

# Let Your ASSETS Be Your Guide:

A Handbook for Community Planning

Prepared by Rural Alaska Community Action Program  
in partnership with the Denali Commission

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This handbook was prepared by the Rural Alaska Community Action Program (RurAL CAP). RurAL CAP is a private, statewide, nonprofit organization working to improve the quality of life for low-income Alaskans.



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**Denali Commission**

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George Canelos, Federal Co-Chair, Denali Commission  
Gov. Sarah Palin, State Co-Chair, Denali Commission



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## What Is Planning?

A **Community Plan** is a document that reflects a community's story, and lists its goals and steps to achieving them.

### **Planning is:**

- A tool that enables people to take greater control over the forces that shape their communities and their lives.
- A process of setting priorities by creating goals.
- A way to decide where you want to be in the future.
- A way of communicating a community's wants and needs.
- A way to use traditional knowledge.
- A process that promotes creativity.
- A process that combines talking about what people want with information about the area they live in.

### **Remember, Planning is not just:**

- just a way to secure grant funding for your community.
- creating a wish list.

*“Failing to plan is planning to fail.”*

~Allen Lakein



## Why Plan?

### Reasons to plan:

- To make the community strong – planning can unify people to think about their future.
- To feel pride in the community.
- To make things happen and guide change.
- To meet the future head-on and get things done instead of avoiding decisions.
- To solve old problems by setting new goals.
- To save money – planning may keep the community from making expensive mistakes.
- To balance what your community has and wants to become.
- To create a framework from which you can evaluate new projects or elements of change in your community.
- To secure funding – agencies that provide money for projects often require a plan. A plan shows them that your community is organized and has thought about how it will operate and maintain new projects and programs. By having a good plan, you are more likely to get funding.

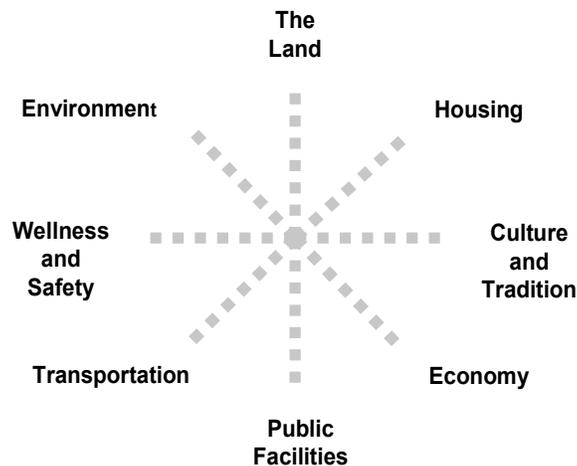


*Doing a plan for your community is just like planning for any other activity you might undertake. For example, if you're going hunting, you'll plan what to bring and where to go before you leave, so you don't waste time and resources.*

## **A New Framework for Planning: The Planning Dimensions**

A *planning framework* is a basic structure by which a plan can be organized. The planning framework outlined in this handbook is based on the idea of eight “planning dimensions”. Every village, town, or city has different components (“dimensions”) that together encompass aspects of community life relevant to planning. Although the community functions as a whole, taking into account the distinct components that comprise a community may help to simplify the planning process. The dimensions are: The Land, Housing, Culture and Tradition, Economy, Public Facilities, Transportation, Wellness and Safety, and Environment..

**Using the planning dimensions is a simple way to organize community planning.**





**Before moving on, it's important to have a clear understanding of how each planning dimension is defined.**

**Culture & Tradition:** The culture of a community is composed of behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions and products of human work and thought. Tradition is the passing down of elements of a culture from generation to generation.

**Economy:** The system or range of economic activity in a community, including how people are employed and how income is generated.

**Environment:** The natural ecological setting of a community including vegetation, water, animals, air quality, and surrounding natural features.

**Housing:** Buildings or other shelters in which people live.

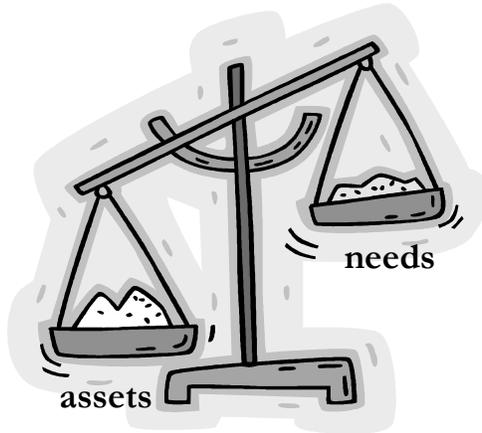
**Land:** Territorial possessions or property that may be owned.

**Public Facilities:** Infrastructure such as electrical, sewer and water systems, and also the buildings housing public entities such as government offices, clinics, or schools.

**Transportation:** The means and equipment necessary for the movement of passengers or goods.

**Wellness & Safety:** Things within a community that contribute to the condition of good physical and mental health as well as the general safety of community members.





