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Go to AlaskaWorkforceAlliance.org to review attachments[1].

Acknowledgements
The Alaska Safety Alliance and the State of Alaska with support from the Denali Commission joined to create the Alaska's Workforce Future Plan. An Industry Advisory Council (IAC) advised strategic planning. IAC members represent air transportation, trucking, maritime, oil and gas, construction, telecommunications, mining, property management, health care, education, and government. The IAC designated upgrading communication and collaboration among employers, educators, government agencies, and young Alaskans as a priority objective.

Special thanks to Dan Robinson, Chief, Research & Analysis, Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, without whom the survey would have been impossible; Dan provided a database of ~19,000 emails to be used in confidence and destroyed on completion. After data were cleaned of duplicates, incomplete addresses, and errors, the file contains 14,368 usable records, and that database was returned to R&A AKDOLWD. The Alaska's Workforce Future Planning Team overseen by the Alaska Safety Alliance also includes Mike Andrews of MCA Strategies, Marcia Olson of The Write Details, and Jamie Hanson of Information Insights along with FOF Communications which authored this report.

[1] Employer survey comments are confidential and are not posted on the website.

Report of Employer Survey: Summary of Key Findings

- For survey design/distribution methods and respondent demographics, see the full report.
- Responses from employers of all sizes and economic regions in 23 major industries show 80% of employers report *moderate* to *extreme difficulty* recruiting new employees; 66% cannot find qualified workers, and 57% report *moderate* to *extreme difficulty* retaining new employees.
- When recruiting new employees, each employer uses an average of 4.6 methods. 68% use social media, 44% use job boards, 36% use online recruiters, 34% use state job centers, 27% use job fairs, 21% use schools or training centers, 15% use associations, 11% use unions, and 10% use ANCI-Tribal.
- Employers report a number of perceived barriers to employment. Atop the list is no qualified workers (66%), followed by aging workforce (31%), work in rural areas (25%), unable to retain new hires (25%), lack of housing (23%), competition from other employers (22%), and lack of transportation (20%).
- 76% of employers think it is *extremely* or *very important* that employers and education/training entities work together to ensure training and education align with industry needs, but only 23% think they actually do so.
- 84% of employers of all sizes say there are not enough communications and collaboration among employers, educators, and local, state, and federal agencies.
- 65% think strengthening connections among employers, educators, training providers, and local, state, and federal government agencies is a valuable goal in solving the labor shortage. Indeed, 76% of employers agree that the siloed information in the private and public sectors is difficult to acquire and use. All this indicates a strong desire for improved communications.
- When asked how frequently they engage with other employers, organizations, trainers, or educators on various workforce development issues, as many as 87% of the employers never or only annually engage in some of these essential activities
- When considering 7 basic soft skills and 6 basic hard skills desired in employees, an average of 94% employers report that the soft skills are important but only 55% say employees they hire actually possess the skills; 78% report that the hard skills are important but only 54% say employees they hire actually possess the skills.
- When considering 5 goals selected by the Alaska's Workforce Future Industry Advisory Council in February 2024, more than 60% of responding employers report the five goals to be of value, but on average only about 12% of employers think the goals have been attained.
- Employers made hundreds of comments in multiple free-form spaces in the survey. This qualitative information is at least as valuable as the quantitative data analyzed in this report. A review of the comments is strongly recommended. A sample comment appears below.

"I hope this survey isn't an attempt at just collecting information for a Board or Committee to evaluate, which they then ask for a plan to review 3 months, then vote on whatever plan/action can then be written into an actionable format for approval. Then at the next 3 month meeting, decide whether to hire people to carry out the plan, then send a request to … to write a PD for the positions needed to carry out said plan.... it goes on forever and nothing gets done."

– Respondent Comment from Sole Prop or LLC

Alaska's Workforce Future
Report of Employer Survey

Background
Alaska's employers face a two-pronged workforce challenge.

Loss of Working Age Population. The Alaskan working age population is declining. New workers cannot be reliably recruited from the Lower 48 because most other states also face labor shortages. Alaska's working-age population peaked in 2013 at about 479,000 and fell to about 452,000 by 2021, a 5.6% *decline*, compared to a national rate of 2% *growth* during the same period, according to Eric Sandberg, a demographer with AKDOLWD Research and Analysis. Only West Virginia and Wyoming, with 8% and 6% declines, have seen higher losses in working-age populations.

The working age population is declining in part due to aging workers leaving the workforce. But the most significant factor in the decline – and the one that will matter most in workforce development – is that young Alaskans who could step in to fill the job openings are leaving the state. About 50% of high school graduates leave Alaska, and half of them do not return. In essence, the workforce of tomorrow is leaving Alaska today. The Alaska's Workforce Future Student Survey (Attachment 2) details some of the challenges and motivations behind this phenomenon.

Increase in Work Opportunity. There are more than 20,000 posted and unfilled jobs in Alaska today. The economy is growing. An additional 5,400 new jobs will be created in 2024 and more than another 5,000 in 2025. Alaska is expected to have in excess of $20 billion in new infrastructure and resource development projects by 2030. To complete those projects, another 20,000 new workers may be needed. Immigration alone cannot solve Alaska's potential need for up to 40,000 new workers or compensate for the chronic outmigration of younger Alaskans.

These challenges have left Alaska's employers facing a skilled labor shortage with more skilled but aging workers retiring out of the system and with fewer younger, skilled entrants to replace them, with almost two job openings available for every qualified worker.

Alaska has a choice. Either meet the challenge with changes in recruiting, retaining, skilling, and reskilling of workers by opening new communications channels among students, job seekers, employers, educators and trainers, and state and regional entities – or face perpetual labor shortages.

Making this transformation requires a new kind of workforce development plan that triggers changes in Alaska's education and training institutions, in the roles of employers and local communities, in how communications are managed, and in the pathways and incentives available for the new workforce.

Purpose of the Surveys
To examine potential barriers to workforce transformation, as well as to probe some institutional capacities and assess their perceived impacts, two surveys were conducted. One survey sampled Alaska high school youth along with new workers and job seekers; the other sampled a wide range of employers of all sizes and economic regions across nearly all major industries in the State of Alaska. Both surveys are cross-sectional studies; that is, observational studies analyzing data from a population at a single point in time.

Summary of Results and Conclusions

In brief, the surveys reveal that some resources for skilling and upskilling Alaskan youth for the Alaskan workforce of tomorrow may have a positive impact when used, but all are likely underutilized, unevenly available, and not well marketed or communicated to Alaska's youth or employers.

Survey responses from employers of all sizes and economic regions in 23 major industries show 74% of employers disagree or strongly disagree that high schools provide work-ready employees; 80% report moderate to extreme difficulty recruiting new employees; 66% cannot find qualified workers, 57% report

moderate to extreme difficulty retaining new employees, and 76% agree that siloed information in the private and public sectors is difficult to acquire and use.

At the same time, 65% of high school students surveyed report thinking about leaving Alaska. AKDOL data show 50% actually do leave, and half do not return. Most high school students and other survey respondents have not been exposed to existing career options through traditional career development methods such as job fairs, career counselors, career courses, and school to work. This suggests that job and career information may not be easily or uniformly available. (see Report of Student Survey, Appendix 2)

Based on these results, to reduce barriers and improve resource use, much of the *existing* activity for skilling/upskilling workers and for meeting employer workforce demands should be communicated widely, with *feedback mechanisms* and results measured across the board on an ongoing annual basis, as recommended in the Alaska's Workforce Future Plan.

Several existing state programs, such as those in Colorado and Oregon, are making significant strides in applying these strategies and should be examined for applicability to Alaska, where staffing and budgetary issues for schools constrain how much more can be done. A coordinated effort would be needed to address the barriers employers report to hiring new workers, which include skills gaps, housing issues, child care, transportation, and local training facility options.

To address the apparent lack of broad access to career pathways and career information for students and employers, it is recommended that career programs be *informally interconnected* by a private sector workforce intermediary whose responsibilities include *upgrading communications* and *feedback* among all players, especially young people and employers. It is crucial to move quickly with innovative open access websites such as Colorado's open access website, My Colorado Journey (mycoloradojourney.com/industries) as a function of the workforce intermediary.

