

Submission Date: _____

Priority: _____ of _____



Ted Stevens

United States Senator for Alaska

Please Note:

- Fill out one request form for each request
- This form (and any attachments) can be returned via:

Fax - (202) 224-2354
 Mail - The Honorable Ted Stevens
 United States Senate
 522 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
 Washington, D.C. 20510

- Requests are due by February 15, 2008.

FISCAL YEAR 2009 PROJECT REQUEST FORM

Project Name: Rural Alaska E-Commerce Training Project

Project Location: Alaska - state wide

Project Description (please attach additional pages as required):

Rural Economic Development Incentive to Assist Small Business and Micro-enterprise.

The Alaska Business Portal creates a new web portal specifically created for small rural village-based businesses. Rural entrepreneurs and existing businesses no longer have to look for only urban sales/consignment outlets for their products and services. They are able to access their web shop directly from their rural community without leaving home and get access to new markets through our private enterprise partner's fifteen million web hits per month feed through and comprehensive built-in Search Engine Optimization. By intentionally creating an —Alaska || focused web portal we are aggregating Alaska businesses not only for customers outside of our state, but are also bringing Alaska business products and services out to rural regions. They can now all be congregated together and find each other easily on one web portal, and use secure credit card processing to buy Alaska products right then and there.

Related Appropriations Bill: _____

Amount of federal funding requested for FY09: \$ 775,410

Total funding to complete this project: \$ 775,410

Number of years to fund this project: 2 years

Matching funds from the State of Alaska: _____

Matching funds from local and private entities:

If this project was funded in prior appropriations bills (within the last five years), list each bill and the amount funded:

Amount included in the President's FY09 Budget: _____

Amount included in the State of Alaska FY09 Budget: _____

Check this box if state funding was sought but not provided.

List legislation that authorizes this project:

Check all that apply:

- A change in the current law is necessary in order to proceed with the project. (If so, attach language and a list of laws that need to be amended)
- Bill or report language is needed. (If so, attach requested language)

The Alaska Manufacturing Business, Industry & Technology Program (AMBIT), a non-governmental organization (NGO) program affiliate of the private, non-profit 501(c)3 Alaska Manufacturing Extension Partnership, Inc. launched the Alaska Business Portal in the fall of 2007. The purpose of the Alaska Business Portal is to meet the need of small rural businesses to have an inexpensive, yet technically robust, E-Commerce platform in which to effectively market the extraordinary merchandise and services produced by Alaskans.

Our development of the Alaska Business Portal over the past year and a half has occupied the efforts of both our organization and that of our private enterprise partner, EntertainMe World, through its locally owned affiliate, EntertainMe Alaska. EntertainMe World donated the cost of development of the Alaska Business Portal to AMEP, a \$2,700,000 investment to-date, because they believe in our goal of expanding and enhancing the economy of rural Alaska by opening new Internet/E-Commerce markets and sales for Alaska made products and services. Our next step is to take access of the Alaska Business Portal out to the rural areas of the state and teach individuals to launch their own web-store with our easy-to-use template based portal. A business person with few computer skills can load their product information, digital pictures, up to eight minutes of video, prices and product availability and be accepting secure credit card transactions within minutes of the start of our training program. At issue for any program development in rural Alaska – How do we make this effort sustainable at the local level? The AMBIT team answer is – We don't, the local communities and regional non-profits and other organizations do. The AMBIT Alaska Business Portal meets the numerous requests organizations across the state have been asking for in web portal access for their small business constituents desperately working to add to their cash income in order to survive the rising cost of fuel in their villages.

One way to insure the lasting efficacy of the program is to extend our training to high school students in entrepreneurship, business management business and personal finance. We intend to accomplish this by partnering with the University of Alaska Fairbanks, education and rural development programs to create the necessary curriculum as a resource for rural teachers to use in their classroom, not as an elective afterschool program, dependent on volunteers. Our belief is that the curriculum must be culturally relevant according to the Alaska Native Knowledge Network culturally appropriate curriculum standards, as well as meeting the state's curriculum standards, and meet teachers' need for ease-of-use in the classroom rather than another irrelevant mandate. We will train young Alaskans in the latest technologies for entrepreneurs involving web based strategies, including E-Commerce, business to business transactions, and online marketing. AMBIT will enhance youth work readiness skills useful in any rural or urban setting. High school students who learn skills in personal finance, banking, photography, videography, and basic business management are more likely to succeed in future small business ventures of their own. These skills will be furthered enhanced as they gain experience working with businesses and elders loading and managing local businesses on the Alaska Business Portal. Our experience in rural community and economic development shows us how to tap into existing institutions, traditions that span thousands of years, and our elders wish for continuity through the generations. Our web portal was designed with this in mind.

This is not Ebay or just a simple E-Commerce site! The Alaska Business Portal allows the small business entrepreneur an opportunity to have a continuous web presence and grow their loyal customer base through our built in Search Engine Optimization. The more Alaska-based businesses loaded in to the portal, the more opportunities EntertainMe World has to send potential customers through to rural Alaska from the fifteen million web hits their network receives monthly. The software provided to us, at no cost, uses the latest Internet technology available. Literally, no other entity, private or public, has the built-in capabilities designed to meet the needs of Alaskans through the Alaska Business Portal:

- An E-Commerce platform promoting client's product or service
- Client easily creates own online store with shopping cart
- Ability to start accepting credit card payments on line in minutes
- Secure transactions processed by client's Paypal Merchant Account
- No Web Hosting fees
- No need for a webmaster
- Zero development costs
- Web Presence with a Billboard and multiple landing pages
- Direct access to content and ability to edit pages
- Rotating Banner on EntertainMe World's affiliate's high-traffic sites
- High quality photo presentation and streaming video
- Links to client's existing website (if they still need one!)
- Marketing strategies including use of digital pictures, video clips & product descriptions
- Tracking of all Visitors, Views and Click-throughs included in subscription
- Simple to use—Simple for client's customers to use
- Search Engine Optimization to drive customers to client's storefront!

One of the fundamental impacts that we have seen during our training sessions is that clients, with little technical background, rapidly gain a feel for how to use this technology to empower themselves and benefit their small business and through the design of the network, have their pages actually found, enabling higher sales rates than could happen on a traditional E-Commerce website...and be in total control of their business and web marketing presence.

Our intent is to coordinate information regarding existing service agencies (such as Small Business Development Center, University of Alaska, Buy Alaska, Made in Alaska, Alaska Grown, the Alaska Regional Development Organizations, Alaska InvestNet, etc.) through our outreach program which has been designed by our team leader, a life-long Alaska Native engaged in rural community and economic development for the past twenty-five years. AMEP and the AMBIT Alaska Business Portal team are invested in delivering the most effective, long-term, sustainable E-Commerce portal project the State of Alaska has ever seen.