

The Changing Face of Alaska's Employment Security System

by Corine Geldhof

In the world of work today, the alliance between workers and employers is radically changing, and so is the business of linking job seekers to potential employers. Linking employers to workers and workers to jobs is the business of labor exchange. Labor exchange, beyond paying unemployment insurance benefits to the tens of thousands of Alaskan workers temporarily laid off each year, has been the role of the Alaska Department of Labor's (AKDOL) Employment Security Division for 60 years.

How these once simple transactions of connecting job seekers and employers and paying benefits to the temporarily unemployed will configure in the future is the most recent challenge of Alaska's employment security system. Government, not unlike most industries, faces the challenge as a paradox: how to deliver more services at less cost.

Alaska's employment security system, comprised of the Alaska Employment Service and the Unemployment Insurance program, is forging into the 21st century by taking advantage of numerous technological advancements and realigning its organizational framework to face this challenge. It is doing so under a statutory requirement that defines AKDOL's mission to "foster and promote the welfare of the wage earners of the state, improve their working conditions, and advance their opportunities for profitable employment," (Alaska Statute 23.05.101).

Alaska's Employment Service historically accessible statewide

The crisis of the Great Depression that put hundreds of thousands out of work in the 1930's induced the federal government to pass laws to prevent or remedy future social ills. The Wagner-Peyser Act of 1933 established nationwide, government-run employment offices, and in Alaska, what is now known as the Alaska Employment Service. The four main industrial centers of

Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, and Ketchikan in 1937 were the sites of the territory's first public employment offices.

Since 1937, the Alaska Employment Service has been the state's primary labor exchange -- dedicated to bringing employers and qualified job seekers together. Nearly 25 percent of Alaska's working age population relies on public employment service programs to help secure employment. Last year, over 28,000 jobs in a broad range of occupations at various wage and salary levels were filled through the public employment service, and thousands of other job seekers found stop-gap employment to tide them over until their job prospects improved. More than 6,000 of Alaska's employers use the state's employment service each year, posting over 30,000 job openings. The program operates 19 local offices in communities from Ketchikan to Nome. The goal is to contribute to the economic stability of Alaska by making sure Alaska's workers get help while unemployed and assistance for finding jobs.

Corine Geldhof is the Communications Coordinator at the Employment Security Division, Alaska Department of Labor. Corine is located in Juneau.

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Much of what works in Alaska's public employment service comes from having to respond to the fluctuations in the state's highly variable economy. A strong seasonal demand for labor from industries such as tourism, timber, fishing, seafood processing, oil exploration and production, construction, mining, and manufacturing creates the necessity for an integrated mix of services for employers and job seekers alike. The employment service does this by delivering services that best respond to the needs of Alaska's employers, wherever they happen to be, for competent and available workers, wherever they happen to be.

Linkages occur through many channels, including within employer communities, native corporations, chambers of commerce, schools, universities, community colleges, economic development councils, labor unions, and other employers and organized worker groups throughout the state.

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those seeking to set up business opportunities go; the place where those who need immediate assistance during Alaska's many seasonal employment cycles go; the place where employers in search of local labor market information go; and the place where employers who need to conduct job interviews in customized interviewing space, called "Employer Stores," go. Self-service computer resource rooms offer the visiting public computers to write resumés, obtain labor market information, look for jobs, make an appointment with an employer, explore training opportunities, and acquire career information.

The public employment service and its agency partners are on the scene with what in the trade is referred to as a "rapid response" effort when mills close, school teachers are laid off, and big oil companies announce downsizing. In the communities of Wrangell and Sitka, and most recently Ketchikan, where an overwhelming percentage of the labor force was devastated by mill closures, the employment security system responded by establishing on-site "transition centers" for direct support to laid-off workers and their families.

Alaska Employment Service offices are involved in a progressive "re-employment" program for unemployment insurance recipients, where people are assessed and offered extensive services intended to hasten their return to employment. Focus is on returning people to work and providing them with the requisite skills. A recent and highly successful innovation to the Alaska Employment Service is the job club, a self-supported, peer-oriented group where job seekers convene weekly to network and help each other infiltrate the labor market, giving each other advice on resumés, interviewing tips, and job searching.

