

# Alaska's Program Year 2007 **WIA Annual Report**



State of Alaska  
Governor Sarah Palin  
October 1, 2008



**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
& WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

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# STATE OF ALASKA

**Department of Labor and Workforce Development  
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October 1, 2008

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao  
Secretary of Labor  
U.S. Department of Labor  
200 Constitution Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Madam Secretary:

On behalf of Governor Sarah Palin, I am pleased to submit Alaska's Workforce Investment Act Annual Performance Report for Federal Program Year (PY) 2007. In addition to the enclosed narrative, the report is supported with requisite performance data separately submitted under the Employment and Training Administration's Enterprise Information Management System.

This report highlights the success of Alaska's workforce development system realized by leveraging federal formula funding with state and business and industry contributions. It is also evidence of how Alaska's workforce investment system successfully responds to the call for innovative, collaborative solutions in meeting business and industry demands for a skilled workforce.

The workforce investments realized in PY 2007 are among the many ensuring Alaskans, particularly those in areas of high unemployment, have continual opportunities to actualize their potential and become more prosperous and competitive in a global marketplace. The next few years will be critical as natural resource development will continue to drive the state's economy, and job growth will rise accordingly. We are confident that with the strong partnerships in place, Alaska will answer the call to action and address an emerging workforce skills gap, and develop vocational, career and technical education, just-in-time training, and apprenticeship opportunities for new talent and for upgrading the skills of the incumbent workforce.

We appreciate your kind consideration of this report and thank you for your steadfast support.

Sincerely



Clark Bishop  
Commissioner

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# Workforce Investment Act Title I-B programs in Alaska



## Introduction and State Overview

Alaska has a workforce investment system that is strong, flexible, and includes the necessary stakeholders and professionals committed to developing training programs that both the existing and the emerging labor force need to succeed. Yet to continue this success and remain globally competitive, the state must explore new and innovative frameworks for financing education and training; particularly as further expansion of energy production in the state is certain. Major projects currently in planning or development include expansions of existing oil fields, oil exploration in the Gulf of Alaska and elsewhere, and the largest construction project in the nation, a natural gas pipeline.

In addition, the mining and construction industries require labor skills similar to those of the oil and gas industry. Development of what is expected to be the world's largest gold and copper mine is currently being explored. Alaska also has one of the nation's least developed transportation systems. Ongoing construction and maintenance of transportation infrastructure will require upgraded and even entirely new labor skills.

Knowledgeable workers equipped with specialized skills gained through apprenticeship, job training, vocational technical training or post secondary education, will fill these future jobs. The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development in partnership with business and industry developed the strategies in the "Alaska Gasline Inducement Act (AGIA) Training Strategic Plan: A Call to Action," to address these opportunities in

the coming years with a focus on career and technical education, registered apprenticeships, on-the-job training opportunities, and the use of industry-based standards in regional training centers.

Alaska's workforce investment system is also considering that in the next decade, two-thirds of new jobs will require postsecondary education or significant on-the-job training. Alaska's Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) maintains a comprehensive vision focused on devel-

The department is exploring new ways of structuring relationships and decision-making processes with the goal of delivering high-impact talent development strategies and services.

oping a workforce system to meet these challenges targeting for priority investment: Natural Resource Development (oil, mining and petroleum), Construction, Transportation, Health Care, Information Technology, Education, Hospitality and Tourism, and the Seafood Harvesting Processing industries.

The department is exploring new ways of structuring relationships and decision-making processes with the goal of delivering high-impact talent development strategies and services. Recognizing that each worker is unique, Alaska Job Center staff learned to customize approaches to service delivery with a just-in-time combination of resources.

In rural areas across the state, entrepreneurship is a vital component to a robust economic development strategy. By developing entrepreneurial spirit and talent across the education continuum, within the public workforce system, and throughout local community organiza-



tions, rural Alaska can attract and retain talent to encourage commerce and create new enterprises.

In program year 2007, the overarching initiatives for Alaska's workforce investments were: registered apprenticeship, AGIA, stronger partnerships, and leveraged resources. The department is continually evaluating creative ways to keep these initiatives effective and successful over time. Anticipating Alaska's future requires creative solutions, input from stakeholders, dynamic partnerships and

use of technological advances for sustainability of ongoing efforts.

This report highlights the state's workforce development system success this past program year using federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funding and leveraged state funds. It is also testimony to how Alaska's workforce

system has successfully responded to the call for innovative and collaborative solutions geared to meet business and industry demands for a skilled workforce.

## Notable Highlights

The U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration awarded a \$7.5 million grant to the department for implementing a four-year Alaska Pipeline Worker Training Project to prepare skilled construction workers for ongoing modernization efforts on existing pipelines, and for construction of an anticipated gas pipeline. Alaska's legislature also appropriated \$860,000 to further the AGIA Training Strategic Plan. The department's effort will make use of apprenticeship programs and align and leverage resources with the department's AWIB-endorsed, industry-led, AGIA Training Strategic Plan. The investments target training for more than 2,500 Alaska workers involved in the state's pipeline maintenance and construction activities, with an emphasis on preparing the workforce as pipeline activity ramps up over the next several years.

During PY 2007, the Alaska legislature appropriated \$2.3 million of state Youth First

Initiative funding to expand some of the most successful activities initiated under Alaska's \$7 million dollar High Growth Job Training Initiative (HGJTI) federal grant that concluded at the end of the program year. With this funding, the Alaska Youth First initiative awarded: nine grants to not-for-profit agencies; five grants to school districts; and four reimbursable service agreements to the Department of Education & Early Development, the department's Employment Security Division, and the University of Alaska.

Alaska's Youth First Initiative outcomes in PY 2007 include: 11,362 youth served through career guides; 3,293 youth completed at least one Youth Employability Skill activity; 810 youth participated in paid and un-paid work experience; 149 partnerships were formed by various grantees; 457 students participated in Academic/Training; and 51 teachers completed externships in three target industries including health care, construction and resource development. The state's 12 career guides were located in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Kodiak, Bethel, Kotzebue, Ketchikan, Sitka, Dillingham, Juneau, and Mat-Su Valley providing outreach to youth in over 25 rural communities. The career guide model is becoming recognized as a national best practice with several states seeking to emulate this program.

