

STATE OF ALASKA

Department of Labor & Workforce Development
Commissioner Heidi Drygas

Division of Business Partnerships
1016 West 6th Avenue, Suite 205
Anchorage, Alaska 99501



**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
& WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

**Request for Grant Applications
State Training and Employment Program
State Fiscal Year 2016**

Date of Issue: March 6, 2015

Application Deadline: April 24, 2015

Grant applications must be submitted through EGrAMS by 5:00 p.m., April 24, 2015.

EGrAMS is an **E**lectronic **G**rants **A**dministration and **M**anagement **S**ystem. It can be accessed from the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development website at egrms.dol.alaska.gov.

Applicants must gain access to EGrAMS and submit a Project Director Request no later than 5p.m., April 20, 2015.

Two teleconferences will be held to answer questions about the RGA and application process.

<u>Teleconference I</u> Date: Monday, March 16, 2015 Time: 9:00 a.m.	<u>Teleconference II</u> Date: Monday, April 13, 2015 Time: 9:00 a.m.
Conference Telephone: 1-888-354-0094 Conference ID: 6981708#	
Questions about EGrAMS should be directed to: EGrAMS Help Desk (907) 465-4893 dol.dbp.egrms.helpdesk@alaska.gov	Questions about the content of this Request for Grant Applications (RGA) should be directed to: Julie Frizzell, Program Coordinator Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development Division of Business Partnerships 1016 W. 6 th Avenue, Suite 205 Anchorage, AK 99501 julie.frizzell@alaska.gov (907) 269-4590

Americans with Disabilities Act - Auxiliary aides and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. To make arrangements for auxiliary aides or services, please contact the Division of Business Partnerships at (907) 269-4651 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: BACKGROUND

Thank you for your interest in applying for a State Training and Employment Program (STEP) grant with Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Division of Business Partnerships. Each year the Division publishes a Request for Grant Applications (RGA) in accordance with state statute [AS 23.15.620](#) and state administrative code [8 AAC 87](#). The STEP is funded by a percentage of the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund and is appropriated to the Division by the Alaska State Legislature.

The purpose of the STEP is to enhance the quality and accessibility of in-state training and employment services to employees and future employees. This allows grantee organizations to leverage valuable training resources and assists eligible program participants in receiving support services essential for attending and completing training. The STEP fosters state economic growth by preparing and upgrading the skills of the local workforce in both traditional and emerging industries, so that they have the latest national and state certifications and competencies in demand by employers. Participants benefit by attaining new and advanced skills and by increasing their earning potential.

The information in the RGA is intended to establish an understanding of the purpose and eligibility requirements of the program as well as provide guidance in completing the application. Additional guidance is included with the application.

SECTION II: PROGRAM INFORMATION

For more than two decades, the STEP has provided funding to training organizations throughout the state. The Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) provides oversight for the STEP. Priority industries are determined by the AWIB and are subject to change from year to year.

What are the priority industries this year?

- Construction
- Education
- Hospitality and tourism
- Seafood processing
- Information technology
- Health care
- Natural resource development (oil, gas, and mining)
- Transportation

Who can apply for the STEP?

Organizations providing training that are:

- State and local agencies
- Private businesses
- Employers
- Federally registered apprenticeship sponsors
- Non-profit organizations (501(c)(3))

What type of training is requested?

A recipient of a grant awarded under the program may use the grant to provide any of the following training services to eligible participants:

Industry Specific Training – Training resulting in participants acquiring industry-recognized skills, competencies, or certifications as required by a specific industry.

On-the-Job Training (OJT) – Training provided by an employer at the work site to a paid participant while engaged in work that provides knowledge and skills essential to perform the job successfully while the

employee is learning the job requirements of the position, including apprentice training in a registered apprenticeship program. OJT is intended to compensate the employer for the *extra* cost associated with hiring and training an individual who does not meet the minimum requirements of the position. An OJT agreement may reimburse an amount negotiated with the Division of Business Partnerships, generally not to exceed 50 percent of the participant's wages. See additional information regarding OJT activities under a STEP grant on the Department's website (<http://www.jobs.state.ak.us/forms/OjtIntro-employer.html>) and in the [OJT Employer Brochure](#).

Customized Job-Linked Training – Training designed to meet the specific workforce development needs of an employer, resulting in participants acquiring the skills and knowledge necessary to be hired, remain employed, or advance in employment. Employers must have expressed a willingness to hire, retain, or advance participants within six months of successfully completing the training.