Research Methods

Both surveys rely on a correlational research design with supplemental Chi-square analysis to examine relationships among selected factors impacting student and employer knowledge, beliefs, and experiences that may weigh on their workforce choices.

The aim of a correlational study is not to measure changes, but to suggest alignments that impact outcomes so that potential areas of change can be identified. A correlation reflects the strength and/or direction of the relationship between two or more variables. Correlation does not imply causation. The direction of a correlation may be positive or negative. Correlation studies can help suggest change and offer a baseline for future comparisons. Questionnaire design and sampling methods are discussed in each report.

Statewide Cross-Industries Employer Survey

The survey is designed to answer four fundamental questions: 1) Are Alaska employers having difficulty recruiting employees? 2) What methods do employers use for recruiting? 3) What barriers to employment impact Alaska employers? and 4) What structural issues frustrate or facilitate access to qualified workers as perceived by employers? The survey also measures secondary issues such as engagement among employers and trainers/educators and perceived performance of training and educational institutions; soft and hard skills valued by employers, and goals of Alaska's Workforce Future.

Questionnaire Design and Distribution

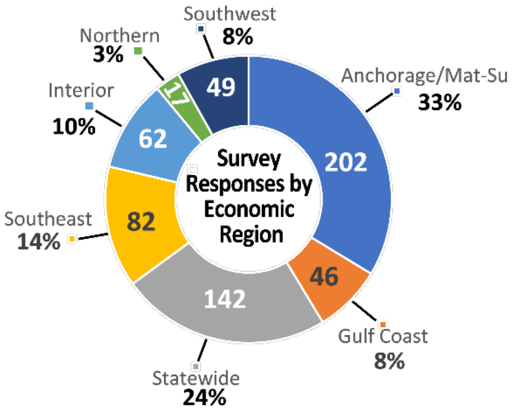
The survey questionnaire was designed with input from Alaska subject matter experts in workforce development and reviewed by the Industry Advisory Committee.

The cross-sectional survey was conducted statewide using a database of ~19,000 employer emails provided in confidence by the AKDOL R&A section. After data were cleaned of duplicates, incomplete addresses, and errors, the file contains 15,841 usable records. An additional 1,437 were excluded because they were not associated with any Economic Region, leaving 14,386 usable records. Over a three-week period in April 2024, a series of three automated email messages was sent to each employer in precisely timed tranches. Each message contains links to the State press release on the Alaska's Workforce Future website, the home page, and the online Employer Survey. The emails resulted in 4,798 unique site visits and 5,212 views of the State press release on the Alaska's Workforce Future site, and 576 completed surveys. (A few responses were obtained by ASA.) Fifty-one percent (295) of survey respondents are willing to talk by phone or email.

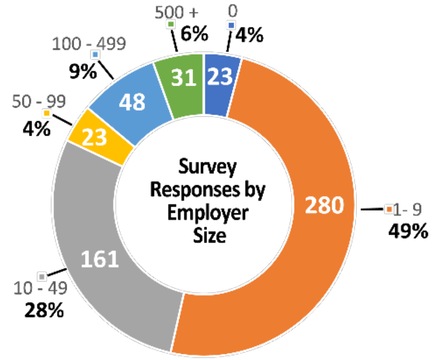
RESULTS

Results are presented in six sections: *Overview of Respondent Demographics, Recruiting and Hiring Challenges, Methods of Recruiting, Barriers to Employment, Structural Effects, and Other Issues*.

Overview of Respondent Demographics



A total of 576 responses were received from employers in more than 23 major industries operating statewide (N=142) and in 6 economic regions: Anchorage/Mat-Su (N=202), Gulf Coast (N=46), Southeast (N=82), Interior (N=62), Northern (N=17), and Southwest (N=49). The total (N=600) exceeds the number of responses because 24 employers selected more than one economic region.



Respondents are classified into five size categories based on number of employees, distributed as follows: 1-9 (N=280), 10-49 (N=161), 50-99 (N=23), 100-499 (N=48), 500+ (N=31), and 0 (N=23). Employers with 0 employees either currently have no employees or have gone out of business; they are used in some analyses but not in others.

Goodness of Fit Tests. Chi-square tests on the next page are used to assess the *goodness of fit* of this sample of 576 respondents for employer size and economic region compared with the 14,368 employers in the State pool. The sample is self-selected; time and resources did not permit a random or a stratified sample.

Economic Region comparisons (Chi-square p=0.000) show oversampling of employers in the Southeast and Southwest and undersampling in Anchorage/Matsu with 202 sampled vs 241.3 *expected*, in the Gulf Coast with 46 sampled vs 65.2 *expected*, and in the Northern region with 17 sampled vs 26.5 *expected*. However, respondents operating statewide may offset some of the undersampling as the state record contains no statewide category and represent 142 employers not accounted for in the comparison.

Economic Regions in Survey Sample vs State Database

		Sample	State DB	
Anchorage/ Matsu	Actual	202	7,611	7,813
	Expected	241.32	7.571.68	
Gulf Coast	Actual	46	2,064	2,110
	Expected	65.17	2,0044.83	
Southeast	Actual	82	1,905	1,987
	Expected	61.37	1,925.63	
Interior	Actual	62	1,867	1,929
	Expected	59.58	1,869.42	
Northern	Actual	17	330	347
	Expected	26.48	320.52	
Southwest	Actual	49	593	642
	Expected	19,83	622.17	
p =0.000		**458**	**14,370**	14,828

Employer size comparisons show overrepresentation of employers in the four largest size categories in our sample (Chi-square p=0.000). The smallest category (0-9) is underrepresented (432 *expected*, 303 actual). The results should still be useful in regard to employers with 10 to 500+ employees, who comprise a substantial economic block in the state, all oversampled. The minor limitation may be further disregarded in light of the difficulty of attempting to obtain responses from a strict statistically representative sample of these 14,368 employers in any context but particularly given the modest conditions of this study.

Employer Size in Survey Sample vs State DB

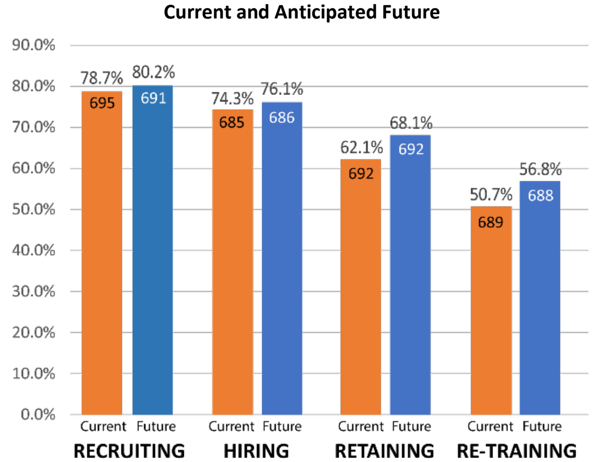
		Sample	State DB	
0-9	Actual	303	11,107	11,410
	Expected	432.47	10,977.53	
10-49	Actual	161	2,729.47	2,837
	Expected	107.53	3,405.29	
50-99	Actual	23	328	351
	Expected	13.30	337.70	
100-499	Actual	48	215	263
	Expected	9.97	253.03	
500+	Actual	31	41	72
	Expected	2.73	69.27	
	p =0.000	**566**	**14,367**	14,933

Recruiting and Hiring Challenges

Do Alaska employers experience difficulty recruiting employees? The answer is yes. 93% of respondents agree that employers in all industries struggle to find and place workers with current and up to date skills.

79% report *'moderate'* to *'extreme difficulty'* recruiting new employees and 74% report *'moderate' to 'extreme difficulty'* hiring new employees, as shown in the bar graph at right. Retaining and re-training are also difficult with 62% currently finding it difficult to retain employees and 50% having difficulties re-training new employees.

Employer Difficulties Recruiting, Hiring, Retaining, and Re-Training
Current and Anticipated Future



Further, employers expect these barriers to increase slightly in the future: recruiting (80%), hiring (76%), retaining (68%), and re-training (57%).

Several nationwide surveys find 70% of employers having similar difficulty. Our results in Alaska are consistent with that. These challenges for Alaskan employers are reported across all industries, all sizes, and all economic areas, as exemplified in Table 1 on page 5. In Attachment 1, tables displaying employers' reported expectations for the future are presented.