## **Introduction to an Asset- Based Planning: A Focus on Strengths**

There are many approaches to community planning. This handbook offers a philosophy of planning that is “asset-based” rather than “need-based”. A “need-based” approach to planning focuses on community problems and might cause residents to think their community is fundamentally deficient, and that they are incapable of taking charge of their lives and their community’s future. An “asset-based” approach to planning does the opposite. It allows the community to concentrate on their strengths rather than their needs. An asset is a useful or valuable quality, person, thing or resource. In a community, an asset can be the strengths of the people, the infrastructure, the organizations, or the programs. By focusing on positive aspects of their community, people are more likely to become committed to investing themselves and their resources in the effort of community development.

*“Each community boasts a unique combination of assets upon which to build its future.”*

~Leadership Plenty Training Guide



## Discovering Assets Through Planning Dimensions

In the planning process, assets may be reflected within the eight planning dimensions. By focusing on the assets within each dimension, community residents may find it easier to identify the gifts and resources in their communities, and to mobilize these capacities to make and meet goals.

*Using the planning dimensions to stimulate a discussion of community assets and to generate goals may make the work of planning easier.*

Asset-based planning strengthens the ability of community members to determine their future by helping them know what resources they can use to grow with.

### **The Asset-Based Philosophy of Planning shows that:**

- Alaskans are rich in culture and traditional knowledge.
- Planning is most effective when it emerges from the community's story.
- Planning is a tool that enables people to take greater control over the forces that shape their communities and their lives.

## **Assets within Planning Dimensions:**

By considering the assets within each planning dimension, community residents are empowered to use their resources for community development. Assets may fit into more than one dimension; for example, natural resources may be used to both grow the economy and to continue the tradition of subsistence. Here are some examples of assets within each dimension:

**Culture & Tradition:** Community Elders, Traditional Practices such as Talking Circles

**Economy:** Existing Businesses, Natural Resources

**Environment:** Wildlife and Vegetation for Subsistence

**Housing:** Existing Homes

**Land:** Village Corporation Land Ownership

**Public Facilities:** Government Offices, Water/Sewer System

**Transportation:** Airport, City Dock

**Wellness & Safety:** Community Clinic, Public Safety Office

**Remember: Aspects of community life may fit into more than one dimension.**



## What Makes a Plan Successful?

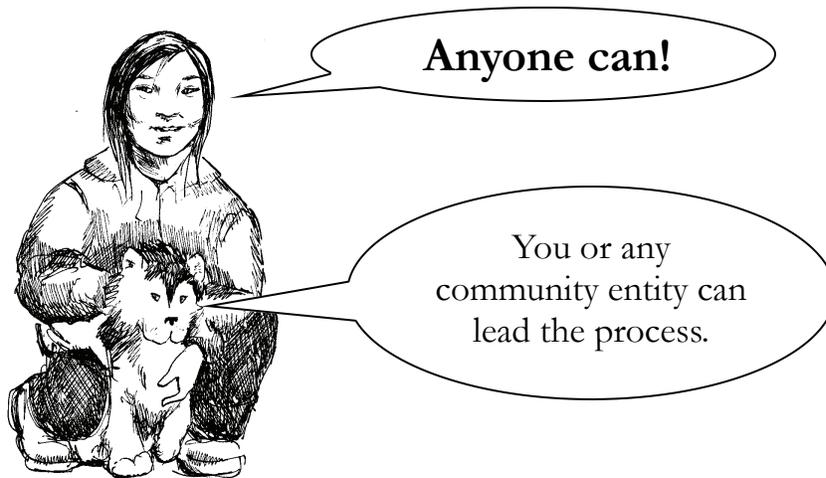
The following helps make a plan successful:

- **Focus** on community **Assets**
- **Organize** around **Planning Dimension**
- **Get a commitment** from community leaders
- **Understand** that planning is a form of self-determination
- **Involve Leadership** in the planning process
- **Involve** local people
- **Encourage Open Communication** between all people involved in planning

“The more successful plans clearly have more interest and involvement from local people, and the less successful plans do not. If you look down across the failures, one of the elements in every case is a lack of interest in planning.”

~Alaska Sanitation  
Planning Guide

## Who Initiates Planning?



## Who Should be Involved in Planning?

**Everyone!** . . . The plan will belong to your community, and your community knows what it wants. Planning leads to greater self-determination and allows people to ‘tell their story’. This means the most important people to be involved in the plan are your fellow neighbors, friends and leaders. There are many ways to involve the entire community. (See Appendix A: *Techniques for Public Participation*)



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## Some kind of community group should **LEAD** the planning process—we can call this the planning “workgroup.”

It is important that the workgroup should represent **stakeholders** (everybody who has an interest in the plan). These are people who may be:

- Particularly interested in the group’s efforts
- Affected by the Plan
- Knowledgeable about the community

The workgroup may have representatives from several community groups.

- **Community Members:**  
interested people from tribal government, village corporation, city government, school, store, other businesses, health clinic, as well as other interested people such as elders, youth, etc.
- **Regional Representatives:**  
regional corporation, regional non-profit, housing authority, regional health organization
- **Agency Representatives** (if available):  
State, Federal, and non-profit agencies

## Appoint a Planning Coordinator

One of the workgroup members should be appointed as the “Planning Coordinator.”

