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Public Involvement in Rural Alaska Construction Projects

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1. Introduction –

One of the cornerstones of democracy is the idea that citizen participation is essential to good government; this ideal is also the hallmark to producing a good construction project. The purpose of public involvement in construction projects is to ensure that the project management makes informed and timely decisions based on the needs of the public. When project management strives to inform and involve the public, a sense of project legitimacy and accountability is generated with the public. Ideally, public involvement aims to inspire people, groups, and organizations to take an active role in enriching their community; practically, public involvement is designed to fulfill four main objectives (Vancouver, 1999):

1. To inform citizens, groups, and organizations about specific project decisions that will likely affect their lives.
2. To ensure all views are considered during planning and decision making.
3. To create a collective vision that speaks to as many interests and concerns as possible.
4. To engage and initiate actions that resolve issues and problems.

If the objectives of public involvement aren't overwhelming enough, consider the unique challenges required to engage the public in rural Alaska. The ordinary problems associated with public involvement are compounded by rural village communities that are not only physically isolated, but also have cultural, language, and economic differences that vary from village to village. In the study "Alaska: Evaluation Through Public Engagement" the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT) began to redefine the agency's relationship to the public by creating a public involvement procedure (PIP). One rural resident summed up the difficulty of keeping the rural Alaska population involved when he commented on the draft public involvement procedure, ". . . [the draft PIP makes] assumptions that rural Alaskans have

access to fax machines, phones and computers. Most of us don't have running water and some don't have electricity."

Alaska organizations see a growing need for guidance and direction regarding how to improve rural Alaska public involvement. This paper will discuss public involvement in rural Alaska construction projects. This includes defining public involvement, discussing the construction project life cycle, and discussing the need for public involvement. The goal of this paper is to demonstrate the need for public involvement in general as well as provide a set of guidelines for public involvement initiatives that could either be adopted into an organizations public involvement policy or could be used as a basis to start a rural Alaska public involvement policy.

2. Alaska Statistical Characteristics

Below is a brief statistical, demographic, and geographic description of Alaska derived from information from the U.S. Census Bureau (Census Bureau, 2005) and the Alaska Department of Transportation (Transportation, 2005).

2.1. Population Characteristics:

- 2003 population - 648,800 (estimate) or 0.2% of the US population.
- Population density – 1.1 person per square mile.
- 29% of the population or 188,150 people live in communities with less than 2,500 population.
- Alaska Population By Race:
 - 69.3% White persons
 - 3.5% Black or African American persons
 - 15.6% American Indian and Alaska Native persons
 - 4% Asian persons
 - 4.1% Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin

- 0.5% Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander
- 3% Other

2.2. Median Household Income:

- \$ 50,700

2.3. Land And Transportation Characteristics:

- Total land area: 615,230 square miles or 20% of US land area.
- Less than 20% of the roads are paved.
- Sixteen times as many aircraft per capita as the rest of the US.
- Over 3500 miles of water ferry route.

3. Defining Public Involvement

3.1. What Is Public Involvement?

Public involvement is the process by which the views and opinions of all interested parties in a decision making process engage in two-way communication, with the overall goal of better decision making. Moreover, public involvement is the means by which public concerns, needs, and values are identified prior to selecting project design alternatives (United Nations, 1997).

The “public” is defined as any person or group with a distinctive interest in an issue. The public is not a single group, but is comprised of different people with different values and concerns. The public is also composed of stakeholders. Stakeholders, like the public, include all individuals and groups with an interest in a project, however, stakeholders are generally considered to have a more direct stake in an issue than the

public. Stakeholders can be divided into four categories: public sector agencies; directly affected parties; indirectly affected parties; and other parties (United Nations, 1997).

People may have a stake or interest in a project based on:

1. Their proximity to the project (i.e. they live nearby).
2. Their economic situation (i.e. their jobs or company may be affected).
3. Their work responsibilities.
4. Their personal values.

3.2. Why Is Public Involvement Important?

On the surface, public involvement may appear to be time consuming and costly however, the long term benefits of public involvement to a project may exceed the initial costs. If the public's demand for a decision making role in projects that affect their interests is ignored, hostile crowds, project delays, higher costs, and a poor final product may be the end result. The benefits of public involvement are (United Nations, 1997):

1. Public involvement improves the quality of planning and decision-making, which reduces the risk of project.
2. Public involvement improves project problem solving by bringing a diverse range of values and opinions to the problem.
3. Public involvement provides the developer (government or private sector) with a "license to operate" in a given area, through the development of "partnership" with local communities.
4. Conflicts between individuals, groups, and organizations undermine sustainable development.

Although public involvement may not eliminate all negative consequences associated with project decision making, a well prepared public involvement program that uses several techniques to reach different segments of the public will reduce the chances of negative consequences.

3.3. When Is Public Involvement Important?

Public involvement in the project decision making process should be sought when project decisions require choices between important social values, when project decisions affect the interests of one or more groups, when the public perceives it has a lot to win or lose, when the project is controversial, or when the project needs public support or action for implementation.

3.4. What Are The Goals Of Public Involvement?

The goals of public involvement are to identify the public's concerns and values regarding the project, to gather relevant project information from the community (economic, social, labor force, etc.), to inform the public about potential actions, to inform the public of project alternatives and outcomes, to develop and maintain project credibility, and most importantly, to improve project decision making.

3.5. What Public Involvement Can And Can Not Do?

Although public involvement cannot overcome all project opposition, resolve all differences in opinions and values, or replace planning and regulatory processes that examine the technical aspects of the project, a well coordinated public involvement initiative can improve the quality of project decision making, improve project management efficiency, and help minimize project costs and delays. Additionally, a well coordinated public involvement initiative can maintain project credibility and legitimacy,

increase management expertise and "team-building" skills, and help build public consensus.

3.6. Types Of Public Involvement

There are seven types of public involvement which are listed below with a brief summary and are arranged by degree of public involvement from lowest to greatest (Story, 2005).

3.6.1. Persuasion

Persuasion is a public involvement method that uses techniques to change public attitudes without raising expectations about the public being involved in the planning process. This includes direct mailing of project brochures, advertising project benefits, and distributing project reports to inform the public to get informal public support for the project. This method does not necessarily ask for the public's direct involvement.

3.6.2. Education

Education is a public involvement method that uses information and instruction to create public awareness and understanding. This includes direct mailing of project fact sheets, public service announcements, workshops, and generating reports to educate the public. Education is used to inform the public, to get formal public support for the project, and may be used to ask for the public's direct involvement.

3.6.3. Information Feedback

Information feedback is a public involvement method where information is distributed regarding a policy initiative where an organization has a stated position

and requests feedback from the public. This method includes surveys, focus groups, interviews, workshops, and requires the public's direct involvement.

3.6.4. Consultation

Consultation is a public involvement method where the public is engaged in a dialogue based on mutually accepted objectives. This method includes open houses, Delphi techniques, participant panels, workshops, and requires the public's direct involvement.

3.6.5. Joint Planning

Joint Planning is a shared decision making method with direct involvement in decision making through direct representation of the public on boards, committees, etc. This method includes collaborative problems solving, mediation, Niagara process, and requires the public's direct involvement.

