

ALASKA'S WORKFORCE FUTURE ALASKA'S



MARCH 2025

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Governor Mike Dunleavy STATE OF ALASKA

February 5, 2025

Dear Fellow Alaskans,

I am honored to share Alaska's Workforce Future with you, a cross-industry plan that reflects the concerted efforts of State of Alaska agencies, industry partners, and dedicated Alaskans across the State. This plan represents not only our shared vision but also a carefully coordinated strategy to prepare Alaska for the opportunities ahead.



We are at a critical juncture in our State's history, with growing opportunities in many sectors, including resource development, infrastructure, healthcare, and technology. With rapid advancements on the horizon, it is vital that we create a workforce ready to meet those challenges. Alaska's Workforce Future serves as a blueprint for industry-specific action, giving all sectors the tools needed to strengthen their workforce and maintain competitiveness in a fast-changing world.

Thank you to the many individuals and organizations that participated in surveys, interviews, and focus groups. Your collective knowledge has shaped this living document, which will evolve to meet Alaska's future needs.

With a unified vision and commitment to our workforce, I am confident that together, we will continue to build a bright and prosperous future for all Alaskans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mike Dunleavy".

Mike Dunleavy
Governor



INTRODUCTION

Alaska's Workforce Future is a partner-based initiative spearheaded by the Alaska Safety Alliance¹ (ASA) and the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD), with support from the Denali Commission.

Inspired by the outcomes of the Alaska Workforce Investment Board's (AWIB) 2023 Industry Convening, AWIB and their partners set out to systematically organize the feedback from the event, engage with a wide array of stakeholder groups to gather additional insights, and integrate all collected information—derived from the convening, surveys, follow-up forums, and interviews—into a comprehensive action plan. DOLWD is focused on efforts to improve career awareness, to remove unnecessary barriers for employment, and to work with industry partners on a new workforce plan, Alaska's Workforce Future, to chart a path forward. This plan outlines specific steps and ensures that all organizations and stakeholders are recognized as essential partners in shaping Alaska's Workforce Future.

Alaska's Workforce Future is a call to action – a guide for industry, government, nonprofits, and educators to collaborate in preparing Alaska's workforce for the future. The following pages are a blueprint for a coordinated statewide effort to address the pressing workforce shortages affecting all industry sectors in Alaska. Its primary goal is to ensure that Alaska remains economically vibrant, enhancing the lives of all Alaskans by developing a skilled, competitive workforce that can meet the evolving demands of the State's diverse industries.

PURPOSE AND NEED

Alaska is experiencing an exciting and unique time of economic growth. Private investment and infrastructure funding is on the rise, creating opportunities for employers and Alaskans. However, every Alaska industry is experiencing significant labor shortages with an abundance of jobs going unfilled. Workforce shortages are evident in every industry and region, which continue to be impacted by the trend of a declining working-age population.

Alaska employers will be further challenged by billions of dollars invested in new infrastructure and resource development projects over the next several years. These projects, funded in part by the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), will create thousands of new jobs across various sectors. As the economy grows with these investments, another 20,000 new workers will be required to fill jobs in both private and public sectors, particularly in support fields such as healthcare, transportation, and public service, while also replacing workers leaving employment. The success of these projects and the positive economic impact they represent depend on a well-prepared workforce to meet the demand.

Though Alaska is facing significant workforce challenges, there is a shared commitment among stakeholders to collaborate on strategies that will retain young and working-age Alaskans, provide them with essential skills, and create an employment climate that will enable them to become the workforce of tomorrow. Through this collective effort, Alaskans will be equipped to fill high-demand, well-paid positions, increase local employment opportunities, and retain our Alaska residents.

¹The Alaska Safety Alliance is a member-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit with over 135 member companies. ASA established a subsidiary organization, Alaska Workforce Alliance, in July of 2025.



PLAN DEVELOPMENT

BROAD-BASED COLLABORATIVE ENGAGEMENT

The development of Alaska's Workforce Future was a collaborative effort that prioritized continuous engagement with a wide spectrum of stakeholders across the State. This process was carefully designed to ensure that the resulting shared goals and strategies reflect the diverse needs and challenges of Alaska's workforce, industries, and regions. Through virtual and in-person forums, key informant interviews, and collaborative sessions, input was gathered from employers, educators, students, job seekers, State agencies, Alaska Native corporations, rural and regional community representatives, and nonprofits, among others. The contributions of these diverse stakeholders were vital in shaping Alaska's Workforce Future.

AWIB INDUSTRY CONVENING

A pivotal catalyst of this collaborative work was the 2023 Alaska Industry Convening, coordinated by the AWIB. The event brought together industry leaders, educators, government officials, and workforce development professionals from across the State for a two-day strategic workshop. The convening served as a crucial platform for stakeholders to share insights, identify challenges, and collaborate on solutions, further solidifying partnerships and infusing momentum into the collective effort to address Alaska's workforce needs.

DATA-DRIVEN APPROACH

Alaska's Workforce Future was informed by extensive data collection and analysis, including labor market trends, industry projections, demographic studies, and existing workforce plans. Surveys, interviews, and forums with employers, educators, and workers were conducted to gather firsthand insights into the workforce challenges and opportunities across different regions and sectors. This data-driven approach ensured that the recommended strategies were grounded in the real-world experiences and needs of Alaskans.

SHARED GOALS

GOAL 1: ENHANCE CAREER AWARENESS AND PATHWAYS

Focus on expanding and improving career awareness initiatives across Alaska, ensuring that students, parents, educators, and the public are informed about high-demand industries and the skills needed to succeed. By strengthening career pathway programs and increasing the visibility of career options, we aim to guide more Alaskans into fulfilling, well-paying careers that align with the state's economic needs.