The Planning Coordinator:

- Is committed to the plan and to making sure it happens.
- Gathers information.
- Organizes meetings and makes sure everyone in the group knows when the meetings are.
- Records minutes and decisions from meetings.
- Encourages people to participate.
- Talks with agencies and officials.
- Makes sure important things get done.
- Is very familiar with the planning process.
- Helps the workgroup go through the steps in the planning process.

***The community should strongly consider paying the planning coordinator if it is not somebody already on staff with one of the local entities. This position requires a lot of work and can take a great deal of time.***



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# The Planning Process

Step 1: Getting Ready to Plan

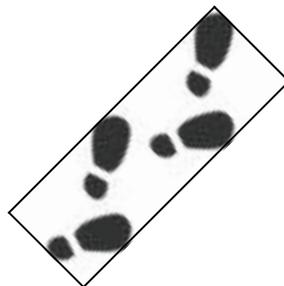
Step 2: Telling your Story

Step 3: Assets, Values, and Vision

Step 4: Goals, Objectives, and  
Activities

Step 5: Putting the Plan Together

Step 6: Putting the Plan into Action



## **Step 1: Getting Ready to Plan**

### **Four Keys to Success in Getting Ready to Plan:**

#### **Gain Commitment**

Because a community plan requires considerable time and energy, community and leadership support is necessary.

#### **Form a Workgroup**

Invite potential stakeholders, plan an initial meeting, explain the workgroup's mission, and plan ongoing workgroup meetings.

#### **Open a Dialogue with the Public**

Have community meetings to inform residents about the planning process and to encourage more people to join the workgroup. Survey households for opinions. Let people know you care about what they think.

#### **Recruit a Planning Coordinator**

A planning coordinator is a resident, city staff person, or leader the community designates to run the day-to-day planning.



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*Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that has."*

~Margaret Mead

If you've made use of the four **keys to success**, you may now be ready to move on to the next steps of the planning process:

**Set up a schedule for regular workgroup meetings.**

- Usually, the small workgroup ultimately leads the planning process.
- At a minimum, the workgroup should ask for public comment during each stage of planning to determine community wants and needs.
- Inform the community of the schedule.

**During the initial workgroup meetings, organize the first community meeting to continue to inform the public and invite more participation.**

- Start advertising the community meeting through posters, radio announcements, and newsletters.
- If the community is small, going door-to-door to invite people is also useful.



## Hold a Community Meeting

For a detailed discussion of how to hold a public meeting, see *Appendix A: Technique 2 – Public Meetings*.

At the meeting . . .

**Describe why planning is important and discuss details of the planning process.**

*(See Appendix B: Simplified Handout on Planning Process—this may be copied and distributed.)*

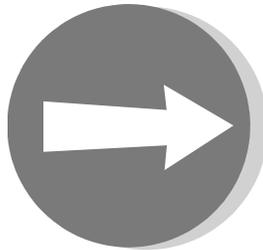
**Explain why the planning workgroup is important, and invite everyone to join it.**

- Encourage key people to be on the workgroup by pointing out the advantages of their involvement.
- You will be asking them to volunteer their time, the volunteers will be satisfied knowing they have made a contribution that will enhance the community and strengthen self-determination.



## Are You Ready to Move on?

- Are leaders and residents solidly behind the planning process?
- Has a workgroup of willing participants been formed?
- Have you identified a planning coordinator?
- Are residents aware of the plan and interested in it?
- Will groups be able to work together and agree on important decisions?



**Now that you have an active workgroup in place and have a planning coordinator, you can start writing the plan.**

## **The Next Steps Will Include:**

- Appoint workgroup members or planning coordinator to start compiling background information— “the story”.
- Plan regular workgroup meetings to begin discussion of community Assets.
- Through discussions of Assets, begin identifying community Values and Vision.
- Present Values and Vision at a community meeting.
- Use Planning Dimensions while gathering community input on “Goals, Objectives, and Activities”.
- Present this community input at a community meeting.



*“No matter what we plan for, by thinking a project through in the beginning, we usually end up with better results.”*

~Alaska Sanitation Planning Guide



## Plan Components

The planning process is organized by planning dimensions and stimulated by assets. As the various plan components (to be described in the next section of this handbook) begin to emerge, they will reflect the assets by planning dimension.

As the planning process unfolds, remember to include a discussion of assets every time you gather public input. For example, bring up community assets at the beginning of every meeting and include questions that stimulate a discovery of assets.

### **These are the components to include in the final plan:**

- Executive Summary *(to be written at the end of the planning process)*, including:
  - The Community—very brief description
  - Community Involvement—who participated
  - Framework for the Plan—the planning method
  - Purpose—why the community chose to do the plan
  - Planning Process—A written description of what your community did to create the plan
  - Summary of Critical Issues
  - Prioritized Goals
- Body of Plan *(Recap the process—Why plan? Why now?)*
  - Story
  - Assets
  - Values
  - Vision
  - Goals, Objectives, and Activities arranged around Planning Dimensions
  - Next steps in the planning process
  - Sources, Resources, Contact Information

## Step 2: Telling Your Story

### Who are we? What is here? Where have we been?

How do you pick a site for a new building or sewage lagoon?  
How do you plan a new program that will best benefit your  
community?

