



Haines, Alaska boat harbor. Photo courtesy of Bill Montano.

NEEDS AND STRATEGIES FOR TRAINING ALASKA'S NEW COMMERCIAL FISHERMEN

Alaska Sea Grant led a project to identify training needs for new entrants to the commercial fishing industry. This multi-year project brought together information from a wide range of contributors, including CDQs, tribal and local governments, NGOs, and industry groups.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The first part of the project was to identify training needs across regions and fisheries in Alaska, starting with collecting information about existing training opportunities and other support for beginning fishermen. Feedback from 15 training organizations, including tribal organizations, community colleges, fishing organizations, and CDQ groups, identified 42 programs available in Alaska to beginning commercial fishermen. These programs range from direct loan assistance and business consulting, to print and online resources, to skills training.

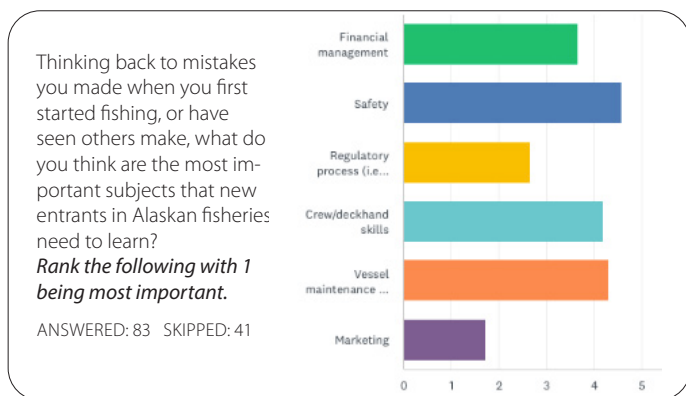
The next step was to talk with commercial fishermen and representatives from fishermen's associations to identify

the training needs of new entrants. Our industry panel identified six categories of assistance and training for beginning fishermen: *safety, financial management, crew/deckhand skills, regulatory process, marketing and quality, and vessel maintenance and repair.*

This information was used to develop an online survey, consisting of 10 questions to gather feedback on the relative importance and specific needs within the identified training areas, location- or fishery-specific areas of need, and how and when it should be delivered.

One hundred twenty-four people (self-selected) responded to the survey, ranking training in safety, vessel maintenance and repair, and crew/deckhand skills as those most important for beginning fishermen. Financial management training was a close fourth, followed by training in regulatory process and marketing.

Respondents identified specific training needs for a variety of fisheries, including seine, gillnet, longline, pot, and troll fishing in Alaska's Bristol Bay, Southeast, and Kodiak regions. The survey also collected preferences for training methods and scheduling. Respondents overwhelmingly preferred in-person training, and felt that training should happen during winter and spring.



- In-person events/workshops
- Online group events/workshops
- Streaming video or other media
- Printed training materials
- Video or other media via mailed storage device
- Other



IDENTIFYING STRATEGIES

The next phase of the project was to start conversations between industry, training institutions, and other interested parties about how to address the identified training needs. Our project team hosted a hybrid strategy session from Anchorage, where participants met to identify strategies for meeting the training needs in each of the six training categories.

Safety

- ♦ Compile comprehensive and location-specific safety resources list for new entrants.
- ♦ Add gear-specific training into existing safety classes.
- ♦ Increase online training resources.

Vessel maintenance and repair

- ♦ Include basic mechanics instruction in more programs.
- ♦ Use a combination of hands-on and distance delivery.

Crew/deckhand skills

- ♦ Create a mentorship model of training that combines classroom and on-the-job training.
- ♦ Micro-credentialing with a tiered non-linear training program.

Financial management

- ♦ Integrate life skills into existing successful training offerings.
- ♦ Create a network of mentors willing to assist with financial mentoring.

Regulatory process

- ♦ Build on the “get out the boat” campaign to encourage participation in the regulatory process in partnership with gear groups.

Quality and marketing

- ♦ Create or support industry quality and marketing awareness campaigns.
- ♦ Increase support for direct marketers.

For more information, please contact Gabe Dunham at gabe.dunham@alaska.edu.



November 2022