Table 1:
Percent Employers Reporting Current *Moderate* or *Extreme Difficulty*
Recruiting, Hiring, Retaining, and Re-Training New Employees (Q9)

Industry	Recruiting		Hiring		Retaining		Re-training	
		N=		N=		N=		N=
Agriculture	40.0%	5	20.0%	5	40.0%	5	20.0%	5
Construction	77.8%	90	74.4%	90	63.3%	90	48.9%	90
Ed or Train	80.0%	35	77.1%	35	65.7%	35	62.9%	35
fin / Ins	91.7%	12	58.3%	12	58.3%	12	66.7%	12
Fishing/Hunting	66.7%	24	66.7%	24	58.3%	24	33.3%	24
Food/Hospitality	82.3%	62	71.0%	62	64.5%	62	41.9%	62
Forestry	100.0%	1	100.0%	1	100.0%	1	100.0%	1
Health Care	80.4%	56	69.6%	56	53.6%	56	32.1%	56
info/Media	40.0%	5	40.0%	5	20.0%	5	40.0%	5
It/Tech/Digital	69.2%	13	46.2%	13	38.5%	13	38.5%	13
Manufacturing	85.0%	20	80.0%	20	65.0%	20	60.0%	20
Military	50.0%	2	50.0%	2	0.0%	2	0.0%	2
Mining	33.3%	3	66.7%	3	33.3%	3	33.3%	3
Nonprofit	86.4%	44	77.3%	44	72.7%	44	68.2%	44
Oil & Gas/Energy	57.9%	19	52.6%	19	57.9%	19	47.4%	19
Other	85.4%	89	80.9%	89	60.7%	89	49.4%	89
Prof/Tech Services	63.3%	60	63.3%	60	43.3%	60	30.0%	60
Real Estate	75.0%	20	75.0%	20	65.0%	20	60.0%	20
State, Fed, Local Gov	79.4%	34	82.4%	34	73.5%	34	64.7%	34
Telecom	90.0%	10	90.0%	10	80.0%	10	80.0%	10
Tourism/Travel	88.9%	27	81.5%	27	59.3%	27	51.9%	27
Transport/Warehouse	92.0%	25	88.0%	25	68.0%	25	64.0%	25
Utilities	63.0%	46	58.7%	46	63.0%	46	56.5%	46
Wholesale Trade	37.5%	8	37.5%	8	62.5%	8	25.0%	8
Grand Total	77.0%	**710***	71.7%	**710***	60.6%	**710***	49.2%	**710***

**Total exceeds total respondents because some employers operate in more than one industry.*

In this cross-sectional analysis of employer responses, the conclusion is inescapable that all of Alaska's industries, regardless of size or region, are struggling with recruiting, hiring, retention, and re-training of their workforces. Our analysis found no significant differences based on employer size for current challenges of recruiting, hiring, retaining, and retraining. Examination of employers by the economic regions they serve shows there is a significant difference for only one, the Southwest, where the null hypothesis of equal probability is rejected for difficulty retaining employees (expected 30.4, actual 41, $p= 0.021$), which means employers in that region report retention is *more difficult* than in other regions. Other tables and chi-square results for these questions are provided in Attachment 2.

Why are employers having difficulty recruiting, hiring, retaining, and re-training? A partial explanation is provided in the next section on Barriers to Employment.

It is important to remember this is a cross-sectional survey, capturing results as a slice in a moment of time. A mechanism should be in place to conduct similar surveys *periodically*, at least annually and perhaps more often and more focused by region or industry. A more robust sampling methodology would be beneficial. We found that, for the most part, employers welcome the opportunity to comment and 51% agreed to participate in follow-up interviews.

Methods of Recruiting

What methods do employers use for recruiting? How do methods vary by employer size and by economic region? How can State recruitment and career pathway offerings be improved?

Table 2: Resources Used for Recruiting and Hiring (Q13)

Rank of Totals %	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
# of Employees	Social Media	Job Boards	Other Resources	Online Recruiters	State Job Centers	Job Fairs	Schools/ Trg Ctrs	Assoc.	Unions	ANC-Tribal	N= 566
TOTALS	67.8%	44.0%	39.0%	36.2%	33.6%	27.0%	20.8%	14.7%	10.8%	9.4%	

Table 2 shows overall reported recruitment resources used by the employers. No employer used only one method; on average, each employer used 4.6. On average, most employers rely on SOCIAL MEDIA (68%) for recruiting and hiring. The second most used method is JOB BOARDS (44%), while OTHER RESOURCES (39%) and ONLINE RECRUITERS (36%) are each used by a sizable minority. The more formal methods are also used by a minority of the employers; STATE JOB CENTERS (34%), JOB FAIRS (27%), SCHOOLS OR TRAINING CENTERS (21%), ASSOCIATIONS (15%), UNIONS (11%), and ANC-TRIBAL (10%). The most often mentioned of the OTHER RESOURCES are WORD OF MOUTH (51%) followed by JOB WEBSITES (18%), and LOCAL ADS (12%). Only one employer listed SCHOLARSHIPS as a recruiting method.

Methods of Recruitment by Employer Size. Table 3 compares recruiting methods used by employers based on size. In general, recruiting methods do not vary much by employer size. [Note: Some employers report 0 employees because they cannot fill the few job openings they have.]

Table 3: Resources Used for Recruiting and Hiring, by Employer Size (Q13)

Rank of Totals %	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
# of Employees	Social Media	Job Boards	Other Resources	Online Recruiters	State Job Centers	Job Fairs	Schools/ Trg Ctrs	Assoc.	Unions	ANC-Tribal	Method Count*
0	4	2	7	6	4	1	2	3	0	1	30
(N=23)	17.4%	8.7%	30.4%	26.1%	17.4%	4.3%	8.7%	13.0%	0.0%	4.3%	
1-9	168	98	113	78	75	35	33	37	10	16	663
(N=280)	60.0%	35.0%	40.4%	27.9%	26.8%	12.5%	11.8%	13.2%	3.6%	5.7%	
10-49	124	72	62	69	41	33	31	19	10	16	477
(N=161)	77.0%	44.7%	38.5%	42.9%	25.5%	20.5%	19.3%	11.8%	6.2%	9.9%	
50-99	14	12	8	9	6	10	8	2	1	2	72
(N=23)	60.9%	52.2%	34.8%	39.1%	26.1%	43.5%	34.8%	8.7%	4.3%	8.7%	
100-499	42	42	18	26	40	42	25	9	25	9	278
(N=48)	87.5%	87.5%	37.5%	54.2%	83.3%	87.5%	52.1%	18.8%	52.1%	18.8%	
500+	31	23	13	17	24	31	19	13	15	9	195
(N=31)	100.0%	74.2%	41.9%	54.8%	77.4%	100.0%	61.3%	41.9%	48.4%	29.0%	
TOTAL	**384**	**249**	**221**	**205**	**190**	**153**	**118**	**83**	**61**	**53**	1,717
(N=566)	67.8%	44.0%	39.0%	36.2%	33.6%	27.0%	20.8%	14.7%	10.8%	9.4%	

**Note: Method Count exceeds the number of respondents because some respondents report multiple recruitment methods.*

Tests of the null hypothesis of no difference in employer size categories using chi-square show employer size is not associated with selection priority for recruitment methods, with three exceptions (see chi-Square comparisons by employer size in Attachment 3). Significant differences in equal probability measures are found for: UNIONS (chi-square p=.000), JOB FAIRS (chi-square p=.000), and OTHER RESOURCES (chi-square p=.000).

The chi-square tests show UNIONS used less often than expected by all sizes of employers, except the 100-499 category. JOB FAIRS are used more often than expected by employers with 50-99 employees (6.72 expected, 10 actual) and by employers with 100-499 employees (26 expected, 42 actual). OTHER RESOURCES are used more often than expected by employers with 1-9 employees (88.6 expected, 113 actual) and less often by employers with 100-499 employees (33.8 expected, 18 actual) and by employers with 500+ employees (23.7 expected, 13 actual) (see chi-Square tests in Attachment 3).