In order to answer these important planning questions, you need  
to consider how these choices relate to the story of your  
community.

One of the pieces of the overall Community Plan will be the  
community's "story" or background. The story is a summary of the  
most interesting information about the community. The story can  
contain information about the people, history, culture, governance,  
and any other information that strongly portrays a sense of your  
community. Describing your community's story will help guide  
your path to community planning and will give a strong sense of  
where you may be going.

It may be helpful to organize the story information around  
planning dimensions (see diagram on page 4). The story  
information may be included at either the beginning or end of the  
community plan.

*You can't get where you're going  
until you know where you've  
been.*

~Anonymous

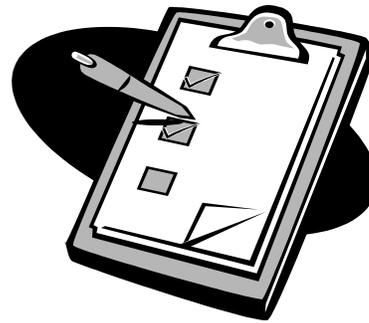




**Here are examples of the things you may want to include in your story.**

**\*Community Descriptions**

- Location
- History and Culture
- Language
- Religion



**\*Demographic Profile**

- Population
- Immigration and out-migration rates
- Age, birth rate, and mortality

**\*Local Government Organization Roles**

- Tribal Council
- City Government
- Village and Regional Corporation
- Relationships between governments



**\*Wellness and Safety**

- Available health services
- Available social services
- Description of Regional Health Corporation/Health Clinic
- Public Safety
- Fire Safety

**\*Public Facilities**

- Water and Sewer
- Solid Waste
- Bulk Fuel Storage and Electricity
- Equipment
- School
- Gym



**\*Local Economy**

- Employment
- Local businesses
- Household income data
- Subsistence information

**\*Transportation**

- Airport
- Waterways
- Roads

**\*Housing**

- Existing housing
- Future needs
- Housing Program details



**\*School/Activities for Youth**

- Bilingual Program
- Youth Group
- Dance Group

**\*Environment**

- Climate ( Temperature, Rain/snowfall, winds, etc)
- Fish and Wildlife
- Vegetation
- Flooding (if relevant)
- Important features of the environment



**\*Culture and Tradition**

- Details about Culture
- Details about Traditions
- Culturally Sensitive Areas

**\*Land**

- Land ownership and availability
- Land area of community importance

**The information and data that is collected will help explain the story of your community. It may help you to answer questions about how today is different from the past. It may help you predict trends for the future. Focus on the assets of your community, and how you can use these to grow.**

## Organize Your Efforts

When you begin collecting information, it may seem like an enormous task. Organizing your efforts may help. Start by making a list — this list may be changed as you gather more information and learn about how assets address your needs.



### **METHODS OF GATHERING INFORMATION ABOUT THE COMMUNITY**

- **Community Members**

Elders and knowledgeable people are the best place to begin collecting information about the community. Traditional local knowledge, including the community's history, is an important part of the information about the community. Remember, long-time residents are very knowledgeable.

- **Mapping**

At a meeting or during your everyday conversations encourage people to mark traditional sites, important areas, and other information you need on a map or aerial photo of the community. Mapping is a good way to get people talking and it's easy to document what they have to say. A good resource for maps can be found online at <http://www.dced.state.ak.us>.

- **Community Surveys and Assessments**

These are a good way to evaluate your community. For methods of conducting surveys, see **Appendix A: Techniques for Public Participation, Technique 5—Public Survey**.

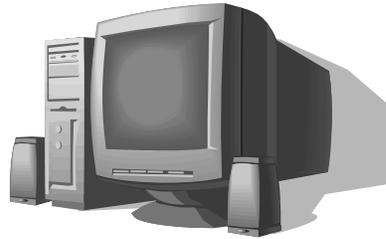


- **State and Federal Agencies:**

These may have written reports about your community or region. Contact these agencies for background information to include in your plan.

- **Nonprofit Organizations:**

Organizations like your regional health corporation, your regional non-profit organization, the University of Alaska, or statewide tribal organizations may have valuable background information on your community or region.



- **Internet:**

If your community has internet access, you may want to try gathering background information by doing an internet search directly. You can gather important statistical data on your community through the internet at: [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov) (for state and national statistics) [www.library.state.ak.us/asp/statestatisticsPQ.html](http://www.library.state.ak.us/asp/statestatisticsPQ.html) (for Alaska statistics)

For specific information on labor statistics, go to <http://almis.labor.state.ak.us>.

The Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development offers useful information regarding Alaskan communities: [www.commerce.state.ak.us/dca/commdb/CFCOMDB.htm](http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dca/commdb/CFCOMDB.htm)



Use key words like the *community's name, issues, and resources*. Try a variety of “search engines” to gather information (**Google.com** is a useful search engine). Children are often taught how to use the Internet at school. Having school children help with your Internet search gets kids involved and can be very helpful if you are unfamiliar with the Internet.

