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New Alliance to Implement Statewide Workforce Development Plan



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With a new plan in hand to help Alaska businesses fill job openings, the Alaska Safety Alliance (ASA) is launching the Alaska Workforce Alliance (AWA). A collaboration between ASA and the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) culminated this month with the publication of *Alaska's Workforce Future*, compiling stakeholder input to define a pathway ahead. AWA will drive implementation in partnership DOLWD, the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB), and industry leaders.

From Vision to Opportunity

"The Alaska Workforce Alliance will be instrumental in transforming this vision into real

opportunities," says AWA Executive Director Mari Selle. "By establishing systems that can support collaboration between industry, educators, and communities, we can create lasting workforce solutions that connect Alaskans with meaningful careers, support businesses, and drive economic growth across the state."

Selle had been ASA's maritime director prior to forming AWA last fall while she helped develop the workforce plan. Through a statewide task force and cross-industry collaboration, ASA helped shape a plan that identifies key workforce challenges, sets strategic goals, and provides a framework for action.

Chief goals and strategies include enhancing career awareness and pathways for young Alaskans, expanding training programs and apprenticeships, retaining and attracting new Alaskans by improving access to post-secondary education, and marketing Alaska's employment opportunities beyond Alaska. Other goals and strategies include the creation of regional workforce development teams for local projects, addressing infrastructure gaps like housing and childcare, and fostering collaboration between AWA, AWIB, and other private sector partners to serve as coordinating organizations to implement these goals and strategies.

"ASA is proud to help champion the next phase of *Alaska's Workforce Future* by establishing the Alaska Workforce Alliance as a dedicated resource moving forward. Through this commitment, we are reinforcing our partnerships with the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, AWIB, industry leaders, and other stakeholders to create meaningful opportunities for Alaskans, laying the foundation for a stronger, more resilient workforce that meets the needs of our state today and in the future," says ASA President and CEO Cari-Ann Carty.

One of AWA's early focus areas will be the development of a statewide workforce information hub to help employers, educators, and policymakers make informed decisions about labor market trends and training needs. Additional efforts will include collaborations with industry partners to promote high-demand career opportunities and launch new or expanded workforce programs designed to address skills gaps in key sectors.

"Employers throughout Alaska have been heavily involved in shaping this plan from the beginning, and our engagement doesn't stop there," says José Owens of American Marine Corporation, a member of the AWA industry advisory committee. "With its strong network and expertise, AWA provides an efficient way for businesses to stay engaged in workforce development without navigating complex systems. Workforce challenges impact every industry-investing in this effort today means building the skilled workforce businesses need for long-term success."

AWA will continue working closely with DOLWD, AWIB, employers, and private sector partners to ensure workforce initiatives remain adaptable, responsive, and aligned with the needs of businesses and job seekers. Priorities for 2025 include launching initiatives that expand career awareness, improve access to workforce data, and strengthen employer-led training programs. AWA will also support efforts to retain Alaskans in the workforce, attract skilled workers to the state, and connect employers with all available talent pools, including rural communities and legal immigrant workers.

"*Alaska's Workforce Future* is a vision for the future of Alaska's workforce," says DOLWD Commissioner Catherine Muñoz. "The goals, strategies, and action items outlined in the plan will improve training pathways so that Alaskans can get and maintain quality jobs in Alaska."

Alaska has had workforce development plans before. The new report, designed to address needs at



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least through 2030, examined plans dating back to 2006 that covered industries ranging from construction and mining to broadband internet and mariculture. The final plan reflects common themes and strategies found in eleven different plans.

Alaska's Workforce Future was made possible through initial funding from the Denali Commission, along with contributions from ASA and DOLWD. The ASA website has links to the [full document](#).

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