3.6.6. Delegated Authority

Delegated authority is a public involvement method that transfers the decision making responsibilities to the public or other levels of government. This method includes using a representative community body or panel to directly make project decisions on the behalf of the community using one of before mentioned methods, and requires the public's direct and indirect involvement.

3.6.7. Self-Determination

Self-determination is a planning process undertaken directly by the public or stakeholders without outside influence. This method includes using a representative community body or panel to directly make project decisions on the behalf of the community, and requires the public's direct and indirect involvement.

4. The Construction Project Life Cycle

There are six phases in the construction project life cycle (Bennett, 2003). The six phases and a brief overview of the functions performed in each phase are summarized below.

4.1. Phase 1 - Pre-Project Phase

In this stage, the project goes from an idea or the identification of a perceived need to setting up the preliminary structure of the project. Items such as what project delivery system the project will use (design/build, design/bid/build, etc), how parties will relate to one another (matrix, top-down, etc.), and what type of contract will be used (fixed price, time and materials, etc.) are defined in this phase. The preliminary decisions made in this phase frames how the project will proceed.

4.2. Phase 2 - Planning And Design Phase

This phase has two parts: part one is planning and part two is design. In the planning portion of this phase, the project's objectives are defined, alternative solutions are identified, project funding sources are identified, and a project brief and program statement is created. During the design portion of this phase, detailed construction and contract documents are created by the design professionals. It is during the planning and design phase that public opinion regarding the project is most important.

4.3. Phase 3 - Contractor Selection Phase

During this phase, the “lowest responsible and responsive” contractor is selected either by an open bid, bid by invitation, or some other form of contractor selection.

4.4. Phase 4 - Project Mobilization Phase

In this phase, the selected contractor prepares to begin the project by obtaining the various bonds, licenses, and insurance that may have been required in the contract

documents as well as obtaining the resources (materials, equipment, labor, etc.) needed to start the project.

4.5. Phase 5 - Project Operations Phase

During this phase, the selected contractor executes the contract documents.

4.6. Phase 6 - Project Closeout And Termination Phase

During this phase, the final testing and start up tasks are executed, final inspections are performed, and final clean up occurs. Once completed, the contractor is released from their responsibilities as outlined in the contract documents.

5. Public Involvement In The Planning And Design Phase

As mentioned above, during the planning and design phase, the project's objectives are defined, alternative solutions are identified, project funding sources are identified, a project brief is created, a project program statement is created, and detailed construction and contract documents are created by the design professionals. Although public involvement is important in all phases of the project life cycle, it is during the planning and design phase that public involvement regarding the project is most important. Hence, before discussing public involvement, it is worth taking a moment to define and discuss what a project brief and project program are and how public involvement influences these documents. This will help demonstrate why public involvement in this phase is the most crucial. A flow diagram will demonstrate how public involvement influences the project throughout the other project life cycle activities.

5.1. The Project Brief

The project brief is the first formal document in the project and forms the basis for the project (Bennett, 2003). The project brief defines the scope of the project, defines the project objectives, and identifies what methods will be used to accomplish the project. The project brief is schematic in nature and a well prepared brief is usually not more than a few pages.

5.2. The Project Program

The project program, some times referred to as the project scoping narrative, is a comprehensive project document that further clarifies the projects objectives and goals. The project program is the foundation for the design professionals to begin meeting the projects objectives and goals. During the creation of the project program, public involvement in the project is sought. Whether the project is to build a community medical/dental clinic, a bridge, a school, or an airport, questions regarding how the project uses land and community resources, the impacts of the project on the community during the project construction, and how the final product will fulfill the goals of the community are asked by the project management (or a representative of the project management like a facilitator) and answered by the public. A facilitator is a neutral party that helps groups deal with difficult issues by engaging the audience while trying to integrate different views and approaches. A facilitator's role is to help a group to its best thinking.

5.3. Project Public Involvement Flow Diagram

Figure one below is a flow diagram that clearly demonstrates how public involvement and public opinion influences a project throughout all the project's life cycle activities (Gebhart, 2003). Additionally, figure one illustrates how public involvement touches all aspects of the planning and design phase either directly or indirectly.

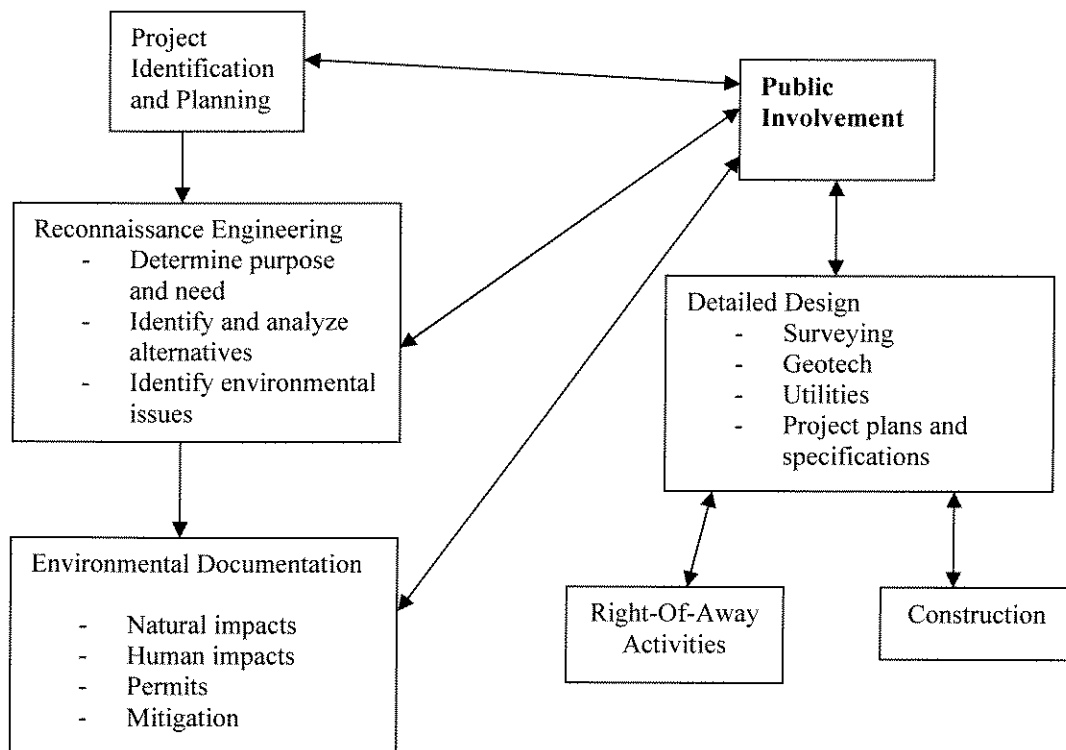


Figure 1 - Flow diagram demonstrating public involvement in a construction project.

