

Alaska's Workforce System

# Infrastructure Symposium

Morning Session  
April 2nd, 2024



# Contents

- I. About this Project
- II. Alaska's challenges and opportunities
- III. Previous workforce development plans
- IV. Alaska's current workforce development system
- V. Findings from the stakeholders survey
- VI. 2023 Workforce System Convening
  - I. Key findings
  - II. Recommendations
- VII. Next Steps

## Please share your perspective today...

We're going to use technology today to capture your questions and opinions throughout the day.

Please access the web with your smart phone or computer.

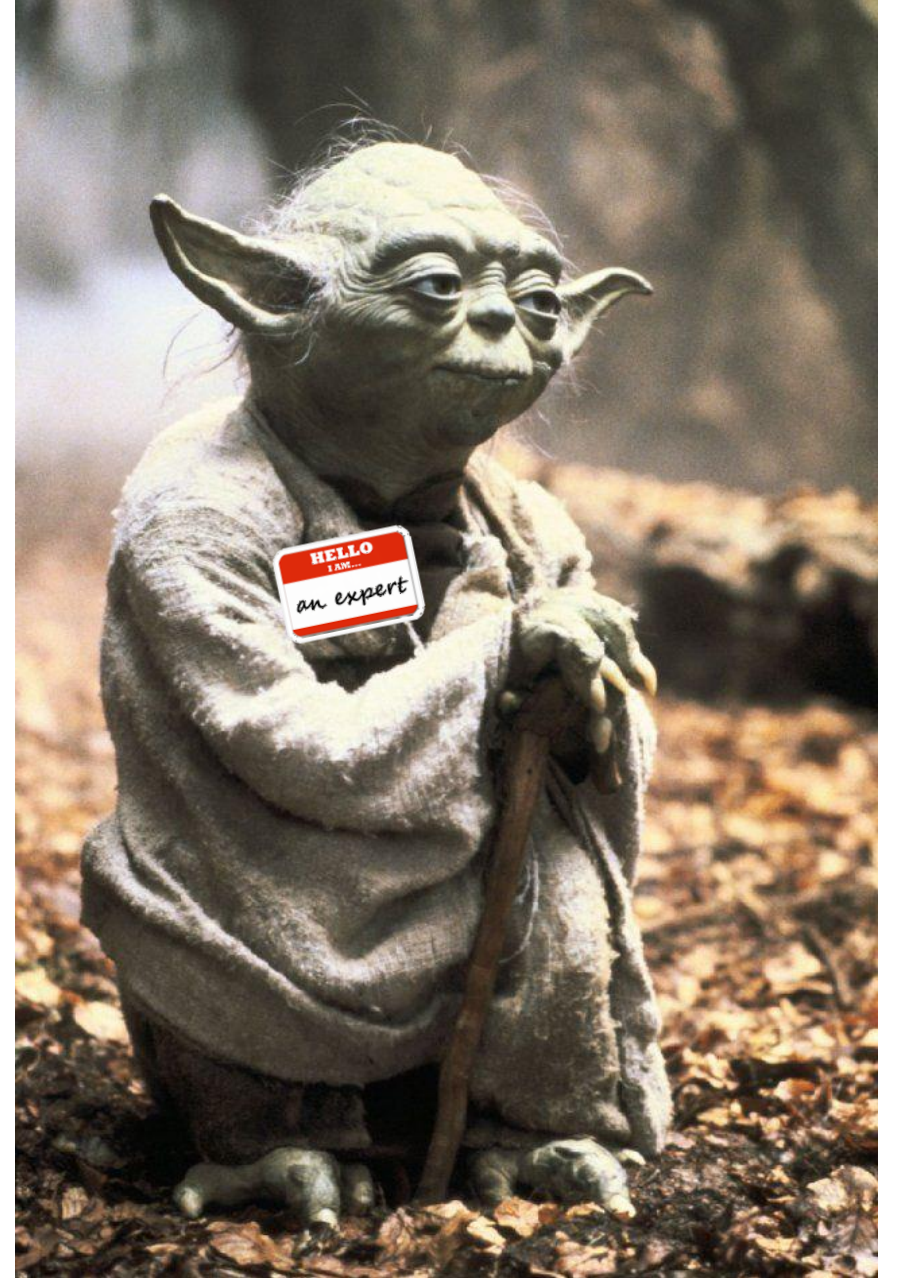
Let's start with an easy question...

What's the best season in Alaska?



# Our mission today

We see you all as experts in this work. You also have unique knowledge to share about your community and region. Please share and ask questions throughout the day.



The background features a dark teal color with a complex pattern of thin, white, intersecting lines that create a sense of depth and movement. The lines vary in length and orientation, some appearing as straight paths while others form more intricate, overlapping structures.

About this project

## 2023 Workforce Convening: about this work

The Alaska Workforce Investment Board and its partners are shaping the next phase of Alaska's workforce development system including a more coordinated effort across the state between employers, training providers, labor, and education.

The expansion of federal funding – especially for infrastructure related projects – presents a significant economic opportunity for the state of Alaska, but the state must have the workforce available or the ability to attract workers to implement these opportunities.

As Alaska looks to take advantage of new opportunities, it must also grapple with persistent challenges to its workforce across all industries – migration loss, aging populations, and the physical challenge of creating a connected workforce system in a vast and geographically complex state

# Research Team & Interviewees

## The Kinetic West Team



**Emma Kallaway**  
Consulting Manager  
[Emma.Kallaway@kineticwest.com](mailto:Emma.Kallaway@kineticwest.com)



**Julia Reed**  
Consulting Manager  
[julia.reed@kineticwest.com](mailto:julia.reed@kineticwest.com)



**Avery Kristen**  
Principal  
[avery@kineticwest.com](mailto:avery@kineticwest.com)

## Research Interviews

Practitioners in Alaska's workforce development field sat with the research team to provide a window into the current state and challenges of Alaska's workforce development system. Thank you to our partners for their time and insight

**Beki Toussaint**  
Alaska Resource Education

**Cathy LeCompte**  
Director, AVTEC

**Mari Selle**  
Maritime Director, Alaska Safety Alliance

**Patrick Rose**  
VP of Business Services and Solutions, Northern Industrial Training

**Anthony Ladd**  
Business Manager, Ironworkers Local #751

**Corey Baxter**  
District 8 Representative, IUOE Local 302

**Mike Andrews**  
Former AWIB Exec. Director

**Erin Heist**  
Former Interim AWIB Exec. Director

**Dirk Craft**  
AWIB Exec. Director

**Jeffrey Steeprow**  
Assistant Director, AWIB

# Research Inputs

## Interviews: Workforce Development Practitioners

Conducted interviews with current and former Alaska workforce development practitioners, including representatives from University of Alaska, AVTEC, AWIB, Alaska Resource Education, and more

Interviews Conducted

10

## Desk Research

Resources provided by AWIB and AVTEC project partners, and included:

- [Alaska Economic Trends](#)
- [AWIB Plans, Policies and Initiatives](#)
- [Alaska Native Corporations at 50](#)
- [Alaska Occupational Forecast](#)

Online Resources

40+

## Survey of Convening Attendees

Surveyed invitees to workforce development convening to discuss

Survey Respondents

29

## 2023 Convening Attendees

Convening attendees that participated in small group discussions and large group decision-making

2023 Convening Attendees

105





# Challenges and Opportunities

# Alaska's Persistent Challenges

## Vast geography

- Simply put, Alaska is huge – with 86% of communities unreachable by road

## Migration and Working Age Population loss<sup>1</sup>

- Alaska has experienced net negative migration for the last 10 years
- We've seen a decline in the working age population from 479,000 to 449,000 over the last 8 years

## Unpredictable state funding, especially petroleum revenues<sup>2</sup>

- 44% of the state revenues are projected to come from petroleum revenue in FY 2023
- However, oil prices can be unpredictable depending on external shocks. The Department of Revenue noted that FY23 budget forecast arrives “during a continued period of uncertainty, due to recent geopolitical and financial events, causing volatile market conditions,” including for oil revenues
- For example, unrestricted general fund revenue from the state is expected to decrease by \$246 million in FY2023, driven by an expected \$295 million decrease in petroleum revenue

## Alaska has long dealt with challenges around migration and population growth

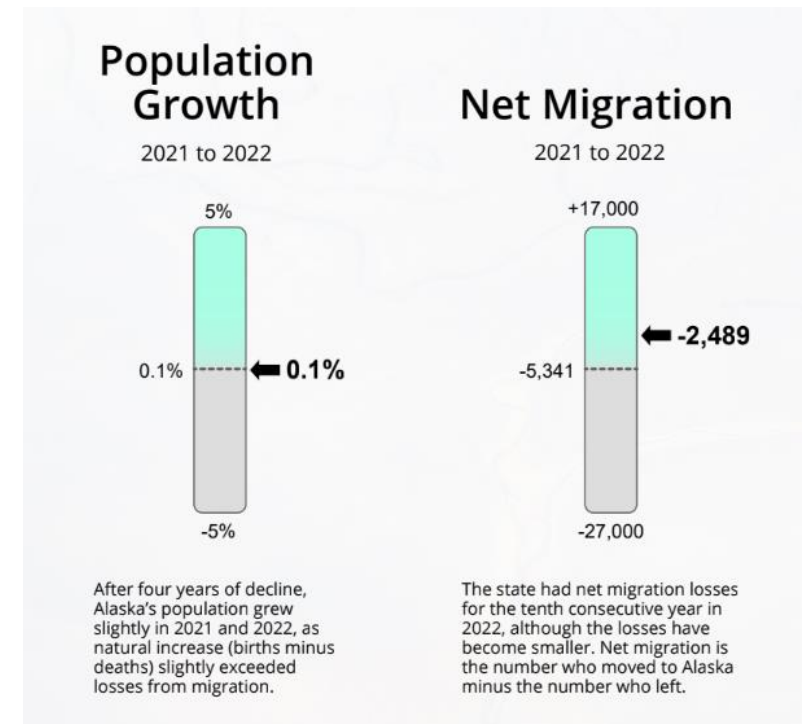


Fig. 1

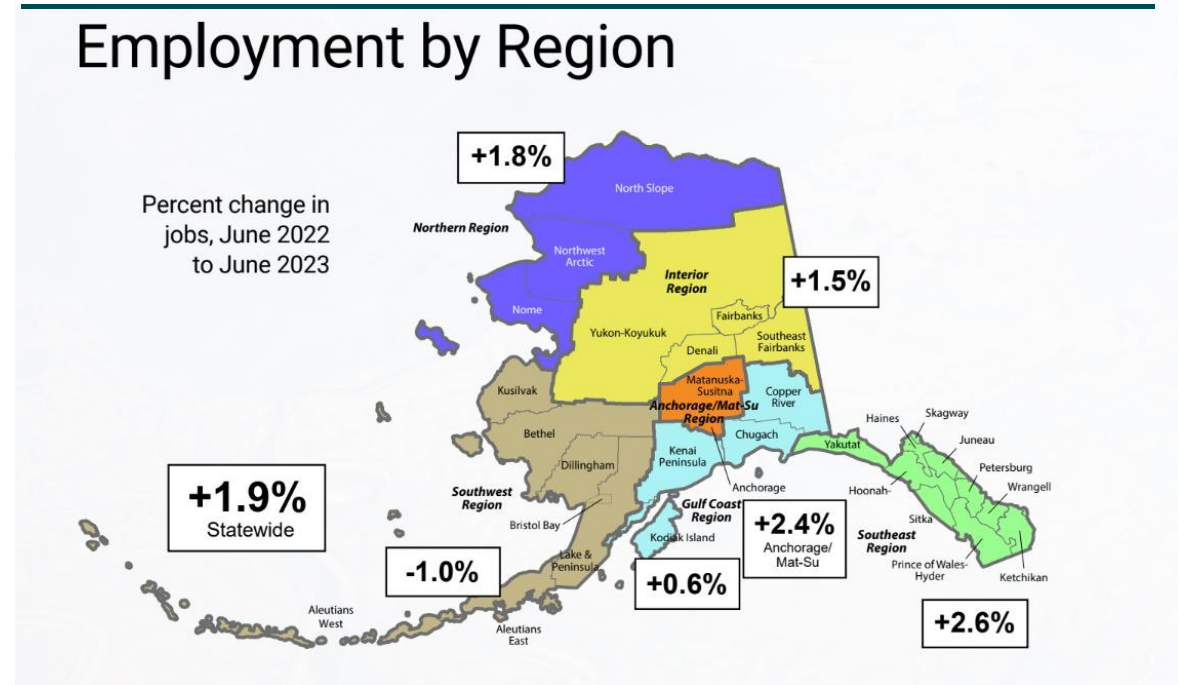
# Alaska's new challenges: Still recovering from COVID-19

COVID-19 recovery is ongoing, but labor shortage is a complication<sup>1</sup>

- Anchorage alone lost 12,000 jobs in 12 months during COVID-19, the biggest annual loss since the 80s
- Recovery is nearly complete in most industries and jobs could be added if there were more job applicants (today there are 2 jobs open for every job seeker)

Post-COVID-19 job growth has been the highest in Anchorage and Juneau/Southeast, not evenly distributed statewide

Employment is rising in most of Alaska's regions, but recovery is not even statewide



# Housing availability and cost of living make moving to Alaska for work a challenge

There are challenges to getting people to work/move to Alaska due to cost of living and housing availability.