GOAL 2: DEVELOP A SKILLED AND QUALIFIED WORKFORCE

Close the gap between the skills required by Alaska's industries and the current workforce. By enhancing education and training programs, particularly in critical sectors, we seek to equip Alaskans with the qualifications necessary to meet future labor demands. The focus is on ensuring that our workforce is prepared for upcoming infrastructure and resource development projects, as well as emerging opportunities in various fields.

GOAL 3: RETAIN ALASKANS AND ATTRACT NEW ALASKANS

To retain and attract young and working-age Alaskans, emphasize the creation of attractive career opportunities and reduction of barriers to employment and education and communicate these opportunities through coordinated marketing efforts. By fostering a supportive environment that encourages local talent to stay and thrive in Alaska, we aim to maintain a robust and dynamic workforce that can sustain the state's economic growth.

GOAL 4: FOSTER REGIONAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Recognize the unique needs and opportunities of different regions across Alaska. Promote the establishment of regional teams to coordinate efforts within their regions, ensuring that local knowledge and resources are leveraged to address workforce challenges effectively. Collaborate and communicate across regions and with the AWIB to align statewide plans with regional priorities.

GOAL 5: IMPROVE INFRASTRUCTURE AND ACCESS TO SUPPORT SERVICES

Ensure that Alaska's workforce has the necessary infrastructure and support services to succeed. Work with partners to increase access to housing, transportation, childcare, and other essential services to create an environment where workers and their families can thrive, enabling full participation in the state's economic opportunities.

GOAL 6: ENSURE SUSTAINABILITY AND CONTINUITY OF WORKFORCE-DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

Achieving long-term sustainability in Alaska's workforce development requires a dynamic and enduring ecosystem of strategic partnerships. Central to this goal is the identification of a coordinating entity that will be charged with guiding the next phase of this effort, including developing and periodically revising a collaborative action plan, securing funding to support ongoing initiatives, fostering partnerships across sectors, and ensuring that all efforts remain coordinated, effective, and on course toward achieving shared goals.

The AWIB, under AS 23.15.575, serves as the State's lead planning and coordinating entity for State human resource programs as well as employment training, vocational education, and workforce development, playing a key role in program sustainability. Comprised of members from various sectors including industry, education, organized labor, and State government, the AWIB provides policy oversight for a myriad of critical State and federal workforce development programs, advancing its mission to "build connections that put Alaskans into good jobs."

AWIB, working with its private and public sector partners, will bring additional resources and expertise to enhance established roles and responsibilities as outlined in its bylaws. Partners working with AWIB will add value in areas such as securing private-sector funding and developing flexible strategies that respond to changing circumstances. These efforts are designed to complement and support the AWIB mission, where partner organizations work together synergistically to achieve shared goals for Alaska's workforce development.

WORK IN PROGRESS: KEY STATE-LED INITIATIVES UNDERWAY

The strategies and actions outlined in this plan are already being set in motion, with active participation from industry leaders, State agencies, and educational institutions. Immediate steps are being taken to address Alaska's workforce needs, reflecting the dynamic collaboration of stakeholders. The following activities demonstrate the State of Alaska's commitment to cultivating a skilled workforce that meets the diverse needs of employers across the state.

2023 ALASKA WORKFORCE CONVENING

In 2023, DOLWD was tasked by Governor Mike Dunleavy to host an industry-led convening to gather stakeholders around broad workforce outcomes for Alaska. The 2023 Industry Convening was a first-in-a-decade effort to assess where we are, where we need to be, and to hear firsthand of the challenges that employers face. Working together with industry partners and stakeholders, DOLWD is focused on efforts to improve career awareness, to remove unnecessary barriers for employment, and to work with industry partners on a new workforce plan, Alaska's Workforce Future, to chart a path forward.

In a follow-up to the Convening, the AWIB has begun work facilitating nine listening sessions in the six economic regions. These sessions expand upon the findings of the 2023 gathering and online surveys. The Board is seeking input on current workforce and training efforts, familiarity with current or past industry workforce development efforts, priority skill sets (hard and soft skills), credentialing, and other qualifications.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Alaska's Workforce Future builds upon established strategic partnerships. Whether in maritime training and the nationally recognized Alaska Maritime Education Consortium (AMEC), a partnership of the Alaska Vocational Technical Center, the University of Alaska and the Alaska Safety Alliance, or a recent partnership with Yamaha International to support engine repair trainings throughout the state, a key to unlocking Alaska's potential is in the strength of our regional and State partnerships.

CAREER GUIDE PILOT PROJECT

In early 2024, starting with several rural school districts, the Departments of Education and Early Development (DEED) and DOLWD initiated a pilot project utilizing Job Center resources and career guides at local high schools. This work builds on input received during the industry convening, specifically that young Alaskans need more information and exposure to various career opportunities available and the training needed for success.

TARGETED CAMPAIGNS

Targeted media campaigns in rural Alaska and the Southcentral region have resulted in an increase in the number of Alaskans successfully completing industry certifications through federal and State training support.

RETAIN AND ATTRACT ALASKANS

The DOLWD recognizes that industry demands require skilled workers beyond Alaska's current capacity. To meet demand, DOLWD seeks to train and employ local Alaskans, and pursue opportunities to attract new residents, focusing on military personnel as they exit active service, legal immigration, and skilled workers from other states. In these areas, the DOLWD has strengthened military partnerships using tools like the SkillBridge program, a partnership with the Department of Defense (DOD), which allows service members to come to work at a partner organization during the six-month period prior to leaving active service, with wages covered by the DOD during that period.