During PY 2007, the Alaska Legislature appropriated: \$2 million for Alaska Construction Academies Capital Improvements at the King Career Center in Anchorage and Hutchinson Career Center in Fairbanks; \$1.5 million for Alaska General Contractors and the Alaska Home Builders Association to expand construction academy services beyond Anchorage to create academies in Fairbanks, Juneau, Kenai Peninsula, Ketchikan and the Mat-Su Valley. More than 1,000 high school students and about 200 adults participated in construction trades classes such as carpentry, plumbing, electrical, welding, and drywall finishing.

Even though Alaska's HGJTI grant concluded, the most successful activities and strategies are being sustained through the state-sponsored Alaska Youth First initia-



tive and other funding sources. The Alaska Legislature continued and enhanced these activities for PY 2008 as follows:

- \$2.3 million for the Alaska Youth First Initiative
- \$3.5 million for the operations of Alaska Construction Academies
- \$860,000 for structured on-the-job training opportunities, registered apprenticeship expansion, labor market research, and cooperative training agreements with business and industry
- \$600,000 for Alaska Labor Exchange System (ALEXsys) enhancement and Gas Pipeline Skills Inventory
- \$3 million Capital Improvement Project (CIP) to Alaska Works Partnerships for developing a Pipeline Training Center
- \$1.35 million CIP to AVTEC for a Maritime Safety Training Center
- \$3.7 million CIP to the department for a new state Workforce Information Performance System (WIPS)
- \$414,000 to implement ACT's Career Readiness Certificate preparation and testing for all Alaska secondary school students
- \$175,000 for Alaska Career Information System (AKCIS) and Occupational Database enhancements

In addition to the above commitments, the federally funded Denali Commission will provide the following for PY 2008:

- \$1.5 million for Denali Youth First
- \$1.2 million for Denali Training Fund for Rural Construction

The state made great strides in collaboration this past year. Alaska Career Ready is a new initiative developed through partnerships with the department, the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, school districts and employers. The Alaska Career Ready program allows students and adult job-seekers to gauge their readiness for work, college and occupational training, and to improve the basic skills valued by employers and educators.

“This is the type of partnership I envisioned when I took office and pledged that Alaskans would be prepared for

jobs,” Governor Sarah Palin said. “It shows what can be accomplished when school, work, business, and industry speak the same language and share the same goals for work readiness.”

On October 2, 2007, the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) announced Nancy L. Heckmann, Employment Security Specialist and supervisor of the Anchorage Business Connection, as the recipient of the James F. Walls Local Office



*Nancy L. Heckmann, Employment Security Specialist and supervisor of the Anchorage Business Connection is the recipient of the James F. Walls Local Office One Stop Employee of the Year award.*

One Stop Employee of the Year award. This national award honors a one-stop employee whose conduct demonstrates his or her outstanding dedication to customers and fellow employees, and extraordinary service to his or her community.

Ms. Heckmann and her team improved services for businesses in need of talent by connecting them more rapidly to the most qualified candidates, reorganizing office space to enable targeted recruitments, establishing a team of one-stop specialists focused on employer needs, and adjusting business hours to include evenings and weekends to accommodate employers. Ms. Heckmann and her team increased annual Anchorage area employer job listings in the Alaska Labor Exchange System (ALEXsys) from 3,500 to over 12,000 since the creation of the Anchorage Business Connection.

On April 29, 2008, the department hosted its first annual Building Alaska's Future Apprenticeship Conference. “One of my strong

convictions and highest calls to action is preparing the next generation of Alaska's workers through registered apprenticeship," Commissioner Bishop stated in his invitation to hundreds of the state's employers, apprenticeship sponsors, administrators, instructors and coordinators, and all state legislators.

Action packed with a full agenda, the apprenticeship conference featured keynote speakers Mr. Anthony Swoope, past administrator, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Apprenticeship, and widely acclaimed apprentice trainer/facilitator Mr. Mark Breslin. Full to capacity, conference attendees represented a prominent cross-section of business and industry, the training community, and others interested in advancing the registered apprenticeship model.

Appreciating the positive performance of apprenticeships, and to meet the priority set by Commissioner Bishop, two dozen Alaska Job Center service delivery staff

from several different programs including Wagner-Peyser Employment Service, WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker, Work Services, and Vocational Rehabilitation attended a two-day training conducted by the Alaska Federal Office of Apprenticeship. This was designed to develop registered apprenticeships and promote the benefits of apprenticeship to program participants and employers within the Alaska Job Center Network.

The department was recognized for excellence for its partnership efforts to create the Anchorage Construction Academy, which attracts and trains young people and adults to first jobs in the construction industry. The department received an honorable mention in the U.S. Department of Labor's nationwide Recognition of Excellence award category, which recognizes outstanding talent development programs from around the nation. The department was recognized in the "Leveraging the Power of Partnerships" category.

## Success STORIES

### Ken Nauseda

Anchorage Construction Academy (ACA) graduate Ken Nauseda had recently finished high school and had begun taking classes at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks. He thought he might like to become an electrical engineer. Everyone assured him he had plenty of time to decide. Then, on his way home to visit his mother in Anchorage during Christmas break, his vehicle slid off the Parks Highway and rolled down an embankment. His truck was totaled. He survived but suffered minor injuries.

The accident changed everything. First, Nauseda no longer had transportation to and from school. Second, he needed a way to support himself. And third, time suddenly felt precious; he wanted to get on with his life. He took two jobs, a full-time position at Lowe's hardware store and a part-time job at UPS. He still pondered the idea of working in the electrical field, perhaps pursuing a trade. Then he saw an advertisement for an electrical course at the ACA and applied.

"The instructors were extremely helpful. With ten to fifteen years of experience in the trades, they were able to give good advice," Nauseda said. After receiving electrical training at the King Career Center, Ken went to work for Davis Constructors & Engineers in Anchorage. Nauseda's supervisor, Craig Worrell said, "There's a guy with a head on his shoulders. He's turned out to be an excellent hand. I can't say enough about him."