These results offer few surprises. Unions generally serve larger employers such as those with 100 to 499 employees. Small employers, such as those with 1 to 9 employees, are more likely to use word of mouth or local advertisement because it is less costly and more localized, and we would expect larger employers, those with more than 100 employees, to be least likely to use word of mouth or local advertising.

A positive surprise may be the popularity of JOB FAIRS, the sixth most used method. The Alaska's Workforce Future Student Survey results show JOB FAIR use is associated with higher likelihood that a student or job seeker is *not* thinking of leaving Alaska. Here we see that job fairs tend to serve larger more stable employers. In fact, 100% of employers with 500+ workers use job fairs. Expanding job fairs to a broader array of locations, and encouraging participation by smaller employers, might be advantageous for employers and job seekers.

Methods of Recruiting by Employer Region. Table 4 shows that the pattern of recruiting methods varies by region; for example, the Northern region relies more on STATE JOB CENTERS and SCHOOLS/TRAINING CENTERS than do Anchorage/Mat-Su or Southeast. Also, UNION and ANC-TRIBAL organizations are most used by statewide employers, as are SOCIAL MEDIA, ASSOCIATIONS, and JOB FAIRS.

Table 4: Methods Used for Recruiting and Hiring, by Employer Region (Q13)

Rank of Totals %	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Employer Region	Social Media	Job Boards	Other Resources	Online Recruiters	State Job Centers	Job Fairs	Schools/ Trg Ctrs	Assocs	Unions	ANC-Tribal	Method Count*
Anch-MS	119	75	79	86	52	37	40	34	14	5	**541**
(n=202)	58.9%	37.1%	39.1%	42.6%	25.7%	18.3%	19.8%	16.8%	6.9%	2.5%	
Gulf Coast	33	16	22	10	16	7	5	1	0	2	**112**
(n=46)	71.7%	34.8%	47.8%	21.7%	34.8%	15.2%	10.9%	2.2%	0.0%	4.3%	
Statewide	118	76	43	61	82	76	52	36	42	31	**617**
(n=147)	80.3%	51.7%	29.3%	41.5%	55.8%	51.7%	35.4%	24.5%	28.6%	21.1%	
Southeast	53	41	28	20	22	18	13	6	0	6	**207**
(n=82)	64.6%	50.0%	34.1%	24.4%	26.8%	22.0%	15.9%	7.3%	0.0%	7.3%	
Interior	46	34	37	21	20	9	9	10	6	6	**198**
(n=62)	74.2%	54.8%	59.7%	33.9%	32.3%	14.5%	14.5%	16.1%	9.7%	9.7%	
Northern	9	12	8	3	10	5	8	3	3	2	**63**
(n=18)	50.0%	66.7%	44.4%	16.7%	55.6%	27.8%	44.4%	16.7%	16.7%	11.1%	
Southwest	27	27	20	15	14	12	8	2	0	6	**131**
(n=49)	55.1%	55.1%	40.8%	30.6%	28.6%	24.5%	16.3%	4.1%	0.0%	12.2%	
TOTAL**	**384**	**249**	**221**	**205**	**190**	**153**	**118**	**83**	**61**	**53**	**1,717**
(N=606)	67.8%	44.0%	39.0%	36.2%	33.6%	27.0%	20.8%	14.7%	10.8%	9.4%	

*Note: Method Count exceeds the number of respondents because respondents select multiple recruitment methods.

**Note: Total Employer Count exceeds the number of respondents because some respondents work in multiple regions.

For all employers, online recruiting methods dominate regardless of size or region. These methods have taken over the role previously served by state job centers and schools and training centers. In part, this is due to job centers, schools and training centers having fewer resources and therefore being less useful. It is also driven by the growth of the internet. However, many researchers now report that these online methods have eviscerated more traditional methods of recruiting and hiring to the detriment of employers and employees and that it is time to revitalize more targeted employer-employee connections to rebuild the talent pipeline and rethink and/or expand the missions of State resources such as job centers.

Reliance by employers on social media, job boards, and online recruiters has upended labor market hiring practices, harms recruitment efforts, and causes potential employee demoralization. A review of the employer comments from this survey spotlights this effect as employers describe their inability to recruit, hire, and retain employees. It is also demoralizing for the potential employees, due to low callback rates and lack of employer contact.

Given most employers' recruiting difficulties, more effective *interactive communications* with young Alaskans about *existing* recruitment methods is a logical immediate target for improvement. This needs to include a focus on methods that improve the talent pipeline, connecting employers with workers as they complete training programs, enter internships, mentorships, participate in job shadowing, school to work, or become apprentices. (See research into the downside of these online recruiting methods in Attachment 8.)

Barriers to Employment

What barriers to employment impact Alaska employers? The list is long and includes issues known to exist for many years. Atop the list is NO QUALIFIED WORKERS (66%), followed by AGING WORKFORCE (31%). Next are: RURAL WORK (25%), UNABLE TO RETAIN NEW HIRES (25%), LACK OF HOUSING (23%), COMPETITION (22%), and LACK OF TRANSPORTATION (20%), all of which are reported by 20% or more. Table 5 displays results for all potential barriers tested in the survey.

Table 5: Barriers to Employment, All (Recruiting, Hiring, Retaining) (Q11)

Mean = percent choosing each	Mean	SE	SD	Count
No Qualified Workers	0.666	0.020	0.472	577
Aging Workforce	0.308	0.019	0.462	577
Unable to Retain New Hires	0.251	0.018	0.434	577
Rural Work	0.250	0.018	0.433	576
Lack of Housing	0.234	0.018	0.424	576
Competition	0.217	0.017	0.412	577
Lack of Transportation	0.201	0.017	0.401	576
Lack of Child/Elder Care	0.186	0.016	0.389	576
Work Demand	0.184	0.016	0.388	577
No Local/Regional Training	0.137	0.014	0.344	576
Cultural Practices	0.031	0.007	0.174	576

One employer's comment sums up a predominant employer view:

"Declining population, declining workforce, declining quality of life, declining education, resource development jobs not attractive to younger workforce."

–Survey Respondent

The reported lack of qualified workers is due in part to the aging workforce but is mostly tied to workforce pipeline needs as discussed in Background (page 1) and elsewhere in this report as well as in the Alaska's Workforce Future Student Survey report.

Barriers by Employer Size

A table displaying all barriers to employment by employer size based on number of employees, and ranked by frequency based on the total is in Attachment 4.Examinations of barriers among employers of various sizes found no significant differences among employer size categories for seven of the barriers: LACK OF HOUSING, NO QUALIFIED WORKERS, LACK OF TRANSPORTATION, LACK OF CHILD/ELDER CARE, RURAL WORK, NO LOCAL/REGIONAL TRAINING, and CULTURAL PRACTICES. (The examinations used chi-square tests, Attachment 5.) However, significant differences in employer size were found for four barriers: WORK DEMAND, AGING WORKFORCE, UNABLE TO RETAIN NEW HIRES, and COMPETITION.

Work Demand relates to the volume of work performed. Overall, 19% of the employers saw WORK DEMAND as a barrier. But perception of that demand is not equally distributed (p=0.003). The larger employers, with 100 or more employees report experiencing the highest WORK DEMAND (see chi-square test with discussion in Attachment 4). This coincides with all the new infrastructure and mega projects planned and underway. These projects will mostly be completed by larger employers that have the resources to carry them out. It is reasonable to assume that at the root of the WORK DEMAND issue is the trifecta of NOT ENOUGH QUALIFIED WORKERS, AGING WORKFORCE, and UNABLE TO RETAIN NEW HIRES. Clearly, the larger companies have the need and the resources to act, so enlisting them in building a new workforce development plan is reasonable.

Aging Workforce is also a significantly greater problem among employers with more than 100 employees (p=0.000) (see chi-square test with discussion in Attachment 4). The reasons for this difference may be inherent in what it means to be a larger employer – stable workforce, long-term reliable employees,
capacity to employ the better qualified, higher wages and benefits – and to be a smaller employer – fewer resources, less stability, perhaps striving to become a large employer. This is not to say it is not a problem among all sizes of employers; 31% say it is a barrier. It does mean that in thinking about solutions, one might consider the greater resources large employers can bring to bear on the primary solution; that is to develop a qualified workforce pipeline. Clearly, large employers have more to gain.