OFFICE OF CITIZENSHIP ASSISTANCE

Another key to meeting employment goals is through legal immigration. The Office of Citizenship Assistance (OCA) opened its doors at the Anchorage Midtown Job Center, as a navigation center for legal immigrants, helping with employment, credential translation and training. The OCA will also help to identify barriers to employment so that policy makers can address issues that may inadvertently keep people from gaining full employment. A recent example was illustrated in the difficulty in obtaining a State-issued commercial driver's license for legal refugees, that has since been addressed via legislative changes.

CHILDCARE

Improving Alaska's child care system is important to address Alaska's workforce challenges. Governor Dunleavy Administrative Order 346 established the Governor's Task Force on Child Care. The Alaska Department of Health has been leading efforts to introduce two reports with recommendations that seek to improve accessibility, affordability and quality across the State. DOLWD Commissioner Cathy Muñoz was a member of the Task Force, and helped guide recommendations to build Alaska's child care workforce.

HOUSING

Access to affordable housing is important for all Alaskans. Housing shortages and struggles to maintain affordable housing options throughout the State strains workforce development goals, especially in rural Alaska. The Governor's fiscal year (FY)26 budget includes support for the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation's (AHFC) Rural Professional Housing Grant Program, supporting housing for teachers, health professionals, and public safety workers.

LICENSURE

To meet the demand for more electricians and plumbers, the DOLWD has addressed certificate of fitness licensing barriers. Recent legislation now permits third party testing, provisional licensure and has removed some of the barriers for trainees. The Department has also increased reciprocal licensure and is looking at regulatory changes that would allow the State of Alaska to recognize licensure from states with similar licensing requirements.

The Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (DCCED), Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing oversees over 40 professional licenses in Alaska. DOLWD, DCCED, and its industry partners, will continue to work to identify regulatory barriers for obtaining and maintaining professional licenses in high-demand careers, including healthcare.

SUMMARY

The State of Alaska plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of the State's workforce, leading the charge in addressing critical workforce needs through innovative initiatives. However, lasting success requires the continued support and active collaboration of industry leaders, educators, and communities. Together, these strategic partnerships are forging a workforce ready to meet the demands of Alaska's diverse industries and unique economic landscape.

This plan represents a unified call to action, equipping Alaskans with the skills and resources needed to seize new opportunities and drive economic growth. To remain effective, the implementation of this plan must be adaptive, continually responding to evolving industry demands and the unique challenges faced by our State. With strong leadership and the dedication of all stakeholders, we are building a resilient workforce that will secure Alaska's future prosperity.



BACKGROUND

Alaska stands at a pivotal point in its economic and social development. The State's unique geographic location, abundant natural resources, and diverse cultural heritage have long been its strengths, driving economic growth and providing opportunities for its residents. However, in recent years, Alaska has been facing a series of challenges that necessitate a comprehensive and forward-thinking workforce development strategy.

Alaska is experiencing a confluence of workforce challenges. Workforce shortages are impacting all major industries, from construction and healthcare to energy and maritime sectors. The challenges and opportunities outlined below have spurred action and partnership among stakeholders, forming the basis of this collaborative work. Through the strategies and actions recommended in this plan, we aim to address these pressing issues and leverage the opportunities to strengthen Alaska's workforce and economy.

From 2013 to 2021, Alaska saw a significant decrease in its working-age population, which declined by approximately 5.6%. This contrasts with the national average, which experienced a 2% increase during the same period. This decline in Alaska's working-age population is due to several factors, including net migration loss, an aging population, and lower birth rates. The shrinking labor pool resulting from these trends has placed increased pressure on existing workers and poses a considerable challenge for the State's economy.

As economic recovery occurred in many places in the lower 48, Alaska experienced a smaller number of new residents relocating and settling in the State, causing net migration losses. This has exacerbated workforce shortages across various industries, making it increasingly difficult for Alaska to meet its labor needs.

Alaska faces challenges in making access to education and training broadly accessible. There are training facilities located in every region, but the State's geographic dispersion and small population limits the availability of certain training programs, particularly in rural and remote communities. Ensuring access to educational resources is essential for developing a competent and prepared workforce that can meet the diverse needs of Alaska's economy.

Amidst the challenges above, the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) presents Alaska with unprecedented opportunity. With over \$20 billion in planned infrastructure and resource development projects by 2030, these initiatives have the potential to create thousands of jobs across the state. However, this opportunity also underscores the urgent need for a skilled and prepared workforce that can meet the growing demand for labor in these vital sectors.

Technological advancements are rapidly transforming industries and the nature of work in Alaska, necessitating continuous upskilling and reskilling of the workforce. As new technologies emerge, workers must adapt to remain competitive in the global market. This ongoing evolution presents both a challenge and an opportunity for Alaska, as the State must ensure that its workforce is equipped with the skills required to thrive in a technology-driven economy.

Finally, Alaska's workforce must continue to adapt and prepare for work within the renewable energy sector. By acquiring new skill sets relevant to these emerging fields, Alaska's workforce can contribute to a more resilient and sustainable economic future.

Given Alaska's vast geography, small population, and diverse industries, a coordinated, strategic response is needed that can unify stakeholders across sectors and regions. The development of a comprehensive, cross-industry workforce initiative, endorsed and supported by all major stakeholders, is critical to ensuring Alaska's long-term economic resilience and growth.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in the development of Alaska's Workforce Future involved a multi-faceted approach, integrating stakeholder engagement as well as quantitative, qualitative, and meta-analysis methods to assess Alaska's workforce needs. The process was guided by collaborative efforts among key participants, including industry leaders, Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development and other State agencies, workforce development experts, educational institutions, Alaska Native organizations, and community members.

Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration

This report relied heavily on the guidance and feedback provided by stakeholders that participated in the Alaska Workforce Investment Board's Fall 2023 Industry Convening.

The Industry Advisory Council (IAC), comprising representatives from various sectors including energy, transportation, healthcare, education, construction, and others, played a key role in guiding this planning process. Regular meetings and work sessions were held to gather insights and recommendations.

Surveys

A student and job-seeker survey was designed to understand the perspectives of Alaskans entering the workforce regarding their knowledge of career education and training opportunities and their aspirations. The survey was distributed statewide over six weeks, reaching a wide geographic spread, and gathered responses from 353 participants. The survey results provided insights about individuals' career aspirations and perceived barriers to employment in Alaska.

A comprehensive employer survey aimed to capture the challenges faced by Alaska employers in their efforts to recruit, train, and retain workers. Conducted over three weeks, the survey achieved 576 responses from employers of all sizes and economic regions across 23 industries, providing a broad understanding of the workforce needs in Alaska.

Appendices 1 and 2 are summary reports of the surveys conducted for Alaska's Workforce Future.

Focus Groups and Key Informant Interviews

Targeted discussions were held with educators, administrators, and training providers from Alaskan institutions. These sessions identified gaps in current career awareness efforts, funding, and programming, and explored opportunities for alignment with industry needs.

Regional focus groups and key informant interviews were conducted with organizations representing rural communities to ensure that the unique challenges and opportunities in Alaska's diverse economic regions are represented in setting goals, developing strategies, and defining desired outcomes.

Appendices 3 and 4 are summary reports of the focus groups and key informant interviews conducted for this report.

Meta Analysis

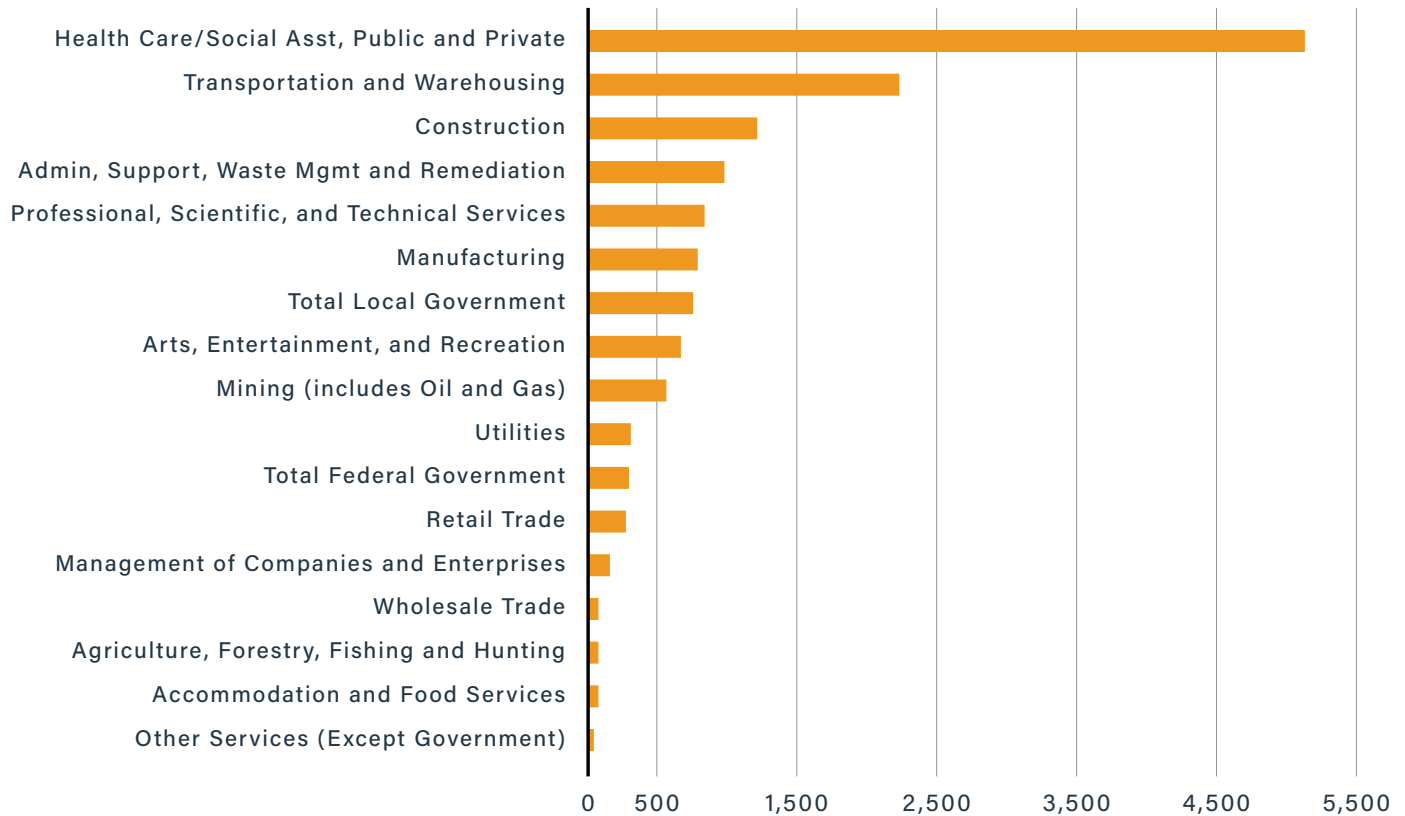
This report reviewed and analyzed over 50 publications, including industry-specific workforce plans, regional plans, Alaska Native tribal organization workforce plans, and Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDs) to include relevant information reflective of Alaska's diverse workforce needs. Other publications reviewed in development of Alaska's Workforce Future include related education-led reports such as the [Alaska Career and Technical Education Plan](#) and the [Alaska College and Career Guidance](#) report.