- **Libraries:**

Libraries always have useful information. If your community does not have Internet access, you can get help from many libraries by calling directly and asking the reference desk for assistance. It is helpful if you know the specific type of information you need before calling.

If your community does not have a public library, you may receive library materials through the mail.

Contact: Fairbanks Regional Services  
Phone: (907) 459-1030  
E-Mail: regional@fnsb.lib.ak.us

If you'd like assistance from one of the large libraries, contact one of the following:

**University of Alaska Fairbanks Elmer E. Rasmuson  
Library**

Phone: (907) 474-7481  
Website: [www.uaf.edu/library](http://www.uaf.edu/library)



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**University of Alaska/Alaska Pacific University Consortium Library**

Phone: (907) 786-1871  
Website: [lib.uaa.alaska.edu](http://lib.uaa.alaska.edu)

**Anchorage Loussac Library**

Phone: (907) 586-5324  
Website: [lexicon.ci.anchorage.ak.us](http://lexicon.ci.anchorage.ak.us)

**Juneau Public Library**

Phone: (907) 586-5324  
Website: [www.juneau.org/library](http://www.juneau.org/library)

**Fairbanks Northstar Borough Public Library**

Phone: (907) 459-1029  
Website: [library.fnsb.lib.ak.us](http://library.fnsb.lib.ak.us)



**While collecting the background information, the information should be organized and written in a clear format.**

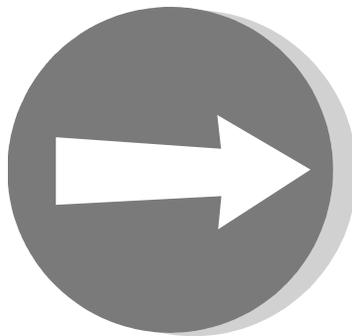
There are various community plans that can be used as a model. These can be accessed on the following website:  
**[www.commerce.state.ak.us/dca/commdb/CF Plans.cfm](http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dca/commdb/CF_Plans.cfm)**





## **Are You Ready to Move on?**

- **Have you collected all the existing background information you need in order to tell your story?**
- **Have you organized the information and written it out in a way you can understand and use as you plan?**





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## The Next Two Steps Will Include How to Identify Assets, Values, Vision, Goals, Objectives, and Activities

Setting goals and defining your community's vision for the future provides answers to key questions such as:

- Where have we come from?
- Where are we headed?
- What values do we find most important?
- What kind of future do we want to create?



## Step 3: Identifying Community Assets, Values, and Vision

### Values through Assets Discussion

Part of the planning process is taking a look at community assets. Each community boasts a unique combination of assets upon which to build its future. A thorough list of those assets would begin with an inventory of the gifts, skills, and capacities of the community's residents.

**When you ask questions to draw out the assets, you are also beginning to brainstorm about values. Questions may include:**

1. What do you treasure most about your community?
2. What are your most valuable natural resources?
3. What do you appreciate about your location?
4. What do you value most about your local culture?
5. What are the talents and strengths that reside in the people?
6. What do you consider to be economic assets of your community?





Invite all community members to a meeting that includes discussions of both assets and values. In the plan, include a description of both assets and values as a way to highlight the positive aspects of your community.



## Values

Values, the foundation of your beliefs, help in creating your plan. Your values create your vision for the future and lead to defining what you want your community to be. They help you understand who you are as a community and are tools you can use as a guide. Values can be listed as phrases or words that are meaningful for the community. Using values as a starting point, community members can create a vision statement.

**During a community meeting, the following questions may help stimulate ideas for Community Values:**

1. What do you like about your community?
2. What about your community makes you proud?
3. What about your community do you want to maintain?
4. Why do you stay?

A way to get answers to these questions is to ask everyone in the room to write a brief response. Traditional talking circles or breaking into small groups may be useful. Once people have had a chance to talk about their answers to these questions, go around the group and ask for volunteers to say their response. Write the answers on a big sheet of paper.

The Community's Values are reflected in the common things that people list. In your Community Plan, you may list the top things that people commonly value.

**Here are some examples of Values:**

**One Word Values:**

Respect  
Elders  
Subsistence  
Health  
Culture



**Phrases as Values:**

Safe place to live and work  
Happy, healthy children  
Good health, long lives  
Subsistence lifestyle



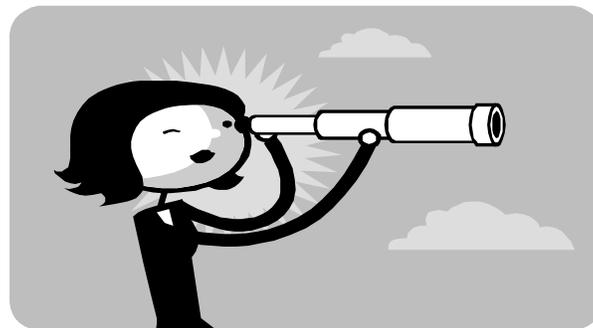


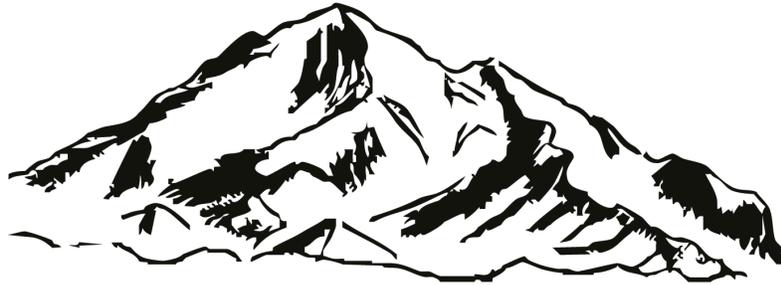
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## Vision