Registered Apprenticeship – Programs designed to move an apprentice from a low- or no-skill entry-level position to full occupational proficiency, meeting parameters established under the National Apprenticeship Act ([29 U.S.C. 50](#) and [29 CFR Part 29](#)) and designed to protect the welfare of the apprentice. Upon completion of a Registered Apprenticeship program, participants receive an industry issued, nationally recognized credential.

Training Goals

Training under this program must enable participants to:

- obtain new occupational skills or
- upgrade current skills and obtain credentials that are needed to retain or obtain employment, and
- pursue careers in Alaska that pay industry-based competitive wages and offer opportunities for advancement.

Training programs must provide:

- training to more program-eligible individuals than would otherwise have been trained without the use of grant funds;
- training and support services that cannot be paid by other sources of money; or
- new areas of high-demand training for the organization.

Grant funds may leverage existing training and employment assistance programs. The training may also foster new jobs in priority industries and occupations.

Specific support for the jobs resulting from the proposed training must be provided by citing one of the Workforce Plans available in the Sector Strategies section of the AWIB page on the Alaska Department of Labor website labor.alaska.gov/awib/ppi.htm. If a workforce plan is not yet available at that site for the supported industry, an industry-developed workforce planning document may be cited. Training supporting industries other than those identified above will be considered to the extent that employer demand, commitments to hire, and wage commitments exceeding the state's median wage can be demonstrated.

Training and employment assistance services as defined in [AS 23.15.641\(b\)](#) may be funded in conjunction with training offered in one or more of the areas identified above. Such services that are considered essential to achieving the performance outcomes must be included in the grant application. If the grant applicant is unable to provide the necessary services, it is incumbent upon the grant applicant to either form a partnership with an organization that can provide the services, or subcontract the services to another

organization. In either case, the services must be included in the detailed budget submitted in response to this RGA. Grant proposals providing only training and assistance support services without also providing training contributing to the required performance outcomes will not be considered.

Multiple applications from an agency will be considered. Organizations registered as a Federal Agency in EGrAMS are not eligible to apply for a grant under this solicitation.

Targeted Participants

To be an eligible participant, a person must, immediately before beginning training or receiving benefits under the grant financed by this program:

- 1) be a resident of Alaska, defined for this program as someone who has been physically present in the state for at least 30 days and intends to remain in the state; and
- 2) have worked in a position covered by unemployment insurance (defined in [AS 23.20](#), or similar provisions in another state) at any time during the five years immediately preceding the application for services; and
- 3) need training to improve the person's prospects for obtaining or retaining employment; and
- 4) be employable but not currently employed and
 - receiving unemployment insurance benefits; or
 - has exhausted the right to unemployment insurance benefits within the past three years; or
- 5) be employed, but liable to be displaced because of
 - reductions in overall employment within a business; or
 - elimination of the worker's current job; or
 - a change in conditions of employment requiring that, to remain employed, the employee must learn substantially different skills that the employee does not now possess.

Performance Outcomes

It is expected that training will:

- result in an increase in wage and salary earnings after training; or
- increase the prospect of employment in a training-related occupation at a wage commensurate with the training received.

Funding Limits

There are no limitations on funding levels for individual grants; however, costs must be reasonable and comparable to industry standards for the type of training proposed.

STEP funds may not be used to replace other funds allocated for training or services for the purpose of reducing costs, such as maintaining operations during periods in which there are no STEP related activities. Grant-funded services are not intended to replace or supplant existing programs.

Unless approved by the department, financial resources of the program may not be used to construct, modify, or otherwise alter existing equipment and facilities, or to finance acquisition of new equipment and facilities to improve physical access to training.

Budget Narrative Guidance

The following category-level information must be entered in the budget *Narrative*:

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

Travel: Summarize the program-specific need for travel, including when travel is anticipated to occur. Participant travel is entered 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: Summarize the equipment (typically items more than \$5000) that will be purchased in support of program objectives.

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

Administration: Summarize how the program or participants benefit from the funded administrative services. This line item is limited to twelve percent.

This category-level overview information is entered in the *Narrative* section of the application budget and will be used by the review committee to get a “big picture” understanding of expenses; it does not preclude the need to enter detailed line-item information in the *Notes* section of the budget form. If more detailed instructions are required, contact the Program Coordinator.

SECTION II: GENERAL APPLICATION INFORMATION

Definitions and References: Applicants are strongly encouraged to read through the *Definitions and References* document, available from the same location at which this RGA was located. This document contains information that can assist in the submission of quality proposals.