To capture a comprehensive view, research spanned several of Alaska's critical industry sectors, reflecting the input from a broad but representative cross-section of the State's economy. This involved analyzing employment data, training requirements, and the potential impact of upcoming mega-projects on workforce demand.

A careful review of the industry data allowed us to identify consistent themes impacting Alaska's workforce. These insights, combined with findings from student surveys and broader research, were essential in shaping the strategies presented in Alaska's Workforce Future.

INCREASE IN NUMBER OF JOBS

2019 - 2032



VISION

The vision of Alaska's Workforce Future was carefully crafted from the collective input and feedback of stakeholders. This inclusive approach ensures that the vision embodies the shared aspirations and priorities of Alaska's workforce development community. It is anchored in the belief that a well-coordinated workforce development effort is essential to the State's economic prosperity and the well-being of its residents.

SHARED GOALS AND STRATEGIES

GOAL 1: ENHANCE CAREER AWARENESS AND PATHWAYS

Strategy 1.1 - Boost Industry Career Marketing and Branding

Organize career awareness campaigns targeting students, parents, teachers, career guides, and working-age Alaskans to increase knowledge of high-demand industries and required skills. Catalog agencies and organizations engaged in career awareness initiatives locally, at the state level, and nationwide to share resources. Establish and maintain regular communications. Apply best practices for industry-specific outreach from example organizations such as Alaska Resource Education (ARE), Alaska EXCEL, Alaska's Area Health Education Centers (AHEC), and others.

Utilize social media to expose young and working-age Alaskans to various job opportunities, featuring testimonials from current workers and employers, and guidance from career guides and industry professionals.

Support, promote, and enhance websites and e-tools available in the State, working with partners to provide linkages between compatible tools, as appropriate (University of Alaska's Career Coach, ACPE's, AKCIS, etc.). Work with partners to explore other successful models such as "My Colorado Journey" to enhance and increase the accessibility of Alaska's available career information resources.

DOLWD, DCCED, DEED, and industry partners will pursue partnerships to market Alaska's industries and employment opportunities to Alaskans.

Strategy 1.2 – Strengthen Career-Pathway Programs

Increase and improve career pathway programs at all educational levels, ensuring alignment with industry needs. Establish ongoing, scheduled methods for leveraging industry feedback related to career pathway programs impacting specific industries; ensure current and future needs are being addressed. Apply best practices, scale up effective programs, and expand to new industry sectors.

DEED, the University of Alaska, DOLWD, and industry partners will explore ways to improve CTE curriculum at the secondary and postsecondary levels to ensure that graduates at the secondary and postsecondary levels are prepared to enter Alaska’s workforce.

Provide support for developing and certifying current and new CTE instructors statewide at secondary and post-secondary levels, including industry trainers for job-based learning and apprenticeship programs. Assist in recruiting new CTE teachers.

Establish and expand Career Guidance initiatives as described in the Association of Alaska School Board’s Interview Finding and Resources: Alaska College and Career Guidance report published in August of 2023.

Advocate for consistent training for all career guides/navigators across the state.

Strategy 1.3 – Support Career Planning and Mentorship

Explore the feasibility of introducing required career-planning classes for high school graduation.

Increase mentorship opportunities and support services, particularly for youth, to guide them into successful career paths.

Assist employers to engage in rural outreach and develop work-based learning initiatives. Launch employer communications plan to connect employers with cohorts graduating from training/certification programs essential to their industry.

The DEED, with DOLWD through its Career Guides program, will work with school districts and employers to connect Alaska’s high school students with career counseling, internship opportunities, and mentorship, exploring potential career opportunities within the State.

GOAL 2: DEVELOP A SKILLED AND QUALIFIED WORKFORCE

Strategy 2.1 – Address Workforce Readiness

Organize Pre-Job Workforce Forums, especially for entities involved in IJJA projects, to prepare workers with the necessary qualifications.

Leverage large infrastructure projects to link economic development efforts with workforce development planning.

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF), DCCED’s Broadband Office, DOLWD and industry partners will coordinate efforts to prepare workers for IJJA projects.

Strategy 2.2 – Expand and Improve Training Programs

Identify potential resources for high school and postsecondary CTE (Career and Technical Education) programs.

Build on strategies and recommendations from the [Alaska Career and Technical Education Plan](#).

Support educational and training programs that prepare the workforce for emerging skills and technologies required by the changing Alaska workforce landscape.

DOLWD, DEED, the University of Alaska, and regional CTE training providers will coordinate efforts to identify gaps in Alaska’s training providers that are not meeting industry needs and make recommendations to policymakers to address those needs.

Strategy 2.3 – Promote Apprenticeships and Internships

Create internship/apprenticeship expansion programs modeled after best practices in other states, potentially including employer subsidies and tax incentives.

AWIB will explore the establishment of a State Apprenticeship Agency (SAA) to streamline and expand apprenticeship opportunities.

