, in geographic areas with high numbers or rates of unemployment or discouraged workers.

For grant application details, go to the State of Alaska's Web site at www.state.ak.us. Click on "Notices" in the top menu bar, view by published date of July 7, 2008, and select "State Fiscal Year 2009 State Training and Employment Program Grant Application."

The deadline for applications is Friday, Aug. 8, 2008 at 5 p.m.

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