The shop where Nauseda works has three full-time mechanics who work on 300 pieces of equipment for Davis Constructors & Engineers. His work around heavy equipment has motivated him to apply for a mechanic apprenticeship. Not only has he found a trade he enjoys, he's making a good living. "I'm making more now at this entry-level job than I did at my other two jobs combined," he said. "This is a job that's going somewhere."





## Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs

During PY 2007 Alaska made a number of changes to improve performance within the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. At the beginning of PY 2007, Career Support and Training Services (CSTS) delivery staff members were motivated and trained to increase customer service focus with the adult and dislocated worker programs. CSTS leadership set priorities and implemented strategies to improve participant enrollment and the number of participants co-enrolled in state and other federal programs.

The need to measure performance is required in managing program outcomes effectively. In PY 2007, a total of 924 individuals participated in the WIA Adult program; this was an increase of 150 percent as compared to the 616 program participants served in PY 2006. The department served additional adults by using funding sources including the High

Growth Job Training Initiative Grant (HGJTI), which served 245 participants, and the State Training and Employment Program (STEP), which served 1,957 participants.

This year, more employers used the workforce system's services and a greater number of job seekers sought services through internet-based points of access. Although the entered employment rate, earnings change, and credential rate are slightly lower than the performance goals, they are all well above the 80 percent threshold of the negotiated rate.

In PY 2007, a total of 699 individuals were served in the WIA Dislocated Worker Program; this was an increase of 156 percent as compared to the 446 program participants served in PY 2006. This total does not include 38 National Emergency Grant (NEG) and 245 HGJTI participants. The charts below show the performance for the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs in PY 2007.

This year, more employers used the workforce system's services and a greater number of job seekers sought services through internet-based points of access.

### WIA Adult Program Year 2007 July 1, 2007 – June 30, 2008

Program Performance Measure	Negotiated Performance	PY 2007 Actual Performance	80% of Negotiated Performance
Entered Employment Rate	74.0%	70.4%	59.2%
Employment Retention Rate	84.5%	86.5%	67.6%
Earnings Change in Six Months	\$16,100	\$14,689	\$12,880
Credential Rate	63.0%	58.3%	50.4%

### WIA Dislocated Worker Program Year 2007 July 1, 2007 – June 30, 2008

Program Performance Measure	Negotiated Performance	PY 2007 Actual Performance	80% of Negotiated Performance
Entered Employment Rate	81.0%	75.8%	64.8%
Employment Retention Rate	87.0%	88.8%	69.6%
Earnings Change in Six Months	\$20,200	\$19,972	\$16,160
Credential Rate	74.0%	63.6%	59.2%



During PY 2007, thanks to an ETA-approved waiver, the state transferred funds from the Dislocated Worker to the Adult program, increased the amount limit of funding per participant, increased case manager training, and instituted changes in the service delivery

The department is committed to continuing the talent development of Alaska's workforce.

system, such as the redesign of the comprehensive one stop job centers. These initiatives dramatically increased the number of participants in both programs and had a positive impact on program performance in six of the eight measures this past year.

To address the challenge of serving seasonal workers, Alaska was granted a waiver of the WIA performance measure pertaining to retention in unsubsidized employment six months after entry into employment. A three-month retention performance measure, for seasonal workers in locations where unemployment is greater than seven percent at the beginning of a calendar year, was approved.

Application of this waiver favorably increased both WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs Employment Retention Rates by 6.6 and 4.4 percentage points respectively.

The department is committed to continuing the talent development of Alaska's workforce. Investing in PY 2008's performance, the department will provide One Stop Operator funds for: assessing the extent to which activities funded under WIA formula grants carried out through the Alaska Job Center Network (AJCN) delivery system are used to provide high-quality, outcome-focused workforce development services in a demand-driven and fully integrated service environment, consistent with the state's WIA Plan; development and implementation of activities designed to measure and improve the delivery, effectiveness, and results of AJCN workforce development activities; and staff training, capacity building and technical assistance activities within Alaska Job Centers.

## Success STORIES

### Alphonozo Hampton

Alphonozo Hampton arrived at the Juneau Job Center in December of 2007 looking for work. During the three months in which he diligently worked with Juneau Job Center staff, he eagerly participated in core and intensive job search services. It was during this time that staff learned that Alphonozo was a felon, and by working with his probation officer, they learned of the extraordinary steps he had taken towards rehabilitation. Although Alphonozo demonstrated daily dedication in the resource room to find a job, it became evident that his current skills would not lead to self supporting work. Therefore, he was enrolled in CDL training through the WIA adult program.

Upon completing his CDL training, he was back in the resource room looking every day for truck driving jobs. He even managed to get his CDL Hazmat endorsement in record time, not always an easy task for someone with his background. Alphonozo displayed such a genuinely positive, pro-active, can-do attitude that staff was reminded about what it means to go boldly forward despite the appearance of major barriers and delays.

Hard work, grit, and determination paid off and Alphonozo was hired by a major construction truck driving company.



"I'm working nonstop, and that's just how I like it," he said. Alphonozo works at a remote mining site where he is driving trucks and operating equipment. It was a collaborative team effort with resource room, vocational counseling, WIA, Vocational Rehabilitation and Alaska Department of Corrections staff contributing to Alphonozo's success. Next stop, apprenticeship!

## Karen Pulley

Karen Pulley arrived at the Kenai Job Center in 2006 with many life challenges. The family charter fishing business went away when the boat was stolen in Seward, Alaska and then sunk into Resurrection Bay. Due to Karen's physical limitations, she was unable to work in the occupations in which she had previous work experience. While applying for work through the Alaska Labor Exchange System, she found her options with the labor market very limiting on her earnings potential.

Karen decided it was time to pursue a lifelong goal of becoming a dental hygienist. She had conducted a very comprehensive study of the field and knew it to be one of the highest paying occupations in the state. Karen's exceptional grades made her one of eight candidates selected to attend the University of Alaska Anchorage Campus Dental Hygienist program.

Karen moved to Anchorage and through the duration of her training, there were

many programs that collaborated to ensure Karen's success, including Unemployment Insurance, Pell Grant, Stafford Loans, Food Stamps and Medicaid. Karen was an honor student and also received scholarships for maintaining such a high grade point average.