**In 2022, Alaska was ranked the 5th costliest U.S. state to live<sup>2</sup>**

- Alaska's cities are not the most expensive for housing, but have high costs for groceries, utilities, transportation, and healthcare<sup>3</sup>
- Kodiak was #1 for grocery costs nationally, Juneau was 3<sup>rd</sup>, Anchorage 8<sup>th</sup>, and Fairbanks 10<sup>th</sup>
- Fairbanks was ranked highest for utility costs

# Alaska's Persistent Opportunities

## Low unemployment, high job openings, and well-paid occupations

- 7 of Alaska's 10 largest occupation categories have a median wages over \$22/hour<sup>2</sup>

**Unique geography and willingness to be creative:** In pre-convening interviews, workforce development professionals cited Alaska's unique environment, cultural of innovation as to benefits to draw on

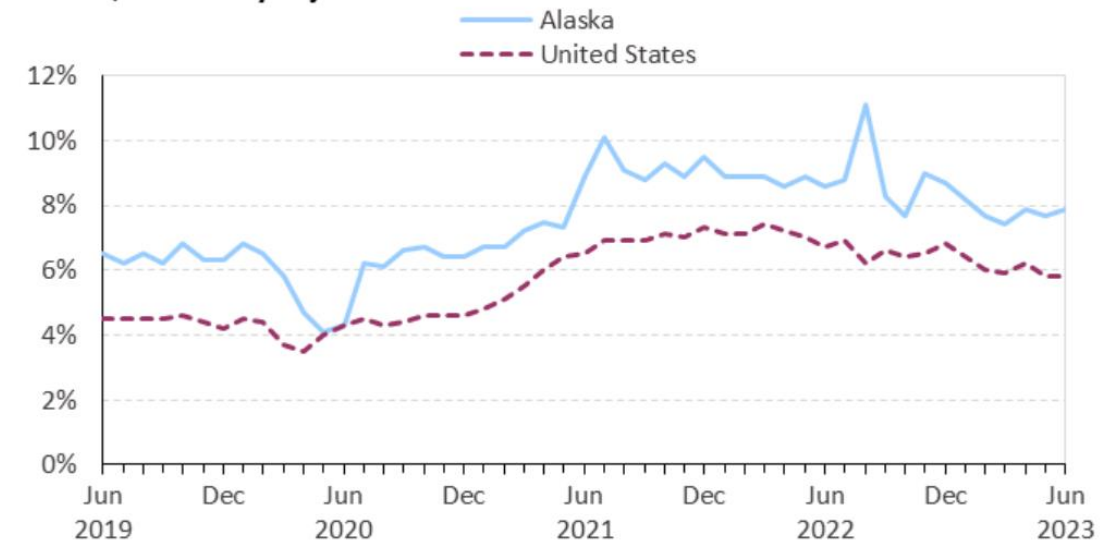
"Everybody wants to come to Alaska. It's on their bucket list"

## Existing network of workforce intermediaries – but there is no coordinator. Alaska's Workforce system includes:

- **Public Sector partners:** University of Alaska campuses, AVTEC, K-12 CTE programs, AWIB, Job Corps, JBER, ANCs
- **Regional resources:** Southeast Regional Resource Center, Alaska Safety Alliance, Borough-led programs
- **Industry and private training partners:** Nine Star, Alaska Excel, AGC and BUILD Alaska, NIT, Alaska Works

## Alaska has more job openings than the U.S. overall<sup>1</sup>

**Chart 1. Job openings as a percent of employment for the United States and Alaska, seasonally adjusted**



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

"There hasn't been a coordinating body in the state... it would be good to have a convening body to know what is going on in different places"

1. Bureau of Labor Statistics, ["Alaska Job Openings and Labor Turnover"](#), June 2023; 2. Bureau of Labor Statistics, ["State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates"](#), May 2022; Quotes and notes on existing workforce systems come from interviews with Alaska workforce partners conducted by Kinetic West in September, 2023

# Alaska’s Persistent Opportunities: Unique Native Corporation structure

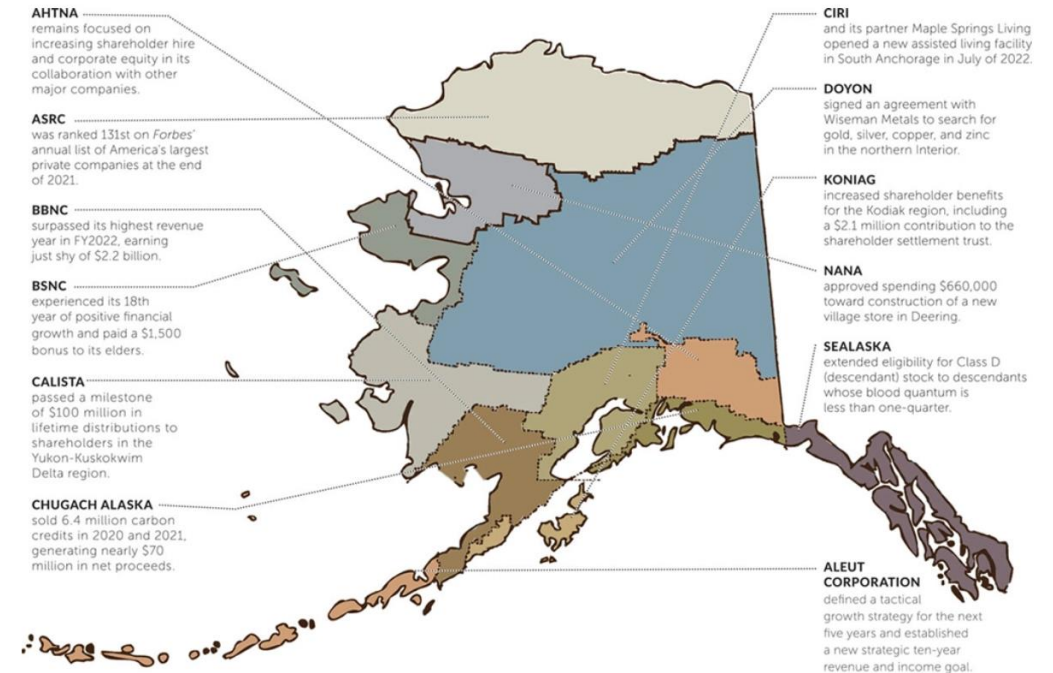
No other state has a native corporation model like Alaska – where native corporations are employers, workforce development partners, and industry catalysts

## ANCs participate in multiple education and workforce programs

- All 12 regional ANCs have nonprofit foundations focused on advancing the educational endeavors of shareholders and descendants
- Most ANCs offer internship programs for high school and college shareholders
- Many ANCs and subsidiaries contribute to the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program to encourage Alaska youth to pursue STEM careers
- In FY17, ANCs contributed over \$17 million to nonprofit organizations that support youth development, workforce development, health and humanitarian services, arts and culture, and other causes

ANCs can also participate in the formal state workforce development programs. For example, Bristol Bay Native Corporation provides commercial drivers license training for Bristol Bay residents through STEP grants<sup>2</sup>

## Alaska’s “Big Twelve” regional native corporations recognized their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2022



Source: [Alaska Business Magazine](https://www.alaskabusinessmagazine.com/)

# Alaska's new opportunities: Federal funding influx coming... but not just here

Alaska expects to benefit from an influx of new federal infrastructure grants and – but other states are expecting to see those benefits as well

- Unlike previous economic booms, jobseekers don't have to come to Alaska to experience high wages and high labor demand

Alaska's track record getting funding out the door might help the state shine in competitive funding environment

"A lot of states down south, they can't figure out how to use the infrastructure money, they have permitting issues – but Alaska knows how to get it done" – AWIB member


Alaska's expects to see significant federal investments coming to the state

## Top 20 Alaska infrastructure act-funded projects

Funding	Community	Project
\$362,707,359	Statewide	National Highway Performance Program
\$250,000,000	Nome	Port of Nome
\$209,000,000	Statewide	Rural Ferry Service
\$187,000,000	ALCAN Border	ALCAN Border Station
\$185,000,000	Seward	Lowell Creek
\$176,452,228	Statewide	Surface Transportation Block Grant
\$130,000,000	Kodiak	Coast Guard Base Kodiak Fuel Pier Upgrade
\$88,000,000	North Pole	Moose Creek Dam
\$77,401,427	Statewide, Anchorage, Fairbanks	Federal Transportation Administration FY22 Apportionment
\$75,000,000	Statewide	Denali Commission
\$68,700,000	Anchorage	Port of Alaska
\$52,600,000	Calista Region	Calista for fiber across 10 villages in region
\$45,000,000	Statewide	Bridge Formula Program
\$42,000,000	Bethel, Platinum, Eek, Napaskiak, Oscarville	Bethel Native Corporation for fiber network
\$40,000,000	Kodiak	Coast Guard Base Kodiak Housing
\$40,000,000	Kodiak	Coast Guard Base Kodiak Childcare Development Facility
\$39,902,549	Statewide	Highway Safety Improvement Program
\$35,625,580	Statewide	Alaska Marine Highway System: Federal Highway Administration Ferry Boat Program
\$34,885,420	Bristol Bay Region	Deploy fiber for the Bristol Bay region
\$33,017,636	Haines, Hoonah Angoon CA, Skagway	Alaska Telephone Company fiber-to-premises network

Source: U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski

Source: [Alaska Business Magazine](#)



Previous Alaska  
Workforce Efforts



# Alaska has created workforce development strategies before, some sector strategies remain active, others are currently dormant

Sector Strategy/Plan	Issued	Current Status
<a href="#">Youth Systems Building Academy</a>	2023	<b>Active:</b> AWIB-led, US DOL effort to assist 10 communities in developing strategies to support youth employment. Most offer guaranteed paid work experiences, businesses committed to quality career pathways and “no
<a href="#">Fisheries, Seafood, and Maritime Initiative</a>	2014; updated in 2020	<b>Active:</b> Alaska Maritime Education Consortium leading implementation, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training at AVTEC, UA Ketchikan, UA Kachemak Bay Campus</li> <li>• Advancing Alaskan Workers Initiative at Vigor Alaska Shipyards</li> <li>• Calista/AVTEC/USDOL registered apprenticeship partnerships</li> <li>• Updated action plan covers 2020-2025</li> </ul>
<a href="#">Alaska CTE Plan</a>	2018	<b>Active</b>
<a href="#">Alaska Health Workforce</a>	2010, updated in 2017-21	<b>Active:</b> Public-private partnership Alaska Health Workforce coalition supports implementation, focused on increasing behavioral health professionals, peer support specialists, nurses, primary care providers, physical therapists, health care administrators, and direct care professionals. Updated plan coming 2024.
<a href="#">Alaska Gasline Workforce</a>	2018	<b>Inactive</b>
<a href="#">Alaska Construction Workforce</a>	2006	<b>Inactive</b>
<a href="#">Alaska Transportation Industry Workforce</a>	2006	<b>Inactive</b>
<a href="#">Alaska Mining Workforce</a>	2014	<b>Inactive</b>

# Alaska has created workforce development strategies before, some sector strategies remain active

## Commonalities from previous workforce development plans:

[Sector Strategy/Plan](#)

[Youth Systems Building Academy](#)

[Fisheries, Seafood, and Maritime Initiative](#)

[Alaska CTE Plan](#)

[Alaska Health Workforce](#)

[Alaska Gasline Workforce](#)

[Alaska Construction Workforce](#)

[Alaska Transportation Industry Workforce](#)

[Alaska Mining Workforce](#)

### Common focal points of previous workforce development plans:

- Increase awareness of priority occupations and career pathways
- Expand capacity for education and training to fill occupations
- Retain and develop incumbent workers
- Sustain engagement and collaboration between industry, education, government

## Challenges in previous workforce plans

### Sustaining momentum and engagement

“We get together for convenings and disappear and work back in our siloes”

“The geography of the state makes it possible to not collaborate... there hasn’t been a coordinating body”

### Unexpected industry shifts

“We did a lot of training for [previous workforce plan] and the jobs never came”

### Frequent turnover, having to start processes over again

“Teacher turnover is high, and new teachers don’t know what careers exist in the state”

“A huge number of [state workforce planning] jobs are not filled right now.”