GOAL 3: RETAIN ALASKANS AND ATTRACT NEW ALASKANS

Strategy 3.1 – Improve Access to Post-Secondary Education

DEED and the University of Alaska will work together to assist students and parents with job and training program applications to reduce barriers to young Alaskans.

Consider tuition reduction and student loan forgiveness for long-term residents and encourage non-resident students to attend post-secondary programs in Alaska.

Strategy 3.2 – Strengthen Talent Pipelines

DOLWD, DEED, and industry partners will increase career awareness and exploration opportunities among Alaska youth and working-age residents.

Establish programs that connect students to work experiences, particularly in rural areas.

Strategy 3.3 – Utilize All Alaska’s Talent

Leverage the talent of all Alaskans, including veterans, legal immigrants, Alaskans with disabilities, and formerly incarcerated individuals. DOLWD, DEED, and industry partners will explore more areas of emphasis to connect more Alaskans to employment and training opportunities.

Strategy 3.4 – Market Alaska’s Opportunities: Recruit In and Out of Alaska

Organize a marketing campaign to encourage working-age adults to find work in, and relocate to, Alaska. Emphasize the “adventure” lifestyle that is unique to the State; seek to collaborate with organizations engaged in marketing Alaska as a place to live, such as the [Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District](#).

Share information about incentives that may be created through partnerships and/or put in place by State or local government agencies. Incorporate focused messaging for past Alaska residents that have moved away, encouraging them to return.

DOLWD and DCCED will partner to market Alaska’s employment opportunities to the Lower 48.

Strategy 3.5 – Elevate Programs that Foster New Alaskans

Support recruitment campaigns that bring new workers to Alaska and leverage opportunities to encourage seasonal, temporary or transient workforce to make Alaska their permanent home.

Continue to improve occupational licensing processes, regulatory compliance such as background checks, improving access to DMV services, enhancing CDL testing procedures, and streamline access to apprenticeship opportunities.

Simplify processes for reciprocal licensing for professionals and journey-level trades; reduce waiting times. Expand reciprocal licensing agreements with other states.

DOLWD’s Office of Citizenship Assistance will support Alaska’s employers to consider hiring legal immigrants to fill critical gaps in Alaska’s workforce. DCCED will continue efforts to expedite the licensing process.

GOAL 4: FOSTER REGIONAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Strategy 4.1 – Establish Regional Teams

Identify or create regional teams to coordinate cross-industry workforce development planning based on regional knowledge of gaps and assets. AWIB will formally recognize partnerships between regional teams, the AWIB, and industry-led coordinating entities.

Align statewide workforce planning with regional efforts to ensure that initiatives reflect the unique needs of each area.

Strategy 4.2 – Leverage Regional Knowledge for Workforce Projects

Support regional efforts to employ community representatives who act as liaisons between residents, State agencies, and employers to foster clear communication and retain local talent.

Use models like Bristol Bay Native Corporation and Bering Straits to guide regional workforce development.

Advocate for regional involvement in workforce development related to IJA projects to prepare workers for those specific opportunities.

GOAL 5: IMPROVE INFRASTRUCTURE AND ACCESS TO SUPPORT SERVICES

Strategy 5.1 – Address Infrastructure Gaps

Advocate for infrastructure projects to include investments in housing, transportation, childcare, and eldercare, which are essential for enabling workforce participation and economic development.

Strategy 5.2 – Collaborate with Partners to Enhance Support Systems

Work with partners to address issues related to housing, transportation, childcare, and access to other critical services that affect workforce stability and mobility.

Drawing from the recommendations in The Governor’s Task Force on Child Care reports, DOLWD will work closely with the Alaska Department of Health to support improving pathways for the development of a robust child care workforce in Alaska, including the development of apprenticeship programs for early childhood education professions.

Housing remains a challenge, especially outside Alaska’s urban centers. The Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, with support from DOLWD and industry partners, will work together to identify forward-looking opportunities for investment in areas of Alaska where infrastructure projects and other economic development efforts will continue to drive demand for affordable housing.

DOLWD will continue to work with DOH, AHFC, and other State agencies to implement the Governor’s initiatives to increase affordability for Alaskan families.

GOAL 6: ENSURE SUSTAINABILITY AND CONTINUITY OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

Strategy 6.1 – Identify the State Coordinating Entity

AWIB, with its partners, such as the Alaska Workforce Alliance and with feedback from industry, through the Business Education Compact, and other private and public sector entities, will coordinate the implementation of these strategies. Together with its partners, AWIB will facilitate ongoing workforce development efforts, ensuring that all stakeholder feedback is incorporated, and progress is continuously measured.

AWIB and its private and public sector partners will coordinate and facilitate specific activities to advance shared goals, including support for regional teams and aligning workforce development activities with other State agencies such as DEED, DCCED, DOT&PF, the Office of Infrastructure, and others.

Strategy 6.2 – Facilitate Engagement and Communication for Long-Term Sustainability

The AWIB will serve the collaborative effort by:

- Identifying, establishing, and maintaining sustainable funding streams to support long-term workforce development initiatives, ensuring goals can be met over time.
- Actively engaging with industry and other partners to keep the workforce development plan dynamic and responsive to changing needs.
- Convening statewide training providers to determine where support can be best directed so that Alaskans can access regionally relevant training near their communities.
- Working closely with the Alaska Business Education Compact (BEC) to utilize this forum as a feedback resource; continue to build BEC engagement across industry sectors, public and private training institutions, State and local agencies, and nonprofits and others providing supportive services.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

A Resilient Alaska Workforce and Economy

The implementation of Alaska's Workforce Future is expected to significantly strengthen Alaska's workforce, making it more adaptable, skilled, and capable of meeting the demands of a rapidly changing economy. By aligning training programs with industry needs and enhancing career pathways, the strategies are designed to reduce workforce shortages and ensure that Alaskans are well-prepared to take on high-demand roles across various sectors.