Karen graduated in May of 2008 and is already working for a Native health care organization while she waits to take her board exams in Las Vegas. Karen is anticipating earning \$50,000.00 a year with benefits in her new job.



## YOUTH PROGRAM

Great strides were made this year to integrate all youth programs. Alignment with the Alaska Gasline Inducement Act (AGIA) and career pathways that will address the workforce needs of the state are essential elements of the youth system. A total of 1,108 youth were served in the WIA Youth Program during PY 2007. Service to out-of-school youth increased for the third consecutive year with the program serving 58 percent for a total of 645 participants. This is an increase of 8 percent from the previous program year. The enrollment of younger youth has stayed close to the same as the previous year, with 79 percent of the youth falling between the ages of 14-18 years of age. Only 21 percent of the youth in the program are older youth. This trend of serving a higher percentage of younger youth, but a larger percent of out-of-school youth, highlights that the program continues to attract youth who have dropped out of the secondary school pro-

gram, and face the realities of living on a minimum wage.

Over 90 percent of the youth enrolled in Alaska's WIA Youth Program qualify as "neediest youth." The program serves nearly 60 percent out-of-school youth, which includes a high population of youth in the juvenile justice system, those served by all grantees, and the Division of Juvenile Justice and the McLaughlin Youth Center.

The Office of Children's Services was a new grantee this year serving youth in the foster care system or alumni of the foster care system. New protocols are being developed with the Casey Family Programs and the Office of Children's Services to meet the needs of youth in care. All grantees serve Alaska Native and American Indian youth with many of these also qualifying as migrant youth according to the federal definition. Grantees from Alaska's vast coastal regions through urban centers provide support to this population.

# Success STORIES

## Jordan Lenaghan

Jordan Lenaghan needed assistance overcoming his barriers to education and occupational training. Jordan participated in the WIA Youth Construction Trades Program and the Mat-Su Borough School District Career and Tech Construction Trades course. This program builds and utilizes a residential dwelling to teach and introduce students to all aspects of construction in a real world setting, including Health and Safety, Tool Safety, Blueprint Reading, Technical Math, Framing, Wiring, Finishing, Plumbing and Heating, and Interior and Exterior Finish.

Jordan graduated from high school, worked seasonally, and has identified his need for additional training. WIA Youth Program is funding Northern Industrial Training's Heavy Equipment and CDL Class A training for him. He is earning certifications on individual pieces of equipment, Traffic Control Flagging, First Aid/CPR, and Mine Safety.



The WIA Youth program provides a system that is focused on education and employment for youth who have dropped out of the formal secondary education system. The goal is to get youth to return to school, but if not, they are encouraged to pursue a GED or an alternative avenue for receiving a high school diploma. The high school completion program which offers a state recognized diploma offered through the largest grantee, Nine Star Enterprises, Inc., increased significantly. The focus for in-school youth is to keep them in school and engaged in developing the skills needed to meet their career goals. Mathematics, reading and writing are emphasized in all activities, and provided as key elements of success. All youth receive employability skills training.

### Younger Youth Measures

The Skill Attainment measure was exceeded at 89.9 percent. This has been difficult with increased numbers of “neediest” youth who are basic skills deficient. The graduation rate for youth with a diploma or GED for the WIA Youth Program was 62.8 percent, which is higher than the graduation rate for the State of Alaska Secondary Education program at 59 percent. This was a slight increase from the previous year, but it did not quite meet the 65 percent measure negotiated. Services to “neediest” youth have increased significantly with over 80 percent of the youth served qualified as “neediest.” The Younger Youth Retention Rate was not met at 59.2 percent, but is within 80 percent of the performance measure target.

### WIA Youth Program Year 2007 July 1, 2007 – June 30, 2008

Program Performance Measure	Negotiated Performance	PY 2007 Actual Performance	80% of Negotiated Performance
<b>Younger Youth (14-18)</b>			
Skill Attainment	85.0%	89.9%	68.0%
Diploma/GED	65.0%	62.8%	52.0%
Retention and Placement	63.0%	59.2%	50.4%
<b>Older Youth (19-21)</b>			
Entered Employment Rate	73.0%	74.5%	58.4%
Credential Rate	53.0%	61.8%	42.4%
Employment Retention	75.0%	73.1%	60.0%
Earnings Change in Six Months	\$4,000	\$4,261	\$2,960
<b>Common Measures</b>			
Placement in Employment or Education	N/A	69.0%	N/A
Attainment of Degree or Certificate	N/A	60.0%	N/A
Literacy/ Numeracy Gains	N/A	21.7%	N/A



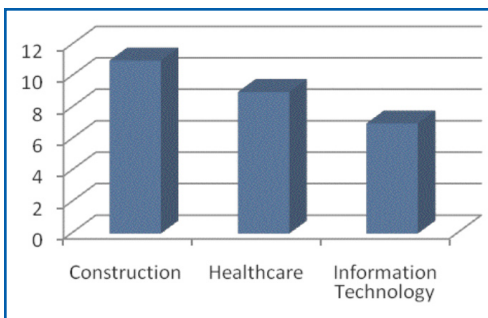
## Older Youth Measures

The Older Youth Entered Employment measure was exceeded at 74.5 percent. The department's emphasis on jobs, the enhancement of employment opportunities provided through the department's Career Guides, collaboration with the state program, the Alaska Youth First Initiative, and career pathway development contributed to this measure. The Credential and Employment measure was met at 61.8 percent. The grantees have researched opportunities for youth to meet this measure under the new guidelines. The Older Youth Retention measure was not met and is the lowest of all youth measures.

## Youth Individual Training Accounts

The waiver by ETA to allow the use of Individual Training Accounts for youth continues to promote a high quality employment training program in Alaska. The emphasis this year has been on priority industries identified by the Alaska Workforce Investment Board. Thirty-one Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) for youth were awarded for a total of \$96,848.55. Thirty-five percent of the ITAs were provided for training in construction related fields. Twenty-nine percent were provided in health care and 23 percent were provided in information technology. A total of 87 percent of the ITAs were used for training in priority industries. Only four ITAs were awarded in other, non-priority industries.