Alaska's Workforce  
Development System  
Today

# Looking at Alaska's Workforce Development System Today

## K-12 and CTE

### Career and Technical Education Programs

- 8,249 secondary-level CTE participants in 2020-2021 school year
- High school CTE students can take part in 60 hours of supervised, on the job training

### **In-school college and career advising**

- Challenged by high counselor to student ratios
- Supported by nonprofit partners like [Alaska EXCEL](#)

### **Industry supported career education**

- Example: [Alaska Resource Education](#)

## Postsecondary Education

### University of Alaska

- 26,948 students graduated since 2011 from programs [relevant to state's high demand industries](#) (40% in certificate and associate programs)
- 94.8% of working graduates are Alaska residents

### AVTEC

- Programs include construction, culinary, maritime, IT, industrial welding, plumbing and related studies program supporting apprenticeships
- 30-35 hours of training per week in classroom and hands-on training labs, graduate with AVTEC certificate and/or industry credentials and licenses

## Adult-focused training

Alaska has a wide variety of training programs for adults and young adults, including:

- [Alaska Native Corporation programs](#)
- [Alaska Works Partnership](#) – Free construction training
- [AWIB](#) training centers
- [Job Corps](#)
- [Build Alaska by AGC](#)
- [SERRC, Alaska's Education Resource Center](#) (includes Alaska Health Education and The Learning Connection)
- [Nine Star](#) Education and Employment Services
- [Alaska Safety Alliance](#)
- Trainings aimed at specific communities (e.g. veterans, immigrants and refugees)
- Employer-provided trainings

# Interviews: What are challenges facing Alaska's workforce development system today?

## **Siloes and lack of coordination**

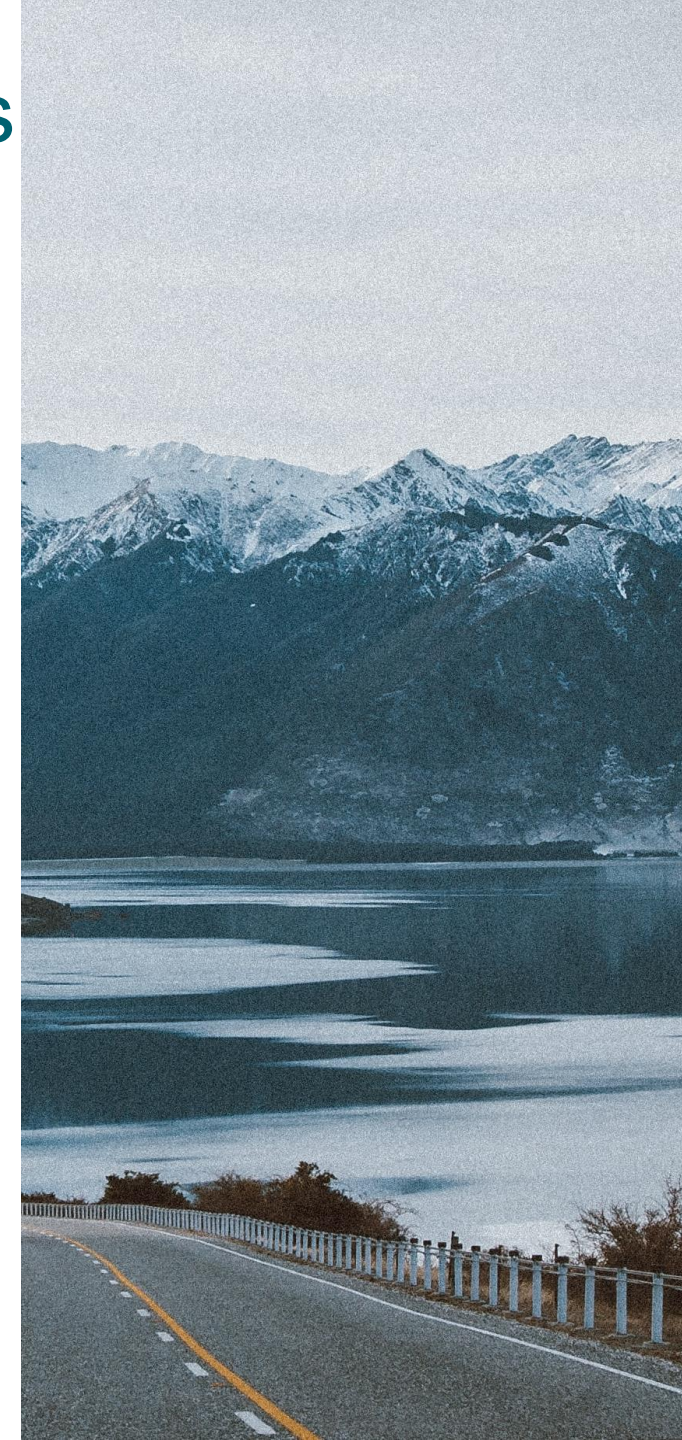
- “The state is so big, we struggle to reach rural areas”
- “Alaska is very siloed. No matter who you talk to, we all think we know what's best”
- No body or board specifically focused on responding to the needs of employers
- Department of Labor is small, and workforce development team within department is small
- Publicly funded training programs have to contend with unpredictable budgets and regulator red tape – that can make it harder to be nimble in response to industry

## **Challenges around efficiency, collaboration in higher education and training**

- Competition and competing systems across the University of Alaska campuses, including for administrative tasks like credit transfers, cross-campus enrollment can cause delays in getting people into programs
- Focus should be not just on enrollment, but completion – what supports do students need to attain the credential, degree, or experience

## **Challenges setting itself apart from other states with similar opportunities. Our interviewees suggested looking at incentives like:**

- Moving vouchers and housing vouchers
- Higher per diem to reflect the increasing cost of living – at least \$135/day, and available to workers in cities as well as remote areas
- More coordinated advertising to young people – one off social media buys aren't enough
- Make it easier for Canadian labor, Ukrainian refugees to come to Alaska to fill jobs



# Interviews: What would help overcome some of Alaska's workforce development system challenges?

"We need a neutral entity that is for Alaska's success, with government at the table, but that isn't a government agency. We need a convener"

"We need a total new model, empower a group that's apolitical, more like a think tank"

## What could a third-party workforce development entity do? Interviewees suggested:

- Help coordinate federal grant applications
- Break down siloes, encourage collaboration, share best practices
- Consistently reach out to employers to understand what they need
- Have oversight over workforce funding and implementation of workforce development plans
- Bring in funding from private industry and/or foundations to support workforce needs

# Looking at Alaska's Workforce Development System Today

## K-12 and CTE

### Career and Technical Education Programs

- 8,249 secondary-level CTE participants in 2020-2021 school year
- High school CTE students can take part in 60 hours of supervised, on-the-job

## Postsecondary Education

### University of Alaska

- 26,948 students graduated since 2011 from programs relevant to state's high demand industries (40% in certificate and associate programs)
- 94.8% of working graduates are Alaska

## Adult-focused training

Alaska has a wide variety of training programs for adults and young adults, including:

- Alaska Works Partnership – Free construction training
- AWIP training centers

## What we heard from workforce practitioners

**Alaska has a wealth of workforce development resources, but lacks a single entity to consistently coordinate, scale, advocate for workforce development efforts**

- Challenged by high counselor to student ratios
- Supported by nonprofit partners like Alaska EXCEL

### Industry supported career education

- Example: Alaska Resource Education

- 30-35 hours of training per week in classroom and hands-on training labs, graduate with AVTEC certificate and/or industry credentials and licenses

### Services

- Alaska Safety Alliance
- Trainings aimed at specific communities (e.g. veterans, immigrants and refugees)
- Trainings offered directly by employers or worksites

The background of the slide is a dark teal color. It is decorated with a complex network of thin, white, straight lines that crisscross the entire frame. These lines vary in length and orientation, creating a sense of movement and connectivity. The lines are most dense on the left side of the slide and become sparser towards the right.

Findings from 2023  
survey

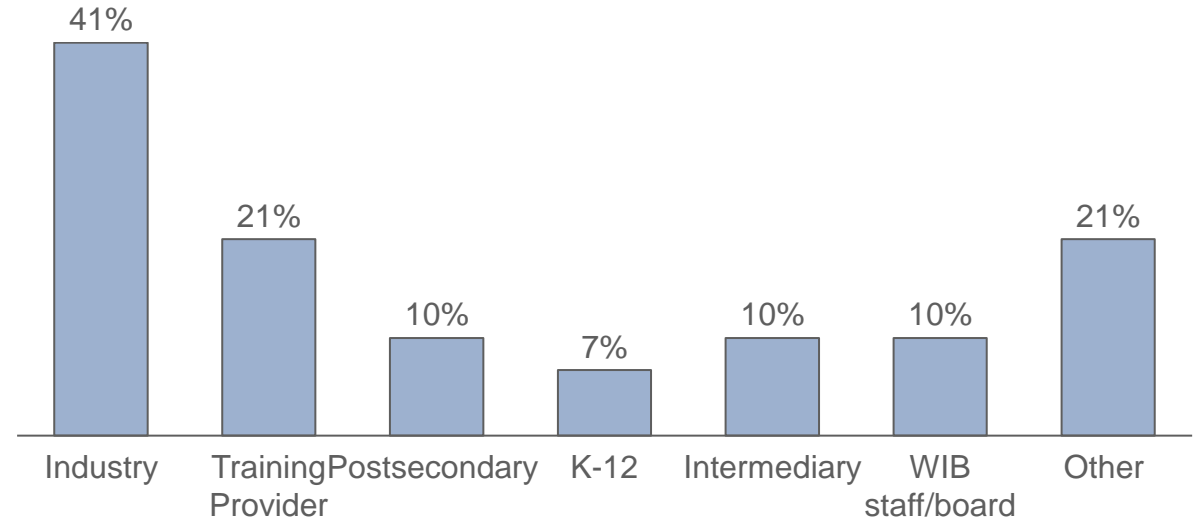


# About the survey

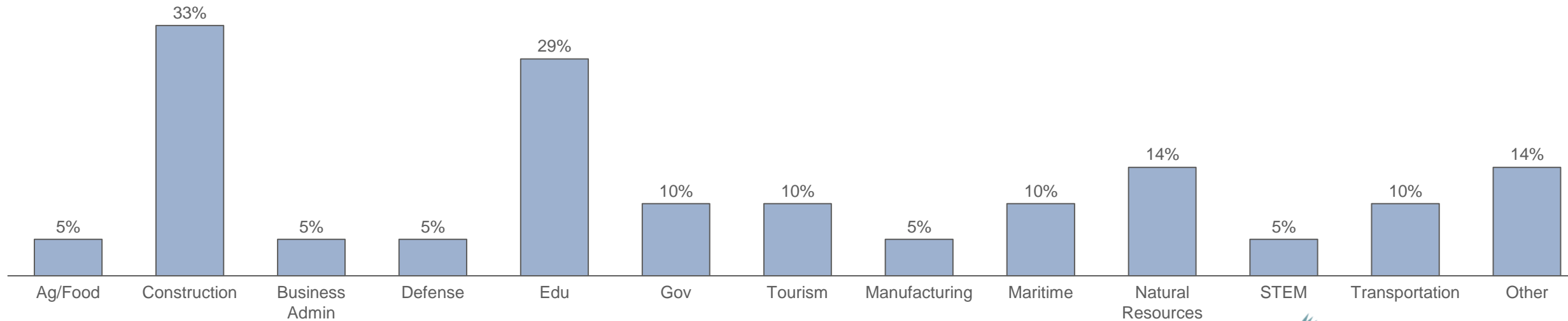
This survey came with the convening invitation

- 29 survey respondents from a variety of roles
- 12 employer responded from a range of industries