Retaining Alaska's Talent

Providing clear career pathways, improving access to local education and training opportunities, and promoting the benefits of staying in Alaska are steps we can take to stem the outmigration of young talent. This will help maintain a robust and dynamic working-age population that can support the State's long-term economic growth.

Growth in Every Region

The establishment of regional teams is expected to lead to more effective and tailored workforce strategies across different regions of Alaska. By addressing the specific needs of local economies, these teams will help ensure that all areas of the state benefit from economic growth, leading to more balanced and inclusive development.

Ready for Alaska's Growth Opportunities

Proactively preparing the workforce for upcoming infrastructure projects funded by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) will ensure that Alaska is ready to capitalize on these opportunities. This preparedness will help the state meet the demand for skilled labor, maximize the economic benefits of these projects, and secure long-term prosperity for its residents.

Unified Workforce Efforts

AWIB will coordinate communication and collaboration among all stakeholders involved in workforce development. This centralized approach is expected to lead to more efficient use of resources, better alignment of efforts, and stronger partnerships between employers, educators, and government agencies.

NEXT STEPS

As we move forward with implementing Alaska's Workforce Future, the following initial steps will lay the foundation for our collective efforts. These steps are designed to be flexible and adaptable, recognizing that strategies will evolve as we receive feedback from stakeholders and the broader community. We anticipate that once the report is published, new ideas and strategies will emerge, offering valuable insights that will help us refine and expand our approach. Our commitment to these shared goals requires an openness to incorporate these contributions, ensuring that our efforts remain responsive and effective.

Formal Endorsement from Key Partners

- **Obtain AWIB Resolution of Support:** *Alaska's Workforce Future* will be presented to the AWIB to secure a formal resolution of support. The formal endorsement will demonstrate the public-private partnership established through this process and unified support for strategic implementation.

Identifying and Securing Funding

To successfully implement the strategies outlined in Alaska's Workforce Future, securing sustainable funding sources is essential. The plan's goals, including the development of a comprehensive career awareness campaign, and the creation of a central hub for workforce opportunities, require dedicated resources. This includes funding for staff, website development, marketing, communications, and the deployment of recurring survey tools.

- **Initial Funding Secured:** The Alaska Safety Alliance has already been awarded \$260,000 from the Denali Commission to support this critical work. This initial funding will be instrumental in jump-starting key initiatives and building the infrastructure necessary for ongoing implementation.
- **Pursue Federal and State Grants:** Identify and apply for relevant federal and State grants that align with the objectives of this plan. This could include workforce development grants, education and training program funds, and infrastructure support from initiatives like the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). Collaborate with State agencies, such as the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, to leverage existing funding streams and explore new opportunities.
- **Engage Private Sector Partners:** Seek financial support from industry partners who will benefit directly from the plan's success. This could involve creating sponsorship opportunities for specific initiatives, such as the career awareness campaign or the development of a centralized workforce information platform. Building on the established public-private partnership, private sector investment will be crucial in sustaining long-term efforts.
- **Explore Philanthropic Funding:** Approach philanthropic organizations and foundations that focus on workforce development, education, and economic growth. These organizations may offer grants or donations to support specific components of the plan, such as outreach programs, workforce surveys, or the creation of educational resources.

Ongoing Stakeholder Engagement

- **Establish Regular Communication Channels:** Set up regular meetings and forums to engage stakeholders across all sectors, including industry leaders, educators, government agencies, and community organizations. Utilize virtual platforms to ensure broad participation, particularly from remote and rural areas.
- **Create a Stakeholder Advisory Group:** Form an advisory group comprised of representatives from key sectors and regions to provide ongoing guidance and feedback throughout the implementation process. This group will act as a bridge between the coordinating entity and broader stakeholder networks.
- **Conduct Periodic Surveys or Focus Group/Key Informant Interviews:** Implement regular surveys to capture stakeholder perspectives and experiences as the plan progresses. Use survey findings to refine strategies and actions, ensuring they remain aligned with stakeholder needs and priorities. Qualitative methods such as focus groups or key informant interviews may also be used for this purpose.