Unable to Retain New Hires is a barrier experienced by 25% of all the employers. It is less a problem for employers with 1-9 employees and more a problem for larger employers with 100 or more employees (see chi-square test with discussion in Attachment 4).

Competition might be imagined to rage among the smaller three categories of employers with 1 to 99 employees. But, in this survey, the greatest perception of COMPETITION as a barrier to employment is reported among the larger employers with 100 or more employees (see chi-square test with discussion in Attachment 4).

Barriers by Employer Region

A table displaying all perceived barriers to employment by each region, the economic region in which an employer operates, is in Attachment 5. Because some employers work in more than one region, the total N is greater than the number of respondents.

The top two barriers are NO QUALIFIED WORKERS (67%) and the AGING WORKFORCE (31%). UNABLE TO RETAIN NEW HIRES (25%) and RURAL WORK (25%) are equal in this breakout. LACK OF HOUSING, COMPETITION, and LACK OF TRANSPORTATION are barriers for at least one-fifth of respondents. Only CULTURAL PRACTICES is identified as a barrier by an extremely small portion (3%).

Examinations of barriers among employers operating in six regions and/or statewide found no significant differences for seven of the barriers: UNABLE TO RETAIN NEW HIRES, COMPETITION, LACK OF TRANSPORTATION, LACK OF CHILD/ELDER CARE, WORK DEMAND, NO LOCAL/REGIONAL TRAINING, and CULTURAL PRACTICES. (The examinations used chi-square tests, Attachment 5.) However, significant differences were found for four barriers: NO QUALIFIED WORKERS, AGING WORKFORCE, RURAL WORK, and LACK OF HOUSING.

No Qualified Workers is the greatest challenge for all surveyed employers, in all regions, as reported by 67% of respondents. More than two-thirds have difficulties finding qualified workers. The analysis by economic region shows significant differences from what would be expected based on a null hypothesis of no difference between regions (p= 0.000) (see chi-square tests in Attachment 5).

The lack of qualified workers is significantly more severe than expected in Anchorage/Matsu (101.6 expected, 137 actual), Southeast (15 expected, 22 actual), Interior (31 expected, 46 actual), Northern (8.5 expected 12 actual), and Southwest (24.6 expected, 32 actual) regions.

One hypothesis is that an AGING WORKFORCE could play a central role in those regions with more difficulty finding qualified workers. But, as discussed below, AGING WORKFORCE is not more pronounced in those regions. Other factors probably have more impact. Consider RURAL WORK, discussed below. Or LACK OF HOUSING. But in the long run, it is likely that the difficulty finding qualified workers is a training/ education and recruitment issue, as discussed in Background (page 1), the Student Survey report, and the Alaska's Workforce Future Plan.

Aging Workforce is a well-known current issue. Along with mounting demands of mega infrastructure projects, it may be the single most discussed driver for the need for qualified workers. But it may not affect employers of all regions equally.

In the analysis of AGING WORKFORCE by economic region, statistical significance is barely achieved (p= 0.048), with the exceptions of statewide (expected 45 and actual 57), Gulf Coast (expected 14.6 and actual 19), and Northern (expect 5.4 and actual 7). Only the Northern region is among those with significant elevations for both AGING WORKFORCE and NO QUALIFIED WORKERS. So it is unlikely the higher levels lacking qualified workers in some regions can be attributed to AGING WORKFORCE. (see chi-square tests in Attachment 5).

Rural Work is a barrier to employment, especially in Alaska. The analysis by region found several significant differences (p=0.000) (see chi-square tests in Attachment 5). As we would expect Anchorage/Matsu employers do not report RURAL WORK as a barrier (expected 55, 15 actual). But for all other regions the actual exceeds the expected, as we might presume.

RURAL WORK will always be an employer barrier in rural areas, unless better efforts are made to upskill the rural workforce so that outside workers are not needed. However, this requires expanding housing, transportation, and training and education opportunities in these communities. That can only be done with a policy commitment. As a first step, the Alaska's Workforce Future Plan recommends creating Regional Workforce Development Teams (RWDTs) and establishing MOU with AWIB to address the specific issues of each region.

Lack of Housing is identified as a barrier by 23% of all respondents. Like RURAL WORK, LACK OF HOUSING is a region-based barrier to employment. Once again, employers in the Anchorage/Matsu region are significantly less likely to identify LACK OF HOUSING as a barrier (55 expected, 15 actual), while all the other economic regions exceeded the expected normal probability by 1.2 to 1.9 times. LACK OF HOUSING is closely tied to rural living and RURAL WORK. Developing plans to deliver housing in rural Alaska is a necessary precondition to mitigating the workforce crisis in these regions. (see chi-square tests in Attachment 5).

Structural Effects

What structural effects frustrate or facilitate access to qualified workers as perceived by employers? What would employers like to see improved?

Alaska employers report difficulty recruiting, hiring, retaining, and re-training employees. They identify numerous barriers to finding and keeping employees. Recruitment methods rely heavily on social media, job boards, and online recruiters. But where do the employees come from? What skills do they possess? Are these skills adequate? If not, what is expected and what part do education and training systems, employers, and others play in assuring a work-ready workforce? How can workforce preparation be improved?

Part of the challenge is employers must depend less on hiring skilled employees because many with skills are either fully employed due to low unemployment or may belong to the aging workforce. So, employers may look to high schools, training providers, and colleges and universities to supply new employees.

Perceived Performance of Training and Educational Institutions. The survey asks which of the following entities provide work-ready employees. Table 6 shows there is wide variation in satisfaction with the output of the institutions based on industry, likely due in part to variations in categories and levels of skills and credentials. As a whole, 91.1% of all employers rely on in-house training to get work-ready employees (n=495). Only 28% of all employers think high schools provide work-ready employees (n=567); 55.5% think training providers provide work-ready employees (n=553), and 52.8% think college do (n=544).

Table 6 Provide work-ready employees (Q18)								DK/No Response=81
% Strongly Agree / Agree by Industry	**High Schools**		**Training Providers**		**Colleges /Universitie**		**In-House Training**	
Agriculture	66.7%	3	0.0%	3	0.0%	2	100.0%	2
Construction	11.9%	84	61.0%	82	35.4%	79	92.6%	68
Education/Training	45.7%	35	68.6%	35	60.0%	35	88.2%	34
Financial/Insurance	25.0%	12	45.5%	11	54.5%	11	100.0%	9
Fishing/Hunting	54.2%	24	50.0%	24	37.5%	24	95.5%	22
Food/Hospitality	40.3%	62	48.2%	56	51.8%	56	96.2%	53
Forestry	0.0%	1	0.0%	1	0.0%	1	0.0%	1
Health Care	28.3%	53	55.8%	52	71.7%	53	87.5%	48
Information/Media	25.0%	4	50.0%	4	75.0%	4	100.0%	4
IT/Tech/Digital	0.0%	12	41.7%	12	58.3%	12	90.9%	11
Manufacturing	27.8%	18	38.9%	18	50.0%	18	81.3%	16
Military	0.0%	2	100.0	2	50.0%	2	100.0%	2
Mining	33.3%	3	33.3%	3	66.7%	3	66.7%	3
Nonprofit	24.2%	33	63.6%	33	51.6%	31	92.3%	26
Oil & Gas/Energy	30.8%	13	76.9%	13	66.7%	12	90.9%	11
Other	30.8%	65	49.2%	63	58.7%	63	96.4%	56
Prof/Tech Services	20.0%	40	51.3%	39	63.2%	38	91.4%	35
Real Estate	41.7%	12	50.0%	12	75.0%	12	88.9%	9
State, Fed, Local Gov.	12.9%	31	48.4%	31	51.6%	31	73.3%	30
Telecom	28.6%	7	85.7%	7	66.7%	6	100.0%	5
Tourism/Travel	31.8%	22	50.0%	22	45.5%	22	95.0%	20
Transportation/Whse	17.6%	17	70.6%	17	25.0%	16	93.8%	16
Utilities	37.5%	8	87.5%	8	50.0%	8	87.5%	8
Wholesale Trade	50.0%	6	80.0%	5	40.0%	5	100.0%	6
Total	**27.9%**	**567**	**55.5%**	**553**	**52.8%**	**544**	**91.1%**	**495**

"The absolute lack of any sort of real tech training in schools."
–Survey Respondent

"Only one school in AK producing 10 Surg Techs a year."
–Survey Respondent

"There is a shortage of lawyers in Alaska ..."
–Survey Respondent

"We struggle to find candidates with the education and skills needed for the job."
–Survey Respondent

"No qualified techs in Alaska"
–Survey Respondent

"If they've gone to university, they're only taught how to enter things in quickbooks instead of true accounting."
–Survey Respondent

Lack of Collaboration Among Educators/Trainers and Employers. An employer's inability to acquire skilled workers from high schools, training providers, universities, and other training or educational institutions is a major concern for many of the respondents.