6. Research Methodology – Standardized Questionnaire

The goal of this paper is to provide a set of guidelines for public involvement initiatives that could either be adopted into an organizations public involvement policy or could be used as a basis to start a rural Alaska public involvement policy. Unfortunately, information regarding public involvement in rural Alaska is not readily available. Hence, it was determined that the

best sources to obtain information regarding rural Alaska public involvement were from Alaskan companies and government agencies with practical rural Alaska experience. Therefore, an interview process using a standardized questionnaire was the chosen methodology to research the information; refer to Appendix A to review the questionnaire that was developed. Owners, owner representatives, non-profit organizations, government agencies, engineering firms, and general contracting firms with rural Alaska work experience were interviewed using the questionnaire; refer to Appendix B to review the list of organizations interviewed. The questionnaire was broken into three sections: organization profile, methods used to recruited public opinion in rural Alaska, and measured responses.

6.1. Section One - Organization Profiles

Section one of the questionnaire determined organizational variables like the size of the organization, when the organization was founded, the organizations average yearly revenue or budget, how much of the organizations revenue was derived from rural Alaska projects, and whether or not the organization was required to solicit public opinion.

6.2. Section Two – Methods For Recruiting Public Involvement In Rural Alaska.

Section two addressed questions regarding whether or not public opinion is important, how does public opinion affect design decisions, what specific measures define a successful rural public recruitment, and what specific methods does your organization use to recruit public involvement. The project survey participants were asked to answer the questions and briefly explain their answer.

6.3. Section Three – Measured Responses Regarding Public Involvement In Rural Alaska

In section three, the project survey participants were asked to rank the statements in section three from 1-10 (one being the lowest, ten being the highest) and briefly

explain their ranking. An example of the questions asked were: is it more difficult to recruit public involvement in rural Alaska, is your organization successful in your rural Alaska public outreach endeavors, and does your organization need more training in recruiting public involvement.

7. Research Summary And Discussion of Research Results

Refer to Appendix C for a sample of a completed questionnaire.

7.1. Section One – Organization Profiles

The organizations that were interviewed have a combination of 382 years of experience in Alaska with organizational founding dates ranging from 1905-1999. The organization types were private, non-profit, and government – Federal, State, and Borough with a combined work force of 1961 employees that ranged from 10 – 500 employees and averaged 163.4 employees.

The combined organizational annual revenue was approximately 605.7 million dollars, ranged from approximately 120 million – 220 million dollars, and averaged 55.1 million dollars. The average percentage of the annual revenue or budget derived from rural Alaska projects was approximately 45%, and ranged from 5-100% of the organization's total annual revenue or budget.

Forty-five percent of the organizations interviewed had formal guidance or policies regarding recruiting public involvement in general. Sixty-seven percent of the organizations were required to solicit public involvement in rural Alaska projects. However, only 33.3% of the organizations had formal training programs regarding

recruiting public involvement in rural Alaska, and 25% of the organizations had formal guidance or policies regarding recruiting public involvement specific to rural Alaska.

7.2. Section Two – Methods For Recruiting Public Involvement In Rural Alaska.

This section asked for general statements regarding methods used by Alaskan organizations to recruit public involvement in rural Alaska projects. Several key themes emerged from this section, and are paraphrased below.

1. Rural Alaska communities should be educated about the project through out the project life cycle.
2. Stakeholders, especially influential stakeholders like Tribal Leaders, Religious Leaders, Regional Native Corporation Leaders, and Village Native Corporation Leaders, should be involved early in the project process and their involvement should be continuous.
3. Rural Alaska communities are not very verbal and usually give very few comments. Public involvement initiatives need to be tailored and personalized to get the rural Alaska communities to participate.
4. Try to provide incentives to increase participation. For example, provide food, door prizes, or organize the public involvement event in conjunction with a local event that generates a lot of public interest (i.e. bingo night or when the Department of Fish and Game comes to the community to issue game tags).
5. Try to provide alternatives to traditional meeting places (i.e. is it possible to have the meeting near the project site instead of in a conference room?).
6. Public involvement initiatives need to be continuously evaluated.
7. Common methods used to communicate with the public included:

- a. Project newsletters
 - b. Public service announcements
 - c. Direct mailings to box holders
 - d. Newspaper advertisements
 - e. Informational materials (fact sheets)
 - f. Surveys
8. Technology has an increasingly important role in rural public involvement initiatives, including:
- a. Databases for local contacts and for direct mailing lists
 - b. Websites and e-mail, where applicable.

7.3. Section Three – Measured Responses Regarding Public Involvement In Rural Alaska

The following is a graphical representation of the responses to the measured questions in section three of the research questionnaire. The project survey participants were asked to rank the statements in section three from 1-10 (one being the lowest, ten being the highest). The mean and mode answer is also provided.

Figure two below demonstrates that the project survey participants did not feel that recruiting public involvement in rural Alaska was more difficult. The most common reason provided was that in small rural communities, it is easier to “get the word out” about the project once the appropriate stakeholders had been notified.

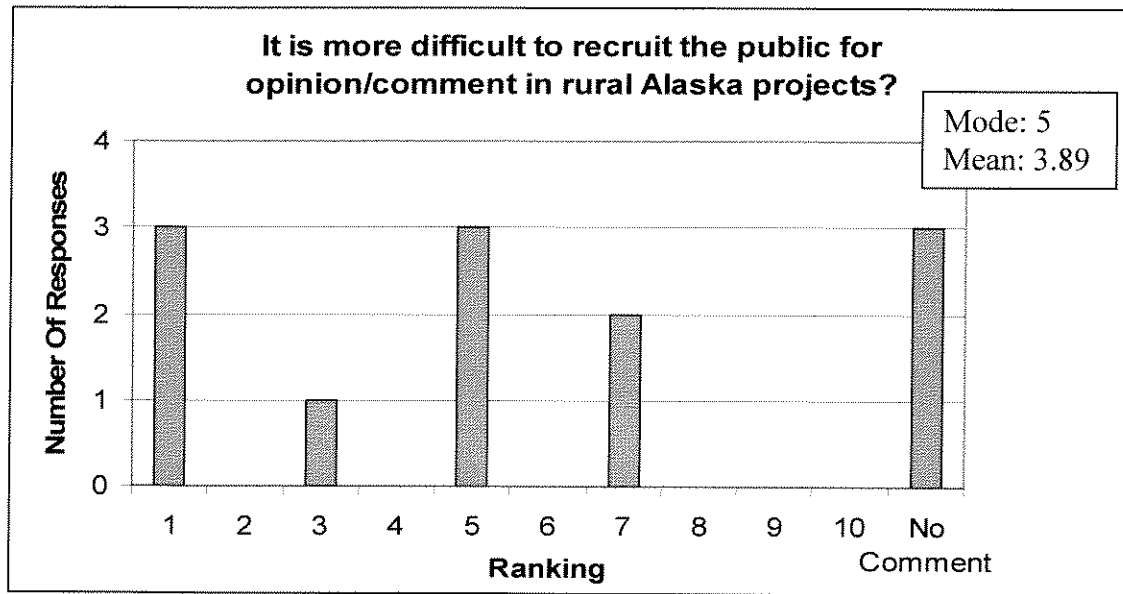


Figure 2 – Graph of the responses to the question, “It is more difficult to recruit the public for opinion/comment in rural Alaska projects?”

Figure three below demonstrates that the project survey participants generally felt that it is more expensive to recruit public opinion in rural Alaska. The most common reason provided was high travel costs.