Another high-profile initiative of the public employment security system today is Alaska Hire. Many of Alaska's top industries, including seafood processing, hire from *Outside*. The Employment Service has targeted the seafood industry as an area to promote year-round employment for resident hire by establishing a specialized seafood unit whose primary mission is to work with Alaska's seafood industry processors. The aim is to build partnerships that will provide a stable workforce for processors, with an emphasis on the employment of Alaskans into quality, year-round jobs. The collaboration and partnership appear to be paying off. Of those newly hired in the summer seafood industry, about 25 percent in 1996 were Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend recipients (residents) compared to only about 19 percent in 1995.

Unemployment Insurance Program rooted in territorial Alaska

The federal Social Security Act that gave us unemployment insurance was passed in 1935. Alaska followed suit in 1937 when the territorial legislature enacted the Alaska Employment Security Act because lawmakers deemed "...involuntary unemployment is a serious menace to the health, morale, and welfare of the people of the state." According to the territorial commission's first annual report to the Governor, "The territory has never undertaken a program presenting greater administrative difficulties and responsibilities than those imposed by the Unemployment Compensation Laws." The first benefit check was typed

and signed by hand in Alaska for \$10.60, issued January 24, 1939. Since then, Alaska has paid billions of dollars in benefits, \$1.3 billion between 1987 and 1996 alone.

What does Unemployment Insurance do?

Unemployment insurance (UI) is an *insurance* program, not a welfare program. It is insurance for people who would work if they could find a job. Among the most important things people in search of work need is financial support to tide them over between jobs, and UI is designed to do just that. As with other forms of insurance, when the benefits are needed they provide vital support to the recipients. For employers, UI benefits mean that a trained workforce is more likely to remain in the local community during temporary or even seasonal layoffs. During the recession between 1985 and 1988 in Alaska, more than 138,000 unemployed workers received unemployment compensation totaling over \$578 million. If the UI system's benefits were considered payroll during that time, the system would have been the third largest employer in the state. In addition, in times of economic trouble, an infusion of spendable income preserves the health of local economies. Nearly every dollar paid in unemployment benefits returns immediately to local communities.

How are UI Benefits calculated and for whom?

The Alaska UI program is governed by the Alaska Employment Security Act. Taxes from both employers and workers in the state are collected to fund the payment of unemployment benefits. Alaska is one of only three states where the employer and the worker share the responsibility for building the reserves from which unemployment benefits are paid. Employers pay an additional tax to fund administration of the program under the Federal Unemployment Tax Act (FUTA). The Employment Security Tax Section of Employment Security Division collects more than \$135 million yearly to pay more than 70,000 individuals.

The UI program is counter cyclical, making it possible to accumulate reserves during good economic times in order to meet drains on the UI Trust Fund in poorer years. It is one of the built-in stabilizers in the economy, going into effect immediately with the onset of economic decline. For employers from whom the majority of FUTA taxes are collected, a sound state unemployment tax structure provides an incentive to maintain stable employment and a method for building reserves during periods of economic growth that can be utilized during periods of economic decline.

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Benefits are only available to those persons who have worked and are temporarily unemployed. There is a limit to benefits that can be claimed. By law, unemployed workers must meet certain requirements to receive unemployment checks. They must be actively seeking work and ready, able, and willing to immediately accept work for which they are reasonably suited. The amount of benefits a worker may receive each week is determined by past wage experience. The number of weeks a person will be eligible is determined by the length and stability of that person's work history. In these ways, UI eligibility reflects a recipient's demonstrated attachment to the labor force.

Where the system goes from here is the 21st century challenge

How a system steeped in purposeful tradition prepares itself to face the future where workers and employers will have needs far different from those at its inception 60 years ago is the paramount consideration in restructuring public employment security services. Meeting those needs will become important as the demand for skilled

labor grows. According to the November 13, 1996, issue of the *Employment and Training Reporter*, from January 1993 through July 1996, the nation's economy added 10.2 million jobs, while at the same time 8.4 million people were displaced from their jobs. Two-thirds of the new jobs created demand higher than average skills and pay an above average salary. Although as of this writing no conclusive data exist about similar trends in Alaska, there is little doubt that the demand for skilled labor will be no exception as Alaska's economy gears up to face the next century.

Any employment security program of the future inevitably will involve the use of technology. New information systems and technologies are what Associate Assistant Secretary for the U.S. Department of Labor, Jim Vollman, says are the "electronic backbone for the American workforce development system." This application is particularly useful in Alaska. The state employment security programs are federally funded and statutorily required to provide a host of services to Alaska's over 600,000 citizens who occupy nearly 600,000 square miles. The state has much to gain from technological advances, more perhaps than any other area of the U.S., due to the vast distances over which its disparate and sparse population is spread, and due to its severe climate.

are dispersed to the eligible unemployed are questions for which Alaska's Employment Security Division is in a race with the clock to answer. Peter Calderone, the former commissioner for New Jersey's Department of Labor remarked when speaking on behalf of his own efforts to reorganize New Jersey's system, "In today's fast-paced world, it's more than ever true that those who hesitate are lost."

