

**STATE OF ALASKA**  
**Department of Labor and Workforce Development**  
**Division of Employment and Training Services**

**Commissioner Heidi Drygas**

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**State Training and Employment Program**

**Notice of Request for Grant Applications**

**State Fiscal Year 2018**

**Date of Issue: March 1, 2017**

**Application Deadline:**

**Grant Applications must be submitted through EGrAMS**

**By 5:00 p.m., April 14, 2017**



**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
& WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

## GENERAL INFORMATION

**Project Timeline** – July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018

**Eligible Applicants** - Entities eligible to apply for STEP funding include private sector employers, sponsors of federally registered apprenticeship programs, non-profit organizations, regional training centers, adult education and training providers, and local and state government agencies who meet the qualifying due diligence criteria and assurances required by the grant.

**EGrAMS:** Grant applications must be submitted through the **Electronic Grants Administration and Management System (EGrAMS)**. The online grant submission system can be accessed at the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development website or directly at [egram.s.dol.alaska.gov](http://egram.s.dol.alaska.gov). A sample application form, sample grant agreement, definitions, references, and frequently asked questions are available for view in EGrAMS. In order to have access to the application within EGrAMS, an individual from the organization must submit a project director request. Questions about EGrAMS should be directed to the EGrAMS Help Desk at (907) 465-4893 or [dol.dbp.egram.s.helpdesk@alaska.gov](mailto:dol.dbp.egram.s.helpdesk@alaska.gov)

**STEP Program Contact:** Questions about the content of the Request for Grant Applications (RGA) should be directed to Julie Frizzell, Program Coordinator: (907) 269-4590 or [Julie.frizzell@alaska.gov](mailto:Julie.frizzell@alaska.gov)

**RGA Informational Teleconference:** Two teleconferences will be held to answer questions about FY 2018 STEP Request for Grant applications (RGA) and application process.

**RGA and Application Overview**

**Date:** Wednesday, March 8, 2017

**Time:** 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

**Conference Telephone:** 1-888-354-0094

**Conference ID:** 7345413

**EGrAMS Application Questions**

**Date:** Wednesday, March 22, 2017

**Time:** 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

**Conference Telephone:** 1-888-354-0094

**Conference ID:** 7345413

**Americans with Disabilities Act** - Auxiliary aides and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. To arrange for auxiliary aides or services, please contact the Division of Employment and Training Services at (907) 269-4590 no later than ten working days prior to the application deadline.

The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development is an Equal Opportunity Employer/Program. All grant recipients or sub-contractors must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

## SECTION I – STEP PROGRAM INFORMATION

Thank you for your interest in applying for a State Training and Employment Program (STEP) grant with the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Division of Employment and Training Services. This Request for Grant Applications (RGA) is in accordance with state statute [AS 23.15.620](#) and State administrative code [8 AAC 87](#). The STEP is funded by a percentage (0.01) of employee payroll tax contributions for Unemployment Insurance directed to the STEP account. Program funding is appropriated by the Alaska State Legislature for employment and training services based upon available resources from that account.

The purpose of the STEP is to enhance the quality and accessibility of in-state training and employment services for Alaska residents to help meet the workforce needs of employers in the state. STEP seeks to increase resident employment in industries where a high number of nonresidents are working, reduce future unemployment claims, and foster economic growth in all regions by meeting employers demand for a skilled workforce. Competitive grants are awarded on an annual basis. The total amount of STEP funds available for competitive grants in Fiscal Year 2018 is \$5.3 million.

The Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) provides oversight for Alaska’s workforce investment system and guides STEP and other state driven employment and job training programs. The AWIB works closely with industry employers and workforce advocates to develop strategic workforce plans for industry sectors. The workforce plans aim to increase resident hire and close labor gaps, particularly in occupations where labor market projections and employer input have identified critical labor shortages. Workforce plans have been developed for the following industries:

- Construction
- Education
- Hospitality and Tourism
- Maritime & Seafood Processing
- Alternative & Renewable Energy
- Information Technology
- Health Care
- Natural resource development (oil, gas, and mining)
- Transportation

The department is seeking proposals for STEP employment and training projects that serve employers, job seekers and employed workers in these and other industries such as agriculture and manufacturing. Of particular interest are projects that focus on strategic workforce objectives identified by the department and the AWIB:

- (1) Health Care: Health Care continues to lead Alaska’s occupational forecast with 14 of the 25 top occupations and projects to generate 3,305 new jobs and 5,538 additional openings by 2024. Proposals should focus on employment and training for entry and mid-level occupations where training is available in Alaska, and particularly proposals that provide apprenticeship programs.
- (2) Resident Hire: Training for occupations where there are high percentages of non-residents employed as identified in the [2015 Nonresidents Working in Alaska Report](#). For purposes of this

RGA an occupation where 20 percent or more industry workers are nonresident according to the report.