Community planning requires that people look at *what is* and envision *what could be*. A community vision is a description of a desired future. It is based on the community's top values and assets, and carries a powerful message. A vision is an overall picture of what the community wants to be. Be daring with your vision! Even if it seems hard to accomplish, your vision will give you focus and direction.

A vision can be a series of statements that summarize the community values and help you imagine your community's future. Once a community has a vision of the future, other planning efforts are often less difficult because the community can look at the "big picture." "Visioning," as it is sometimes called, leads to setting goals for the community.





**Example of a Vision Statement:**

“We take pride in who we are by making sure we have a safe place to live for our children and elders. We show strong family values through our culture, religion, education, and subsistence. Subsistence is critical to our way of life because it provides food and enriches our economy. We value our land and the abundance of wildlife it provides for usage.

We believe in keeping our community clean and beautiful through education and through showing respect for land, water, nature, and our heritage.

We provide education, training, and job opportunities by utilizing our community entities and relying on the wisdom of our elders for guidance. We have a stable future where people live socially and economically sustainable lives.”

—*Vision Statement of Russian Mission, Alaska*



Invite everyone in the community to participate in the visioning process. Community planning will have greater support if the community is involved. Encourage children, adults, and elders to participate in the visioning process.

**Here are some steps which will help you define your vision:**

- Envision how you want your community to be. Do not think about constraints such as lack of resources or current capacity.
- Read your community values out loud and use these to reflect on a desired future through group discussion.
- You may turn your values into sentences that can be combined into an overall vision statement.
- As a group, come up with a statement that best expresses a common vision.
- You may want to vote on a final vision once you have refined two or three possible vision statements.

The final vision statement will be included in the community plan. You may use this statement as a reminder of what is important to the community. It expresses the guiding principles of the community and will be used as a focal point. The goals you will identify next must relate to and support this vision. In fact, all future community actions should take into account your vision.

## Step 4: Identifying and Prioritizing Goals, Objectives, and Activities

The workgroup continues the planning process by determining community concerns in each planning dimension and beginning to form ways to address these using community assets.

The Goals, Objectives, and Activities that are written for the Community Plan will be methods for addressing community concerns and supporting work that is already being done to help the community. It is essential that the workgroup now lead the effort to identify and prioritize Goals, Objectives, and Activities by planning dimension.

### Definitions:

#### A GOAL:

- Is a broad statement designed to address one or more of the identified community concerns.
- Is a guiding statement of what the community would like to become in the future.
- Supports the overall community vision.

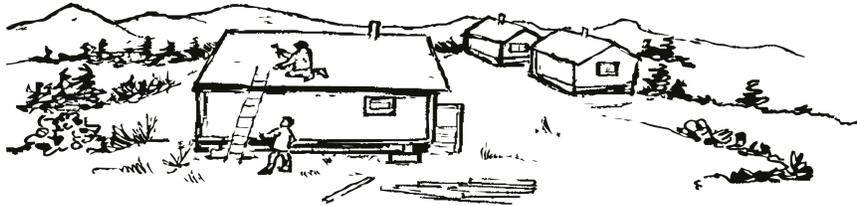
**Example Goal:** We have adequate housing that meets the needs of our current and growing population.





## AN OBJECTIVE:

- Is a specific way to achieve a broader goal.
- Is a major change that will move the community toward the goal and vision.
- Is measurable.
- Identifies generally what will be done to achieve the goal.
- Guides action.



**Example Objective:** Build 20 new homes in a subdivision in the west part of the community.

## AN ACTIVITY:

- Is more specific than an objective.
- Lists the steps and actions to take to meet the objective, when they will be done, and who will do them.
- Is measurable.

**Example Activity:** The Tribal Administrator may write and post a job description for a housing officer by the end of the month.

## Identifying Goals, Objectives, and Activities within Planning Dimensions:

Continue to incorporate the planning dimensions (Culture & Tradition, Economy, Environment, Housing, Land, Public Facilities, Transportation, and Wellness & Safety) into the planning process. Collect and organize Goals, Objectives, and Activities by planning dimensions. For example, if using a survey, you may wish to organize the survey questions by planning dimension. This will make the information much more structured and accessible. You may also gather information through community meetings.

The community should use the dimensions to organize its Goals, Objectives, and Activities to see that every part of community life is considered. An Objective can fit into more than one dimension because elements in communities overlap. When organizing information, objectives may be detailed under one dimension, and be referred to under another.