Some creative approaches to serve Alaska's youth include the development of career academies. There has been participation by WIA youth in academies that are intensive explorations in health care,



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Division of Business Partnerships.



construction, tourism, and entrepreneurship. Evidence-based research indicates that the academy approach improved student average level of school engagement; they also increased the rates at which students participated in career awareness and work-related activities (2006, Quint-, Meeting Five Critical Challenges of High School Reform).

Annual training held in PY 2007 focused on building liaisons between industry, higher education, secondary schools and tribal organizations. A session provided

**The WIA Youth program provides a system that is focused on education and employment for youth who have dropped out of the formal secondary education system.**

by the Department of Education & Early Development on developing written career plans was one of the highest ranked workshops. Participation by Alaska Job Center staff from around the state and other youth program providers emphasized the high level of integration between all youth programs, employers, organizations, and educators. Monthly teleconferences have also provided a venue for providers to share success stories and challenges. These are used as tools for training and conveying information and also as a roundtable to share and gather best practices.

In summary, the Title IB Youth program continues to play an essential role in the development of Alaska's workforce and is highly valued and supported.

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Thanks to a bright economic future based on steady growth over the past 19 years, the opportunities in mining, construction, energy and transportation and the potential of the Alaska gasline the Alaska workforce system is focused on preparing Alaskans for the opportunities perceived.

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## STATEWIDE ACTIVITIES

WIA Statewide Activities grants and programs are consistent with the AWIB's Strategic Plan, priority industries, and Alaska's WIA Two-Year State Plan for PYs 2007 and 2008. This past year the focus was on funding the required activities as described in the federal regulations. Expenditures for required activities include: disseminating the eligible training provider list;

conducting evaluations in order to establish and promote high-level performance practices; and assisting in the establishment and operation of One Stop delivery systems.

Allowable activities included: funding the One Stop academy, providing capacity building and technical assistance, supporting incumbent workers by establishing and implementing innovative programs, youth services and state administration costs.

Statewide Activities Categories	PY 2007 Expenditures
One-Stop Delivery, Capacity Building, Staff Development and Technical Assistance	\$ 315,518
Evaluation	\$ 147,025
Incumbent Worker Projects	\$ 90,910
Eligible Training Provider List and Management Information System	\$ 202,499
Youth Services	\$ 120,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 876,015</b>

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Division of Business Partnerships.

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WIA Title 1-B Funding Breakouts	Available	Expended/Obligated	Percent Expended	Remaining Balance
Adult Program Funds	\$2,407,255.00	\$1,877,018.28	78%	\$530,236.72
Adult Carry In Funds	\$268,296.00	\$252,453.70	94%	\$15,842.30
Dislocated Worker Program Funds	\$3,976,738.00	\$2,992,644.32	75%	\$984,093.68
Dislocated Worker Carry In Funds	\$387,674.00	\$387,674.00	100%	\$0.00
Youth Program Fund	\$2,598,762.00	\$2,464,994.93	95%	\$133,767.07
Youth Carry In Funds	\$334,812.00	\$13,145.73	4%	\$321,666.27
Local Administration Funds	\$998,084.00	\$686,809.07	69%	\$311,274.93
Local Administration Carry In Funds	\$348,874.00	\$177,779.39	51%	\$171,094.61
Rapid Response Funds	\$739,515.00	\$647,874.92	88%	\$91,640.08
Rapid Response Carry In Funds	\$56.00	\$56.00	100%	\$0.00
Statewide Activities Funds	\$1,891,827.00	\$1,085,798.07	57%	\$806,028.93
Statewide Activities Carry In Funds	\$1,134,974.00	\$129,717.74	11%	\$1,005,256.26
<b>Total All Fund Sources</b>	<b>\$15,086,867.00</b>	<b>\$10,715,966.15</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>\$4,370,900.85</b>

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Division of Business Partnerships.

## Cost Analysis—WIA Title 1-B Registered Participants

	Participants	Costs	Cost Per Participants
Adult	924	\$ 2,129,471	\$ 2,305
Dislocated Worker	699	\$ 3,380,318	\$ 4,836
Youth	1,108	\$ 2,595,139	\$ 2,342

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Division of Business Partnerships.

Preparing Alaskans for foreseeable changes in Alaska's economy is at the core of the PY 2007 cost effectiveness analysis. Thanks to a bright economic future based on steady growth over the past 19 years, the opportunities in mining, construction, energy and transportation and the potential of the Alaska gasline the Alaska workforce system is focused on preparing Alaskans for the opportunities perceived. By re-organizing our service delivery system, promoting apprenticeship opportunities, and leveraging new job training resources Alaska increased the number of participants in WIA job training programs.

Alaska improved performance in PY 2007 by increasing the number of participants who received quality training and by reducing the cost of training per participant. With a focus on improving service delivery to adults and dislocated workers, Alaska increased the number of participants co-enrolled in state and other federal programs. A reduction in costs associated

with serving clients was also found due to a greater number of participants and employers using the state workforce system through Internet-based points of access. These changes in practice allowed Alaska to invest in more support services, leverage funds and improve overall service to job seekers.

In PY 2008, the state will support apprenticeship opportunities as a way to meet short term workforce needs and provide for long term, skill development. In aligning the training system around registered apprenticeship, it is important that Alaska's training providers be ready to provide the just-in-time training that is the related instruction component of registered apprenticeship. Alaska expects to increase the number of participants served through this model and increase overall performance in meeting the needs of employers and the workforce.

## RAPID RESPONSE

In PY 2007, the Rapid Response Team assisted 66 businesses that were experiencing layoffs. These layoffs affected over 500 individuals. The largest layoff requiring response was Agrium, located in Kenai. Agrium operated a fertilizer plant that employed 230 full-time employees. Due to the lack of deliverable natural gas, the company shut down the facility in stages.

