

Appendix 5: Alaska’s Industry Sector Workforce Plans

Overview of Cross-Cutting Goals/Strategies

Eleven Alaska Industry Sector Plans Reviewed¹

1. Building Alaska’s Construction Workforce: A Comprehensive Workforce Development Plan 2006
 - <https://awib.alaska.gov/AWIB%20Building%20Alaska's%20Construction%20Workforce%20Plan.pdf>
2. Alaska Gasline Inducement Act Training Strategic Plan 2007-2008
 - https://www.alaskacteplan.org/uploads/2/6/8/6/26865794/agia_2008.pdf
3. Alaska Health Workforce Development Plan May 2010
 - <http://www.alaska.edu/research/wp/plans/health/HealthWFDPlan.pdf>
4. Alaska Career & Technical Education Plan: A Call to Action August 2010
 - https://awib.alaska.gov/AK_CTE_Plan_AUG2010.pdf
5. Alaska Oil and Gas Workforce Development Plan 2014 – 2018, May 2014
 - <https://www.alaska.edu/research/wd/plans/oil-and-gas/OilGasPlan.pdf>
6. Alaska Maritime Workforce Development Plan May 2014
 - <https://awib.alaska.gov/PDFs/AK-Maritime-Workforce-Dev-Plan.pdf>
7. Alaska Mining Workforce Development Plan December 2014
 - https://awib.alaska.gov/forms/AWIB_AK_Mining_WD_Plan.pdf
8. Alaska LNG Project Gasline Workforce Plan April 2018
 - https://jobs.alaska.gov/energy/documents/2018_Gasline_Workforce_Plan.pdf
9. Alaska Apprenticeship Plan October 2018
 - https://awib.alaska.gov/Alaska_Apprenticeship_Plan-10-2018.pdf
10. Alaska Broadband Workforce Plan (unpublished draft November 2023)
 - <https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/abo/Home.aspx>
11. Alaska Mariculture Workforce Development Plan December 2023
 - <https://seagrant.uaf.edu/book-assets/download/index.php?loc=fla%2FMAB-89%2FMAB-89PDF.pdf&pub=MAB-89PDF&title=Alaska+Mariculture+Workforce+Development+Plan&bypass=TRUE>

Alaska has developed nearly a dozen workforce plans since 2006, each focusing on an industry sector or overall training system. Each plan was developed with substantial input from a variety of stakeholders, including industry, educators, trainers, secondary and postsecondary providers, state agencies, economic development groups, and policy makers, and most were subsequently presented to and endorsed by the Alaska Workforce Investment Board. Each plan set out important goals and strategies and resulted in strong partnerships among the stakeholders as they worked to strengthen the workforce for that particular sector. While the plans themselves may not been updated, most of the partnerships that formed remain active, new partnerships have formed, the goals and strategies from the plans are still relevant, and implementation efforts continue to this day in many forms.

Five major themes echo throughout the plans’ visions, missions, goals, and strategies:

1. Increase awareness and knowledge of careers and occupations – and the skills, training, and credentials needed - in high-demand industries and priority occupations.
2. Strengthen and support career pathway programs at all levels and in all regions.
3. Recruit, train, and retain Alaskans to fill the jobs industry needs.

¹ [Alaska’s Industry Sector Workforce Plans Crosswalk](#)

4. Ensure continued plan implementation with involvement of industry and other partners.
5. Establish and maintain sustainable resources/funding.

These themes are repeated in recent research for Alaska's Future Workforce Plan.

Career Awareness: There is a lack of career awareness and opportunities among Alaskans both young and old. They do not know about industries' needs or the training and employment opportunities that exist. The issue was brought up not only by schools or training providers, but by industry. High schools do not have the resources to provide dedicated career guidance to all students.

Career Pathway Programs: There is limited or underfunded career pathway training relating to many industries and at many levels of education/training, from high school to college to other postsecondary efforts. Some of the training may be offered but is not readily accessible by all residents due to geographic or monetary constraints or other challenges. Several industries have established their own training programs to help fill the gaps.