## Survey Respondent By Role

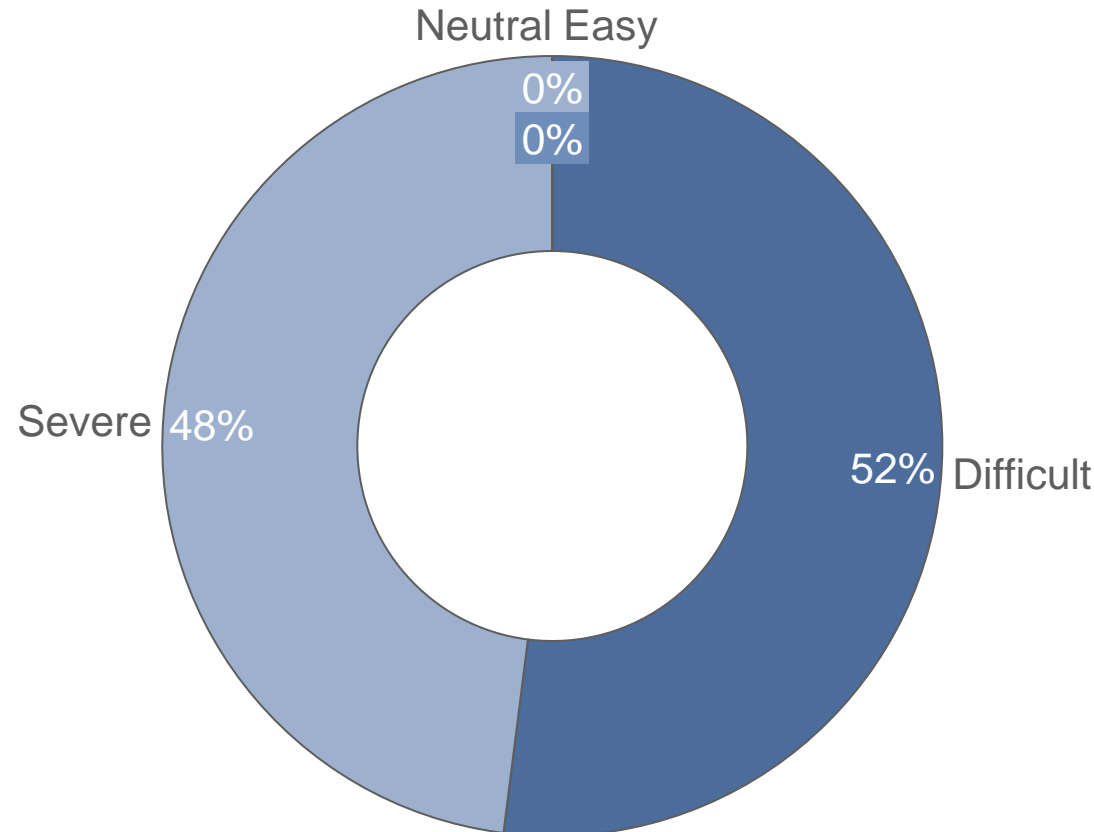


## Employer Respondents by Industry



# 100% of employers and stakeholders agree challenges facing employers ability to fill their talent needs are difficult or severe

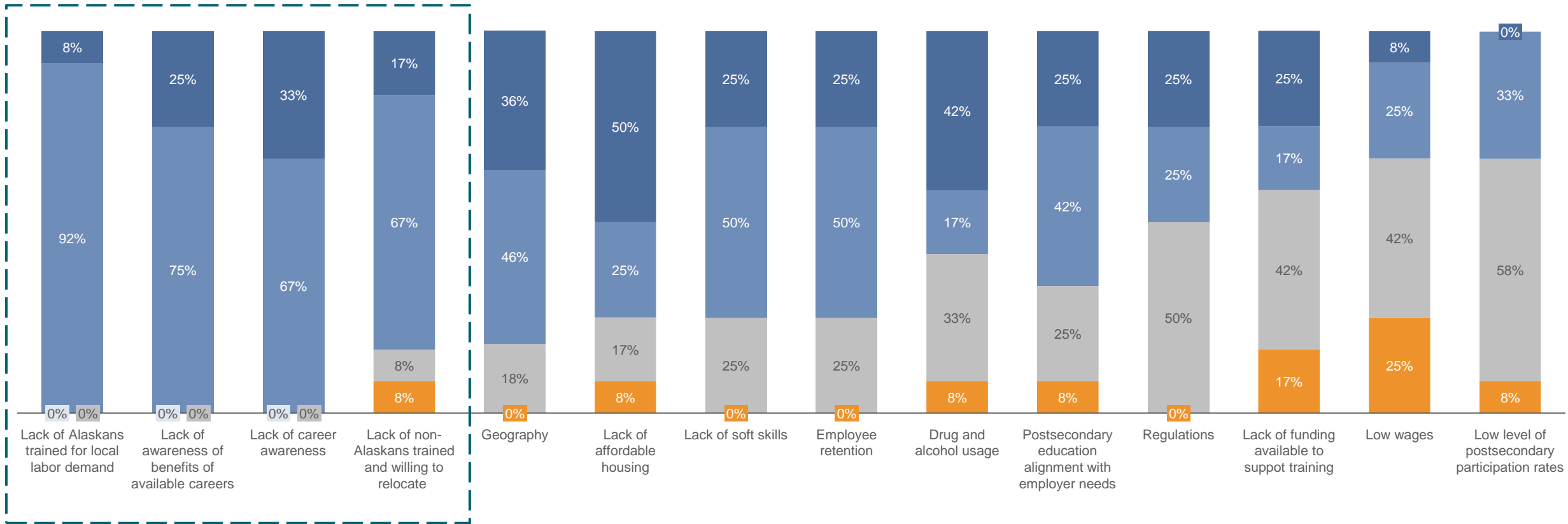
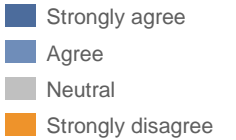
How would you describe the level of difficulty you have filling your talent needs?



Not one survey respondents said they had an “easy” or even “neutral” time meeting their talent needs

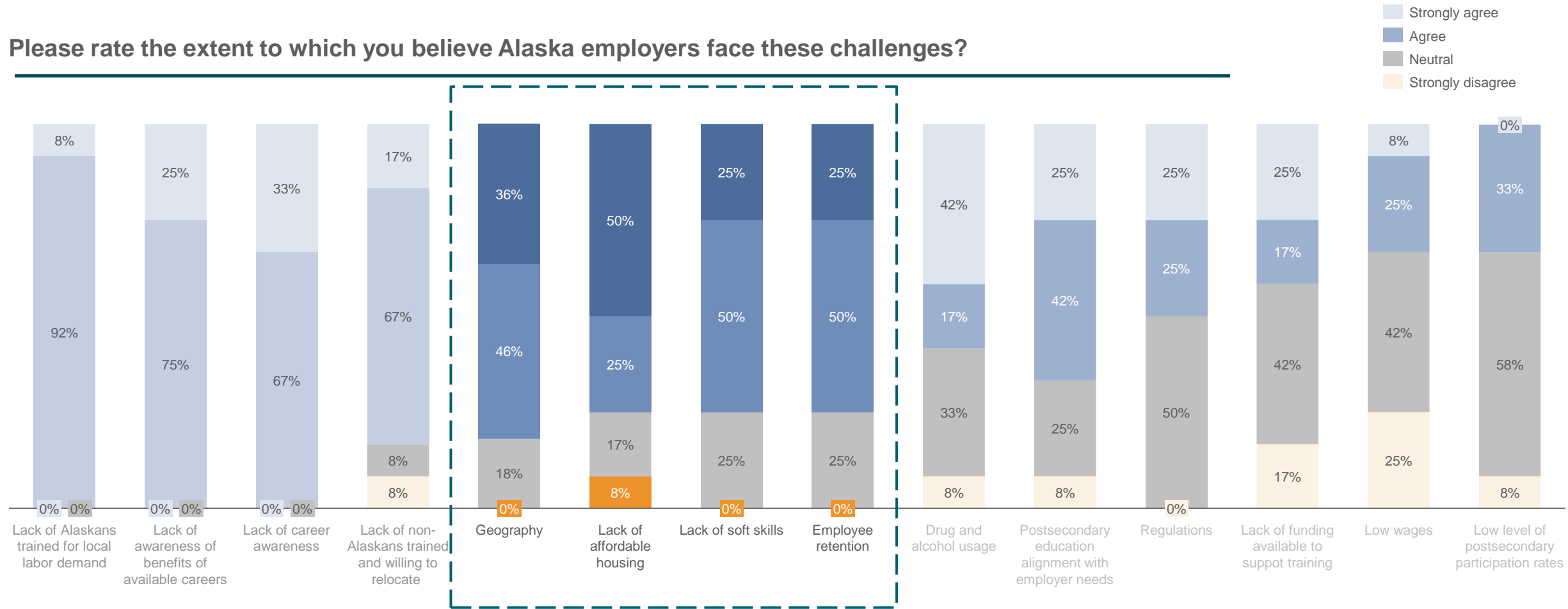
# Respondents said their biggest challenge is finding enough workers, as well as career awareness and relocation of talent

Please rate the extent to which you believe Alaska employers face these challenges?



# Geography, housing affordability, helping employees build soft skills, and retaining employees were also a challenge

Please rate the extent to which you believe Alaska employers face these challenges?



# Employers struggle to recruit talent with desired technical skills amidst competitive environment for wages, benefits

## Most challenging roles to fill, according to employers

---

- Qualified tradespeople and technical positions (ex. specialized factory mechanics i.e. Baader technicians, etc.)
- Finance people
- Operations personnel (technicians and supervisors)
- Specialized positions -trades and manager level positions
- Qualified journey level personnel just to fill current needs
- All hospitality roles
- Mid-level management
- Pilots, drivers and mechanics

## Challenges business faces when filling talent needs

---

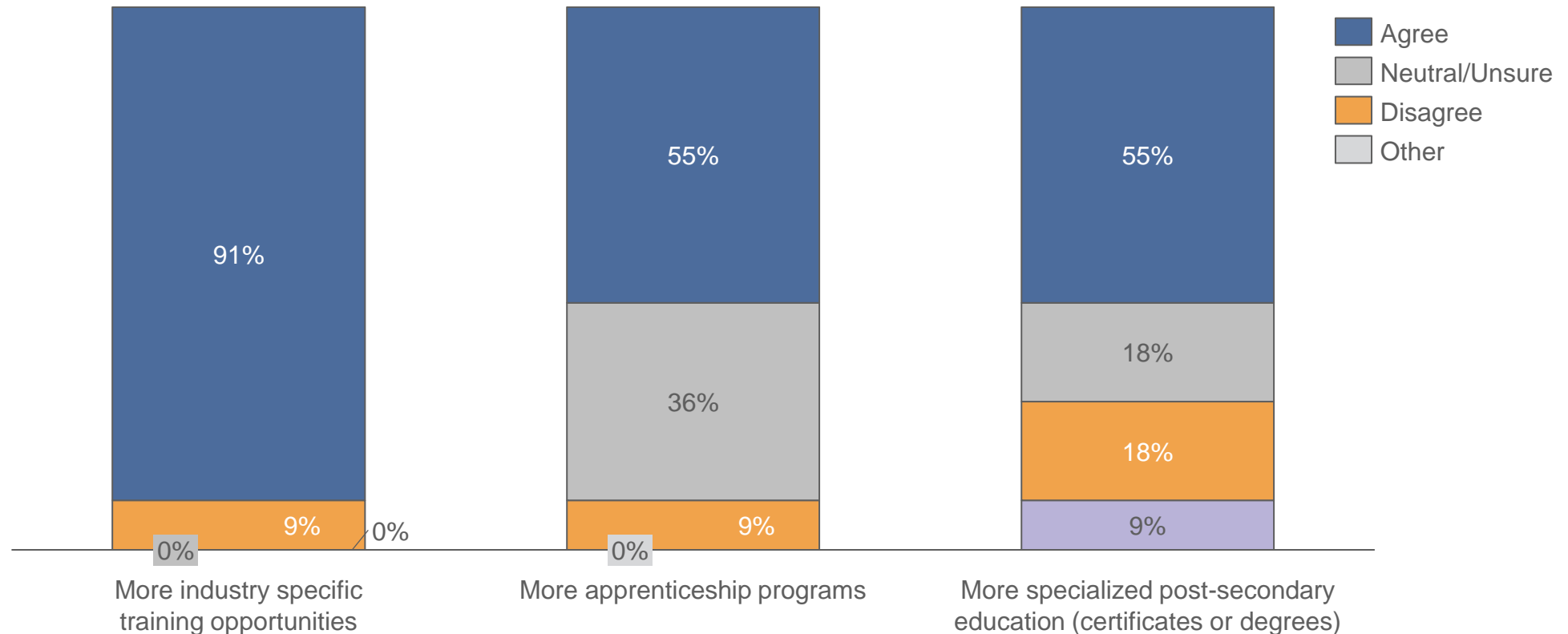
- Post-covid expectations from employees (ex. employees desiring remote work)
- Space limitations for apprentice, intern, or job shadow programs (ex. space on vessels at Sea is extremely limited)
- Individuals struggle to manage conflict and work across differences on teams
- Low levels of durable skills in new hires (ex. accepting failure as part of work and to learn from it)
- “Managers aren’t willing to take a chance on someone who doesn’t meet all of their. We need to think out of the box.”
- Keeping up with national market wages
- Benefits to supplement wages: housing, child care
- Drug tests

# Employers need greater industry specific training opportunities and applied learning should center in-demand industries