The Rapid Response Team worked with Agrium management and set up an on-site employee support program called the "Peer Group". The Peer Group assisted their co-workers through the "change process" by providing information, resources, tools and support. Rapid Response held multiple informational meet-

ings with the employees to raise their awareness of programs such as the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), Trade Adjustment Act (TAA), Unemployment Insurance (UI), and Health Care Tax Credit (HCTC) — all programs designed to assist workers through transition.

To assist the high number of employees in one location, the department through the Rapid Response program, established the Agrium Transition Center and staffed it with two Peer Workers and a Career Development Specialist. With funding from WIA and TAA, the former Agrium workers received assistance with job search, training and relocation planning. Résumé writing, interview classes,

## Ricco Ramirez

Elvin 'Ricco' Ramirez was a Security Guard working for Purcell at the Agrium U.S. Incorporated's fertilizer plant on the Kenai Peninsula when it closed. Following his layoff from the plant, Ricco was able to find a job in San Diego, California thanks to support and relocation assistance from the staff at the Agrium Transition Center established under the state's Rapid Response program.

Ricco told staff the financial and educational assistance that was provided, through the programs made available at the transition center, helped him obtain a good job with good pay and benefits. He now sees a happy retirement in his future, just not too soon.

Ricco plans to return to school to finish those few classes needed for his degree. All of this was made possible, Ricco said, by programs that serve to help people that "need a hand up to make it over the edge to see daylight and people who give encouragement along the way."



Success  
STORIES



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**ROPE focuses on sustainability and growth for existing businesses within each community by providing one-to-one counseling and workshops centered around a community's unique needs.**

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job search assistance, a networking club, regular newsletters, hot job alerts, Alaska Career Ready testing, and hot coffee and a bowl of soup (paid for by Agrium) are some of the services that can be found in the Transition Center. By June 30, 2008, seventy-two percent of the former Agrium employees had connected with new jobs. The assistance provided by the Transition Center staff has been instrumental in achieving these successes.

Responding to layoffs and industry declines remain a priority; however, in the past year layoffs in most urban areas have been on the decline. As a result, the program shifted to focus on projects that center around averting layoffs and business closures in rural areas. A partnership was formed and resources leveraged between the Rapid Response Program and the Small Business Development Centers to address the need.

The *ROPE* (Rural Outreach Programs for Entrepreneurs) project was developed in 12 small Southeast communities from Prince of Wales to Skagway. Other entities participating in the project include the Southeast Conference, Juneau Economic Development Corporation, state and local Southeast Chambers of Commerce, SeaAlaska Native Corporation, Goldbelt Native Association, tribal and local governments, Alaska Manufacturing Extension Program (AMEP), Alaska Works Partnership, and private consulting firms. This collaborative approach encourages the leveraging of limited resources, improves and supports increased levels of technical assistance, training, cross fertilization and communication.

*ROPE* is centered on the core services provided by the Small Business Development Center. The program focuses on sustainability and growth for existing businesses within each community by providing one-to-one counseling and workshops centered around a community's unique needs.

The project is set up in phases with **Phase I** including all initial marketing and outreach to provide information on the project and to gauge each community's interest. During this phase screenings were utilized in order to determine a general sense of the community's skill set and economic infrastructure as well as determine their need for counseling and other specific workshop or consultant needs. During **Phase II**, an in-depth assessment was completed via in-person community visits. Project staff created a strategic plan with participation by resource partners to address the specific needs of each community.

**Phase III** of this project will implement the Phase I & II strategic plan as identified by the project team community by community. A critical outcome of this project, and the last phase, **Phase IV**, provides for continued sustainability through the provision of ongoing counseling by project partners to address business and community needs. The department is currently in the third phase of the project. The successful conclusion of the *ROPE* project will hopefully lead to its expansion beyond Southeast Alaska and serve as a blueprint for other rural areas of the state.

## Success STORIES

### Rick Nelson

Rick Nelson was a 12-year employee at the Agrium U.S. Incorporated's fertilizer plant when it closed. Rick started his career at the plant in the welding shop. He later transferred to the operations department and worked in ammonia plant four.

Rick wrote the Agrium Transition Center this note:

*"Just to let you know I'm currently in the process of completing the hiring phase and have agreed to go to work as a technical writer on the North Slope for a company by the name of Abbotts Field Industrial Training, Inc. They are a contract company that was hired by BP to update process & equipment manuals. They have a long and good history with BP.*

*I just wanted to extend my thanks to all of you at the Agrium Transition Center (ATC) for the help that you have provided to me and all of my co-workers with our transition from Agrium and to all of the entities that have made it possible and provided the necessary tools, like resume reviewing and writing, interviewing skills, vocational counseling, TAA and WIA training benefits and all of the support services and the unlimited resources such as computers, faxes, phones, printers, copiers and even a warm cup of coffee and snacks.*

*It is great to be able to have a place to go to and just trade stories and possibilities of jobs and opportunities that are out there. Take care and I will be coming by from time to time to keep up on any new developments with this transition."*

Sincerely, Rick Nelson



# Trade Adjustment Assistance

Trade Act training applications from former Alyeska Pipeline and Peak Oilfield workers, as well as Alaska commercial salmon fishermen continue to come in regularly. The most noteworthy Trade Act news in Alaska during PY 2007, however, was the announcement of the impending closure of the Agrium U.S., Inc. fertilizer plant in Nikiski on the Kenai Peninsula.

Lengthy negotiations for an affordable natural gas contract that would allow Agrium to continue operations did not

materialize as hoped. This hope, combined with only minimal layoff activity beginning in 2005 and the plant's ability to keep its doors open at partial capacity, gave many workers at Agrium a false sense of security that their jobs would last. Unfortunately, this was not the case. Employee layoffs began in earnest in early December 2007, and continued in stages until the last few remaining employees of the original 230 were laid off in mid-August of 2008.



## Kimberly Peterson



Those who choose the often dangerous, always tumultuous livelihood of commercial fishing know and embrace a certain way of life. Kimberly Peterson is one of these people. She embodies the true spirit of the hard-working, risk-taking Alaska commercial salmon fisherman (Kim said that even the women prefer to be called fishermen, not fishers). When the bottom dropped out of the salmon industry at the turn of the century, it severely jeopardized the livelihoods of thousands of Alaskans, including Kim's. Kim recognized that the stakes were too high to risk procrastination, and she quickly changed her strategy for success by training for a new career path.