The survey asked about the importance of employers and trainers/educators working together to align training and education with industry needs (Q19). More than 75% of the surveyed employers with an opinion feel this is *extremely* or *very important*. The perception of importance is greater among the larger employers, but is an issue among all employers, even those who currently have no employees.

							DK=105
Q 19. Important that employers and educators/trainers work together to align with needs.							
	0	**1-9**	**10-49**	**50-99**	**100-499**	**500+**	**Total**
Extremely important	9	75	39	10	16	9	158
Very important	4	117	53	9	18	13	214
Moderately important	2	33	21		7	3	66
Somewhat important	2	17	15	1	1	3	39
Not at all important	2	7	6			1	16
Total	19	249	134	20	42	29	493
Extremely/Very	**68.4%**	**77.1%**	**68.7%**	**95.0%**	**81.0%**	**75.9%**	**75.5%**

							DK=105
Q 20. To what extent do employers and education/training entities work together.							
	0	**1-9**	**10-49**	**50-99**	**100-499**	**500+**	**Total**
Always	0	8	4		1	1	14
Often	4	37	19	5	10	2	77
Occasionally	4	64	43	7	9	6	133
Rarely	6	67	27	4	11	12	127
Never	4	19	13	2	1	2	41
Total	18	195	106	18	32	23	392
Always/Often	**22.2%**	**23.1%**	**21.7%**	**27.8%**	**34.4%**	**13.0%**	**23.2%**

The survey asked to what extent respondents think employers and education/training entities actually do work together (Q20). Only 23% think they actually do so, '*always*' or '*often*'. This varies somewhat by employer size; the lowest percentage is among the largest employers, and those with 50 to 499 employees claim the highest level of cooperation.

Do employers collaborate with educators/trainers? (Q21). The actual self-reported participation of employers with educators or others engaged in workforce development suggests it is a rare event. Time is a factor, but *communication* may be a greater one.

							DK=0
Q 21. Do you serve on any workforce committees or task forces?							
	0	**1-9**	**10-49**	**50-99**	**100-499**	**500+**	**Total**
YES	2	21	15	2	8	1	49
NO	20	247	138	21	35	30	491
Total	18	195	106	18	32	23	392
YES	**9.1%**	**7.8%**	**9.8%**	**8.7%**	**18.6%**	**3.2%**	**9.1%**

Employer Perceptions of Hard and Soft Skills. Feeling unable to rely on a supply of work-ready employees adds to employer costs and reduces their efficiency. In addition, many employers are unwilling to take on workers who are not fully skilled because if they spend time and resources skilling them, they may find a better job, or be poached by a competitor, or just leave. For this reason, many employers try to attract workers from other employers rather than upskill new or unprepared workers.

"My associate broker is now filling the role at the front desk because no matter how hard I try, I cannot find someone. The last one, after taking the real estate class, just stopped showing up. The class cost $600 and I paid them to actually take the class and study, so my investment was really over $2000."

–Survey Respondent

The majority of employers in this survey do not think employees they hire possess required soft skills and hard skills. Among the listed soft skills, all were rated *important* or *very important* by more than 90% of the employers. But for the most part only 45% to 66% of the employers feel employees *completely* or *mostly possess* those soft skills.

Soft Skills Needed vs Possessed (Q28-29)	Very Important or Important	N=	Completely or Mostly Possess	N=
A. Communication	96.5%	510	56.6%	512
B. Teamwork	92.8%	513	65.9%	510
C. Time management	95.3%	514	45.0%	513
D. Adaptability	90.6%	513	58.8%	512
E. Problem-solving	95.0%	504	52.5%	507
F. Work ethic	96.4%	506	56.6%	498
G. Critical thinking	90.6%	502	46.5%	477

Among the listed hard skills, all but marketing, were rated *important* or *very important* by more than 85% of the employers. But for the most part no more than 66% of the employers felt employees *completely* or *mostly possess* those skills.

Hard Skills Needed vs Possessed (Q30-31)	Very Important or Important	N=	Completely or Mostly Possess	N=
A. Technical skills	84.7%	516	61.3%	514
B. Marketing skills	33.5%	523	20.4%	519
C. Customer relations	85.1%	518	54.1%	518
D. Problem-solving	93.8%	515	55.0%	516
E. Basic computer skills	83.5%	516	63.1%	512
F. Task-oriented skills	88.3%	512	67.6%	481

An innovative mechanism to facilitate *streamlined communication* and *collaboration* among educators/trainers and employers is required to overcome these issues. The Alaska's Workforce Future Plan recommends a private sector *workforce intermediary* and *regional workforce development teams* to facilitate communication, drive beneficial choices and opportunities for workers and employers, and to measure the success of any efforts.

Other Issues

The employers have identified a number of other barriers that prevent workforce development success discussed below. These could be taken up by the proposed workforce intermediary.

Outdated and Siloed Information. Similarly, when asked if SILOED INFORMATION IN THE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECTORS WHICH IS DIFFICULT TO ACQUIRE AND USE is a problem, 76% employers of all sizes who responded agree, as shown in Table 7. The comment from a State agency respondent highlights the *disconnect* between what may be available and how it may not be *communicated* to employers.

"… these opportunities are already out there. The state is understaffed in many segments. I'm sure the state already has extensive experience with everything in this survey."

–Survey Respondent

DK=170

Table 7. Outdated and siloed information in the private and public sectors which is difficult to acquire and use (Q22)

	0	1-9	10-49	50-99	100-499	500+	Total
Strongly Agree	3	32	18	2	2	4	61
Agree	7	93	46	11	15	12	184
Disagree	1	26	26	3	11	3	70
Strongly Disagree	1	2	4		1	1	9
Total	12	153	94	16	29	20	324
Agree/Strongly Agree	**83.3%**	**81.7%**	**68.1%**	**81.3%**	**58.6%**	**80.0%**	**75.6%**

Lack of Communication. First, when asked if NOT ENOUGH COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION AMONG EMPLOYERS, EDUCATORS, AND LOCAL, STATE, AND FEDERAL AGENCIES is a problem, 84% of employers of all sizes who expressed an opinion answered *'agree'* or *'strongly agree,'* as shown in Table 8.

							DK=107
Table 8: Not enough communication and collaboration among employers, educators, and local, state, and federal agencies (Q22)							
	0	**1-9**	**10-49**	**50-99**	**100-499**	**500+**	**Total**
Strongly Agree	5	50	37	5	10	6	113
Agree	7	116	45	13	15	15	211
Disagree	4	22	18		7	2	53
Strongly Disagree	1	4	3				8
Total	17	192	103	18	32	23	385
Agree/Strongly	**70.6%**	**86.5%**	**79.6%**	**100.0%**	**78.1%**	**91.3%**	**84.2%**

"Difficulty trying to coordinate with higher educational or other services to try and attract reputable candidates."

–Survey Respondent

Lack of Employer Participation in Workforce Development. To estimate the extent of current workforce development participation, employers were asked how frequently they engage with other employers, organizations, trainers, or educators on several common workforce development issues. Results indicate as many as 87% of the employers never or only annually engage in some of these essential activities. They do not participate in activities that could help build and shape the training and education their future workers receive that could alleviate the skilled labor shortage. The following five tables show the levels of participation by employers in various workforce development activities.