**There are many questions your community can ask to help identify Goals, Objectives, and Activities. Have a community meeting where Goals, Objectives, and Activities within each planning dimension may be discussed.**



**The following are suggested questions that can be used:**

- What do we want for the future and how can we achieve it?
- What is the condition of our current programs and facilities?
- What will change and how?
- What is our primary concern with regard to \_\_\_\_\_ (ask about a specific dimension such as the economy, environment, etc.)?
- What overall goal would we like to see for \_\_\_\_\_ (ask about a specific dimension)?
- Are there any improvements we'd like to see in \_\_\_\_\_ (for example, health care or public safety)?
- What role do we want our community entities to play in providing \_\_\_\_\_ (for example, cultural preservation, environmental protection, etc.)?

Be creative with suggestions that community members offer. Some of the Objectives and Activities may be feasible and realistic, and others may not. Combine ideas. Write all of them down, even if they do not seem realistic. The workgroup may make a list of as many options as possible because:

- Good ideas may be generated out of seemingly weak suggestions.
- Good ideas are less likely to be overlooked.
- By considering everyone's ideas, you will gain community support for the final Objectives and Activities selected.
- Remember that only those Goals, Objectives, and Activities that represent the community as a whole should be included in the final plan.

**This is the real work of the workgroup—to take the raw ideas and narrow them into realistic Goals and Objectives.**

- **Community Input:** Does the Goal, Objective, or Activity do what the community wants?
- **Vision:** Will the Goal, Objective, or Activity work in the future, based on the community's Vision?
- **Community's Infrastructure:** Will the Goal, Objective, or Activity work considering the community's buildings, land ownership, etc.?
- **The Land, Water and Wildlife:** Does the Goal, Objective, or Activity harm the land or wildlife that is important to the community?
- **Effects on Residents:** Will residents be willing to pay for some of these new Goals, Objectives, or Activities? Or will they be willing to do the work necessary to implement these new ideas?
- **Experiences of Other Communities:** Have the Goals, Objectives, or Activities worked well in other communities?
- **The Community's Capacity:** Think about how your community would address each Goal, Objective, or Activity. What kinds of management will the Goals, Objectives, or Activities require? Consider the reliability of your workforce, training needs, etc.



## Next Steps:

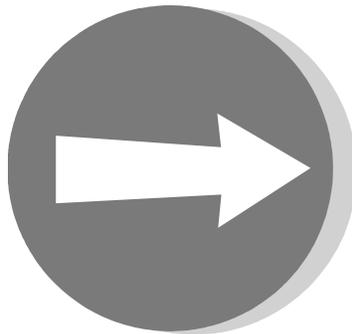
- After collecting and organizing input from the public and coming up with realistic Goals, Objectives, and Activities, the workgroup may present the information to the public for reviewing and prioritizing.
- One suggestion of how to present and prioritize the information is to write all of the suggested Goals, Objectives, and Activities in a handout and ask participants to prioritize the information by Goal and Objective.
- In a separate workgroup meeting, the workgroup can then evaluate the results of the prioritizing. The workgroup should write a final draft form of the prioritized Goals, Objectives, and Activities, and hold another community meeting to present the priorities to the public.
- After this public meeting, the workgroup may write a final product that includes all prioritized Goals, Objectives, and Activities for inclusion in the final community plan.
- This meeting can also serve as a public hearing by the body(ies) who will finally adopt the plan.
- It is important that there is general consensus among those present at the community meeting about the Goals, Objectives, and Activities for the Community Plan.





## **Are You Ready to Move on?**

- **Have you identified assets and values, and used them to write a vision statement?**
- **Did the workgroup consult the community to come up with Goals, Objectives, and Activities?**
- **Did the community prioritize the Goals, Objectives, and Activities?**
- **Are the Goals, Objectives, and Activities put into a final draft form that is usable for the plan, taking public comment and priorities into account?**





## Step 5: Putting the Plan Together



Organize the various components in writing to create a draft plan:

- Include the Executive Summary (explained in detail on the following 2 pages)
- The Story (or background information)
- Assets, Values, Vision Statement
- Goals, Objectives, and Activities
- Next Steps in the Planning Process
- Sources, Resources, Contact Information



## **Begin to Write the Executive Summary:**

### **The Community**

Provide a brief description of the community. Provide the most essential information such as the location and population characteristics.

### **Community Involvement**

Provide information about the people who were primarily involved in the process. Include community entities such as the Tribal Council or City Council and perhaps a list of the workgroup members.

### **Framework for the Plan**

Include a description of the planning dimensions and the asset-based planning method. It may be based on information from this handbook.

### **Purpose of the Plan**

Describe why community planning was desired and necessary in the community.





## Planning Process

Provide a brief description of the planning process your community experienced. Explain what was accomplished at the various meetings, and how other methods of public participation were utilized. List key people who were involved.

