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## **Small Businesses Win Big at ATIA Convention**

### ***\$17,000 Cash Prizes Awarded at 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Alaska Tourism Shark Tank***

**Juneau, AK** – Based on the reality TV show Shark Tank, the Alaska Travel Industry Association (ATIA) held its 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Alaska Tourism Shark Tank competition on October 9. Entrepreneurs from across the state presented innovative ideas in front of three Alaska tourism “Sharks” and a live ATIA convention audience, hoping to win a cash prize to help turn business ideas into reality.

New this year, ATIA convention-goers entered the water and voted for a “fan favorite.”

Participants were allowed 3 slides and 2 minutes to make their pitch. Ideas ranged from new products to market outreach. Alaska’s tourism sharks provided fin-tastic business advice, diving deep to “chews” their favorite.

Shark-selected winners were:

- Hike Alaska, Anchorage – \$5,000 to purchase winter equipment and expand year-round tour opportunities. (<https://www.gohikealaska.com/>)
- Salted Roots, Seward - \$5,000 to build and market new glass A-frame visitor cabins. (<https://www.saltedrootsalaska.com/>)
- Naaataq Gear, Nome – \$2,500 and Alaska Airlines tickets to support marketing a new line of outdoor Naataq jackets at the Alaska Gift and Wholesale Show. (<https://naataqgear.com/>)
- Laing & Co, Anchorage - \$2,500 for permitting support to create a new Alaska glacier tunnel tour experience near Valdez, Alaska

Salted Roots also received the “Fan Favorite” \$2,000 cash prize.

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Other participating businesses included:

- Segway Tours of Anchorage, Anchorage: marketing for new zoo tour (<https://www.segwaytoursofanchorage.com/>)
- Tonbo Digital, Anchorage: digital intelligence (<https://www.tonbodigital.com/>)
- Treehouse Cove Lodge, Seldovia: marketing and construction support (<https://www.seldoviabay.com/treehouse-cove-lodge>)
- North Pacific Expeditions, Mukilteo, WA: to purchase a man overboard retrieval system (<https://northpacificexpeditions.com/>)

“Shark Tank is a great way to present new ideas and support small businesses, said Sarah Leonard, ATIA President and CEO. “Our members get feedback from their colleagues and real cash prizes for growing their businesses. We’re excited to see how these companies will use the Shark Tank prizes for their business ideas!”

Dale Wade, Alaska Railroad Corporation; Scott Habberstad, Alaska Airlines; and Heather Handyside, GCI served as this year’s Shark panel.

Hike Alaska, Salted Roots, Naataq Gear, and Laing & Co join previous Shark Tank top winners, Koyukuk River Tribal Tours, Gilpatrick’s Hotel Chitina, Juneau Food Tours, and Paws for Adventure.

ATIA is Alaska’s largest statewide membership trade association for the travel industry and represents more than 650 members and businesses supporting Alaska tourism. ATIA promotes Alaska’s travel industry as one of the state’s major economic forces and advocates for the growth of the industry while remaining attentive to Alaska’s natural environment, diverse cultures, and unique quality of life.

For more information, visit [www.AlaskaTIA.org](http://www.AlaskaTIA.org) or contact 907.306.2331

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