- (3) Reducing Recidivism: Employment and training for individuals 18 years or older who are transitioning from juvenile justice or adult correctional facilities and returning to society, as well as those who have completed their term and need industry recognized skills and credentials to be employed.

The department has established six economic regions and seeks projects from all regions to ensure STEP resources are distributed to help meet local workforce needs:

- Anchorage/Mat-Su
- Gulf Coast
- Interior
- Northern
- Southeast
- Southwest



## Types of Employment and Training Services Allowed

**Industry Specific Training** – Training resulting in participants acquiring industry-recognized skills, competencies, or credentials as required for a specific industry occupation. Industry specific training teaches individuals technical knowledge and hands-on skills to perform the tasks of a specific occupation. Training should result in an industry-recognized credential, certificate or licenses that attest that the individual has those skills.

**Work Based Learning** – Training provided by an employer at the work place where there are paid work experience opportunities and a structured learning process is in place. Work based learning such as on-the-job training (OJT) and internships builds trainees skills and prepares them for success in that job. Work based learning entails a written agreement between the employer and the trainee that outlines the structured learning process, lists the skill competencies to be learned, states the rate of hourly pay and includes the involvement of worksite mentors who teach the required skills and evaluate the worker's progress. OJT compensates the employer for the *extra* cost associated with hiring and training an individual who does not yet meet the requirements of the position. An OJT agreement may reimburse employers an amount negotiated with the Division of Employment and Training Services. Additional information regarding OJT activities is located on the Divisions [OJT webpage](#).

**Company Specific Customized Job-Linked Training** – Training designed to meet the specific workforce development needs of a business that will result in participants acquiring the skills and knowledge necessary to be hired, or training for existing employees to upgrade skills to meet new conditions of the job such as introducing new technology, equipment, products or processes. Employers must clearly state why there is a need for this specific training. Applicants that apply for company specific training must state in writing their intentions to hire, retain, or advance persons that successfully complete the training.

**Quality Pre-Apprenticeship** – Pre-apprenticeship is defined as a program or a set of strategies designed to prepare individuals to enter and succeed in a Registered Apprenticeship (RA) program where there is a formal agreement with at least one or more federally RA program(s). A pre-apprenticeship program provides paid work experience and hands-on training to increase math, literacy and occupational skills needed to gain entry into a RA program. The pre-apprentice agreement should offer either direct recruitment or direct entry into the RA program. The department has adopted the USDOL Model for Pre-Apprenticeship as a guide for Alaska programs. More information about pre-apprentice training is located in [Training and Employment Notice 13-12](#).

**Registered Apprenticeship** - All apprenticeship programs must register with the US Department of Labor, Office of Apprenticeship. Grant applicants must submit proof of current Federal Registration. Alaska has over 2,000 apprentices learning while they work in jobs leading to highly paid careers essential to Alaska's economy. In October 2015, the AWIB passed [Resolution #15-05](#) supporting the use and expansion of Registered Apprenticeship as an employment and training career pathway. Expanding registered apprenticeship is a goal of Governor Walker's administration and a priority of the AWIB. The

governor signed [Administrative Order #278](#) in November 2015 that establishes a goal of apprentices performing 15 percent of the work on public funded construction projects.

## **Types of Employment and Training Services Not Allowed**

**Degree Centered Long-Term Training** - STEP grants are not intended to provide tuition for an associate or college degree program. There are many other resources available to individuals that want to pursue a higher education degree. Applicants should propose training that starts and ends during the grant year. However, STEP training resulting in earning college credit is encouraged and the credits listed in the proposal. Any training provided by an accredited postsecondary school or college must be completed within the timeframe of the grant and result in participants obtaining an occupational certificate, credential or license, recognized by industry.

