

State of Alaska PY 2013
Workforce Information Grant
Performance Report

July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014

Introduction

During Program Year 2013, the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Research and Analysis Section (R&A) met the requirements of the Workforce Information Grant to States outlined in TEGL No. 29-12 as detailed below.

I. Workforce Information Database (WIDb)

Alaska updated the Workforce Information Database (WIDb) core tables with all of the required datasets. The data were also used internally to deliver data in a variety of formats and special reports to the business community, the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB), individuals, and workforce development professionals.

The Alaska Career Information System (AKCIS) is an example of an Internet product that uses several WIDb datasets in a standalone career information delivery system. The WIDb provides Alaska wages, employment projections, and licensing information. AKCIS links these state-specific occupational and educational figures in one place, creating an interactive, Web-based education and planning tool for career seekers.

The AKCIS portal is at: <http://akcis.org/>

II. Industry and Occupational Projections

Alaska met its short-term and long-term occupational forecast deliverables and submitted them as required.

The long-term occupational and industry projections were used in a number of presentations and consultations to and with industry and educational audiences including:

- The oil and gas industry as a key part of an oil and gas workforce development plan: <http://user-fpkrebt.cld.bz/Alaska-Oil-and-Gas-Workforce-Development-Plan#1>
- The Alaska Workforce Investment Board
- Alaska's maritime sector: <http://labor.state.ak.us/maritimeplan/AK%20Maritime%20Workforce%20Flyer%20FINAL%20web.pdf>
- The state's Career and Technical Education administrators and educators

The industry and occupational projections are published on R&A's website and have been incorporated into several R&A products including the Alaska Occupations Information

webpage, the Oil and Gas Industry Occupational Information webpage, the Alaska Career Lattice (<http://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/cl/index.cfm>), the Alaska Health Care Occupations webpage, the Alaska Maritime Priority Occupations webpage, the Alaska Occupational Forecast webpage, the Alaska Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Occupations webpage, and the Alaska Local and Regional Information webpage (<http://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/alari/>).

R&A also created and widely disseminated through a variety of presentations and publications Alaska's Top Jobs list, which highlights 54 occupations as having a combination of strong growth, a significant number of openings, and higher than average wages.

III. Annual Economic Analysis and Other Reports

Though a relatively small part of the total funding required, WIGS funding also helps support R&A's monthly economic news magazine, *Alaska Economic Trends*, which provides a wide variety of economic analysis and reporting. More than 33,000 copies were distributed to subscribers in 2013:

<http://labor.alaska.gov/trends/>

Data produced under WIGS deliverables is frequently cited in industry and geographic profile articles — long-term occupational projections in particular — and when new long-term projections are published, both the primary and secondary articles are devoted to that topic.

In recent months, R&A has published articles: 1) profiling Alaskans and Alaska workers in their twenties; 2) analyzing the economy of the City of Wrangell, Alaska; 3) profiling the arts, entertainment and recreation sector; and 4) comparing the rental and home purchasing market in Fairbanks, Alaska to the state and nation.

R&A's Web site (<http://laborstats.alaska.gov/>) is the section's primary dissemination tool for its products, reports, and data, most of which benefit from WIGS funding either in the production or use of data or the resources used for dissemination.

IV. Customer Consultations

Alaska uses several methods to collect and interpret customer needs and satisfaction.

- **Customer satisfaction survey:** R&A maintains a web-based user survey on its site. Customers who completed the survey were mostly satisfied with the products and services that R&A offers. Of those who were familiar with the data they were seeking or using, all expressed satisfaction with the Web site.

- **Informal discussions and collaboration:** R&A worked closely with its primary user groups – including AWIB, employers, and the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development’s Employment Security and Business Partnerships divisions – to meet data needs. Alaska’s principal customers expressed strong support for R&A and its services and products.
- **Information requests:** R&A receives and responds to hundreds of requests for information from industry, media, legislature, administration, economic consultants, and the general public. WIGS funding is often used to make R&A’s Web site more accessible and informative in response to the types and quantity of those requests.