How often do employers, organizations, trainers or educators engage with one another to: (Q16)	Weekly or Monthly	Yearly or Never	Total	% Never or Annually
A. convey skills needed for workforce?	217	280	497	56.3%
B. contribute to curriculum design?	86	398	484	82.2%
C. discuss how to interest students or workers in job skills?	135	355	490	72.4%
D. Participate in career days/job fairs?	60	428	488	87.7%
E. Serve as industry advisor to a training/education facility?	68	398	466	85.4%

How often do employers, organizations, trainers or educators engage with one another to convey skills needed for workforce? (Q16A)							
Employer Size	**0**	**1-9**	**10-49**	**50-99**	**100-499**	**500+**	**Total**
Yearly or Never	12	137	81	9	23	18	280
Weekly or Monthly	9	118	48	13	20	9	217
Total	21	255	129	22	43	27	497
% Never or Yearly engage	**57.1%**	**53.7%**	**62.8%**	**40.9%**	**53.5%**	**66.7%**	**56.3%**

How often do employers, organizations, trainers or educators engage with one another to discuss how to interest students or workers in job skills? (Q16C)							
Employer Size	**0**	**1-9**	**10-49**	**50-99**	**100-499**	**500+**	**Total**
Yearly or Never	13	176	99	15	30	22	355
Weekly or Monthly	7	72	31	7	12	6	135
Total	20	248	130	22	42	28	490
% Never or Yearly engage	**65.0%**	**71.0%**	**76.2%**	**68.2%**	**71.4%**	**78.6%**	**72.4%**

How often do employers, organizations, trainers or educators engage with one another to participate in career days/job fairs? (Q16D)							
Employer Size	**0**	**1-9**	**10-49**	**50-99**	**100-499**	**500+**	**Total**
Yearly or Never	16	221	118	19	30	24	428
Weekly or Monthly	4	27	12	3	10	4	60
Total	20	248	130	22	40	28	488
% Never or Yearly engage	**80.0%**	**89.1%**	**90.8%**	**86.4%**	**75.0%**	**85.7%**	**87.7%**

Serve as industry advisor to a training/education facility? (Q16E)							
	0	**1-9**	**10-49**	**50-99**	**100-499**	**500+**	**Total**
Yearly or Never	17	200	107	19	31	24	398
Weekly or Monthly	3	31	19	3	8	4	68
Total	20	231	126	22	39	28	466
% Never or Yearly engage	**85.0%**	**86.6%**	**84.9%**	**86.4%**	**79.5%**	**85.7%**	**85.4%**

MIT Sloan Management Foundation describes this problem as "the widespread failure of American companies to share responsibility for skill development." (The Summer 2021 Magazine Volume 62, Issue #4 concludes, "Many employers are simply unwilling — or unable — to invest sufficient resources, time, and energy into work-based learning and the creation of skill-rewarding career pathways that extend economic opportunity to workers on the lowest rungs of the labor market ladder.")

Engaged stakeholders, such as employers, educators, trainers, and community organizations are essential for developing workforces that meet the local workforce needs. Extensive research shows this interaction among stakeholders can be facilitated by workforce intermediaries, as proposed in the Alaska's Workforce Future Plan.

Lack of Supports. When asked if LACK OF SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS, PARENTS, NEW JOB SEEKERS, AND WORKERS is a problem, 83% of employers of all sizes who answered agree (Table 9).

Table 9. Lack of supports for students, parents, new job seekers, and workers (Q22)							
	0	**1-9**	**10-49**	**50-99**	**100-499**	**500+**	**Total**
Strongly Agree	4	54	32	7	12	10	119
Agree	9	113	60	10	21	13	226
Disagree	3	27	23		5	2	60
Strongly Disagree	1	5	3		1	1	11
Total	17	199	118	17	39	26	416
Agree/Strongly	**76.5%**	**83.9%**	**78.0%**	**100.0%**	**84.6%**	**88.5%**	**82.9%**

Goals and Comments. Employers were asked about five goals set by the IAC (Industry Advisory Council) in February 2024 through a consensus survey to determine which goals are worthwhile and the extent to which they thought the goals have already been attained (Appendix 9).

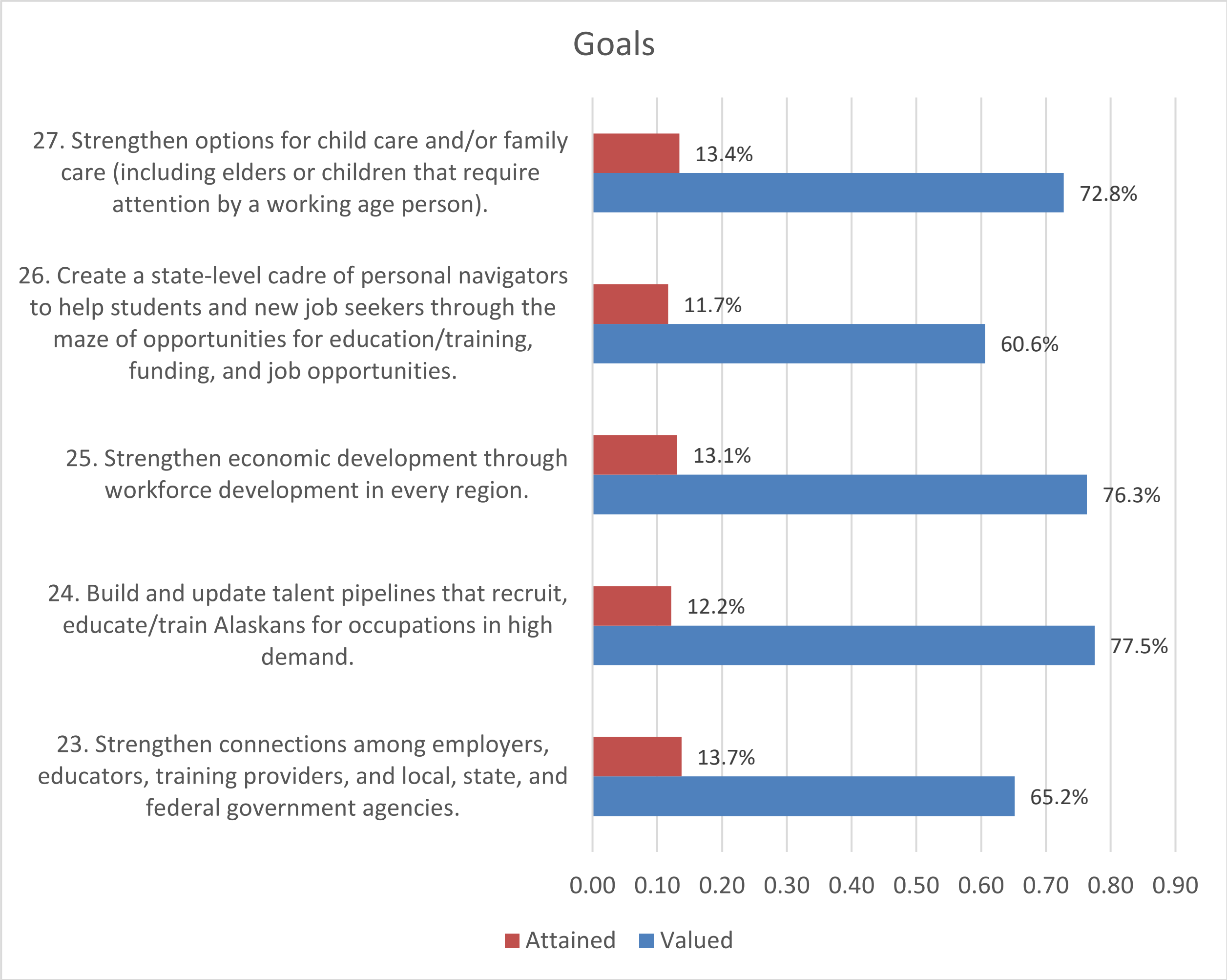
Q23. Strengthen connections among employers, educators, training providers, and local, state, and federal government agencies.

Q24. Build and update talent pipelines that recruit, educate/train Alaskans for occupations in high demand.

Q25. Strengthen economic development through workforce development in every region.

Q26. Create a state-level cadre of personal navigators to help students and new job seekers through the maze of opportunities for education/training, funding, and job opportunities.

Q27. Strengthen options for childcare and/or family care (including any elders or children that require attention by a working age person).



As the graph on page 17 shows, more than 60% of responding employers consider these five goals of value, but on average only about 12% of employers think the goals have been attained. Most respondents regard these as goals worthy of pursuit by the proposed private sector workforce intermediary and regional workforce development teams.