## **Recruitment of Participants**

Applicants must clearly describe their outreach, recruitment and selection process for participants in the grant application. STEP is an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) program and all grant recipients must adhere to EEO and Civil Rights rules and regulations outlined in the assurances that will accompany any grant award.

## **Participant Eligibility Requirements**

Individuals identified to receive STEP funded training and support services must meet all eligibility requirements including:

- Must have worked in a position covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) in Alaska or another state within the past five years. Eligibility for UI can be determined through copies of payroll stubs, W-2's, letters from employers attesting that they contribute to the UI fund on behalf of the individual, or by an individual self-attesting they have contributed to UI within the past five years. If unemployed, the individual must have applied for or be receiving UI benefits or have exhausted the right to UI benefits within the past three years.
- Must be an Alaska resident, meaning a person who maintains a principal place of abode in the state for at least 30 days, is physically present in the state, and plans to remain indefinitely. Proof of Alaska residency is through an Alaska Driver's License or State ID.

## **Support Services for STEP Participants**

STEP can provide support services to enable participants to attend STEP training. Applicants should include all participant support costs needed within their proposal. For example, participant transportation to and from training, ground transportation during training, temporary housing, meals, and required license and certificate fees, if needed. Individuals that need additional services not provided by a STEP grant should be referred to an Alaska Job Center for assistance.

## **Performance Outcomes**

Grant recipients are expected to provide monthly narrative and financial progress reports to the department that describe the activities that have taken place to achieve the goals of the grant as well as enter data for all participants into the departments Individual Case Management (ICM) system. All training must result in the participant attaining industry recognized credentials, licenses, or certifications or advancement in apprenticeship training.

The department's Research and Analysis Section analyzes performance outcomes and reports the results to the Alaska Workforce Investment Board, Governor, and the Alaska State Legislature. The performance measures are:

- The total number of participants served;
- The number and type of occupational certificates, credentials or licenses participants earned;
- The annual earnings of the participant prior to receiving STEP services; and
- The annual earnings of the participant 7-12 months after receiving STEP services.

## **Funding Limits**

Costs must be reasonable and comparable to industry standards for the type of training proposed. The average cost per participant trained with STEP grant funds in fiscal year 2016 was \$1,795. Additionally:

- Funding requests may not exceed \$400,000 per application. Any request for STEP funds above \$400,000 will be rejected;
- One application allowed per organization. If a grant applicant submits two applications both applications will be rejected;
- The cost per participant may not exceed \$5,000 including training related support services. Grant applicants may provide additional funding of their own if costs exceed \$5,000 but STEP will not provide funding above the \$5,000 per participant limit;
- The use of funds for personnel and sub-contractors must be clearly defined and necessary to meet the goals of the grant;
- STEP funds are for the direct benefit of participants. STEP funding is not intended to replace or supplant existing resources for training;
- STEP may not be used to construct, modify, or otherwise alter existing equipment and facilities, or to finance acquisition of new equipment and facilities; and
- Equipment is not an allowable expense.

## Grant Proposal Review and Evaluation

The AWIB will form a panel who will review and score proposals following the evaluation criteria established for STEP.

- The project addresses industry workforce needs including the number of residents to be trained; the region served; the priority industry and in-demand occupations; participant support and employment plan.
  - Up to 40 points
- The project activities are clearly defined and estimated results are identified for outreach, training, occupational certificates, and timeline.
  - Up to 30 points
- The grant applicant's organizational capacity to perform the tasks and achieve results. Previous STEP grant recipients will be rated, in part, on timely data entry and reporting, use of budget and meeting past project performance outcomes. New grant applicants will be rated on experience with conducting training projects and the capacity to perform as outlined in their proposal.
  - Up to 20 points
- The budget, budget narrative and cost per participant clearly explain the financial needs and the estimated costs are reasonable for the project activities.
  - Up to 10 points

## Budget Narrative Guidance

When completing the application, the following information is necessary to complete the budget narrative:

**Personal Services:** Summarize the positions covered under personal services, including the roles of the positions, the proportion of the individuals' total time dedicated to this grant, and the funds allocated for the positions.

**Travel:** Summarize the need for travel, including when travel is anticipated to occur. Enter Participant Travel under Participant Support.