Application: Applications will only be accepted through EGrAMS, the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Division of Business Partnerships (hereinafter “Division”) **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 Division.

In order to have access to the application within EGrAMS, an individual from the organization must submit a project director request. No project director requests will be approved after the time indicated on page 2 of this RGA.

Application Deadline: Only applications received by the deadline will be 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 assessed and evaluated by a review committee. Unless specifically approved by the Division, incentives, promotional items and memorabilia, gifts, and souvenirs are not allowed.

Grantee Contribution: A grantee contribution includes all resources, including 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. Grantee contributions specified in the budget require expenditure documentation.

SECTION III: AWARD/DENIAL PROCESS

Application Review: The Division will perform an initial review of all properly submitted applications. All complete, responsive, and eligible applications will be evaluated by a review committee, which will make funding recommendations to the Division. Applications deemed non-responsive will not be reviewed by the committee.

Evaluation: A review committee comprised of members of the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) will evaluate applications using the evaluation criteria specified in EGrAMS. A Deficient rating in any area will result in the application being considered “non-responsive” or “not recommended for funding.” The Division will consider the results of the review committee’s assessment along with other relevant criteria and information, including budgetary information, training schedules, and state priorities, when making funding recommendations to the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development commissioner. The Division may request additional information from applicants if it is needed to make funding recommendations. The commissioner is solely responsible for making all award or denial decisions under this solicitation.

Results of Application Review and Evaluation: Each application 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 grant negotiations with the Division. The Division reserves the right to revoke a Notice of Intent to Award if it is subsequently found to be in error, made on the basis of inaccurate information, or not in the best interest of the state.

An applicant whose application is not recommended for an award will receive a written Notice of Award Denial. Applicants receiving a Notice of Award Denial have ten working days to request reconsideration.

Grant Negotiations: The Division will negotiate the grant award amount, performance, reporting levels, and any conditions to a grant award that it determines are prudent and in the best interest of the state. All grants awarded under this solicitation are contingent upon the appropriation of sufficient funds by the Alaska legislature. In the event that funding is withdrawn, reduced, or limited in any way after the effective date of the grant agreement, grants awarded are subject to reduction, re-negotiation, or termination subject to the new funding limitations or conditions imposed by the legislature.

It is understood that organizations may apply for multiple Department grants within a single program or under different programs. Those grant applications may request grant funds to cover expenses that would be duplicative if more than one grant were to be awarded. During grant negotiations with organizations receiving more than one Department grant, the Division will highlight for clarification any expenses that appear to be duplicative.

Grant Award: Grant agreements must be signed within 45 days of receipt from the Department or the Department may rescind the award in order to redirect the funds to a responsive grantee.

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. For more information see the State of Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development [Due Diligence Policy](#).

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 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. Upon completion of the project, the grant recipient is required to submit a final program report.

Financial Reports: 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.

The Division will provide electronic forms to request reimbursement of expenditures and submit periodic reports and income reports. Reimbursement requests and grant contributions must be supported with clear and concise financial reports and expense documentation.

Success Stories: Success stories and photographs are critical components to the continuation of the program and can be submitted at any time, but the grant recipient must submit three success stories by the completion of the grant period. A Photo Consent and Release form must be submitted along with the success story for each member included in a photograph.

Participant Data Collection and Reporting: Grant recipients are required to collect personally identifiable information (PII) for participants receiving services. This information must be collected and entered in a timely manner in the Division’s Individual Case Management system (ICM); methods of transferring data from an “in house” data collection tool to ICM will not be considered.

Data to be collected includes, but is not limited to, personally identifiable information including 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 and documentation of eligibility, must be kept for each participant.

Information collected in ICM will only be used by the Division 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.

Applicants unable or unwilling to collect and report the necessary data, including PII, in a timely manner, should consider other sources of grant funds.

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 will also maintain a signed copy of the *Equal Opportunity is the Law* certification form from each subcontractor or partner, and from each organization that receives services under this grant. All organizations that provide training or services for which participants must apply or register must maintain a signed copy of the *Equal Opportunity is the Law* certification form from each applicant or registrant.

Monitoring: Grant recipients are subject to monitoring. This will include, but is 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, through written requests for information, or by distance-delivery. Additional information is available in [Policy 625.10, Grant Monitoring](#).

Supply and Equipment Expenditures: Supplies and equipment purchased with grant funds must be used in support of the grant during the grant performance period. Expenditures for supplies and equipment must be made prior to the end of the third quarter.