Kim wisely chose one of the state's highest growth industries – the health care industry. She became a Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA). Kim worked as a CNA at a senior living home in Juneau for less than \$14.00 per hour. She came to realize she liked the field of nursing and she was good at it, but the wages she was earning were too low to sustain her family. Based on this, she applied and was determined eligible for Trade Act funded training to become a registered nurse.

In the spring of 2006, Kim enrolled in an online distance education program offered through the University of Alaska-Anchorage. Online training allowed her to continue to work in Juneau where she continued to acquire CNA experience and support herself while working toward her Associate of Applied Science in Nursing. Kim earned high marks in all of her classes. She kept in regular contact, and dutifully and proudly provided her grades to the Trade Act Coordinator. Trade Act flew her to Anchorage where she completed a required two-week nursing rotation and gained valuable hands-on experience in her field. Kim successfully earned her degree in December of 2007.

Kim is a true Alaska Trade Act success story. After earning her AAS in nursing, Kim was immediately hired by Southeast Alaska's largest health care center, Bartlett Regional Hospital. She began her career as a Registered Nurse in early January of 2008, and happily reported her starting wage rate was \$24.50 per hour, a gain of more than \$10.00 per hour over her CNA wages. Kim has found a very satisfying, high wage career with the potential for personal growth and professional advancement and Alaska has gained another much needed health care professional.

## Todd Knutson

Todd Knutson worked as a process operator for eight years at Agrium U.S. Incorporated's nitrogen fertilizer production plant located on the east side of the Cook Inlet on the Kenai Peninsula. Todd is the sole bread winner for his family, which includes nine children and his wife. A deeply religious man, with strong personal beliefs and a self-reliant character, Todd was initially reluctant to accept help when faced with his job loss when the facility closed.

Like so many of his former co-workers, he eventually found himself at the door of the Agrium Transition Center established under the state's Rapid Response Program. There, friendly, familiar faces ushered him in with open arms. He said his prayers were answered when he entered the center and received assistance with résumé writing, job searches, and finally TAA/WIA relocation benefits to his new Process Operator job with a major oil company, Conoco Phillips, in Wyoming.

Todd and his family stayed in a trailer park (as a family of 11 does not fit well in a hotel) for about a month until their belongings arrived and his family could move into their new house. Todd is enjoying his new job and self sufficiency thanks to the TAA and WIA assistance he received.



During PY 2007, the Trade Act program trained 11 Agrium workers for certification into the heavy equipment and truck driving industries. The choice of training program aligns itself very well to existing construction job opportunities throughout Alaska, and also to the Governor's push for training toward Alaska's oil and gas based employment opportunities under AGIA.

Agrium had been the largest employer in the Kenai area. Its closure impacted not only the workers who lost their jobs, but also had a significant ripple effect on their families and the entire economy of Kenai. A few companies on the Alaska peninsula were able to absorb some of the workers. The lack of jobs for those with skills specific to their 20 years of employment at Agrium forced many to look for work elsewhere. A total of 14 Agrium workers took advantage of TAA relocation benefits. To date, about 70 percent of Agrium workers have been reconnected to the workforce either in Alaska or the Lower 48.



# Wagner-Peyser

The state continues to make enhancements to the online Alaska Labor Exchange System (ALEXsys). One addition was the Reemployment Services Orientation that provides beneficial information to job seekers on how to utilize the tools and features of ALEXsys. This online, self-service orientation also provides guidance and contact information for the programs we offer at the job centers (i.e. Resource Rooms, Workshops, Labor Market Information, Job Fairs, Training Services, Employer Hire Incentives, Assistance Programs, Housing Services, Veteran Services, and Disability Services) and in part satisfies a requirement to provide at least a minimum level of service to veteran beneficiaries.

The Job Center Resource Rooms continue to show increased traffic. The number of customers assisted in the Resource Rooms increased by 10.5 percent over last year. Job Center staff continue to conduct extensive outreach to both individual users and employers on how to use ALEXsys. ALEXsys assists clients to build useful online résumés, which helps em-

ployers match job seekers with the right skills necessary for their company's open recruitments.

The department adopted the Alaska Career Ready program into the Alaska Job Centers as an added service to job seekers and employers. The Alaska Career Ready program allows students and adult job-seekers to evaluate their readiness for work, college and occupational training and to improve the basic skills valued by employers and educators.

By taking these three assessments an individual can earn a nationally recognized Alaska Career Ready Certificate (ACRC) which demonstrates their current skills level to employers. The assessments are available in nine of our job centers located throughout the state. WorkKeys® pre-assessment courseware is also available in each Alaska Job Center. Programs include targeted, self-paced instruction, pre-assessments, complete learning management systems and occupational job profiles databases. These components can be used to help job seekers learn, practice and demonstrate the skills they need to succeed in the jobs and careers they desire. The courseware helps prepare students and job seekers who are looking to earn the ACRC.



## Diane Maple



Diane Maple, a high school teacher, came to the Bristol Bay Job Center in January 2008, seeking to expand her experience outside of rural Alaska where she had been teaching. Employment Security Specialist Pat Owens discussed with Diane numerous job opportunities in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau. He focused on openings with the Department of Education & Early Development and the University of Alaska that correlated to Diane's work experience and education.

In March, Diane returned to the job center with her résumé and cover letter for critique. Pat helped Diane to access the State's online recruitment tool, Workplace Alaska, as well as the University of Alaska's job websites to post her résumé and seek new employment. Later that month, Diane was contacted by both the state and university to schedule phone interviews. Diane sharpened her interview skills by participating in a series of seven mock phone interviews conducted at the Job Center in April.

Diane contacted the Job Center in May with the good news that she had accepted the job of Statewide Tech Prep Grant Coordinator with the University of Alaska Anchorage. Her starting salary of \$52,000 for an 11-month contract position exceeded that of her teaching position in rural Alaska.





