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## ***Alaska Marketplace* Assessment Phase Begins Today**

### **RURAL INNOVATION COMPETITION TO ASSESS PROPOSALS THIS MONTH**

ANCHORAGE, AK: The first *Alaska Marketplace* kicks off the new year today at the BP Energy Center, where 29 Alaska leaders are meeting to select finalists for the ideas competition. Those finalists who make it through this “Assessor Phase” will continue to the next round to vie for a portion of the \$200,000 in award money.

“We are very excited at the overwhelming response of application submissions,” said AFN spokesperson Freddie Christensen. “There are so many good ideas out there, and it’s going to be a tough job for the assessors.”

The panel of assessors will evaluate proposals based on sustainability/profitability, innovation, job creation/poverty reduction and cultural heritage. The assessors’ scores will determine the handful of projects that will move on to the next round, where the entrepreneur will write a formal business plan and present their idea at the final event, which will take place in Anchorage from April 6-7, 2006.

The *Alaska Marketplace* is an exciting new initiative aimed at rural Alaskans with innovative ideas on how to create jobs and stimulate village economies. Cash will be awarded to the top proposals as an initial investment or start-up funds for the groundbreaking projects.

The *Alaska Marketplace* is partially funded by ConocoPhillips, BP, the Denali Commission, State of Alaska, Alaska Federation of Natives, Telecommunications Development Fund, and a growing list of public and private partners. For more information on the *Alaska Marketplace* initiative, visit [www.alaskamarketplace.org](http://www.alaskamarketplace.org).