Some variation among value and current attainment is found in comparisons by employer size and economic region. However, these variations, while statistically significant, are likely not of any practical importance.

Of greater interest here may be the employers' comments generated by these goals. A sampling is presented on the next pages. The employer comments for all survey questions can be reviewed in Attachment 6.[2]

[2] Employer survey comments are confidential and are not posted on the website.

Type Of Company or Organization	Employer Size	Use this space for any comments you have about Q26.
Alaska Native Tribal entity	1-9	"Cadres of personal navigators"? How about a website with an ai plugin. A trained chatbot could seamlessly accomplish this task. Keep the "Cadre of personal navigators" local. Teachers, guidance counselors, parents...
Alaska State dept or agency		Again, these opportunities are already out there. The state is also understaffed in many segments. I'm sure the state already has extensive experience with everything in this survey.
Publicly traded corporation	10-49	an army of well-intentioned government navigators would be counter-productive.
Partnership or S corporation	10-49	Employment issues, in the private sector, need to be solved in the private sector. This should NOT be at the state level. Government has a way of throwing money at things but missing the mark. I as an employer is not interested in hiring people that have been trained by state sanctioned training facilities. They are trained to navigate the system and learn all the loop holes, and, oh yeah, they get a little skills training. This is almost worthless to the privately owned and run company that needs skilled hardworking people.
Other nonprofit	1-9	Fund public education and teachers. Subsidize childcare and affordable housing. AK needs an income tax.
Small business or franchise	1-9	help high schools counselors/teachers throughout all of rural Alaska know what jobs are available to high school students.
Publicly traded corporation	50-99	hopefully you can tell I don't support any tax dollars, state or fed, going to these initiatives.
Privately held corporation	10-49	How is this going to be funded? How does this relate to non union non municipality jobs
Other nonprofit	1-9	I agree with this concept but NOT AT THE STATE LEVEL - this must be done at the regional (at most) and community level at best. The state does not know best...
Alaska Native Tribal entity	0	I don't think it's a need for the State to set up a New department to achieve this. I believe that the Public Education System, ie schools, are failing to train up people with skills to enter the workforce and I believe much of that is parents are indifferent to how well students perform and don't train them at home to be respectful citizens of the community. Could schools require community services like trash clean up day etc, Yes and it would help but it's trained in families, not schools. More programs aren't necessarily the solution. Programs like ANSEP Acceleration are a Huge positive start but even they are limited to making certain students take certain college classes vs determine which career path best suits a student's interests and SKILL sets. Student real world skills is crucial for High School and college students.
Alaska State dept or agency	10-49	I really want to be that person who says that I don't want to hire someone who can't figure out how to look up a job. Then I think about the farce that is something like USAJOBS and how those positions are really not publicly available and perhaps there's value. Still, unless someone has developmental delays or other challenges that truly require an aide, having a navigator in many ways perpetuates challenges we have with people who wait to do what they are told instead of taking initiative. Yes, that can be a cultural issue, and that needs to be taken into consideration, even so, having a hand holder through basic job application processes for anyone other than those entering the work force for the first time, or those re-entering after an absence, I obviously have concerns.
Sole proprietorship or LLC	10-49	I would say if by State-level you mean government employees that are paid to help students navigate, I do not see that working. If by State-level you mean Alaska Travel Industry Association working with students, then yes.

Type Of Company or Organization	Employer Size	Use this space for any comments you have about Q26.
Privately held corporation	1-9	I'm not sure a state level entity would be helpful.
Small business or franchise	10-49	It is difficult to access attainment in rural areas where hiring conditions have not improved at all the entire time the business has existed. If the area was an attractive place to live, there would be more people looking for work.
Privately held corporation	50-99	Job Service exists - it doesn't work well.
Publicly traded corporation	0	No more stupid state programs.
Small business or franchise	10-49	not supporting a "government" solution to this problem
Sole proprietorship or LLC	10-49	Not sure, but state-level does not grab my attention. I would want people at the local level to help students.
Industry trade association	10-49	Sounds like a pitch to create another state government department. Not a fan.
Industry trade association	1-9	State level isn't realistic - the regions are too varied. Perhaps one statewide coordinator - but there needs to be regional levels to this for success.
Privately held corporation	10-49	The current climate created a lazy, entitled moocher of public services and assistance. There are always open jobs at every level, shunned by able-bodied, capable people who find public assistance more appealing.
Other nonprofit	10-49	The problem with State and Federal funding for apprenticeship is the constant paperwork that has no benefit. Along with the "everyone must be included" philosophy that makes them undesirable for employers to participate in. I believe that someone that has been to prison can be reformed and become a productive member of society, but I won't subject my apprenticeship program to have to accept every prisoner that took a class inside because there is a check attached.
Alaska Native Tribal entity	1-9	There are plenty of administrative employees that can be pooled to send out emails and phone calls between trainers to schools and employers. The State needs to use resources wisely.
Sole proprietorship or LLC	1-9	Yes! This strategy is proven to work in Alaska and in other rural states. We dismantled a system eight years ago and need to reinvest in this infrastructure.

Conclusions

The Alaska's Workforce Future Plan calls for a private-sector workforce intermediary whose prime function is to *upgrade communications* among students and other young Alaskans, employers, trainers, educators, and government and community entities. Results of the Employer Survey support this approach. Below are several activities likely to meet with employer support.

1. Upgrade communications. Employer Survey respondents report stakeholders lack communication and operate within silos, and large majorities report a lack of collaboration among employers and educators/ trainers and a failure to align education/training with workplace needs. The Alaska's Workforce Future Student Survey finds young Alaskans are unaware of most job and career pathways offered in the state. The Alaska's Workforce Future Plan contains a summary of 11 workforce plans developed in Alaska since 2010 (Appendices 5 and 6). Many focus on admirable objectives not so different from what is needed now, but all lack *communications* and *feedback* mechanisms to measure what happens. This leads to skepticism of any proposed plan among employers. It also leads to disheartened community members who see only plans and meetings. Of all the tasks, upgrading communications, including a central 'switching' website, would be the first to do the most.

2. Set up snap polls and robust surveys with analysis and reporting. The downfall of most plans of any type is the inability to adequately measure outcomes and communicate them effectively to the stakeholders. Periodically polling employers about current needs and conditions and seeking their input for improvements in Alaska's workforce culture and structures would be an invaluable tool. Employers want to provide input. They do not really want meetings, and many say they do not want others in endless meetings.

"The State has an email and phone number for every ACTIVE business license. Each divided by their Cage code. The ability to reach out to Alaskan businesses is simple." – Survey Respondent

3. Stand up local community based workforce committees. The employers have expressed no interest in, and even opposition to, solutions involving a top-down statewide approach. Employers want community up and out support. This indicates there would be widespread support for the Alaska's Workforce Future plan objective.

4. Improve the interface between employers and workers seeking employment by invigorating the role of employers in education and training. The Employer Survey, especially in the free-form comments, reveals a lot of dissatisfaction among employers with the workers being recruited and hired (A major factor is recruitment through social media, job boards, and online recruiters. For the most part, these "recruitment process outsourcers" seek only to connect someone with a job based on efficient use of proprietary algorithms.). The Employer Survey also found most employers are not involved in education, training, or curricula design. The US Chamber of Commerce recommends review of a report on rethinking employer involvement in the talent pipelines as a starting point (LINK).

"I am excited that this topic is being discussed. To recruit and maintain a strong workforce in Alaska, we need to invest in training programs" – Survey Respondent [Private Regional Corporation]

5. Upgrade local actions to leverage State and other services. Most employers do not use existing State services. For statewide job centers, this has to do with the mission to find work for the unemployed as a condition of receiving other social services. It may be time for the mission of statewide job centers to receive a face lift. The State must take the lead. In addition, many employers say they use job fairs but say fewer are held now and job fairs should be expanded in rural areas. The Student Survey found job fairs is one of the tools that results in fewer high school students thinking about leaving Alaska. Finding ways to hold more job fairs and job fairs in less populated regions would likely be useful and productive.

"We need to have more Job fairs, recruitment sites, educational sponsored learning opportunities." – Survey Respondent