

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

Commissioner Heidi Drygas

State Training and Employment Program

Notice of Request for Grant Applications

State Fiscal Year 2019

Date of Issue: March 1, 2018

Application Deadline:
Grant Applications must be submitted through EGrAMS
By 5:00 p.m., April 13, 2018



**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
& WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

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GENERAL INFORMATION

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 for employment and training services based upon available resources from that account, upon the approval by the Alaska State Legislature signing the Alaska Operating Budget into law each fiscal year.

Project Timeline

July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019

Eligible Applicants

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

Grant Submittal

This RGA provides important information and guidance to assist you in determining whether to apply and in completing the grant application questions. 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. A sample application form, sample grant agreement, definitions, references, and frequently asked questions are available for view in EGrAMS. The guidance and documents change somewhat each year. All applicants, including previous awardees, are encouraged to review all of the documents before applying. 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

Total Funding Available

The total amount of STEP funds available for competitive grants in Fiscal Year 2019 is \$5.5 million.

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

RGA Informational Teleconference

Two teleconferences will be held to answer questions about FY 2019 STEP Request for Grant applications (RGA) and application process. Even if you have applied and received a grant in the past, you are encouraged to attend.

RGA and Application Overview
Date: Tuesday, March 13, 2018
Time: 10:00 a.m.
Conference Telephone: 1-888-354-0094
Conference ID: 7345413

EGrAMS Application Questions
Date: Thursday, April 5, 2018
Time: 2:00 p.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 1 – 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. 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 purpose of 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. The program 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 employer demand for a skilled workforce.

Grant applications are reviewed by the AWIB and are awarded in alignment with the state fiscal year, July 30, 2018 – June 30, 2019. Organizations training STEP-eligible job seekers or workers must plan for training that begins and ends within that fiscal year. Training must result in necessary skills upgrade, or industry or nationally recognized credentials that allow the individual to obtain or maintain employment and provide the potential for increased wages. Applicants may request funding for training, tuition, supplies, and specific support services as listed in this RGA, for eligible jobs seekers or workers to attend training.

The AWIB works closely with industry employers and workforce professionals to develop strategic 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. The department is seeking proposals for training projects that benefit employers, job seekers, and employed workers in these industries:

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

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:** The state continues to focus on training Alaskans for occupations where there are high percentages of non-residents employed as identified in the [2016 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 is considered to have a high percentage of non-residents employed.
- (3) **Women and Minorities:** Employment and training opportunities for women and minorities continues to be a focus in Alaska as it is throughout the country. The department encourages the submission of applications that focus on this large segment of our population.
- (4) **Reducing Recidivism:** In support of a valuable and underserved population, the department encourages 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 Training Allowed

Customized Employment Training

- Training designed to meet the specific workforce development needs of a business that will result in individuals acquiring the skills and knowledge necessary to be hired.
- Training for existing employees to upgrade skills to meet new conditions of the job such as becoming knowledgeable about 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.

Industry Specific Training

- Industry specific training teaches individuals technical knowledge and hands-on skills to perform the tasks of a specific occupation.
- Training should result in individuals acquiring industry-recognized skills or credentials as required for a specific industry occupation.

On the Job Training (OJT)

- Training provided by an employer at the work place where there are paid work experience opportunities and a structured learning process is in place.
- OJT 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](#).

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.

Quality Pre-Apprenticeship

- Pre-apprenticeship is 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) for either direct recruitment or direct entry into the RA program.
- The department has adopted the USDOL Model for Pre-Apprenticeship programs and additional information may be found in [Training and Employment Notice 13-12](#).

Types of Training Not Allowed

STEP grants are not intended to provide tuition for an associate or college degree program. However, STEP training resulting in earning college credit is encouraged (associated credits must be identified in the proposal). Any training provided by an accredited postsecondary school or college must be completed within the timeframe of the grant, and no portion of the training that took place prior to the grant can be covered by grant funds. All training must result in participants obtaining industry-recognized occupational certificates, credentials, or licenses.

“Soft skills” training for individuals is not appropriate under STEP grants. Soft skills include such skills as workforce readiness, communication, enthusiasm and attitude, teamwork, networking, problem solving and critical thinking, and professionalism.