Future labor exchange requires realignment and transformation

Alaska's wake-up call in recognizing the need to expedite its future labor exchange was prompted by a 1996 federal reduction of nearly \$1 million in Wagner-Peyser funds used to pay for state employment service programs. The amount of nearly \$1 million represented approximately 10 percent of Alaska's public employment service annual operating budget. Although the onus was on the employment service component of the budget, the cut was severe enough to realign and transform the entire operations, including the unemployment insurance (UI) program. The operating costs for both the UI and employment service programs are almost 100 percent federally funded in Alaska. A critical link exists between the two programs because a quick return to employment restores workers' earnings and minimizes unemployment benefits paid from employer taxes. Under the existing 60-year-old system, unemployment benefit recipients are required to register and report for employment services; in order to receive benefits, they must be able to actively look for work.

As a result of the federal budget reductions, the AKDOL Employment Security Division's task this past year has been to restore productivity and deliver fast, efficient services and high-demand products. A new look at the historical core mission and institutional purpose of Alaska's employment security system provides direction to this task—get people jobs and pay UI. Clearly, the immediate challenge is to enhance their delivery, and the answer has been found in emerging technologies.

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Futurists predict that within the next decade up to 50 percent of the United States' workforce could be self-employed. How employers will find workers, how job seekers will find work, and how, meanwhile, unemployment benefits

UI “Call Centers”—where telephone lines replace waiting lines

Processing UI claims is a straightforward, standardized procedure and does not require one-on-one, labor-intensive contact between a claims taker and a claimant. When seasonal high unemployment hits communities, staff time typically devoted to employment services, such as job searches and employer outreach, stands still in the employment service offices across Alaska until UI is processed, one-on-one, claim by claim. Ironically, when there is high unemployment, there is a more pressing need to help the unemployed find or prepare to find their next job, in addition to paying benefits. Organizational change has been inspired by the thought that UI claimants just want the services provided to them as efficiently as possible.

In November 1995, when seasonal highs in processing unemployment claims paralyzed the employment service side of operations, the largest office in Anchorage converted to a UI “call center,” no longer requiring claimants to file for benefits in person. Claims were taken by mail or phone only. For Anchorage, which annually handles 24 percent of the state’s claims, the transition changed the look and feel of the local office. “Before this, the office was focused on unemployment claims, with seasonal peaks that would feel like chaos,” said Jerry Kanago, Anchorage Office Manager. “We reduced the number of in-office customers, which reduced waiting time. Now our face-to-face customers are job seekers, actively choosing our services to find new jobs.”

The lobby area in Anchorage once used for waiting, was converted to a resource room with personal computers and self-service terminals. Customers can prepare resumés, review current job openings, obtain labor market information and refer themselves to a job club facilitated by a staff member. Job club participants work as a group for three weeks, networking, sharing employer information, practicing interviews and reviewing each other’s resumés.

When the effect of centralizing UI claims into “call centers” began to be felt, John Scott, then

Sitka’s local office manager of the Alaska Employment Service, found time to canvass the community’s employers. “Our plan was to introduce our employment services to a host of new customers. We said, ‘We are your job service; we’re here to serve you; what can we do?’” The results were extraordinary, including immediately receiving five times as many job orders in a two-week period from Sitka’s employer community. “Taking unemployment processing out of the office has changed our focus. We are now directing our time to employers, which is where I always believed it should be, but we could never find enough time,” Scott added.

Toll-free call centers are enabling Alaskans from all over the state to initiate their UI claims.

The Sitka local office of the Alaska Employment Service has long been known for its professional, business-like environment, but one significant change was made recently, to increase the customer focus. “We had this counter in our reception area, a barrier between us and our customers,” Scott said. “We took it down. Now we welcome our customers face-to-face, eye-to-eye.”

Predicated on the success of the Anchorage experiment, toll-free call centers today are enabling Alaskans from all over the state to initiate their UI claims. The efficiencies in Anchorage showed that the physical and functional removal of UI from the employment service office was not only logical, it made good “service” sense. Telephone lines replaced waiting lines for the unemployed. Moreover, staff overtime has decreased as much as 96% in some locations, and call center staff report very favorable feedback from users. Before the call centers, Alaska paid only 79 percent of UI claimants on a timely basis, but with the advent of new processing, over 90 percent are now on time.

