



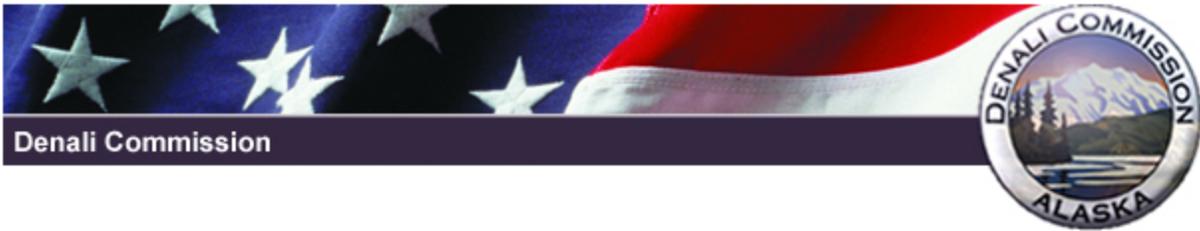
**2008 NADO Innovation Award Winner
Denali Commission
Alaska Marketplace**

Through innovative partnerships, the Denali Commission works with agencies like the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN), a non-profit corporation, to provide economic development opportunities for rural Alaska, opportunities like Alaska Marketplace..



Nelson Angapak (left to right) and Rose Ellis both from AFN, Leanne Mazer from NADO, George J. Canellos, Federal Co-Chair of the Denali Commission and Mark Allred from the Denali Commission and Shirley Moto from AFN all during the NADO award presentation.





George J. Cannelos
Federal Co-Chair
Denali Commission

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Denali Commission:

The Denali Commission is an innovative, independent federal agency which provides critical utilities, infrastructure, training and support for economic development in rural Alaska in the most cost-effective manner possible. By creating the Commission in 1998, Congress mandated that this unique agency partner with state, local, tribal and private organizations to find new and innovative solutions to address the challenges of America's most remote communities.

Remote communities in rural Alaska face challenges that are unique to the 49th state. No other state has the vast roadless distances, the harsh climate and terrain, and the broad expanses of permafrost. Those conditions sharply limit where people can live and make economic development difficult and expensive.

Today in Alaska, there are limited cash paying jobs in most rural communities. Those jobs that do exist are overwhelmingly supported by government funding. Unfortunately, when job opportunities in these rural areas do become available, rural residents often lack the skills necessary to compete with skilled people from outside the community. In over 100 rural Alaska communities,

unemployment consistently exceeds 50%.

The Denali Commission has made economic development a priority for economic growth in rural Alaska. The Commission firmly believes that sustainable economic development for Alaska's rural communities will be generated in the private, commercial sector, not within government. To that end, the Commission supports the development of public infrastructure upon which the private sector creates jobs and wealth and helps ensure that good businesses and entrepreneurial ideas have a chance to become long-term, self-sustaining enterprises.

Alaska Marketplace



This year the Commission's Economic Development Program supported the Alaska Marketplace competition. The *Alaska Marketplace* competition is administered

through the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN). AFN is a non-profit corporation comprised of regional profit Native Corpora-





tions formed under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), regional nonprofit Native Associations and Native villages throughout Alaska. AFN represents the social, economic, and political interests of more than 125,000 Alaska Natives.

The *Alaska Marketplace* seeks to revitalize the economies of rural Alaska by fostering innovation and business creation that promotes Alaska's unique cultural heritages. It provides job opportunities using local economic resources, generates revenue and diversifies strategies of economic development. The initiative brings together visionaries, financiers, technical experts and entrepreneurs in a competition which business owners and/or aspiring business owners showcase their ideas to a panel of judges. Entrepreneurs compete and are chosen by a panel of appointed judges. The selection process involves a review of business plans and presentations by the individual(s) selling their idea. The goal is to promote new businesses and stimulate economic development in rural Alaskan communities.

Alaska Marketplace's 2006 inaugural year competition received more than 170 concept papers from diverse communities such as the remote villages of Savoonga on St. Lawrence Island, the regional hubs of

Nome, Bethel, Dillingham and Cordova. Forty-three finalists competed resulting in twenty-two entrepreneurs sharing in an award pool of \$500,000 ranging in increments from \$8,000 to \$50,000.

Building on the phenomenal success from 2006, the Alaska Marketplace launched its second year competition in May 2007. A total of 306 eligible Business Idea Applications were received from across the state. The assessors selected 61 finalists to advance to the judging phase of the competition. During the 2007 AFN Annual Convention in October, 21 finalists were awarded \$700,000 ranging in amounts from \$15,000 to \$60,000.

The Alaska Marketplace has brought a broad spectrum of partners from across the state—civil society groups, social entrepreneurs, government agencies, academia, and the private sector resulting in 16 different funding agreements; and has established over 40 in-kind partnerships.

This project fosters innovations and integrates culture as the basis for development and demonstrates that. Alaska residents possess strong cultural traditions, a rich history of innovation and a powerful capacity to changing conditions.

The competition has drawn considerable media coverage locally, regionally, statewide and nationwide. Winner's have been featured in numerous business periodicals, radio, television, and invited as guest speakers at conferences, workshops to highlight their business and the Alaska Marketplace competition.

The Denali Commission's innovative approach to program delivery allows the flexibility of supporting programs and partnerships like AFN's Alaska Marketplace and is funding this program again in 2008.