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

In order to receive STEP-funded training and support services, individuals must complete a STEP application and 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-2s, 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, defined as a person who has maintained a principal place of abode in the state for at least the previous 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. These costs can include, as an example; participant transportation to and from training, ground transportation during training, temporary housing, meals, and required license and certificate fees, if needed. Applicants requesting basic tools, safety gear, and training supplies should request items that will be used for multiple training years. Individuals that need additional services should be referred to an Alaska Job Center for assistance.

Performance Outcomes

Grant recipients are expected to provide **monthly** narrative progress reports and **monthly** financial reimbursement requests and to enter data for all participants into the department's Individual Case Management (ICM) system. All training must result in the participant attaining industry recognized credentials, licenses, certifications, or advancement in apprenticeship training.

In addition to the performance outcomes provided by the grant recipient, the department's Research and Analysis Section analyzes performance outcomes for each grant recipient and reports the results to the Alaska Workforce Investment Board, Governor, and the Alaska State Legislature.

The performance measures are:

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

Collectively, performance outcomes may be used as a factor in the award of subsequent grants.

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 2017 was \$2,421.

Additionally:

- funding requests may not exceed \$400,000 per application. Any request for STEP funds above \$400,000 will be considered non-responsive;
- only one application is allowed per organization. If a grant applicant submits two applications, both applications will be considered non-responsive;
- the cost per participant may not exceed \$5,000, including training related support services provided by the organization or in combination with another organization receiving STEP funds. Grant applicants may provide additional funding of their own if costs exceed \$5,000, but a STEP grant will not provide funding above the \$5,000 per-participant limit. No exceptions will be considered;

- STEP funding cannot be leveraged against other department funding requested by partner organizations;
- 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 attending training. STEP funding is not intended to replace or supplant existing resources for training; and
- STEP funds may not be used for new business or program startup costs, capacity building, to construct, modify, or otherwise alter existing equipment and facilities, or to finance acquisition of new equipment and facilities.

Grant Proposal Review and Evaluation

The AWIB will form a panel who will review and score proposals following the evaluation criteria established for STEP. Scoring is based upon a 100 point system with additional consideration for projects with a focus on state workforce priorities and direct, in-kind or leveraged resources.

- 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

SECTION 2 – BUDGET/FISCAL REQUIREMENTS

Budget

The amounts proposed by the applicant in the budget are intended as a guideline and are subject to revision based upon negotiation or funding availability. The budget should provide a summary of costs by line item.

The budget must be reasonable and practicable; account for the expenditure of all funds during the fiscal year; and will be used by the review committee in providing award recommendations. Unless specifically approved by the department, incentives, promotional items, memorabilia, gifts, and souvenirs are not allowed.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to use the *Budget Item Guidance* (found in the *Definitions and References* document available in EGrAMS along with this RGA) while preparing the application.

When completing the application, the following information is necessary:

- **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 Services.
- **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.

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.

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. Grantee contributions, while not required, are considered during application review. If an applicant has funding from other sources to be used in conjunction with STEP funds for the proposed training, the funding must be entered in the grant application as subrecipient contribution, with documentation provided to the department upon request. More information can be found in the [Grant Recipient Contribution](#) informational guide.

Submission of Most Recent Audit

As a subrecipient of STEP funds, applicants that meet the requirements of receiving and expending a cumulative total of \$500,000 or more of state financial assistance or \$750,000 or more of federal financial assistance funds are required to submit an annual financial and compliance audit performed under Generally Accepted Accounting Principles by an independent auditor per 2 AAC 45.010. A copy of the audit must be provided to the State of Alaska. The audit should be submitted within 30 days after the completion of the audit, but no later than six months after the end of the audit period.

Invoices

Since this is a reimbursement grant, the applicant will be expected to incur the cost for all program services and make payments on behalf of the enrolled participant, then report each month's expenses by the 15th day

of the following month for reimbursement. The monthly reimbursement submission will be through EGrAMS.

As the period of performance (grant year) runs from July 1 through June 30, the final reimbursement request must be submitted no later than the 10th day of July following the grant year. The year-end closeout report will be submitted thereafter.

Sub-grants

If any part of the training proposal is to be sub-granted or passed through to another agency, copies of the proposed sub-grant agreement must be submitted to the division.

Public Outreach

Outreach materials, publications, and activities developed in any medium with award funds, or for services paid for with award funds, must contain an acknowledgement of the division as the grantor.