## What types of training would help employers fill talent needs?

### Key insights:

- All industry specific trainings and applied learning are valuable
- Stakeholders agree Alaska most needs more industry specific training opportunities
- Respondents shared comments that the type of apprenticeships programs and specialized post-secondary need to align to in demand industries to be valuable



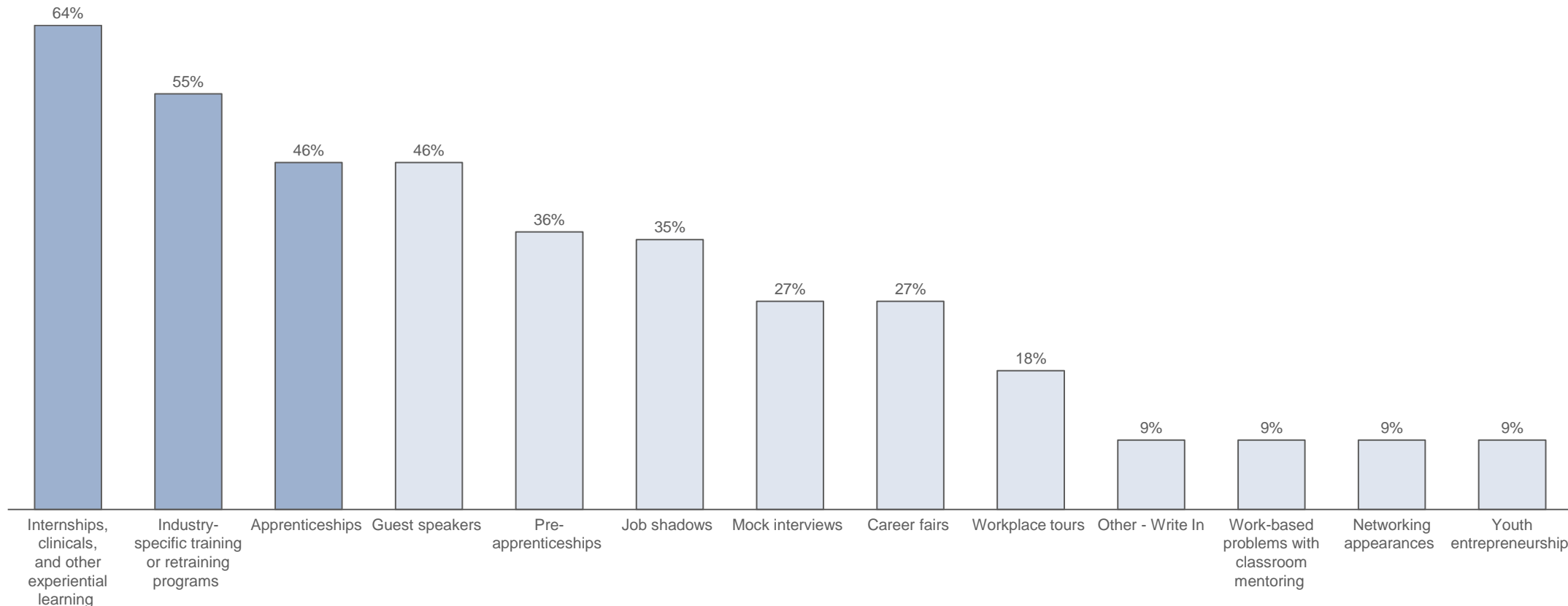
How do employers want to be involved? What incentives matter to them?

# Employers want to be involved in creating and supporting applied work-based learning opportunities

What type(s) of career connected learning are you (employers) most interested in being a part of?

**Opportunity for Strong Partnership**

Applied work-based learning experiences are a top priority for workforce training - employers are willing and ready to participate

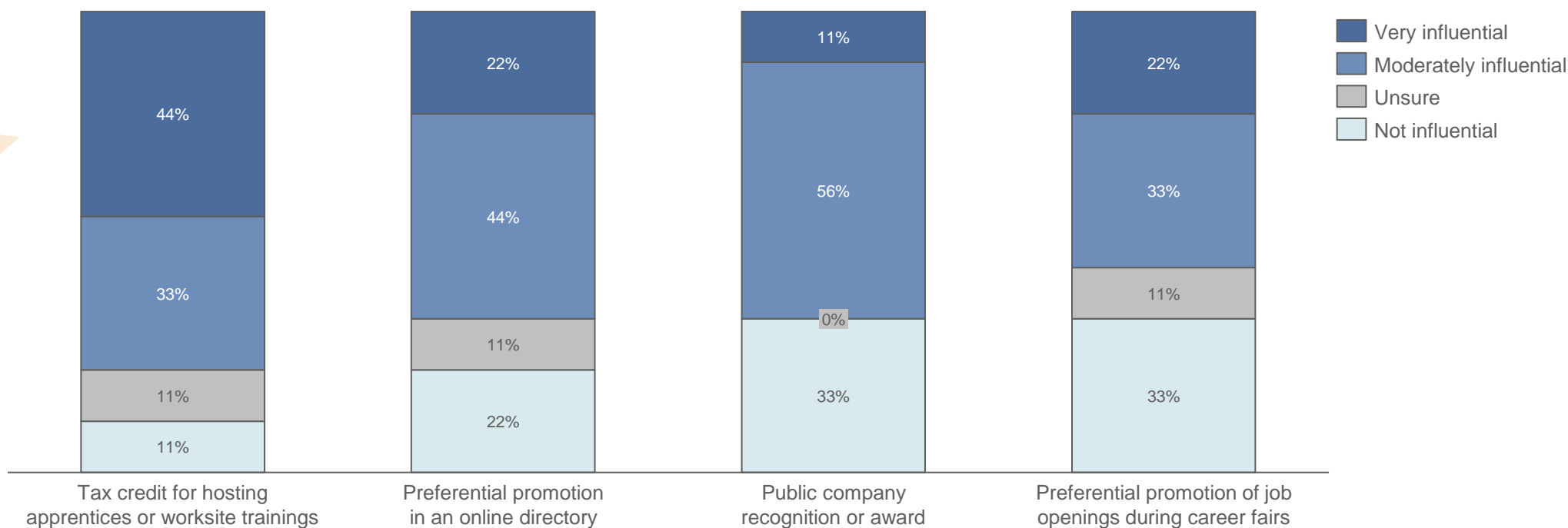




# Employers want financial support to create more training opportunities over promoting jobs to the current pool of talent

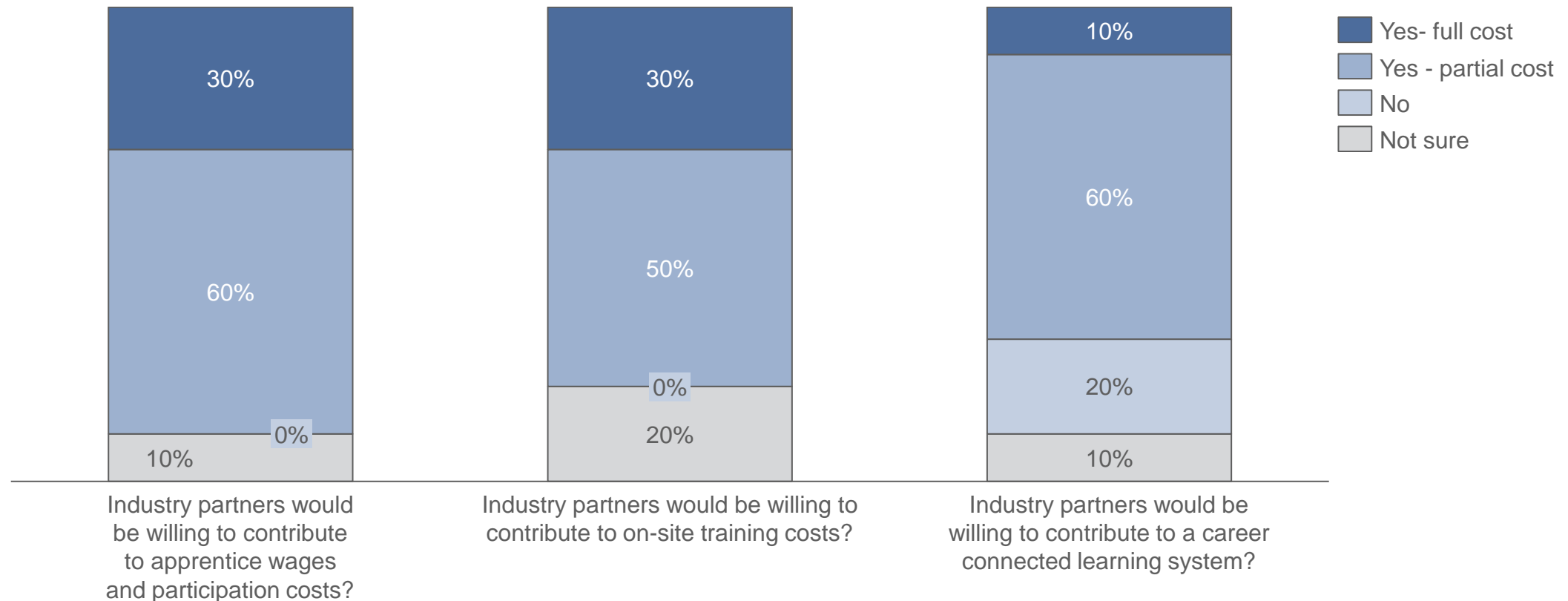
## What incentives matter to employers?

Top incentive for employers is a financial incentive or tax credit to offset costs for hosting apprentices and worksite trainings



# Employers want a system leader and shared responsibility to improve Alaska's workforce readiness

If/how would industry partners be willing to financially support the workforce system and greater career connected learning

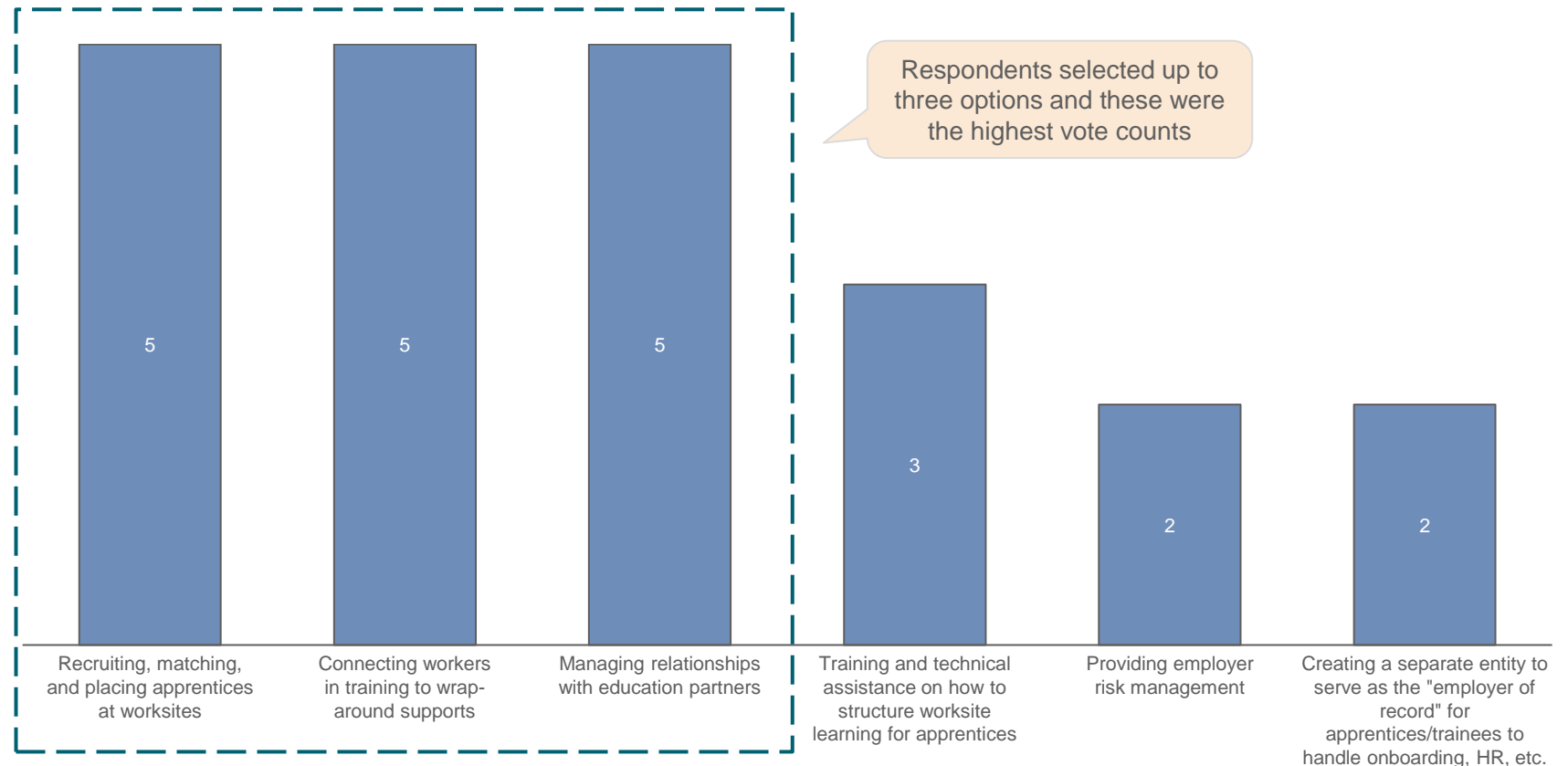


# Alaska has opportunity for collaborative system matching workers to accessible, industry certified programs

Which workforce develop system components and services should be prioritized? (Select 3 most valuable)