**Contractual:** Summarize the contractual expenses (expenses for services received from entities other than the applicant), including how the costs of contractual fees were determined.

**Supplies:** Summarize the supplies (typically items less than \$5000) that will be purchased in support of program objectives.

**Equipment:** The purchase of equipment is not allowed under STEP.



**Participant Support Services:** Summarize the expenses for training and employment assistance services.

**Administration:** Summarize how the program or participants benefit from the funded administrative services. All administrative costs must be included in this line item and the administrative costs must not exceed twelve percent (12%) of the total grant award.

Each category line item estimated amount will be described in the **Budget Narrative** section of the application budget and will be used by the review committee to better understand expenses. This does not preclude the need to enter detailed line-item information in the **Notes** section of the budget form. If the Grant applicant needs more detailed instructions contact the Program Coordinator.

## SECTION II: GENERAL APPLICATION INFORMATION

**Definitions and References:** Applicants are strongly encouraged to read the *Definitions and References* document, available in EGrAMS along with this RGA. This document contains information that can assist in the submission of quality proposals.

**Application:** Applications are only accepted through EGrAMS, the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Division of Employment and Training Services' **Electronic Grants Administration and Management System**. Application information shall not be treated as public information any time prior to the notices of award or denial, but is subject to public disclosure after the notices are issued. Upon receipt, all applications and their contents become property of the Department. In order to have access to the application within EGrAMS, an individual from the organization must submit a project director request.

**Application Deadline:** Only applications received by the deadline are considered; EGrAMS will not allow submittal of applications past the submission deadline.

**Cost Reimbursement Grants:** Grants awarded are cost reimbursement grants. Costs incurred by the applicant, including, but not limited to, the cost for the preparation and submission of an application, prior to the full execution of the grant agreement, are the sole responsibility of the applicant.

**Budget Costs:** The applicant must provide a detailed budget that reflects the anticipated costs of the project. The budget must be reasonable and practicable; account for the expenditure of all funds prior to the end of the fiscal year; and will be evaluated by a review committee. Unless specifically approved by the department, incentives, promotional items, memorabilia, gifts, and souvenirs are not allowed.

**Grant Recipient Contribution:** A grant recipient contribution includes all resources, such as cash, in-kind and leveraged, used by the applicant to support grant activity and outcomes. Although applicants are

encouraged to provide a contribution, contributions are not a requirement for an award. Grant recipient contributions specified in the budget require expenditure documentation.

### **SECTION III: AWARD/DENIAL PROCESS**

**Application Review:** The Division of Employment and Training Services will perform an initial review of all properly submitted applications and forward all complete, responsive, and eligible applications to the AWIB review committee. The committee will not reviewed applications deemed non-responsive.

**Evaluation:** The AWIB review committee will evaluate applications and provide the department Commissioner a list of funding recommendations. If necessary, the division may request clarification of information from applicants to assist the AWIB in making funding recommendations. The Commissioner, after consultation with the AWIB, is solely responsible for making all grant award or denial decisions under this solicitation.

**Results of Application Review and Evaluation:** Each applicant approved by the Commissioner will be provided a written Notice of Intent to Award. Upon issuance of a Notice of Intent to Award, the application will move to the grant negotiation stage with the division. The Commissioner reserves the right to revoke a Notice of Intent to Award if the information provided in the application is found to be subsequently in error or the decision was made based on inaccurate information. Applicants not recommended for funding will receive a written Notice of Award Denial.

**Grant Negotiations:** The division reserves the right to negotiate with all applicants pending award of a grant as needed to achieve the best outcomes for STEP participants. The division may negotiate the grant award amount, performance and outcomes, and other conditions to ensure an adequate distribution of funds to provide employment and training services in all regions. All grant awards are contingent upon the appropriation of sufficient funds by the Alaska State Legislature. While this has not happened in the history of STEP, if the FY 2018 STEP fund appropriation is reduced or limited in any way after the effective date of the grant agreement, awards are subject to possible re-negotiation or termination.

**Grant Award:** Grant agreements must be signed within 45 days of receipt from the division or the award may be rescinded in order to redirect the funds to a responsive grant applicant.