Recruit, train, and retain Alaskans for Alaska jobs: A sizable portion of workers in several industries continues to be imported from other states, and more recently from other countries. The issue has been compounded by Alaska's low secondary and postsecondary completion rates; over a decade of more out-migration than in-migration; and the aging out of our working age population.

Continued implementation and industry involvement: Significant partnerships were established, and implementation has been ongoing at various levels for each plan, with some being more active than others. The plan developers realized that sustainability of these partnerships and implementation efforts were crucial to continued progress, and that industry is an important partner in all these undertakings. We have heard these same thoughts today, with our research revealing that schools and industry need more interaction, and that implementation efforts may be ongoing but there is no coordination or communication among the various efforts.

Sustainable funding mechanisms: The plans recognized that sustainability of workforce, education, and training endeavors depends on reliable and sustainable funding, as opposed to short-term bursts of money that may allow a project to begin but not to fulfill its potential when the funding runs out. Our recent research finds this is still a problem. Promising programs are started but cannot continue when grant funding ends; K-16 education, including CTE, has been severely underfunded across the state for several years; funding has been cut for staff who previously coordinated some efforts across agencies.

Below are specific strategies or action steps mentioned in the cross-cutting themes:

1. Increase awareness and knowledge of careers and occupations – and the skills, training, and credentials needed - in high-demand industries and priority occupations.
 - a. Establish career awareness/information/guidance programs for all students
 - b. Create a public awareness/marketing campaign
 - c. Involve all industries, parents, teachers, counselors/advisors, state agencies
2. Strengthen and support career pathway programs at all levels and in all regions.
 - a. Expand secondary and postsecondary CTE system, including apprenticeships, internships, and other work-based learning opportunities

- b. Identify and mitigate barriers for high school and postsecondary attainment
 - c. Build on existing workforce and training efforts
 - d. Improve workforce readiness for all youth and job-seekers
 - e. Maximize dual-credit opportunities for high school students; provide postsecondary credit for apprenticeship completion; maintain/enhance pre-apprenticeship training.
3. Recruit, train, and retain Alaskans to fill the jobs industry needs.
 - a. Recruit, develop, support, and retain qualified instructors
 - b. Enhance, expand, and/or develop education and training programs
 - c. Increase access to training opportunities for all Alaskans to achieve industry-valued skills and credentials, certificates, and degrees
 - d. Build a diverse Alaska workforce, including under-represented populations
 - e. Expand capacity to train incumbent workers to gain cross-industry skills and keep pace with technological changes
 4. Ensure continued involvement of industry and other partners.
 - a. Coordinate efforts across regions and stakeholders
 - b. Establish mechanisms for ongoing collaboration among industry, education, training providers, government agencies, workforce and economic developers, other stakeholders
 - c. Utilize both public and private partnerships
 5. Establish and maintain sustainable resources/funding.
 - a. Advocate for sustainable funding mechanisms
 - b. Develop both public and private funding
 - c. Explore other resources such as shared facilities & instructors

Though implementation of many of the goals and strategies for these plans is ongoing, it seems to be happening in silos – both within and among the plans – resulting in various groups not even being aware of efforts by other groups or in other regions. There has been no vehicle for overall coordination or communication among these efforts, which severely limits the potential for leveraging resources, sharing ideas and best practices, and sustaining efforts.

Alaska’s Future Workforce Plan seeks to remedy that by recommending that a Workforce Intermediary be designated or created, to bring stakeholders and workforce efforts together. This idea was specifically echoed by a variety of stakeholders during Plan research – secondary and postsecondary education; industry; workforce and economic development organizations; rural residents and groups; and state agencies – and the Industry Advisory Council wholeheartedly endorsed the idea. This need was also one of the top priorities brought out at the fall 2023 Industry Convening sponsored by the Alaska Workforce Investment Board.

The new Workforce Intermediary should be non-governmental, or “non-partisan,” to move away from a largely federal system of workforce development, and to a new collaborative model that is not constrained by the need to comply with federal rules, regulations, and requirements such as WIOA and Carl Perkins. This new model can make Alaska’s workforce development system transformative in the way it brings all partners together and provides a robust vehicle for collaboration, communication, partnerships, and leveraging resources.