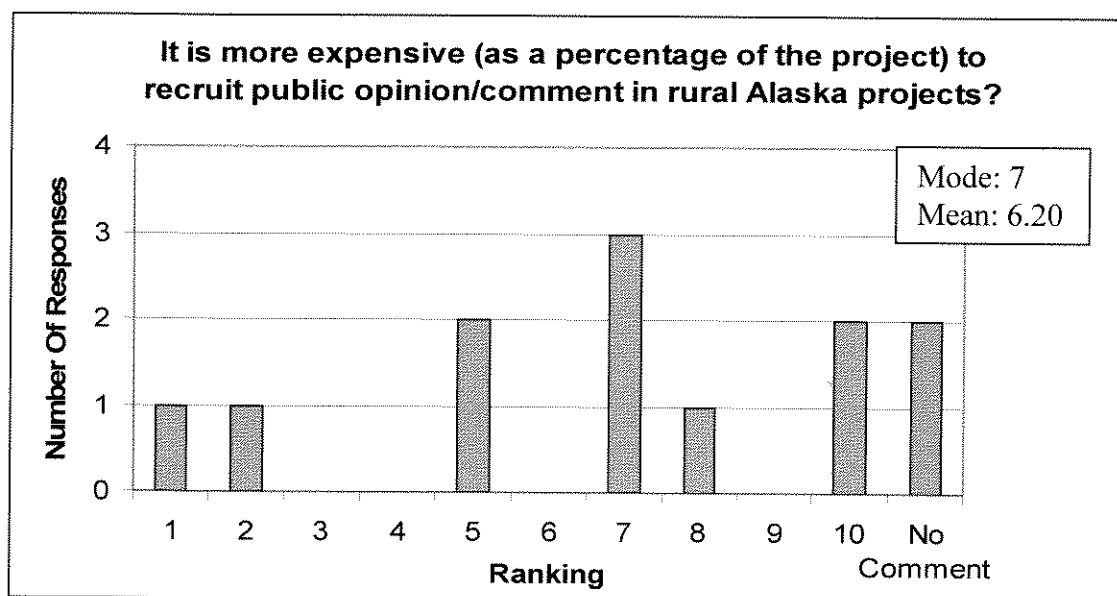


Figure 3 – Graph of the responses to the question, “It is more expensive (as a percentage of the project) to recruit public opinion/comment in rural Alaska projects?”

Figure four below demonstrates that there was a high belief among the project survey participants that there is a positive cost benefit for recruiting public involvement in rural Alaska projects. The most common reason provided was that obstacles were avoided by involving the public instead of assuming or guessing what the public wanted.

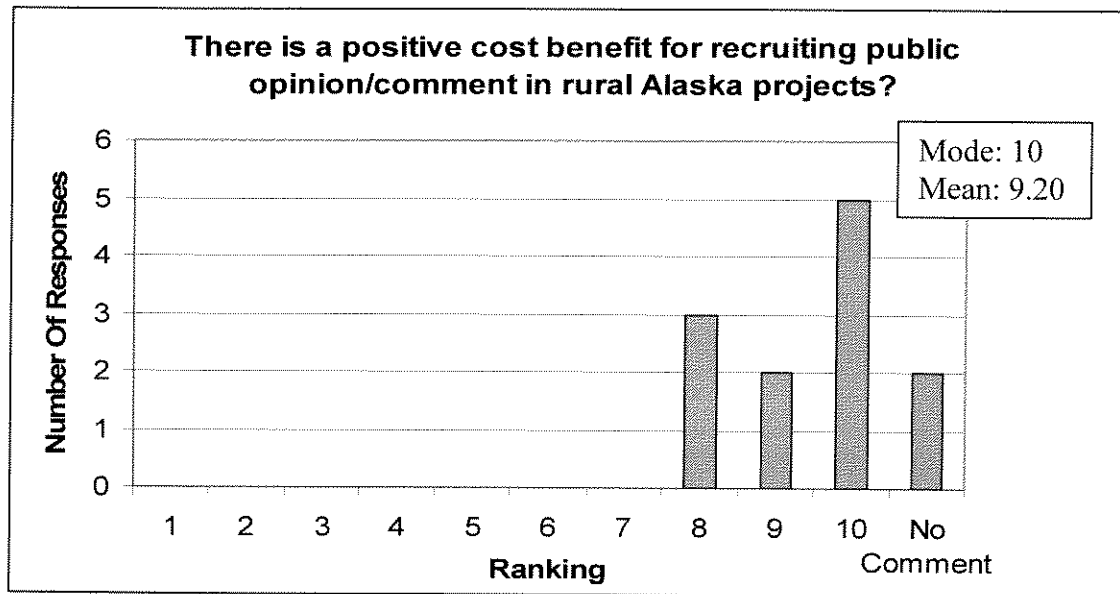


Figure 4 – Graph of the responses to the question, “There is a positive cost benefit for recruiting public opinion/comment in rural Alaska projects?”

Figure five below demonstrates that there was a high belief among the project survey participants that public involvement was vital to the overall success of the project. The most common reason provided was that the public felt ownership by contributing to the project, which made them more supportive of the project.

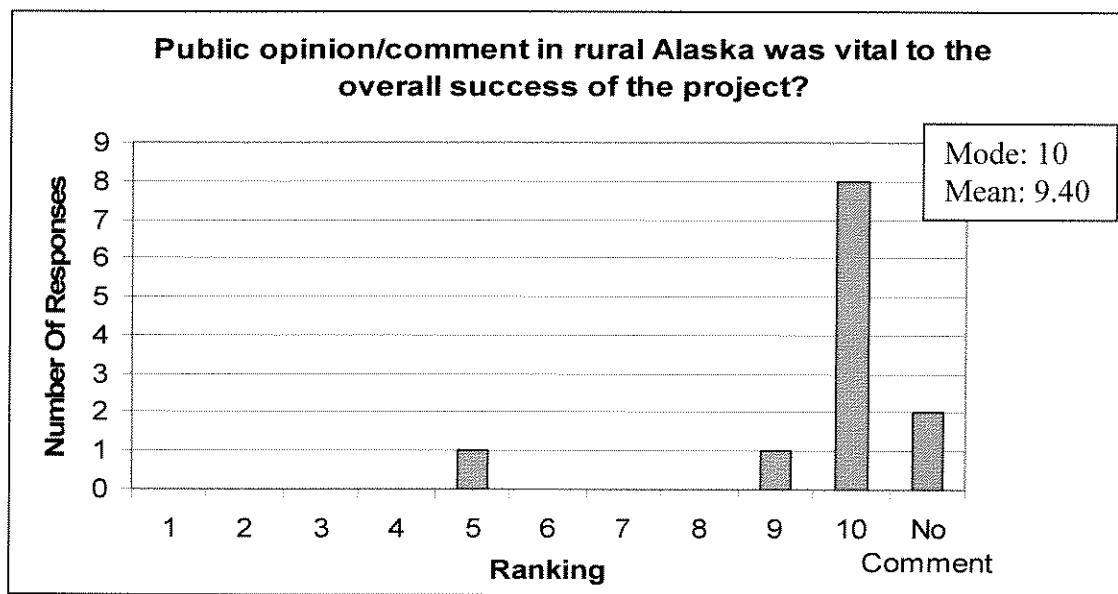


Figure 5 – Graph of the responses to the question, “Public opinion/comment in rural Alaska was vital to the overall success of the project?”