HISTORY OF ALASKA'S EMPLOYMENT SECURITY SYSTEM¹

1935	With the passage of the Social Security Act of 1935, the Unemployment Insurance System was born.		Seattle liaison branch closed. Allowance for dependents was added to benefits.
1937	The Alaska Unemployment Compensation Act was passed in the 1937 session of the territorial legislature. Offices were located in Anchorage, Juneau, Fairbanks, and Ketchikan.	1951	April 1951, Wrangell office transferred to Petersburg. Each local office had a designated Veteran Employment Representative. To help meet the labor needs of the Alaska Railroad, mining industry and defense contractors, the Alaska Territorial Employment Service in cooperation with the Alaska Native Service, and labor management, tapped a labor resource in our own back yard — the Alaska Native. This activity resulted in 1,417 placements, including 227 with the Alaska Railroad, 917 with defense construction contractors, 91 mining and 175 to three different fish processing cooperatives. Kodiak office reopened part time. Palmer office opened part time.
1938	Cordova office opened because of the mass layoff caused by closure of the Kennecott Copper mine and the Copper River and Northwestern Railroad which closed November 1939. Nome office opened.	1953	Offices were located in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, Ketchikan and Petersburg commonly referred as the "Commission." The five local offices made 4,000 visits to local employers.
1939	Nome office closed after five months in February 1939. Cordova office closed; manager and equipment went to Kodiak. Kodiak opened December 1939 and closed February 1949. First claim check was issued January 24, 1939, in the amount of \$10.60.	1954	Oil pipeline constructed from Haines westward. Ketchikan Pulp Mill was constructed.
1941	December 19, 1941, Alaska was asked (along with all other states and territories) to turn over operations to the federal government in an effort to secure unified direction and control considered necessary for the management of the national labor exchange during the period of national emergency. This was done in early 1942, but was subsequently returned to the territory on November 16, 1946 (War Manpower Commission). During the war, offices were opened for brief periods at Adak, Shemya, Haines, Valdez, Sitka, Excursion Inlet, Whitehorse and Edmonton, Alberta. Workers came to Alaska hoping to work on the military bases that were being built. The Commission tried to stop the needless migration of labor and the seeds of local hire were sown.	1957	Organization Act of 1957 placed Employment Security Division within the Department of Labor. Homer office opened.
1947	First full post-war year. Offices in Anchorage, Cordova, Juneau, Fairbanks, Ketchikan and Kodiak. Wrangell office opened October 1947; two people took turns traveling to Petersburg.	1959	Part-time offices opened in Nome, Kodiak, Palmer and Sitka. Statehood generated accelerated interest in Alaska jobs with Employment Service principal aim... "RIGHT WORKER IN RIGHT JOB"... ALASKA JOB FACTS brochure prepared to send to 28,904 inquirers.
1948	Until July 1948, territory did not have to match funds—entire cost was paid out of federal funds. Opened liaison branch office in Seattle.	1960	Full-time offices in Fairbanks, Anchorage, Juneau, Petersburg, Ketchikan and Sitka. Part-time in Kodiak, Palmer and Nome. Full-time claims office opened in Homer. Positive recruitment for Alaska Lumber and Pulp and for RCA for Clear Missile Detection Site.
1949	Cordova and Kodiak offices closed due to lack of funds, and because of a ruling that communities smaller than 5,000 persons did not warrant a local employment office.	1962	Full-time claims office opened in Soldotna. Part-time office opened in Seward. Manpower Development Training Act passed, determining training needs, developing training projects.
		1964	Alaska Earthquake was a priority project that sent workers to assist in rebuilding Anchorage, Kodiak, Seward. Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 activated Job Corps. Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC) and Community Action Programs Emergency Office established in Valdez.