Advertising

Advertising media include magazines, newspapers, radio, television, direct mail, exhibits, electronic or computer transmittals, web pages, social media, and the like specific to the project. Allowable advertising costs are those that are solely for:

- the recruitment of personnel, including persons to attend the training or employment-related services, required for the performance of the award;
- the procurement of goods and services for the performance of the award;
- the disposal of scrap or surplus materials acquired in the performance of the award except when non-federal entities are reimbursed for disposal costs at a predetermined amount; or
- other specific purposes necessary to meet the requirements of the project, as approved by the division.

The following are unallowable advertising, marketing, and outreach costs funded by the grant, unless specifically approved by the division:

- costs of displays, demonstrations, and exhibits;
- costs of meeting rooms, hospitality suites, and other special facilities used in conjunction with shows and other special events;
- salaries and wages of employees engaged in setting up and displaying exhibits, making demonstrations, and providing briefings;
- costs of promotional items and memorabilia, including but not limited to models, gifts, and souvenirs;
- costs of advertising and public relations designed solely to promote the organization; and
- all advertising and public relations costs that are not otherwise specified.

SECTION 3 – INSTRUCTIONS AND GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

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. 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.

Submission

A representative authorized to commit to the award on behalf of the organization must electronically sign and submit the application in EGrAMS.

Application Deadline

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

Grant Preparation Expenses

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.

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 review 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 decision was made based on inaccurate information provided in the application.

Applicants not recommended for funding will receive a written Notice of Denial of Award.

Grant Negotiations

The division will 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. If the 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.

Appeal Process

A grant applicant that receives a Notice of Denial of Award may file a written request for reconsideration as outlined in the division policy [Grant Award and Appeal Policy 07-507](#). Appeals should be addressed to: Department of Labor & Workforce Development, Commissioners Office, PO Box 111149, Juneau, AK 99811.

Otherwise-acceptable proposals may not be funded due to the grant funds available and the number of acceptable applications. Award denial based on funding availability cannot be appealed.

SECTION 4 – ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Due Diligence

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

ACPE Registration

Training or education programs not in the University of Alaska system must be authorized or formally determined to be exempt by the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE). This requirement is implemented in accordance state statute [AS 14.48](#) and applies if:

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

Depending on the nature of the training program, obtaining an ACPE status can take several months. To apply for or check on the status of your training program, or for more information, see [Institutional Authorization](#) on the ACPE website or contact ACPE at EED.ACPE-IA@alaska.gov.

Insurance Requirements

Grant recipients must obtain accident insurance to cover participants while they participate in STEP activities. On-the-job employers must provide proof of worker's compensation or comparable coverage for participants receiving STEP funds. No participant will be permitted to work or receive services or training in a building or surroundings or under working conditions which are unsanitary, hazardous, or dangerous to the participant's health or safety. All participants placed in paid work experiences or internships must be covered by workers' compensation.

Grant recipients using motor vehicles in conducting program services shall provide automobile insurance. The State of Alaska is held harmless against claims arising from ownership, maintenance, or use of said vehicle.

Progress Reports

Grant recipients must complete and submit *monthly* progress reports in EGrAMS. Progress 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.

Financial Reports

Grant recipients must complete *monthly* reimbursement requests in EGrAMS. Data entry into ICM and project activities reflected in the progress report will be used to support approval of reimbursement requests. 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 will be submitted in the monthly progress report.

Participant Data Collection and Reporting

Grant recipients are required to collect information for participants receiving grant-funded services. The information must be collected and entered in ICM per division policy [Participant Performance Data Collection Policy 07-508](#). Data to be collected includes services provided and demographics, as well as personally identifiable information (PII) such as birthdate, address, and social security numbers. Documents required by the grant agreement, including applications, must be kept for each participant and applicant in either paper or electronic format. 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. 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

The division has developed a systematic monitoring system for evaluating the quality and effectiveness of program administration. Monitoring is the quality control system whereby the division gathers and analyzes information to determine whether services are in compliance with the grant agreement, detect problems, identify strengths and weaknesses, and propose improvements to the services. Grant recipients are expected to cooperate with any monitoring, inspection, audit, or investigation of activities related to the grant agreement.

Monitors will include, but are not limited to, examination of, and photocopying as necessary, books, records, files, documents, property or equipment related to all aspects of STEP funded activities. The review of grant recipient files and records assesses 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 only be required to comply with simple requests for information to confirm compliance with grant conditions. Additional monitoring information can be found in division [Grant Monitoring Policy 07-523](#).