## System opportunities:

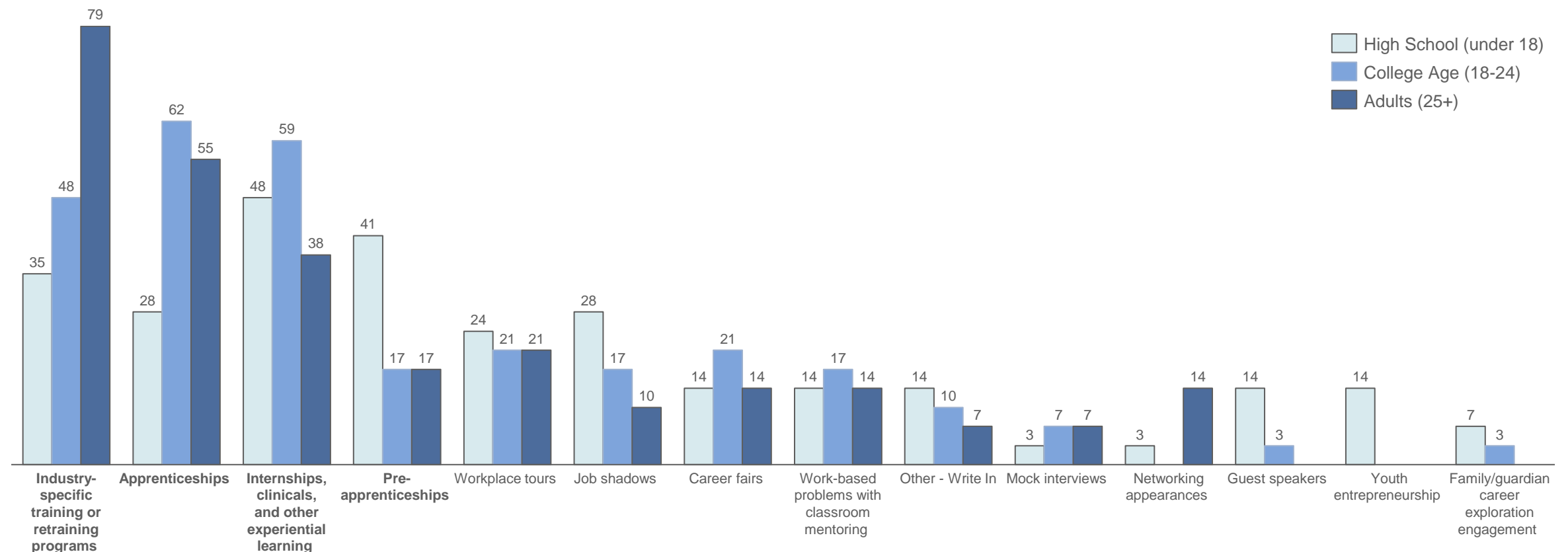
- Prioritize creating connections across stakeholders
- Remove barriers and build incentives for under employed and young Alaskans to take local opportunities
- Set up a system that focuses on creating more work-based learning and training slots across the state
- Develop a system that maps opportunities statewide and helps to match workers



What do employers want to see in a future workforce development system?

# Stakeholders agree that an applied work-based learning is critical – with graduated opportunities for different ages

What career connected learning opportunities would you prioritize for high school students in the Alaska?



# Most open positions require some post-secondary education but less than a 4-year degree – trend will grow in the future

## Alaska's middle skills jobs are hardest to fill

---

- Qualified tradespeople
- Technical positions
- Finance people (non-professional degree holders)
- Operations personnel (technicians and supervisors)
- All hospitality role
- Drivers
- Mechanics

“2020 USA workforce needs by educational attainment: 35% of the job openings require at least a bachelor’s degree, **66% require more than a high school diploma and less than a bachelors degree**”

*Recovery Report: Job growth and education requirements*

*Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce*

What existing work should we scale? What new opportunities should we prioritize?

# Alaska has existing work-based learning programs that can be scaled

## Survey respondents and interviewees specifically called out the following programs:

- Continuing training for teachers to keep them abreast with current industry standards/certifications
- Alaska Maritime Education Collaborative
- “AMSEA has a good program for commercial fisheries and maritime occupations”
- “AK Safety Alliance & Alaska Career & Technical Education Association provides great opportunities for teachers”
- “Specialty instructor certifications/endorsements like MSHA blue card”
- Alaska’s apprenticeships
- Alaska Healthcare Partnership
- “Collaborative Career & Tech Ed models (Bristol Bay Regional CTE, Kuslivak Career Academy) also leverage resources while putting the interests, needs and strengths of rural Alaska Native students first”



# Big ideas for a collaborative statewide system

Data system to track available spots in training programs, job openings with required skills, support services to help hard to recruit populations

Financial recognition by project owners (SOA) for apprentice utilization in fields recognized as faced with shortfall and reward for maximizing trainee/apprentice utilization

Support/collaboration across an industry to participate in national recruiting campaigns

Development of rich virtual training, which may not replace in-person training but could provide powerful support and awareness

Bring back statewide usage of The Career Guides model (as implemented in Alaska until 2016 and currently implemented by rootED in Texas and Missouri) – this can be a cost-effective way of providing students with the guidance they need to connect with appropriate career opportunities

Create a statewide entity that coordinates the system across industry and training providers

Pool resources to advertise 21<sup>st</sup> century jobs and recruit hard to reach individuals into training and careers

Create a system that centers industry and allows Alaska to move at the speed industry needs

# What opportunities should we prioritize?

Stakeholder suggestions broken down by potential actor/role...

## **K-12**

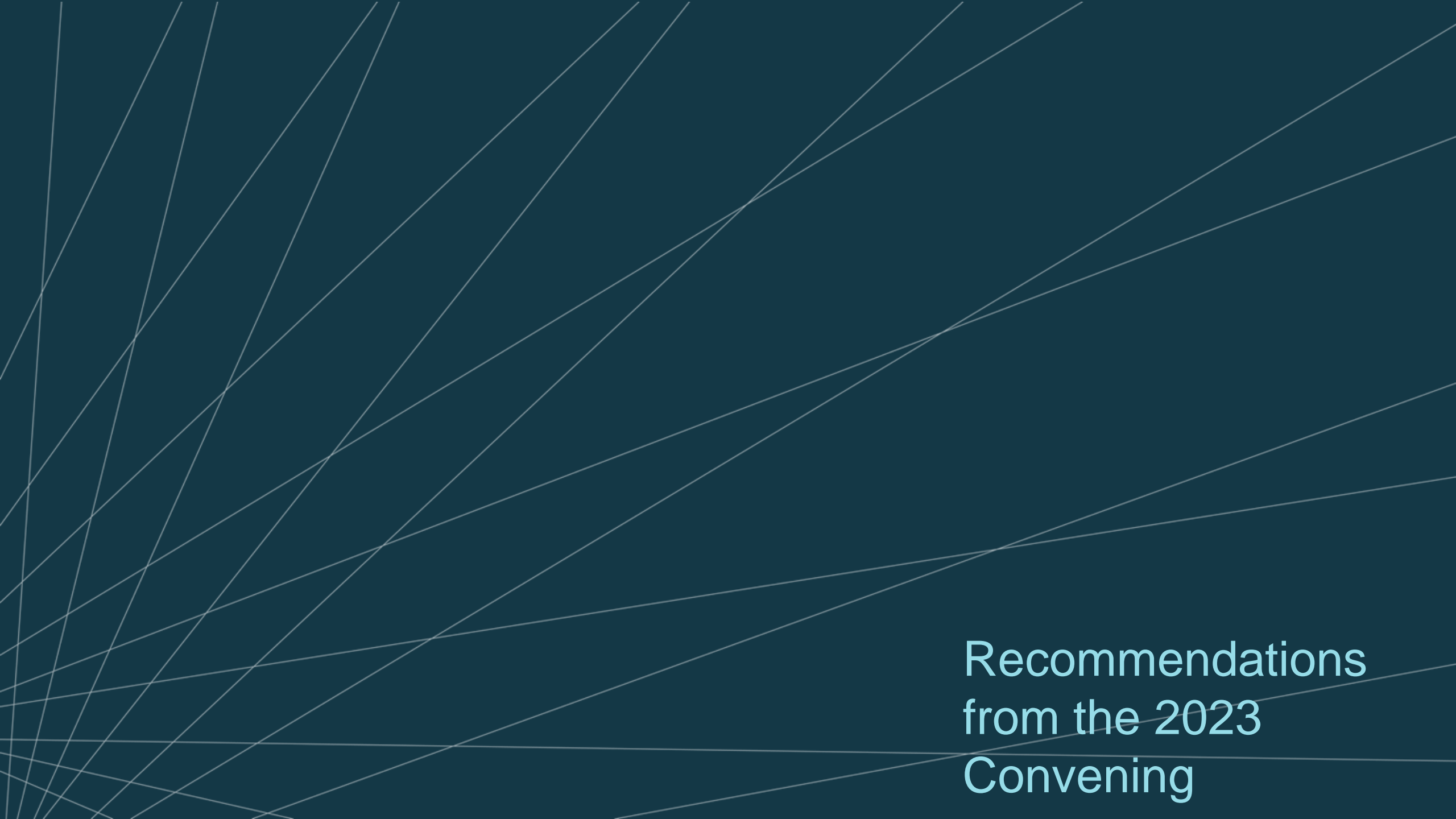
- Provide K-12 career awareness training for educators and counselors – young people are trusting adults closest to them for career pathway planning. For example, provide K-12 career awareness training for educators and counselors – young people are trusting adults closest to them for career pathway planning
- Prioritize K-12 teacher retention – the foundation of our K-12 system is critical to everything that comes after high school

## **Workforce Training Providers and Higher Education**

- Scale existing exemplar programs –Alaska already has some trusted and effective home grow programs
- Grow the number of industry specific training opportunities and applied learning focused first on in-demand industries
- Grow middle-skill training programs for in-demand industries
- Engage employers as the state grows applied work-based learning experiences – employers are willing and ready to participate
- New programs development should look for ways to leverage new technologies for remote training

## **Statewide System Coordinator(s)**

- Identify and fund a system leader that works with all stakeholders
- Provide project management for regular connection across stakeholders (collaborate on initiative)
- Remove barriers and build incentives for under employed and young Alaskans to take local opportunities
- Fund a financial incentive or tax credit to off set costs for hosting apprentices and worksite trainings –this the top incentive for employers
- Build a shared responsibility model to quickly fund and create new training opportunities – industry partners would be willing to contribute partial funds to a pool of funds if industry partners have a role in designing the program and goals
- Develop a system that maps opportunities statewide and helps to match workers – better data could also help to anticipate future talent gaps/training gaps