- 1967** In the aftermath of the Fairbanks flood, the local office was used as a morgue. The local office manager filled out an accident report involving a river boat.
- 1968** Kodiak fish processors access Bethel and Lower Kuskokwim for laborers. Operation Mainstream: Goal was to help hard-core unemployed and disadvantaged become prepared to be active and employable. Fairbanks recruited 873 emergency fire fighters for BLM. Commercial oil discovery on North Slope.
- 1969** 1969 Legislature established Manpower Training Division, became Manpower Centers, under Governor Keith Miller. Glennallen office opened. Civilian workforce was 103,700. Smaller communities project in Barrow. Bethel recruited cannery workers for Kodiak. Palmer office found workers to harvest potatoes and other crops. Oil companies were told about employment service recruiting capabilities. Bethel office opened.
- 1970** Dillingham, Barrow, and Kenai offices opened.
- 1971** Smaller Communities Team, Manpower Development and Training Act, Work Incentive Program (WIN), New Careers, Neighborhood Youth Corp, Bureau of Apprentice and Training.
- 1973** Nixon signed the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA).
- 1974** Petersburg office closed. Trans-Alaska Pipeline construction began from Prudhoe Bay to Valdez.
- 1975** Operation Hitchhike...Provided service to 15,556 individuals from 75 remote villages; Cooperative venture also between Department of Education and Youth Employment Service. Youth Employment Service placed 20,190 in jobs. Tok office opened.
- 1977** Rural Mobile Team; JOB Bank established.
- 1978** Palmer office moved to Wasilla.
- 1979** Homer office closed. Kotzebue office opened. Petersburg office reopened.
- 1980** Targeted Jobs Tax Credit Program established, providing tax credit incentives to employers who were willing to hire and train workers from targeted groups.

Homer office reopened in a motor home in the parking lot of a drugstore on Pioneer Avenue.
- 1985** Valdez office reopened.
- 1986** Barrow office closed; Eagle River office opened.
- 1988** "Alaska Employment Service" designated as new name. Unified service delivery of both employment service and unemployment processing in one location at one time for local offices. Dutch Harbor office closed.
- 1989** Cordova office reopened in response to Exxon Valdez oil spill.
- 1990** Cordova and Soldotna offices closed. Bethel, Dillingham, Petersburg and Kotzebue offices became full service offices.
- 1994** New automated benefit system installed, called "DB2."
- 1995** Targeted Jobs Tax Credit program (TJTC) expired. Unemployment Insurance processing shifts from Dillingham to Juneau Mail Claims. Dillingham office is open part time only.
- 1996** Worker Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) program established by federal Small Business Job Protection Act to encourage employers to hire from targeted groups.

Petersburg, Sitka and Ketchikan unemployment insurance processing moved to Juneau UI Call Center.

Eagle River, Bethel, Glennallen, Kotzebue, Nome, Tok, Homer and Valdez unemployment services moved to Anchorage UI Call Center.

Fairbanks and Juneau UI processing shifts to UI Call Center mail claims.

Glennallen and Tok offices close for winter

Unemployment Insurance site debuts on Internet.
- 1997** Seward, Kenai and Kodiak unemployment insurance services moved to Anchorage UI Call Center.

Tok and Glennallen offices reopen for summer employment season.

Alaska's Job Bank debuts on Internet.

1. Events have been compiled and reconstructed from incomplete historical records.

Source: Alaska Department of Labor, Employment Security Division.

Most significantly, the shift to UI call centers frees up staff time in the employment service offices for helping people find jobs and helping employers find job-ready people – exacting the business of labor exchange. The emphasis for employers is on referring qualified applicants for job vacancies and providing critical labor market information for business and economic planning. For job seekers, the emphasis is on referral and job placement for the ready and willing workers, referrals to training for the unready, skills assessment and counseling for workers in transition, and a place to hone skills for veterans who re-enter the labor force. While other public employment programs are described as *school-to-work* and *welfare-to-work*, the employment service is now designed to be described as a *work-to-work* program.

The 49th State makes futuristic innovations

The Executive Summary of Alaska Lieutenant Governor Fran Ulmer's *Working Group on Electronic Access to Government* report, dated January 12, 1995, reads, "The world is coming north on the information highway. If we can't handle the traffic, the world will press a button and take its business elsewhere. Government officials and government information must be accessible to Alaska's citizens, businesses, and customers. We must give the next generation of Alaskans the tools to compete on the Internet and the rest of the national information infrastructure."

The AKDOL Employment Security Division is positioning itself for a future where not only federal program realignments and resource reductions are probable, but where the increased demand for services and products is inevitable. Claims for unemployment insurance (UI) are not likely to stop, given the continuing seasonality of Alaska's industries. Alaskans are not likely to stop looking for their first, next, or best job. The business of labor exchange is still in demand and the public employment security system, as the U.S. Congress has recently concluded, is vital to maintain. There is no substitute for the universally available, coordinated system of the local employment service offices and UI centers already in place.