**Due Diligence:** All grant recipients and any sub-contractors or sub-recipients receiving over \$25,000, which are not state agencies, are required to go through a multi-step due diligence process to demonstrate their suitability to receive grant funds. Additional information can be found in division [Due Diligence Policy 07-527](#).

**Reconsideration and Appeals:** A grant applicant that receives a Notice of Denial of Award may file a written request for reconsideration addressed to the Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development no later than ten working days after receiving the Notice of Denial of Award. The denial notice will include information explaining the reasons the proposal is denied. The grant applicant must provide a written request for reconsideration that addresses the reasons the proposal was not recommended for award, as

explained in the denial notice. Appeals should be sent to: Department of Labor & Workforce Development, Commissioners Office, PO Box 111149, Juneau, AK 99811.

The Commissioner will issue a written decision by the tenth working day after a request for reconsideration is reviewed. The Commissioner's decision on an appeal will serve as the final determination. If the Commissioner reverses the decision to award a grant based upon the appeal for reconsideration, the division will contact the grant applicant and negotiate the terms of the award. Additional information on grant awards and appeals can be found in division policy [Grant Award and Appeal Policy 07-507](#).

## SECTION IV: GRANT TERMS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

**ACPE Registration:** Grant recipients not in the University of Alaska system must have a status with the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE). This is an ACPE requirement by state statute [AS 14.48](#) and applies to grant recipients:

- *if* they are providing classes, courses, or programs of training, instruction, or study;
- *and* their primary focus is on working with persons who have completed or terminated their secondary education, or who are beyond the age of compulsory high school attendance;
- *and* their organization can be defined as “an entity offering postsecondary programs, courses, vocational training, or an educational credential including distance education.”

To check the status of your organization, see [Institutional Authorization](#) on the ACPE website or contact ACPE at [EED.ACPE-IA@alaska.gov](mailto:EED.ACPE-IA@alaska.gov) for more information.

**Program Reports:** Grant recipients must complete and submit program reports in EGrAMS. Program reports must include narrative updates on the progress of the project and statistical data related to the grant recipient meeting the goals and objectives of the project scope. All grant recipients must report monthly. Upon completion of the project, the grant recipient may be required to submit a final program report.

**Financial Reports:** Grant recipients must complete reimbursement requests in EGrAMS. It is critical to the success of the program that grant funds are fully expended by the end of the award period. To ensure that budgets are on target, grant recipients are periodically required to demonstrate how their budget will be fully expended by the end of the period of performance. Grant recipients that are not meeting their planned expenditures may have their grant awards reduced.

**Success Stories:** Success stories and photographs are critical components to the continuation of the program and shall be submitted in the monthly progress report.

**Participant Data Collection and Reporting:** Grant recipients are required to collect personally identifiable information (PII) for participants receiving services. The information must be collected and entered in a timely manner in the Department’s Individual Case Management system (ICM) per division policy [Participant Performance Data Collection Policy 07-508](#). Data to be collected includes, but is not

limited to name, birthdate, and address; social security numbers for participants age 18 or older or receiving wages associated with activities conducted under this grant; services provided; and demographics. Files, including applications must be kept for each applicant and participant in either paper or electronic files. Additional file and record retention policies will be listed in the grant agreement.

Information collected in ICM will only be used by the department to develop impact measurements and aggregate statistics. All information, including PII, will only be shared with other State of Alaska departments and only as necessary to develop aggregate statistics.

**Equal Opportunity Responsibilities:** Grant recipients must disseminate, and prominently display in a conspicuous location, the *Equal Opportunity Is the Law* notice, providing initial and continuing notice that it does not discriminate on any prohibited basis. Grant recipients are required to provide a copy of “Program and Equal Opportunity Discrimination Complaint Information” document to each program participant. This document will be provided to the grant recipient by the division.

**Monitoring:** Grant recipients are subject to monitoring by the AWIB and the division. Monitors will include, and are not limited to, review of grant recipient files and records to ensure adherence to the project scope, objectives, goals, training schedules, financial, and equal opportunity compliance. Monitoring may be conducted on-site or at the division office. Grant recipients will receive written notices to inform them of a project monitor and a detailed list of items to be reviewed. Some grant recipients may be monitored with simple requests for information to confirm compliance with grant conditions. Additional monitoring information can be found in division [Grant Monitoring Policy 07-523](#).