## Veterans' Services

The Veterans' Job Lab at the Muldoon Job Center has been open for nearly one year. Two Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists assigned there assist Veterans' Affairs, and Veterans' Rehabilitation & Employment (VA VR&E) Chapter 31 clients along with all veterans who visit the lab. The lab is located within the Resource Room in a private area with a computer, fax and telephone on-site. In PY 2007, the lab served 612 veterans.

The department's Veterans Team in Anchorage continues to partner with the VA VR&E and State Vocational Rehabilitation to offer Job Center orientations for veterans. The two-hour orientation is offered

once a month. The orientation provides information on all of the services available for veterans and also includes referral to other resources.

Staff was fortunate to participate in a course that provided greater awareness of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) to help in medical services referrals. A DVOP from Anchorage participated in a six week training session on TBI through the University of Alaska Anchorage Center for Human Development, Alaska Brain Injury Network (ABIN), Inc. and Telehealth Idaho Virtual Grand Rounds. ABIN partnered with Idaho State University to connect Alaska to the Idaho Virtual Grand Round Series and veterans.

Anchorage offices conduct an annual Veterans' Job Fair each fall near Veteran's Day. Sixty-seven employers participated with over 1,000 veterans and active-duty service members attending. The job fair has become quite successful with the number of employers participating only limited by the space available. Anchorage and Fairbanks veteran representatives partnered with the Department of Veterans' Affairs to provide services to homeless veterans via "STAND DOWN" activity. STAND DOWNS are typically one- to three-day events providing services to homeless veterans such as food, shelter, clothing, health screenings, VA and Social Security benefits counseling, and referrals to a variety of other necessary services, such as housing, employment and substance abuse treatment.

The Veterans' Program currently has six Transition Assistant Program (TAP) and Army Career Alumni Program (ACAP) facilitators statewide. The TAP courses are specifically designed to prepare participants for military-to-civilian transition. Attendees are taught principles in setting objectives, networking, writing resumes and cover letters, interviewing techniques, and other job search skills in order to find civilian employment. In October, 2007, there was a revision to the TAP curriculum which added a day to the workshop. The attendees are currently required, at a minimum, to complete a hand written resume by the conclusion of the workshop. In addition to TAP workshops held at Army and Air Force installations, during PY 2007 there were four

## Success STORIES

### Jacob Percival

Robert "Jacob" Percival was referred to the Juneau Job Center Career Support and Training WIA program by the Helmets to Hard Hats apprenticeship coordinator. Jacob, a recently separated Operation Iraqi Freedom veteran, had been looking for work for two months after separating from service. Jacob had applied for the ironworkers apprenticeship having done some construction laborer work prior to his enlistment.

He was accepted into the apprenticeship but he needed a little help before and during training. Jacob's wife, a homemaker, was taking care of two small children and he "just did not know how he would ever be able to take care of his family on Unemployment during the five weeks of training."

Jacob was enrolled in the WIA Dislocated Worker Program, and being unemployed, he was co-enrolled in the State Training and Employment Program. WIA and STEP supportive services helped Jacob with tools, transportation, short term rental assistance, and safety gear to support him and his family during training and into employment.

Jacob successfully completed his first round of training and immediately started to work upon completion of training. He is currently making \$16.50 plus overtime in the construction industry as a first-year ironworker apprentice.

TAP workshops held at Fort Richardson's Warrior Transition Unit (WTU) and two at the Kodiak Coast Guard Station. The WTU unit replaces Medical Hold Companies and houses active and reserve personnel with a new level of care for injured soldiers. The WTU mission is to facilitate the healing and rehabilitation of soldiers, return them to duty when possible, or to prepare them for a successful life as a veteran in their community.

### TAP Workshop, PY 2007

Quarter	Number of Workshops	Participants
July–September	16	274
October–December	13	294
January–March	16	412
April–June	21	492
<b>Total</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>1,472</b>

The Veterans Program continues to build a working partnership with the Helmets to Hardhats (H2H) program. There were 228 new registrants on the H2H site in PY 2007 in Alaska; a total of 50 veterans have entered apprenticeship programs during that same time and one went directly to journeyman status. Veterans that are interested in apprenticeship opportunities are encouraged by Alaska Job Center staff to register with H2H. The H2H coordinator provided Alaska Job Centers with veterans' information training on H2H and apprenticeship opportunities. The training was provided to all 24 Alaska Job Center teams.

## Gregory Gaul and Donald Simmons

# Success STORIES

When he leaves the military, 25-year-old Gregory Gaul looks forward to spending more time with his daughter. She is two years old, and so far he has spent half of her life at war. In Afghanistan, Gaul helped build a road that cut through Taliban strongholds. He often worked 17-hour shifts operating a scraper, followed by several hours of guard duty to protect equipment while soldiers slept. Serving his country in the military is something Gaul says he always wanted to do. And now that he's getting out of the military, he's pursuing another life-goal. He plans to support his young daughter by working in the construction trades.

Through the H2H program, Gaul recently completed Commercial Driver's License training. This fast-track, three-week course was provided by the Alaska Teamsters-Employers Service Training Trust in Palmer. This CDL training was unique in that it was provided to a class of all veterans. Gaul and eight other fellow veterans now have CDLs and are ready to go to work.

Transitioning from military service to a civilian job can be a big challenge. "I went directly from high school into the Army," said Donald Simmons, who also completed the H2H CDL course. He is 30 years-old and an Army veteran of Afghanistan. "The structure of military life versus civilian life is totally different. The only trade I ever had was the military."

Fred Ready, director of the Teamster Training Center/Center for Employment Training (CEE), understands completely. His own military service spans 31 years. When he returned from Vietnam in 1973, programs like Helmets to Hardhats didn't exist. He said that Helmets to Hardhats reflects how society's attitudes toward veterans have changed. The public now recognizes that veterans need and deserve support when returning from war. He also cited job training as the most pressing need for people leaving the military. Ready said, "The training provided by Helmets to Hardhats offers veterans the skills and qualifications to work in the civilian job market."

Kevin Hanley, Alaska Apprentice and Training Coordinators Association president, said that Helmets to Hardhats has given the construction trades some of its best apprentices. Ready agreed. "The ones who succeed in the training are stellar performers. The military has instilled discipline which is key and essential in any job market."