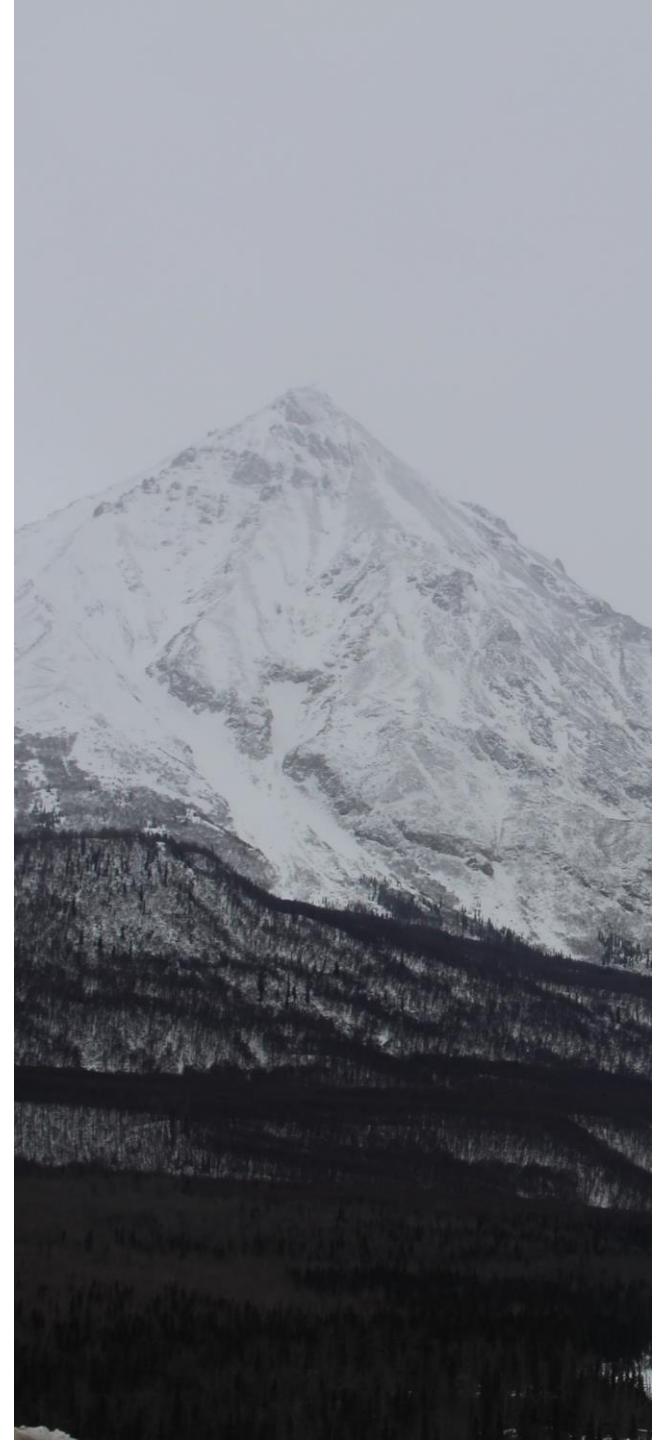
Recommendations  
from the 2023  
Convening

# What we focused on: Day 1

## Day 1: Learning from Industry

What does a successful workforce development system look like from the perspective of Alaska's industries and employers?

- What do industries and employers *need* to see from the workforce development system?
- What could industries and employers *provide* the workforce development system to galvanize success?
- What workforce development actions should the state, industry, and educators *prioritize*?

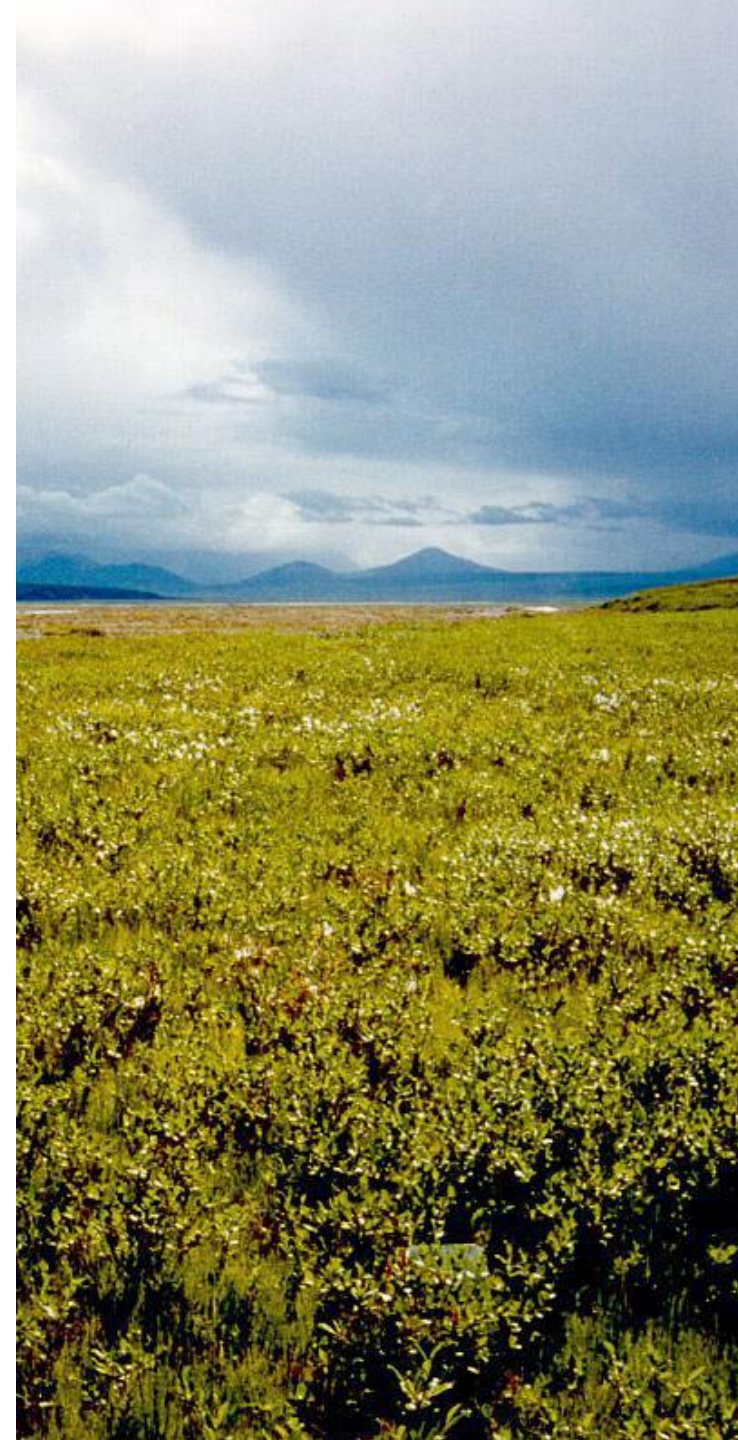


# What we focused on: Day 2

**Day 2: Today is about action – how can we take what we learned from industry yesterday and develop concrete actions**

**Key question:** How can we operationalize what we learned and build momentum for greater connectivity to drive improvements to the workforce system

- What roles need to exist to meet these priorities?
- What short term and long-term actions do we need to operationalize priorities from day 1?



# What does industry need from the workforce system?

**Help recruiting and retaining workers:** Developing new workers through the education system is important, but to meet the needs of Alaska’s workforce system, Alaska will still need a steady flow of workers willing to move here and become new Alaskans

**Suggestions we heard in the convening to address these issues:**

- **Recruitment campaign**, co-funded by industry and government, to bring workers to Alaska (similar to Alaska Seafood Campaign; e.g. “Don’t just get a job, have an adventure, in Alaska.”)
- **Remove barriers to reciprocal licensing in Alaska**, which make it hard for trained professionals to relocate here (healthcare, education, etc.); join reciprocal licensing agreements; reduce bureaucracy around licensing
- Eliminate “out of state” tuition at Alaska universities and technical colleges, allow anyone to study at the same cost as in-state students; require post-graduation residency term in order to qualify/retain trained workforce
- **Guarantee employers spots** in AVTECH programs, other training programs: Employers want to get employees into training programs offered through AK education institutions, but need to guarantee spots will be available
- Provide employers with alerts when training cohorts are close to finishing, how many trained graduates will be coming available, and where to find them
- **More outreach to rural communities in Alaska**, potential untapped resource of talent. Look at innovative programs like Bristol Bay Native Corporation driver’s license program, providing work IDs

# What does industry need from the workforce system?

**Help promoting industry to the next generation:** Many industries in Alaska suffer from a lack of awareness or a reputation (e.g. students thinking they're "dirty") that are turning off a new generation of Alaskans and driving a homegrown workforce shortage

**Suggestions we heard in the convening to address these issues:**

- **Provide more work-based learning opportunities in schools:** Give young people a chance for hands-on learning in key industries
- **Provide reliable industry-schools liaison:** Industry doesn't have the time or expertise to figure out how to engage with each school district individually. Schools don't have the contacts or bandwidth to build their own relationships with industry. Could liaison roles be created by district or region to support these relationships? Especially needed in rural areas where teachers may turn over every year without consistent knowledge transfer
- **Support more industries in creating school-friendly content:** How can programs like Alaska Resource Education be copied for other industries?
- **Give teachers opportunities to learn:** Example given, geometry teacher shadowing construction industry to learn about how to bring construction trade into geometry lessons
- **Provide more reliable information about Alaska career pathways in schools:** Alaska Studies classes can be great fits for this. Tools like the Kenai Peninsula Economic Development organization's website, but expanded and adapted for the entire state, can be useful. Industry-specific curriculum like that offered by Alaska Resource Education also is needed

# What does industry need from the workforce system?

**Expansion of the apprenticeship system:** Both requiring the utilization of apprentices on all Alaska projects and helping new industries create apprenticeship systems of their own

**Suggestions we heard in the convening to address these issues:**

- **Require apprenticeship utilization on state and municipal construction projects**
- **Expand the apprenticeship models to industries where it's not commonly used:** Healthcare, government, oil and gas were all cited as places where new or expanded apprenticeship programs could be beneficial
  - Example: in Washington State, the [SEIU 1199NW Multi-Employer Healthcare Training Fund](#) brings together state and hospital funding to pay for training cohorts of healthcare workers looking to upskill for better jobs. Training happens on site at the hospital with community college instructor and wraparound supports provided by SEIU



# What do workers need?

## For Alaskans looking to transition to new industries/regions

- Reduce housing costs and childcare shortages, especially in rural areas, that depress Alaska’s ability to recruit and retain workers
- Provide incentives and wrap around services from the state government for employed workers who’ve taken a leap into a new region or new career path
- Allow for greater flexibility of the work week to accommodate lifestyle and providing for a family (i.e. flex during hunting and fishing seasons, allow for longer shifts and few days for those who struggle with childcare availability)
- Support the mental health of workers and encourage employers to prioritize mental health

## For young Alaskans, Alaskans returning to work

- Provide a longer safety net that protects workers with specific needs (e.g. formerly homeless, formerly incarcerated, people with disabilities, veterans transitioning to civilian work, etc.) with training and support for the first 1-2 years, while they work
- Ensure stable funding for K-12 schools and higher-education institutions to invest in workforce development programs. State budget uncertainty contributes to challenges building a sustainable system

## For new Alaskans

- Provide state incentives to encourage people to move to Alaska and support transition/immigration costs for more than the first month, “consider the cost of getting settled and not simply arriving.”
- Create consistent programs to turn Alaska’s large volume of seasonal workers into year-round residents
- Support additional pathways to residency for Alaska’s immigrant labor force. Immigrants are an important part of the Alaska workforce – as temporary workers, H2B visa holders, and long-term residents.

# What does the workforce system need to be for all Alaskans?

**Alaska has a lot of pockets of incredible workforce development projects, just a few examples cited at the convening**

- Trident seafood partnership with AVTECH; NIT training programs
- Bristol Bay Native Corporation workforce innovation efforts like mobile drivers' license clinic
- Regular labor force data reporting from Department of Labor
- AWIB Board with industry, labor participation
- King Tech, ASD Academies coming online
- [Kenai Peninsula Economic Development](#) Career Pathways project

**But statewide coordination, including coordinating the actions in each region, is a challenge**

**Alaska is also impacted by shortages in housing, childcare like many states, that can blunt the impact of workforce development investments – though these shortages also exist in other U.S. states, across the West**

**AWIB board has the desire, but maybe not the capacity or mandate to be the workforce development convenor**

- Workforce providers and some industry partners are eager for a workforce coordinating entity outside of government
- Alaska will need to decide if they want to pursue a new coordinating entity or reform their existing one

**While that decision is pending, there are some immediate steps around workforce marketing, data coordination, and reducing red tape around professional licensing that Alaska could tackle immediately**

# What should the workforce coordinating entity do?: Advice from the convening

## Manage statewide initiatives

- Focus solely on workforce development: Recruitment of new workers to Alaska, retention of existing workers, filling gaps in workforce system training programs, and development of future workforce pipeline
- Identify system barriers/duplication and pull teams together to work on system repairs (ex. credit requirements in college make it difficult to complete CTE programs and get to work quickly)
- Support statewide career coaches in their training to connect Alaskans to training and jobs

## Coordinate a workforce system

- Create an infrastructure workforce plan and facilitate apprenticeship programs, coordinate execution
- Coordinate nationwide workforce recruitment plan to attract adult workers to Alaska
- Manage regional committees comprised of education, industry, government, AWIB to increase communication and awareness of workforce needs, resources by region
  - Note: Regional coordination is very important in Alaska, so the new entity must have a regional approach

## Analyze and amplify

- Create inventory of jobs and skills that are needed in the future, jobs/skills currently trained for, and plan to fill the gaps
- Be a one stop shop for all training funding and resources
- Create statewide inventory of training space, equipment, and programs

# Suggested Next Steps

## Stand up (or designate) workforce coordinating entity

- Create business plan and identify funding requirements for the new entity
- Determine if this will be an existing group with an expanded staff and mandate, or a new entity

## Develop marketing plan to address immediate workforce shortages, promote Alaskan industries

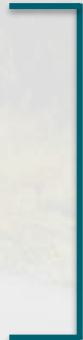
## Grow Career Guides in Alaska

## Build immediate momentum on specific issues identified in the convening


- Stand-up career guides
- Set up taskforce to work on reducing licensure barriers, U of A credit requirement and transfer barriers
- Stand up joint industry-education-DOL task force focused on designing expanded data pipeline
  - What is the most important data for industry, education to access (e.g. what jobs do we expect to need? How many graduates for these roles is AK currently producing and where in the state are they?)? How can DOL disseminate this better?
  - Develop database to track training cohort graduation and alert industry to upcoming trained talent



*We're discussing these solutions today*



*AWIB is working on these more immediate suggestions*



Where do we go  
from here?