V. Activities Undertaken to Meet Customer Needs

As noted above, there is substantial communication between users and R&A as data and analyses are published and disseminated. Often in response to those exchanges, R&A’s webpages are simplified, amended, or enhanced.

Web traffic is regularly monitored including by individual article for *Alaska Economic Trends*. Topics that generate significant traffic are noted and more likely to be revisited or explored further. Partly in response to AWIB and legislative communications, R&A’s work on training-related outcomes was comprehensively reviewed and simplified to bring it more in line with statutory requirements.

Another example relates to the American Community Survey. Because the U.S. Census site was confusing to users and difficult for users to navigate, R&A developed a custom interface that made extracting ACS data more intuitive and user friendly. In the past year R&A has gone further to make the ACS data more user-friendly by providing data by Census Tract level, providing ACS Profile data, and by allowing users to view information from multiple geographies on a single page.

In PY 2013, R&A also met customer needs by improving long term occupational forecasts through the creation of federal government staffing ratios based on the Office of Personnel Management’s (OPM) FedScope data for Alaska. This data was also used in a Trends article on the federal government workforce.

R&A’s core values are to provide accurate, objective, and clear data and analysis and the section is always looking for ways to improve in those three areas in particular, whether in response to issues raised by users or to problems that are identified internally.

VI. New Tools and Resources

R&A's Web site

On average, about 52,000 users visited R&A's Web site each month in PY 2013. There were 173,500 downloads of R&A publications and products. *Alaska Economic Trends* accounted for about 32 percent of all downloads.

In PY 2013, R&A added several new resources and improved site functionality as follows:

ACS Data Enhancements (<http://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/cen/acsarea.cfm>)

Additional data specific to Alaska were added to the Web site and database-driven Cold Fusion functions were added.

- Census tract data to 5-yr were added
- Aggregating profiles from a single table in various ways
- Ability to choose multiple geographies

Employer Resources for Reporting Quarterly Occupational Data

The addition of web-based application that assists employers in coding their employees' occupations on their quarterly unemployment insurance contributions report.

Additional Occupational Sub Groups Added

(<http://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/occ/maroccs.cfm>)

Maritime priority occupations were added to the Web site. This is a subgroup of all occupations that are specific to the maritime industry. Other sub groups include green, health care, oil and gas, and STEM.

Population and Census Information

R&A added the following to the Population and Census pages:

- Historical population estimates by age and sex for the 1980's
- Population estimates for cities with more than 1,000 people
- Population estimates by Census Tract

VII. Efforts to Create and Support Partnerships and Collaborations

R&A works regularly with the AWIB and other partners to provide presentations, reports, and data. R&A also collaborates with other state agencies and the University of Alaska to conduct surveys and analyses. Examples from PY 2013 include:

- A partnership with Alaska Housing Finance Corporation to produce data on housing prices, rental statistics, construction costs, housing affordability, and new home building.
- Work on a health care vacancy survey and a health care benefit survey.
- Data and analysis on public school system graduates for the Department of Education and on University of Alaska attendees for the various campuses of the University of Alaska system.
- Served as Vice Chair of the Federal-State Cooperative for Population Estimates.
- Collaborated with the Alaska Department of Commerce Community and Economic Development to a report analyzing the potential impacts of a road to the community of Tanana, Alaska, an isolated rural community, not currently on the road system.

VIII. Activities to Leverage LMI-WI Funding

Though many of the work products referenced in this report benefit from WIGS funding either in the production or use of data or the resources used for dissemination, the WIGS funding alone is not sufficient to cover the costs of developing and disseminating these products. R&A leverages funding from the users of its data and its public and private partners to conduct the more in depth analysis referenced in Trends and its other deliverables. Most of the partnerships referenced in section VII have funding agreements that are used to help leverage WIGS funding and produce the best information possible.

IX. Recommendations to the ETA for Changes and Improvements to WIGS Requirements

No specific recommendations for changes or improvements are being made this year. R&A recommends, in fact, that no changes be made to the basic structure of the grant in terms of it partly funding specific tasks (populating the WIDb and producing industry and occupational projections) and partly funding work left to the discretion of the states who are best positioned to determine the needs of its users.