Figure six below demonstrates that the average response among the project survey participants was low with regard to increasing the percentage of the project budget spent on recruiting public involvement in rural Alaska projects. The most common reason given was labor and travel costs.

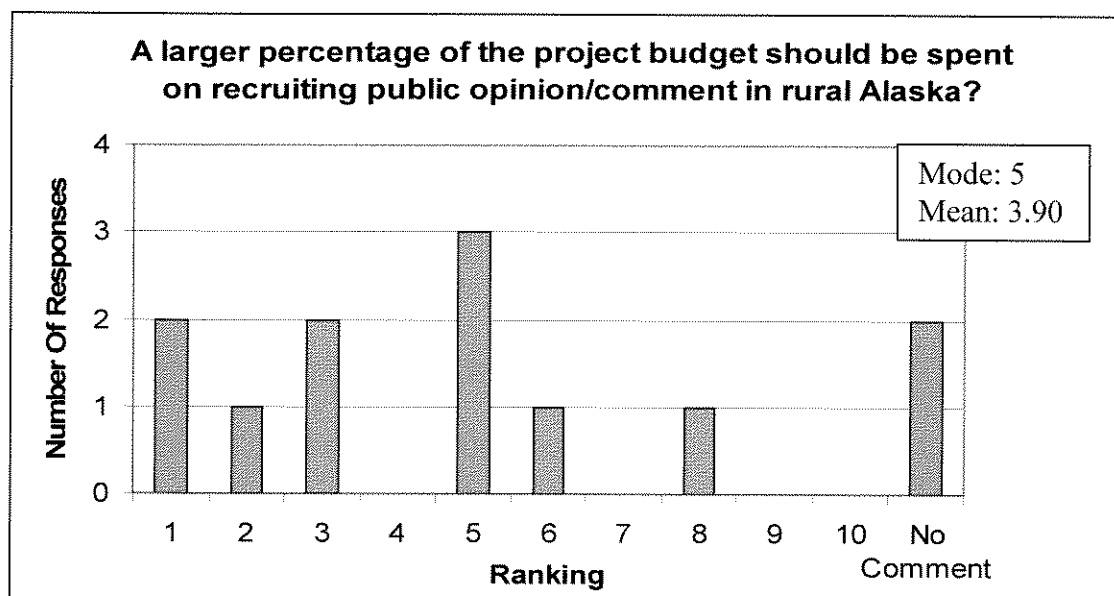


Figure 6 – Graph of the responses to the question, “A larger percentage of the project budget should be spent on recruiting public opinion/comment in rural Alaska?”

Figure seven below demonstrates that there was a high belief among the project survey participants that their organization is successful in their rural Alaska public outreach endeavors. The most common response was that there is always room for improvement.

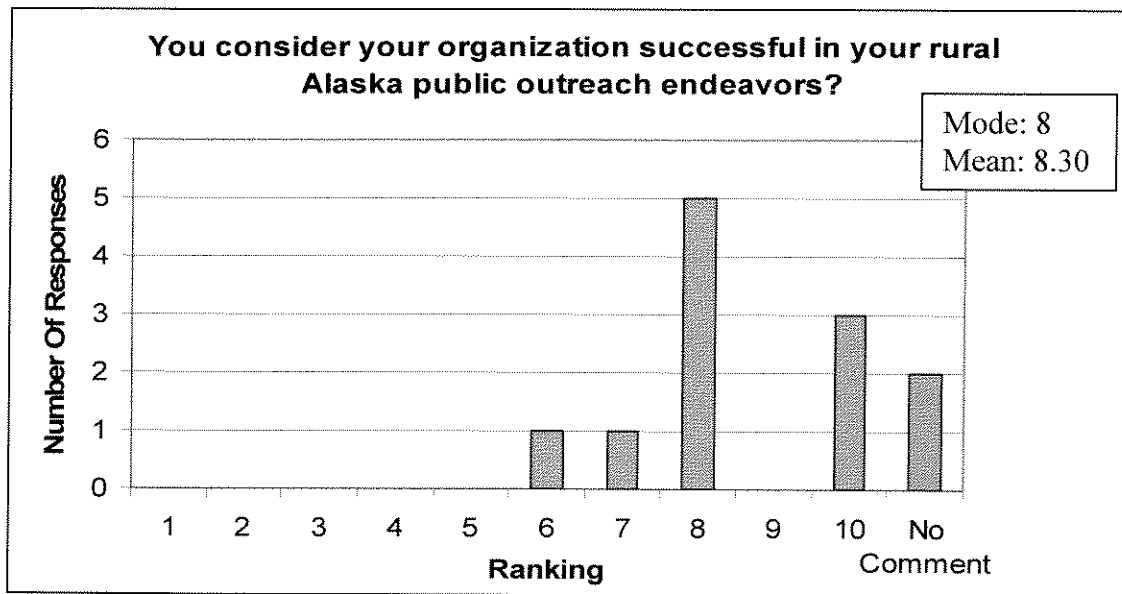


Figure 7 – Graph of the responses to the question, “You consider your organization successful in your rural Alaska public outreach endeavors?”

Figure eight below demonstrates that there is a low belief in the project survey participants that their organization needed to provide more training in recruiting public involvement in rural Alaska. The most common response was that although training was important, training was driven by employee turn-over and that current employees had general training as well as on the job training. Policy guidelines or organizational directions regarding how to perform rural public involvement initiatives were considered more important than formal training.

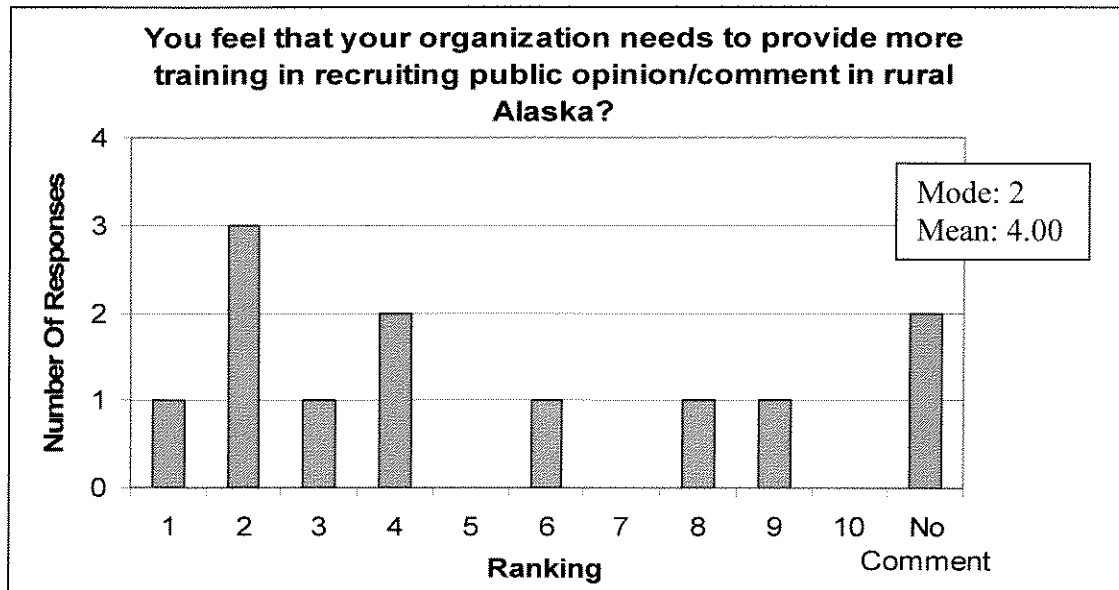


Figure 8 – Graph of the responses to the question, “You feel that your organization needs to provide more training in recruiting public opinion/comment in rural Alaska?”