# Our Goal: Convening key stakeholders in Alaska to pursue coordinated efforts to address workforce gaps

## Retreat objectives



**Build:** Relationships between stakeholders and shared commitment to progress



**Assess:** Current state of workforce development system to understand the gaps (e.g. “What’s missing?”) and identify assets the state can nurture and grow



**Define:** Collective vision and support thinking around the change participants would like to see in Alaska’s workforce development system



**Align:** Roles of stakeholders and set of next steps



**Act:** Pursue short- and medium-term priorities / “workstreams” to guide action

2023 Convening focus

2024

Alaska's Workforce System

# Infrastructure Symposium

Workforce Initiatives in Alaska: Panel  
April 2nd, 2024



# Please come back after lunch...

After lunch we're going to talk about these initiatives and your priorities for filling workforce gaps in Alaska.

We have some interactive and small group activities planned to get your perspective on what major milestones AWIB and other supporting regional initiatives should prioritize in the coming year.

## **After Lunch Agenda:**

- I. Discuss local strategies for filling workforce gaps in your community
- II. Identify roles and conveners in your region
- III. Provide feedback on statewide work that is meaningful to you



## Tell us what you think before lunch...

Please go back to Menti-meter and answer these questions before you leave for lunch...

1. Of everything you've heard about this morning, what challenges or barriers resonated the most?
2. Which of the strategies you heard today do you feel is most urgent for Alaska to implement?



Alaska's Workforce System

# Infrastructure Symposium

Afternoon Session  
April 2nd, 2024



## Please share your perspective today...

We're going to use technology today to capture your questions and opinions throughout the day.

Please access the web with your smart phone or computer.

Let's start with an easy question...

**What is the coolest animal in Alaska?**



# Today's purpose

**Goal:** Gather further feedback from regional experts on key workforce initiatives identified this past fall.

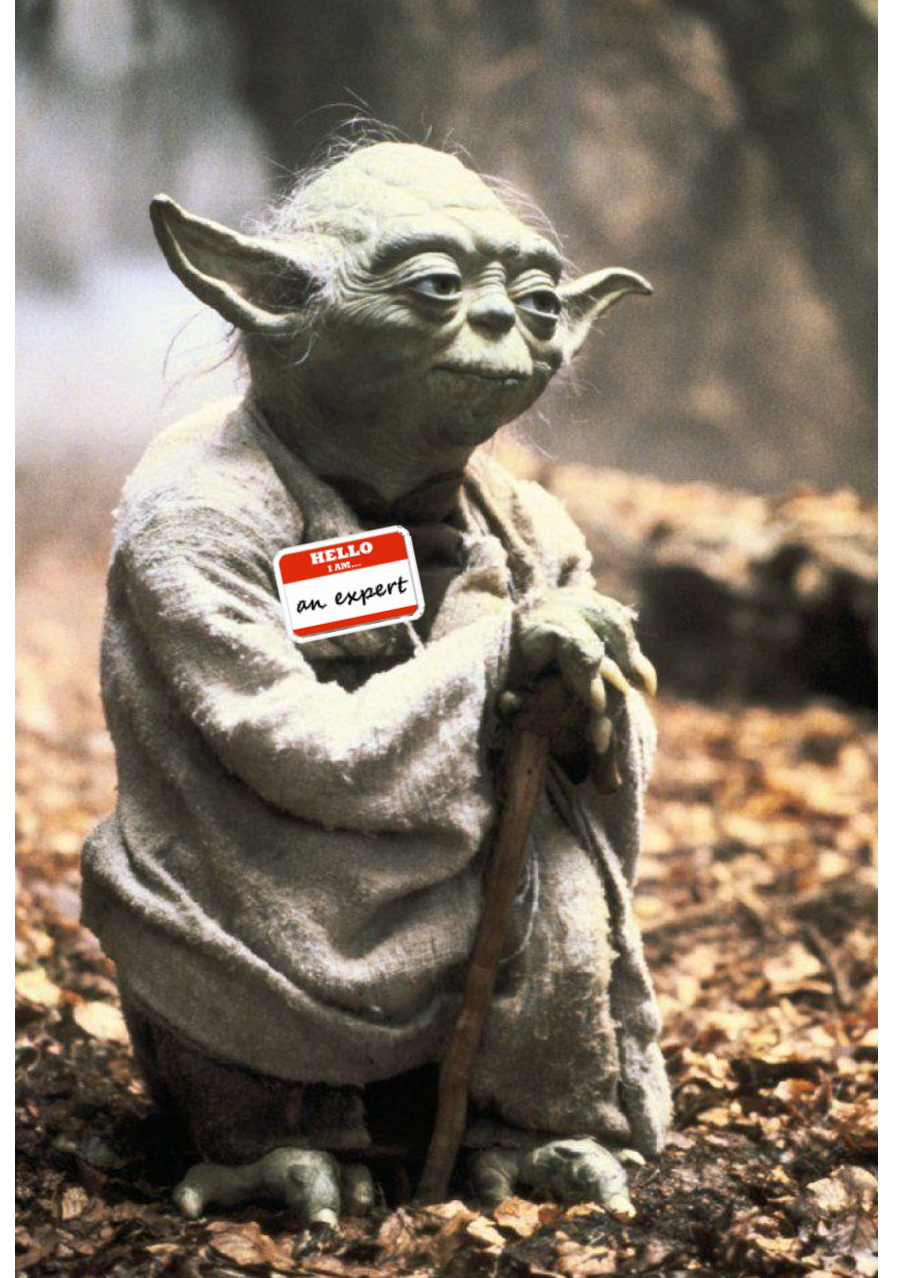
Feedback we've gathered already, and **today's session will be incorporated into the implementation plans** led by the Alaska Workforce Investment Board and other Alaska Department of Labor efforts throughout the state.

We're calling this "strategic doing."

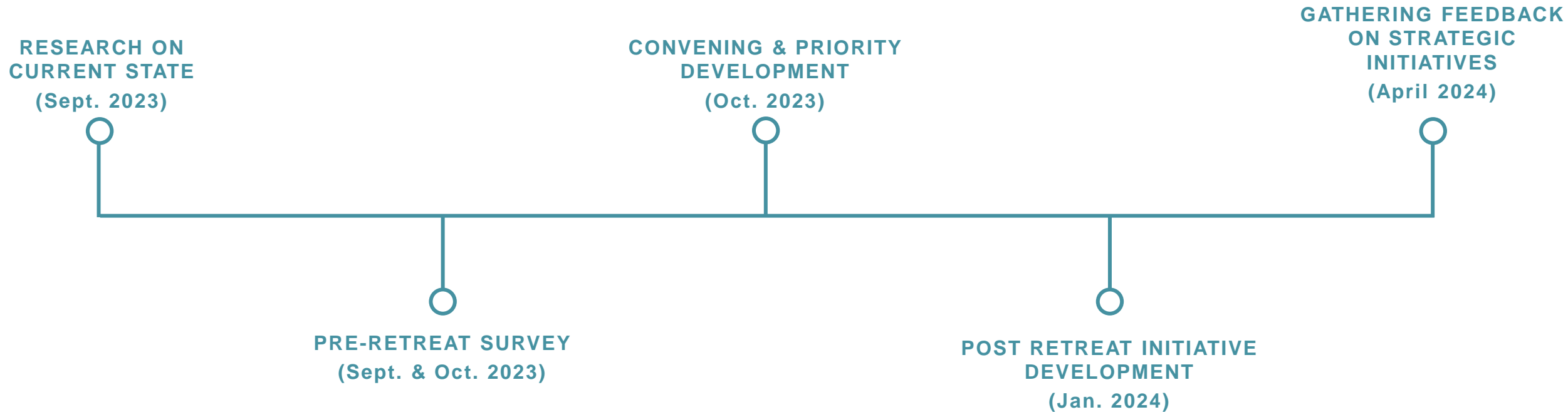


# Our mission today

We see you all as experts in this work. You also have unique knowledge to share about your community and region. Please share and ask questions throughout the day.



# Today we will be building on statewide strategic initiatives identified in the fall...



# Statewide Initiatives to Support Workforce Development

## 1 Career Guides

AWIB pilot program meant to build capacity for greater career guidance- these efforts are meant to amplify and complement existing work, not duplicate it  
Out of our job centers and working with the region where the job center is located

## 4 Data Sharing and Trend Sharing

Training providers and employers want better data visualization so all players can clearly see where gaps need to be filled in real time.

## 2 Marketing Campaign

A Department of Commerce effort to fill workforce gaps by a mix of sharing incentives for Alaskans and making it easier to become a resident to fill the biggest labor gaps

## ★ Other Ideas

Beyond these issues what are the other issues that you want to work on?

## 3 Convening Stakeholders

AWIB and other partners want to align efforts by convening industry groups, nonprofits, native corporations, and government around common initiatives. The goal is to share resources and avoid duplication.

# What's coming for the rest of today?

## Afternoon Agenda:



Discuss local strategies for filling workforce gaps in your community



Identify roles and conveners in your region



Provide feedback on statewide work that is meaningful to you



## Please share your perspective today...

Thank you for coming to the workforce breakout session...

Please share some of the strategies you've liked, tried, or seen work to fill workforce gaps in your region

*Note: You can submit as many concepts as you'd like, just keep submitting answers*



# Statewide Initiatives to Support Workforce Development

## 1 Career Guides

AWIB pilot program meant to build capacity for greater career guidance - these efforts are meant to amplify and complement existing work, not duplicate it  
Out of our job centers and working with the region where the job center is located

## 4 Data Sharing and Trend Sharing

Training providers and employers want better data visualization so all players can clearly see where gaps need to be filled in real time.

## 2 Marketing Campaign

A Department of Commerce effort to fill workforce gaps by a mix of sharing incentives for Alaskans and making it easier to become a resident to fill the biggest labor gaps

## ★ Other Ideas

Beyond these issues what are the other issues that you want to work on?

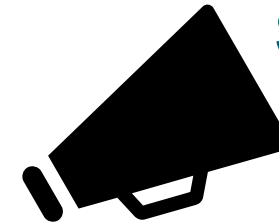
## 3 Convening Stakeholders

AWIB and other partners want to align efforts by convening industry groups, nonprofits, native corporations, and government around common initiatives. The goal is to share resources and avoid duplication.

# Activity – Identifying Roles and Connectors

*Directions: Please select at these two of these questions to answer in your small group. Write responses on your group's poster paper.*

- Who should be involved in the implementation of this initiative—could be regionally or statewide? (make sure to list organization and role)
- Who is doing similar work to this initiative in your region/community? (please also put your location)
- Where does this initiative overlap with existing work?
- Who would you trust to lead implementation of this work statewide or regionally? (include even if that organization or person is not doing this work today)



**SHARE OUT**

# Activity – Implementation Dos and Don'ts

*Directions: Take a stack of post-its and add responses to the poster paper for each initiative.*

Key questions:

- What would you want implementers to keep in mind as they are developing plans for this initiative?
- What could cause the initiative to not go well in your region/community? (e.g., pitfalls, unintended consequences)
- What could contribute to this initiative's success?



**GALLERY  
WALK**

Marketing Campaign	
<i>Do's</i>	<i>Don't's</i>

# Activity – Setting Meaningful Measures of Success

## Defining Success

*Directions: Go back to your original groups. Discuss the questions below and write responses on your group's poster paper.*

- What does successful implementation look like for your initiative?
  - What looks and feels different?
  - What measurable change takes place?
- What would be accomplished in the short-term (1-year)? What about the long-term (5-years)?

# Closing

Thank you for sharing your expertise!

Please

## Please share your final thoughts ...

Thank you for coming to the workforce breakout session...

Please tell us about your experience in today's session and let us know if you'd like to stay connected.