Communication of Plan Progress

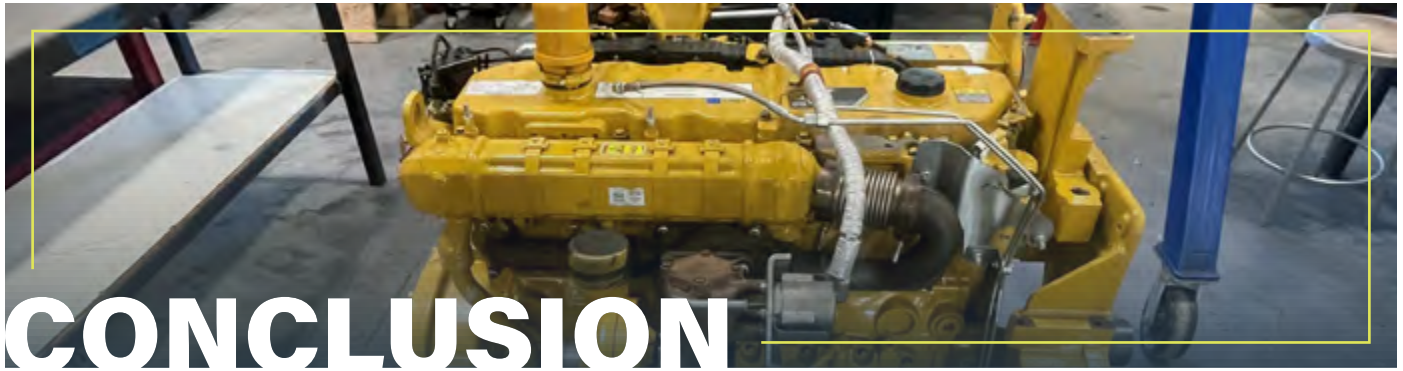
- **Develop a Public Dashboard:** Create an online dashboard that tracks the progress of the plan's implementation. This dashboard should be updated regularly with key metrics, milestones, and outcomes, providing transparency and accountability to the public and stakeholders.
- **Issue Regular Progress Reports:** Publish biannual or annual progress reports that summarize the achievements, challenges, and adjustments made during the implementation. These reports should be widely distributed to all stakeholders and made available on the plan's website.
- **Host Public Forums:** Organize public forums or town hall meetings at key milestones to share progress, gather feedback, and discuss any necessary course corrections. These forums should be accessible to all Alaskans, with options for in-person and virtual participation.

Adjustments and Revisions

- **Implement a Continuous Improvement Process:** Establish a mechanism for regularly reviewing and updating the plan based on new data, stakeholder feedback, and changing economic conditions. This process should be flexible enough to adapt to emerging opportunities and challenges.
- **Conduct Annual Review Sessions:** Hold annual review sessions with the coordinating entity and key stakeholders to assess the effectiveness of the strategies and actions. Use these sessions to identify areas for improvement and to update the plan as needed.
- **Incorporate Feedback Loops:** Ensure that all feedback from stakeholders, whether through surveys, forums, or direct communication, is systematically reviewed and used to inform ongoing revisions to the plan. This will help keep the plan responsive to the evolving needs of Alaska's workforce.
- **Ongoing Leadership, Adaptation, and Engagement:** AWIB is tasked with advancing this plan, guided by the recommendations of the 2023 Convening. This includes securing additional resources, hiring the necessary staff, and supporting the ongoing initiatives identified by the Convening.

In addition to these responsibilities, AWIB will focus on maintaining widespread stakeholder engagement through future convenings, events, surveys, and forums. The Alaska Business Education Compact (BEC) will be utilized as a core feedback resource, helping to sustain engagement across diverse sectors, training institutions, agencies, and service providers. AWIB's role is to lead with a focus on long-term sustainability, fostering innovation, building resilience, and adapting to evolving workforce challenges.





CONCLUSION

Alaska's Workforce Future is not just a workforce plan—it is a shared vision for the State's economic prosperity and the well-being of its residents. This comprehensive, data-driven approach was built on the collaborative efforts of stakeholders from across the State, reflecting the diverse needs and opportunities that exist within Alaska's workforce. The goals and strategies outlined in this plan are designed to address the pressing workforce challenges we face, while also seizing the opportunities that lie ahead.

As we move into the implementation phase, the success of this plan will depend on the continued dedication and collaboration of all partners involved—industry leaders, educators, Alaska Native organizations, government agencies, and community groups. The early actions outlined in the Next Steps section will set the foundation for our efforts, but flexibility and adaptability will be key as we incorporate feedback and adjust to evolving conditions.

Together, we can build a stronger, more resilient workforce that meets the demands of today and prepares for the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow. By staying committed to our shared goals and continuously engaging with all stakeholders, we can ensure that Alaska's Workforce Future is one that benefits every Alaskan, securing the State's economic vitality for years to come.





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The Alaska Safety Alliance is an Alaska 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization comprised of more than 135 members, including private sector employers, education and training providers, Alaska Native corporations, and partner nonprofit organizations. In July 2024, ASA established a subsidiary organization, the Alaska Workforce Alliance (AWA), to advance initiatives that align with our mission to *ensure the availability of a highly trained workforce sufficient to staff Alaska's industries safely and competitively, now and in the future.*

The Alaska Safety Alliance is grateful to all the individuals and organizations across Alaska that have contributed to *Alaska's Workforce Future*. We would like to give special recognition to the following individuals who participated on the Industry Advisory Committee and other working groups for their dedication and commitment to creating opportunities for Alaskans in support of Alaska's business community.

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ACRONYMS

- ACPE** Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education
- AHEC** Area Health Education Centers
- AKCIS** Alaska Career Information System
- ASA** Alaska Safety Alliance
- AWA** Alaska Workforce Alliance
- AWIB** Alaska Workforce Investment Board
- BEC** Business Education Compact
- CTE** Career and Technical Education
- DOLWD** Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development
- FAFSA** Free Application for Federal Student Aid
- IIJA** Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act
- IAC** Industry Advisory Council
- SAA** State Apprenticeship Agency



LIST OF APPENDICES

[Appendix 1: Report of Employer Survey](#)

[Appendix 2: Report of Student Survey](#)

[Appendix 3: Report of Education Focus Groups and Interviews](#)

[Appendix 4: Report of Regional Communities Focus Groups and Interviews](#)

[Appendix 5: Industry Sector Plans](#)

[Appendix 6: Industry Sector Plans Crosswalk \(spreadsheet\)](#)

[Appendix 7: IAC Report of Initial Survey](#)

[Appendix 8: Models from Oregon and Colorado](#)

[Appendix 9: Overview of Career & Technical Education in Alaska](#)



Scan the code or go to alaskasafetyalliance.org/workforce/plan to view the full appendices.





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