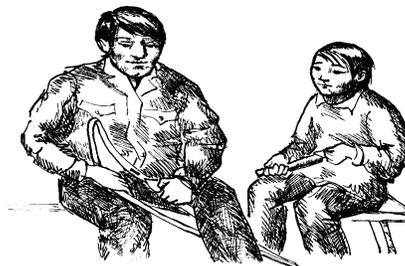
## Summary of Critical Issues

Even though the planning process may be “asset-based”, it is helpful to have a list of the most critical issues facing a community.

## Prioritized Goals

The community should prioritize the Goals. This may be done in a variety of ways. The Goals may be prioritized *within* each planning dimension, or all Goals (from all planning dimensions) may be listed in order of priority. It is important to list the Goals by priority so that: 1) the community has a sense of how to proceed with fulfilling its Goals, and 2) agencies reading the plan may quickly understand the community’s priorities.

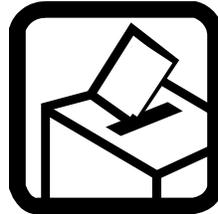
Considering both the Critical Issues and Prioritized Goals will give both the community and the readers a strong sense of how to fulfill the plan.



## **Request Public Comment about the Draft Plan:**

The draft plan can be given to community members and distributed in public places such as the City or Tribal Council offices, library, school, stores, etc. This will give the public a chance to review the plan. Comments regarding the plan and any suggestions for changes can be solicited from the public and community leaders through a variety of methods:

- Another public meeting can be held for a final discussion.
- Phone calls can be made to request comments.
- Forms may be distributed with the draft, to be filled out with comments, and returned anonymously to a drop-off box.



**Use community comments to revise the plan. While the plan is in draft form, there is still an opportunity to refine or change aspects of the plan.**



Once your community has agreed on the draft community plan revisions, publish final copies and organize a **celebration!** This gathering may act as a continuation of the work yet to come—**implementing the plan!**



Your community has worked hard to get to this point, and it should be a time for celebration. The city, tribal government, and local Native corporation can jointly adopt the final plan by passing a resolution or signing a formal letter. Funding agencies like to see this formal step to show that your community has accepted the final plan. A **resolution** provides a means of documenting your community’s decisions (*See Appendix D: Resolution for Adoption of Community Plan*).

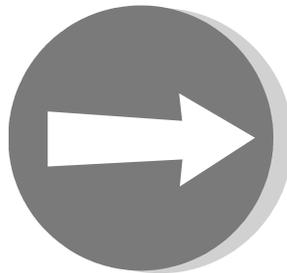
One way to bring the community together to celebrate the hard work could be a “signing ceremony”, where the community leaders sign the resolution. Another suggestion might be to have all those involved in the planning process sign and then frame the resolution to put on the wall.





## **Are You Ready to Move on?**

- **Have the wants and needs of the community been reflected in the Community Plan?**
- **Have all the necessary information and plan components been included in the Community Plan?**
- **Has the draft plan been updated based on the comments from the public?**
- **Has the final Community Plan been written?**
- **Have the City, Tribal Council, and/or Native Corporation signed a resolution approving the final Community Plan?**





## Step 6: Putting the Plan into Action

Distribute copies of the plan to all community entities, leaders, and members. Send the plan to the Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (DCCED) to be posted on their website. To do this, contact the DCCED by phone at (907) 269-4568 , by fax (907) 269-4539, or by e-mail at [questions@commerce.state.ak.us](mailto:questions@commerce.state.ak.us).

Organize a planning group, such as the existing workgroup, the Tribal Council, or the City Council, to begin implementing the plan. Or, the Planning Workgroup may delegate the activities to the specific entities. The planning group may be divided into committees to work on achieving objectives in each planning dimension. During regular Tribal Council and City Council meetings, the council members should consider the activities in the plan, and assign staff members to carry them out as appropriate.

Develop ways to measure progress for each Objective and Activity. For example, if the activity is to build three new homes, the way to measure progress is to ask “How many new homes have been built in the last year?” Consider creating a “scorecard” to keep track of activities as they are completed.

*It takes discipline to stick with the plan and make sure it gets carried out.*



Things change. Goals are met. New challenges emerge. The Community Plan must be updated periodically. The final plan should describe how and when to do the updates. The community will need to revise the Goals, Objectives, and Activities at least once every two years. By updating the plan often, the plan will continue to be a relevant tool to move your community forward.

**An update will include:**

- Recording which Activities, Objectives, and Goals have been reached since the last update.
- Reviewing the Vision, and making certain all Goals still support the overall community Vision.
- Reading all background information, changing outdated descriptions, and adding missing information as necessary.
- Reassessing current development opportunities and challenges that the community faces, and reevaluating Goals, Objectives, and Activities in light of these.
- Making needed changes or additions to Goals, Objectives, and Activities based on the current status of the community.
- Updating Resource and Contact information.



# Congratulations!

You've taken some big steps toward writing the next chapter of your community's story. Take time to celebrate and reflect on how far you've come and where your vision and this planning process will take you. Be sure to thank everyone who participated in or contributed to the effort.



# APPENDIX

Appendix A: Techniques for Public Participation

Appendix B: Simplified Handout on Planning Process

Appendix C: Workgroup Member Responsibilities

Appendix D: Sample Resolution for Adoption of Community Plan





# