

STATE OF ALASKA

Department Of Labor and Workforce Development

FRANK H. MURKOWSKI, GOVERNOR

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OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

June 15, 2004

Emily DeRocco, Assistant Secretary
Employment and Training Administration
U.S. Department Of Labor
200 Constitution Avenue, NW, Room S-2307
Washington DC 20210

Dear Ms. DeRocco:

On behalf of the Alaska Workforce Investment Board, I am writing to request an extension of the previously granted Workforce Investment Act (WIA) waivers granting the State of Alaska authorization to operate under a Single Statewide Regional Planning Area under 20 CFR 661.300(f) and to waive the requirements relating to local performance under WIA Sec. 136(C).

In response to a recommendation of the Alaska Workforce Investment Board, Alaska requested these waivers in order to change its workforce investment structure to create a streamlined and accountable workforce investment system. The streamlining change allows the state to quickly react to economic development workforce needs in a standardized and efficient manner. The change in accountability ensures timely response to changes in performance as demonstrated by the improved performance of the older youth programs. The existing waivers expire June 30, 2004. Alaska has benefited from the waivers and seeks to continue its efforts toward streamlining, standardization and accountability for job training programs.

In light of current WIA reauthorization discussions, the state requests that the extension last for the duration of the current WIA legislation through program year 2004, or until WIA is reauthorized.

Enclosed with this request are the waiver request documents from our plan modification dated August 15, 2003, and our response to questions from Ms. Kulik regarding the waivers. If you have any questions concerning this request, please feel free to contact this office. Thank you for your consideration of this extension.

Sincerely,



Greg O'Claray
Commissioner

W E F I S H E L F O R

cc(w/encls.): John Humphrey, Acting Regional Administrator Region VI

Enclosures

August 15, 2003

Christine Kulik
US Department of Labor
Employment And Training Administration
200 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington DC 20210

Ms. Christine Kulik:

Thank you for your request for additional information regarding the waivers Alaska is requesting as a part of our plan modification. Below is the information you requested organized according to the questions asked.

1. Describe the actions that the state or local area, as appropriate, has undertaken to remove state or local statutory or regulatory barriers.
 - In May 2003, the Alaska legislature passed Senate Bill 192. This bill removed state statute that depended upon local board guidance. The language was then replaced with the Alaska Workforce Investment Board. By taking this action the state was able to align workforce investment programs under a single oversight body.
2. Describe the individuals affected by the waiver.
 - Very few individuals were adversely affected by the decision to establish a single regional area. As a part of the consolidation some individuals lost their jobs due to elimination of duplicate activities. All staff were offered employment with the state and most accepted or were able to transition to other jobs with the Municipality of Anchorage.
 - Local board membership was discontinued, although members from each were appointed to the state board. In addition, Local Advisory Councils will seek to leverage the expertise and knowledge of past board members.
 - Participants of the Workforce Investment Program have been positively affected in several ways.
 - First, the opportunities for older youth are increased as a result of statewide, broad-based grant strategy. Older Youth are low-income youth age 18-21 who are in need of assistance to enter training or gain employment.
 - Second, participants will have more flexibility to move within the state and have continuity of service without exiting, re-entry and encountering new standards, rules and guidelines.
 - Third, individuals eligible for dislocated worker services can expect better service due to a standardized application of the eligibility policy.

- Partners and service providers have been positively affected by the waivers in that they now work with a single administrative entity, using common statewide policies and practices. Grantees were able to consolidate grants and reporting where previously they had duplicate grants in each local area using inconsistent formats for application, reporting and performance management expectations.
3. Describe the processes used to:
- a. Monitor the progress in implementing the waiver.
 - Several measures were established to measure the progress and success in implementing the waiver. These measures include; reduce time to issue grant awards, reduced cost associated with administering WIA, increased standardization in service delivery and eligibility. Some measures are monitored quarterly and grant programs will be providing monthly reports once training has been completed.
 - b. Provide notice to any local board affected by the waiver.
 - The Anchorage/Mat-Su and the Balance of State Local Workforce Investment Boards were notified in February, 2003, and engaged in providing input. Presentations to the Anchorage/Mat-Su LWIB were provided on multiple occasions. The Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development met with the executive committee and the full board in an effort to inform the local board of the impact and a facilitated session of the executive committees of the three boards was part of the initial planning activities.
 - c. Provide any local board affected by the waiver an opportunity to comment on the request.
 - The public comment period was open for thirty days. During the period of public comment the Anchorage/Mat-Su local workforce investment board met to review the plan modification and voted in favor of the plan. Their comments were included in the public comment material.
 - d. Ensure meaningful public comment, including comment by business and organized labor, on the waiver.
 - Public comment was received from members of the public as well as leadership of organized labor. The plan was discussed with industry lead groups including the Alaska Process Industry Careers Consortium, the Industry Skills Coalition, and Commonwealth North. Organized labor provided substantial comments on the method of making the changes but did not comment on the decision to re-align the state's workforce investment system.

If you need additional information please contact me at (907)269-3729.

Sincerely,

Katherine Farnham, Executive Director
Alaska Workforce Investment Board
Division of Business Partnerships

Cc: Armando Quiroz, Regional Administrator US Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration Region VI
Greg O'Claray, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development
Alice Galvin, PhD, Chair, Alaska Workforce Investment Board

State of Alaska Unified Plan Modification 1

Section N, Page 210: Waiver and Work-Flex Requests

Modification:

Since developing the Unified Plan, Alaska has submitted three requests for waivers. These waivers have focused on customer needs as they relate to performance. First the youth ITA waiver, in rural Alaska young people are independent at a much earlier age. They can benefit from vocational training while many other students are trying to remain in school. Alaska also has a young urban population with ever growing responsibilities. More and more young people are anxious to earn good wages to support or assist their families. This waiver will provide them the opportunity to train in high wage, high demand jobs.

The second waiver is our request to serve seasonal workers. Several of Alaska's major economic industries are seasonal in nature, such as tourism, fishing and rural construction. Unfortunately because of the retention expectation, workers in these industries are discouraged from assistance by WIA because of the negative impact on the retention performance measures. Our waiver proposes a separate performance measure for those working in seasonal industries.

Finally, Alaska is seeking a waiver to transfer more than 30% of dislocated worker funds to the adult program. This waiver will encourage economic growth and align limited workforce development resources with the current demands of the state. Alaska is likely to experience slow steady growth over the next several years. If additional adult funding is not likely, then the flexibility to transfer funds assures that a state will have more options to address workforce and economic development concerns.

In addition to the three waiver requests referenced above, Alaska, with the submission of this modification, is formally requesting a waiver to apply 20 CFR 661.300(f) (which permits a state board to carry out the roles of a local board in a single local area state) to a statewide regional planning area. With the waiver, the Governor may designate the state board to carry out any of the roles and responsibilities that would otherwise be carried out by local boards. Approval of this waiver will enable the Governor to establish a governance structure that is responsive to the unique requirements of Alaska. Further, the Governor can streamline the administration of services, increase efficiency, and avoid duplication across the workforce investment system.

Alaska also formally requests a waiver of the requirements relating to local area performance in WIA sec.136(c). Alaska, in functioning as a statewide region, will report statewide data and meet applicable state performance requirements without providing data for each local area. This will enable the AWIB to monitor progress throughout the state, take appropriate corrective action promptly, and will lead to improved statewide performance.

State of Alaska Unified Plan Modification 1

The waivers are submitted in accordance with 20 CFR 661.420(a)(1) and are expected to result in improved programmatic and performance outcomes. This Unified Plan modification is intended to supplement the waiver plan submitted on February 3, 2003, and contains the information required by sec. 661.420(c). These waiver requests will lead to the outcomes identified in February 3, 2003 waiver plan. They will streamline the administration of services, increase efficiency, and avoid duplication across Alaska's workforce investment system.

6/17/2004

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STATE OF ALASKA
 DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
 DIVISION OF BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS

FACSIMILE TRANSMITTAL SHEET

TO: Sean Kelly	FROM: Mike Shiffer
FAX NUMBER: 202-693-3015	DATE: 6/17/04
COMPANY: Division of one-stop Ops. OWI, ETA, US DOL	TOTAL NO. OF PAGES INCLUDING COVER: 6
PHONE NUMBER: 202-693-3994	CC:
RE:	

URGENT
 FOR REVIEW
 PLEASE COMMENT
 PLEASE REPLY

NOTES/COMMENTS:

Sean,
 attached is Alaska's request to continue two waivers that expire on 6/30/04. Please call me if you have questions.

Thanks.
 (907) 269-3729

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 ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99501-1963

PHONE: (907) 269-7485 • FAX: (907) 269-4661