VICTOR debuts

Several new projects recently instituted by the Employment Security Division are noteworthy for putting *security* back into Alaska's future employment picture. In addition to UI call centers, a more sophisticated approach using telecommunications to process UI claims currently is making its debut. *VICTOR* (Voice Initiated Claims Telephonic Online Response) is a telephonic, voice-initiated response system designed to serve UI claimants even faster by allowing them to file their bi-weekly claims over the telephone. Previously, only *initial* claims were taken by telephone, and followed up by mail-in certifications. *VICTOR* will enable claimants to conduct virtually all their UI business through a toll-free number, electronically making inquiries, and electronically recording answers, in order to transact and process claims. It will also enable claimants to have the most frequently asked question in the UI payment business, "Where's my check?", be immediately answered. This service will be available seven days a week, 6:00 am until 7:00 pm. With 184 phone lines, the system can process more than one million calls per year. Starting with Sunday of the week, claimants can file for two weeks' benefits via *VICTOR*. The following day, they can call *VICTOR* again and hear the status of the claimed weeks. Filing and inquiries will be easier, cheaper, and quicker for the claimants.

Benefit payments electronically deposited

To complement *VICTOR*, a companion program will debut in 1998 and make possible the automatic deposit of eligible claimants' benefits directly into their designated savings or checking accounts. This feature, Electronic Funds Transfer, permits applicants, once they are determined eligible, the option of having their benefit payments automatically transferred directly into their bank accounts. This will eliminate sending paper checks to applicants via U. S. Postal Service, avoid Alaska's inclement-weather-produced mail delays, improve service generally, and realize a significant savings in operational costs.

Alaska's Job Bank hits the information highway

The 49th State was the 49th state to partner with the nation's electronic public labor exchange by putting Alaska's Job Bank (<http://labor-aix.state.ak.us/cgi-bin/jobs>), the public employment service statewide job orders, on the Internet, with a direct link to America's Job Bank. Together, both America's Job Bank and Alaska's Job Bank post up to 500,000 jobs on any given day. While the Internet will provide Alaskans, especially those in rural areas, much broader access to information about jobs in their own state, the same access to these job listings will be available to nonresident job seekers as well. To provide resident Alaskans optimum access to job opportunities close to home, each Alaska Employment Service office has the ability to restrict recruitment on job orders to its own local area for up to two weeks before posting the job for worldwide access on the Internet. The most important aspect, however, of an online job bank is that job openings are immediately available to all Alaskans, whether or not they have access to a public employment service office. The on-line job bank also is an intelligent investment in Federal Unemployment Tax Act dollars because of the impact it has on keeping UI taxes down, and more importantly, because it reduces the cost in both time and money of recruiting qualified employees.

The possibilities for Alaska connecting to America's Talent Bank and America's Training Network, both still in developmental stages with pilots in several states, are very real. The talent bank will permit job seekers to enter their resumé online so that employers can view them and determine their suitability for immediate openings. The training network, in the embryonic stages, is being designed as a database of training opportunities just as America's Job Bank is a database of job openings and America's Talent Bank is a database of resumé.

One-stop career centers on horizon

Alaska is participating to the extent resources permit in America's One-Stop Career Center Sys-

tem. The system connects employment, education, and training services into a coherent network of resources at local, state, and national levels. This new system links the nation's employers to a variety of qualified applicants and provides job seekers with access to employment and training opportunities next door as well as around the country. The Alaska Job Centers Network unites several key agencies to collaborate and consolidate delivery of services, including combining facilities when possible. The Alaska one-stop design was strengthened when a 1995 legislative act created the Alaska Human Resource Investment Council (AHRIC) to oversee the planning, monitoring, and evaluation of all state- or federally-funded employment and training and education programs. Through AHRIC, state agencies now have the official authority to intensify their cooperative work so that Alaskans have better opportunities to acquire the necessary skills, knowledge, and education for good jobs. The one-stop network in Alaska will bring together, sometimes under one roof, an array of employment and training programs, social services, and education opportunities so that the common frustration among job seekers and employers in finding quality information on available employment and training services is remedied.

Alaska's employment security venture is prepared

The venture of Alaska's public employment security system has been one of progressive service, moving the resources and values accumulated over its 60 years into the technology and market places of both today's world and that envisioned for the coming century. Staff resources are evolving from a labor-intensive, one-on-one service delivery force to a technologically facilitated delivery system designed to help the public help themselves. This describes the changing face of Alaska's public employment security system, continually adapting to better prepare Alaska's up and coming workforce for whatever our future world of work will demand.