8. Rural Alaska Public Involvement Training And Policy Guidelines

To improve public involvement initiatives in rural Alaska, a set of standards that guide public involvement initiatives needs to be adopted. Standards help create consistency in the approaches used in public involvement initiatives as well as aids in the evaluation of the public involvement process.

Below is a set of generalized guidelines regarding public involvement initiatives in rural Alaska based on the information gathered from the research questionnaire and two public involvement studies. The first study was performed by the City of Vancouver B.C. in 1999, and titled, “Public Involvement Review,” and the second study was performed by the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration in 1996, and titled, “Public Involvement Techniques For Transportation Decision-Making.” Although neither of the before mentioned studies specifically studied rural Alaska public involvement, both studies investigated methods to involve typically underserved portions of the public including ethnic, minority, and

low income groups. Hence, given the physical, cultural, and economic isolation of the rural Alaskan communities, the technical aspects of the studies are relevant to the topic of this paper. By blending common underserved public involvement themes from the before mentioned studies with the public involvement themes gathered in the questionnaire, a set of generalized guidelines regarding public involvement initiatives in rural Alaska was developed.

8.1. Develop A Policy Regarding Multicultural Outreach.

Individuals from minority and ethnic groups in rural areas often find participating in public involvement initiatives difficult and have historically experienced barriers in the public decision-making process. These barriers arise from cultural, language, and economic differences. Public involvement initiatives for minority and ethnic groups in rural areas require special attention in addition to the basic purpose of public involvement; some of the special issues are (Transportation, 1996):

- a. Target rural communication medias like community newspapers and newsletters, community bulletin boards, and community television and radio to access larger, less involved audiences
- b. To convey project subject matter in ways that is meaningful to other cultures.
- c. To attempt to bridge the cultural and economic differences that reduces rural participation.
- d. To use communication techniques that enable people to interact with other participants and to develop partnerships on a small group basis to assure representation.

It is important to follow local etiquette when dealing with rural Alaska communities. Rural Alaska communities are not very verbal and usually give very few

comments. Hence, public involvement initiatives need to be tailored and personalized to get rural Alaska communities to participate. Moreover, project management should ask the community leaders if the project staff may come to the community and give a presentation based on the best time for the local community's calendar of events, not the project's schedule. If possible, it is best to arrive to the community a day or two before the scheduled meeting to informally meet with the community people. This allows relationships to be formed informally prior to the formal meeting. Rural Alaska communities tend to be quiet and informal; once a good relationship between the project staff and the community is created, future public involvement initiatives will likely be less formal.

8.2. Train Project Staff In Plain Language.

Plain language should be used in all rural area public involvement initiatives (Vancouver, 1999). This requires training project staff to communicate project information with the broadest possible basis without using technical language. Additionally, project staff involved in planning and implementing public involvement initiatives need to have the necessary cultural sensitivity training as well as basic training in conflict resolution.

The project staff should make general information, including technical and policy background information, readily available, either at meetings or through project information publications like "fact sheets." Information publications can be prepared to serve a number of different processes, from providing technical information about the project to clarifying the basic roles and expectations for public involvement.

8.3. When To Start Rural Public Involvement.

Rural Alaska communities should be educated about the project throughout the project's life cycle. Hence, rural public involvement initiatives should start as early as possible and should extend throughout the project. Furthermore, stakeholders should be involved early in the project process and their involvement should be continuous. Informing rural communities of project events and providing project status reports helps to establish a good working relationship. This approach is also very effective in diffusing potentially controversial issues by addressing concerns early. The advantages for early rural public involvement initiatives include breaking down historical cultural barriers and increasing the chances for obtaining consensus.

8.4. Develop A Rural Alaska Public Involvement Initiative Check List.

To improve the overall quality of public involvement in rural areas, special attention should be paid to the initial planning of each public involvement initiative. One approach would be to create a planning form or check list for completion by those responsible for implementing the public involvement initiative. The check list should include prior successful incentive methods used to increase participation. Incentive methods include providing food, door prizes, or organizing the public involvement event in conjunction with an event that generates a lot of local interest (i.e. issuance of game tags).

The checklist could also be a basis for altering the public involvement initiative when necessary and for evaluating the initiative upon completion. The checklist could also be used to make sure that local cultural etiquettes and norms are understood by the project staff before speaking and interacting with the local community. It is important to

make sure that all of the entities that have power/authority in the community are jointly contacted ahead of time.

8.5. Commit To Evaluation Of Each Rural Public Involvement Initiative.

Each rural Alaska public involvement initiative needs to be continuously evaluated and documented. The final results of the public involvement initiative should be reported as part of the final report on the project. The participants in the public involvement process should have access to the evaluation results and consideration should be given to interim evaluations during complex or controversial projects.

8.6. Prepare And Maintain A Rural Alaska Community Contact Database.

A centralized database which inventories the rural community groups, community leaders, and community profile should be created and maintained. This inventory would have to be updated regularly and should be cross-referenced for a variety of different areas of interest. The database could be used by all project staff to ensure that all appropriate community groups and community leaders are involved in a public involvement process. The information inventory in the database should help project staff answer the questions regarding:

- a. Who in the community can help (i.e. stakeholders, tribal leaders, etc.)?
- b. What communication resources does the community have (i.e. churches, radio, schools, etc.)?
- c. How, why, and where do people gather?
- d. How do people find out what is going on?
- e. Who most influences local decisions, local funding, and local investment?

Below is a list of websites that provide database information regarding local rural Alaska Tribal Governments and Native Corporations.

Alaska Community Database:

http://www.dced.state.ak.us/dca/commdb/CF_COMDB.htm

Tribal Government Listings:

http://justice.uaa.alaska.edu/rlinks/natives/ak_tribalgovt.html

Native Corporations:

http://justice.uaa.alaska.edu/rlinks/natives/ak_organizations.html

Local Governments:

http://justice.uaa.alaska.edu/rlinks/government/ak_local.html

8.7. Maintain Continuity In Community Contacts.

Once a centralized database is created, maintain relationships with rural area community groups and community leaders. Allowing project staff to maintain and collect rural area knowledge will enable them to more easily coordinate future public involvement initiatives with rural area stakeholders. It is more effective to maintain current database of stakeholder relationships and to build on the success of past public involvement initiatives, rather than attempting to create new relationships on a project by project basis. Try to build long lasting relationships by following up on meetings and by maintaining contacts.

8.8. Improve The Use Of Survey Research.

Random sample surveys are an important tool in the public involvement processes (Vancouver, 1999). Whether the surveys are mailed, telephonic, or handed out in public meetings, guidelines for the use of public surveys need to be defined to increase consistency and reliability in the survey results. For example, whether a threshold for agreement is set at 51% or some other level of agreement, the threshold for agreement

needs to be consistent from survey to survey so that the survey results can be compared; especially if the community is being surveyed several times throughout the project's life cycle.

8.9. Enhance Information Feedback At Project Closure.

Attention should be paid to the closure process at the end of a rural area project, including providing feedback on how input was used in making decisions, how the input influenced decision making, and what the decisions were, as well as expressing thanks to participants. As mentioned in item one above, individuals from minority and ethnic groups in rural areas often find participating in public involvement initiatives difficult and have historically experienced barriers in the public decision-making process. By demonstrating how the rural public's input was used, how the rural public's involvement was vital to the success of the project, and by thanking them for participating helps bridge historic public involvement barriers. Part of the project closure procedure should include updating the central database with community information.

9. Conclusion

Ideally, public involvement aims to inspire people, groups, and organizations to take an active role in enriching their community; practically, public involvement is designed to fulfill four main objectives (Vancouver, 1999):

1. To inform citizens, groups, and organizations about specific project decisions that will likely affect their lives.
2. To ensure all views are considered during planning and decision making.
3. To create a collective vision that speaks to as many interests and concerns as possible.

4. To engage and initiate actions that resolve issues and problems.

The goal of this paper was to demonstrate the need for public involvement in general as well as provide a set of guidelines for public involvement initiatives that could either be adopted into an organizations public involvement policy or could be used as a basis to start a rural Alaska public involvement policy. To accomplish this goal, this paper defined public involvement, discussed the construction project life cycle, and discussed the need for public involvement in general.

Moreover, a standardized research questionnaire was developed and Alaskan companies and government agencies with practical rural Alaska experience were interviewed. The data gathered from the research effort was blending with common themes from two studies that investigated methods to involve underserved portions of the public including ethnic, minority, and low income groups. The result of this effort was the development of a set of generalized guidelines regarding public involvement initiatives in rural Alaska.

Alaska organizations see a growing need for guidance and direction regarding how to improve rural Alaska public involvement. Often the project participants remarked that they would be interested in a brochure or a pamphlet that gave guidance, direction, or suggestions regarding rural Alaska information resources and how to improve rural Alaska public involvement.

Although public involvement, whether in rural Alaska or in general, cannot overcome all project opposition, resolve all differences in opinions and values, or replace planning and regulatory processes that examine the technical aspects of the project, a well coordinated public involvement initiative can improve the quality of project decision making, improve

project management efficiency, and help minimize project costs and delays. Additionally, a well coordinated public involvement initiative can maintain project credibility and legitimacy, increase management expertise and "team-building" skills, and help build public consensus.

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Appendix A

Research Questionnaire

Date: _____ Interviewed By: _____

Name: _____ Organization Name: _____
Last FirstAddress: _____ Phone Number: _____
(Street) _____

Email: _____

SECTION 1 – Organization profile

1. In what year was your organization founded? _____
2. What type is your organization (Private, Federal, State, etc...)? _____
3. Where does your organization's consider its primary State of operation (AK, WA, OR, etc)? _____
4. Does your organization work in rural Alaska (where/what regions)? _____

5. How many employees does your organization have? _____
6. What is your organization's annual revenue or budget? _____

7. As a percentage of your organization's annual revenue or budget, how much is derived from rural Alaska projects? _____
8. What is your organization's average rural Alaska project budget size? _____

9. What does your organization do in rural Alaska? _____

10. Is your organization required to solicit public opinion/comment on projects in rural Alaska (explain)? _____

11. Please describe your organization's activities and experiences in working with the public in rural Alaska. _____

12. Does your organization have a dedicated staff member or department to handle recruiting public opinion/comment for projects in rural Alaska? _____

13. What kind of training does your organization provide for its employees regarding recruiting public opinion/comment for projects in rural Alaska? _____

-
-
14. Does your organization have formal guidance or policies regarding methods for recruiting public opinion/comment? **Y** / **N**
15. Does your organization have formal guidance or policies regarding methods designed specifically for recruiting public opinion/comment in rural Alaska? **Y** / **N**
16. Can we have a copy of your organizations guidance or policies regarding public involvement? **Y** / **N**

SECTION 2 – Methods and reasons for recruiting public opinion/comment in rural Alaska

17. How much does your organization spend, as a percentage of the project budget, to recruit public opinion/comment in rural Alaska projects and how is that percentage determined (explain)? _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
18. Does your organization consider cultural differences when recruiting public opinion/comments in rural Alaska (explain)? _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
19. Where are the best places to recruit public opinion/comment for rural Alaska projects (example)? _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

20. What specific methods does your organization use to recruit public opinion/comment in rural Alaska projects (example)?

21. At what stages in a project does your organization solicit public opinion/comment in rural Alaska projects (example)?

22. What are the pros/cons to the designers regarding public opinion/comment on projects in rural Alaska (example)?

23. What are the pros/cons to the contractors regarding public opinion/comment on projects in rural Alaska (example)?

24. What are the pros/cons to the end-users regarding public opinion/comment on projects in rural Alaska (example)? _____

25. What are the specific measures used by your organization to define a successful public recruitment in rural Alaska projects (examples)? _____

26. Using the measures listed above, what was your most effective rural Alaska public recruitment (why)? _____

27. Using the measures listed above, what was your most ineffective rural Alaska public recruitment (why)? _____

28. Do you have any additional thoughts or comments regarding recruiting public opinion/comment in rural Alaska projects that you would like mention? _____

SECTION 3 – Measured response for recruiting public opinion/comment in rural Alaska

29. For the following questions, please rank the following statements from 1-10 (one being the lowest, ten being the highest) and briefly explain your ranking?

- a. Based on your past experience and in general, it is more difficult to recruit the public for opinion/comment in rural Alaska projects (rank 1-10 and explain)? _____

- b. Based on your past experience and in general, it is more expensive (as a percentage of the project) to recruit public opinion/comment in rural Alaska projects (rank 1-10 and explain)? _____

- c. Based on your past experience and in general, there is a positive cost benefit for recruiting public opinion/comment in rural Alaska projects (rank 1-10 and explain)? _____

- d. Based on your past experience and in general, public opinion/comment in rural Alaska was vital to the overall success of the project? (rank 1-10 and explain)? _____

- e. Based on your past experience and in general, a larger percentage of the project budget should be spent on recruiting public opinion/comment in rural Alaska (rank 1-10 and explain)? _____

-
-
- f. Based on your past experience and in general, you consider your organization successful in your rural Alaska public outreach endeavors (rank 1-10 and explain)? _____

-
-
-
-
-
- g. Based on your past experience and in general, you feel that your organization needs to provide more training in recruiting public opinion/comment in rural Alaska (rank 1-10 and explain)? _____

Appendix B

Alaskan Organizations Interviewed
Thank You For Your Participation.

1. Engineering Consulting Firms:

- a. PDC Inc Engineers
- b. Rockwell Engineering and Construction Services Inc.

2. Government Entities:

- a. Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB) Planning and Zoning
- b. Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) Federal Facilities Group
- c. Army Corps of Engineers Alaska District
- d. Alaska Department of Transportation (ADOT) Pre-Construction

3. Owner/Owner Representatives:

- a. Alyeska Pipeline Service Company
- b. University of Alaska, Fairbanks - Facilities Services Division of Design and Construction
- c. Fairbanks Gold - Fort Knox
- d. Denali Commission

4. General Contracting Firms:

- a. Great Northwest
- b. GHEMM Company

5. Non-Profit:

- a. Aleutians/Pribilofs Association

Appendix C

Sample Completed Research Questionnaire

Date: 3/28/05Interviewed By: TLC

Name: _____

Organization Name: _____

Address: _____
(Street)

Phone Number: _____

Email: _____

SECTION 1 – Organization profile

1. In what year was your organization founded? 1999
2. What type is your organization (Private, Federal, State, etc...)? Federal
3. Where does your organization's consider its primary State of operation (AK, WA, OR, etc)? AK
4. Does your organization work in rural Alaska (where/what regions)? Statewide
5. How many employees does your organization have? 23
6. What is your organization's annual revenue or budget? \$150 M
7. As a percentage of your organization's annual revenue or budget, how much is derived from rural Alaska projects? 97.4%
8. What is your organization's average rural Alaska project budget size? varies \$2.5M - \$1.5M
9. What does your organization do in rural Alaska? 2 major - health care - energy -
rural public infrastructure - training

State
agencies
are now
rural

10. Is your organization required to solicit public opinion/comment on projects in rural Alaska (explain)? _____

Self imposed, when law drafted
also publish work plan in Federal Register

11. Please describe your organization's activities and experiences in working with the public in rural Alaska. _____

Rely on the public
get public mtgs - take testimony -
have hearings around state - NOM, TNA, FTA
(3 so far this CY) in addition to strategy

12. Does your organization have a dedicated staff member or department to handle recruiting public

opinion/comment for projects in rural Alaska? All members charged
with it, integral part of job description

13. What kind of training does your organization provide for its employees regarding recruiting public

opinion/comment for projects in rural Alaska? monthly staff mtgs,
project by project orientating by chief of staff
have a monthly training days. Work on
a staff by staff basis to develop skills

14. Does your organization have formal guidance or policies regarding methods for recruiting public opinion/comment? ☒ Y / N

15. Does your organization have formal guidance or policies regarding methods designed specifically for recruiting public opinion/comment in rural Alaska? ☒ Y / N

16. Can we have a copy of your organizations guidance or policies regarding public involvement? ☒ Y / N
on web page - law : respect for culture in 5 core values

SECTION 2 – Methods and reasons for recruiting public opinion/comment in rural Alaska

17. How much does your organization spend, as a percentage of the project budget, to recruit public opinion/comment in rural Alaska projects and how is that percentage determined (explain)? _____

~ 6% goes to business planning process

no determination, require business plan, but historically turns out to be ~6%

18. Does your organization consider cultural differences when recruiting public opinion/comments in rural Alaska (explain)? ^{US} translation; bring in elders, work

with tribal, city, corporation

work with in

19. Where are the best places to recruit public opinion/comment for rural Alaska projects (example)? @

community, develop contacts in community, work through them to make it happen

20. What specific methods does your organization use to recruit public opinion/comment in rural Alaska

projects (example)? SI

liasons, personal rel, comments, hearing,
telephone survey,
existing structures
tailor to situations

21. At what stages in a project does your organization solicit public opinion/comment in rural Alaska projects

(example)? during reconnaissance - meet needs
feasibility - approp config of interest
design - community, regional support

22. What are the pros/cons to the designers regarding public opinion/comment on projects in rural Alaska

(example)? ^{pros} Comp simulations - not as good as TEK

big pro - respecting land use - traditional use
input brings on pride of ownership, sense
of participation
con - Don't ask, project won't

23. What are the pros/cons to the contractors regarding public opinion/comment on projects in rural Alaska

(example)? local hire, local conditions, available
svcs, collaborate on work with other contractors
logistics

pros - no cons
public is the customer

24. What are the pros/cons to the end-users regarding public opinion/comment on projects in rural Alaska

(example)? pros - more sustainable (properly sized affordable)

serve the public, want their opinion

25. What are the specific measures used by your organization to define a successful public recruitment in rural

Alaska projects (examples)? Yes - look @ training program

- local govt resolution in writing buying in,
50% salaries stay in community accountant
75% local hire
set aside for training

26. Using the measures listed above, what was your most effective rural Alaska public recruitment (why)?

Kotlik

V-K hospital corp - by going thru got lots of village support

AIRC - went out to villages, responded to requests, listened, show respect to existing structures

27. Using the measures listed above, what was your most ineffective rural Alaska public recruitment (why)?

SE - Thingit Haida commission, set up SW approach, didn't use do most distressed communities first, perception is that they aren't getting fair share of \$

28. Do you have any additional thoughts or comments regarding recruiting public opinion/comment in rural

Alaska projects that you would like mention? Serve the public, no substitute for effective public participation, most impact of everything we do

SECTION 3 – Measured response for recruiting public opinion/comment in rural Alaska

29. For the following questions, please rank the following statements from 1-10 (one being the lowest, ten being the highest) and briefly explain your ranking?

- a. Based on your past experience and in general, it is more difficult to recruit the public for

opinion/comment in rural Alaska projects (rank 1-10 and explain)? 5 (more difficult)

- do more, don't necessarily ^{have} media outlets, takes more time, requires travel, tailoring to cultures, languages

- b. Based on your past experience and in general, it is more expensive (as a percentage of the project) to recruit public opinion/comment in rural Alaska projects (rank 1-10 and explain)? 7 -

because of travel, try to piggy-back,
live within budget

- c. Based on your past experience and in general, there is a positive cost benefit for recruiting public opinion/comment in rural Alaska projects (rank 1-10 and explain)? 8

Avoid costly mistakes, benefits Always
exceed costs

- get regional support, broader the better

- d. Based on your past experience and in general, public opinion/comment in rural Alaska was vital to the overall success of the project? (rank 1-10 and explain)? 10 -

yes - single most important thing

- e. Based on your past experience and in general, a larger percentage of the project budget should be spent on recruiting public opinion/comment in rural Alaska (rank 1-10 and explain)? 2

No - innovation and existing mechanisms can
be used. Not a question of money, work
with communities, councils, etc
EIS process.

- f. Based on your past experience and in general, you consider your organization successful in your rural Alaska public outreach endeavors (rank 1-10 and explain)? 6 -

always room for improvement - dynamics change, public is fickle, won't be 100% successful.

- g. Based on your past experience and in general, you feel that your organization needs to provide more training in recruiting public opinion/comment in rural Alaska (rank 1-10 and explain)? 4

turnover rate driven, training is always important component, refresh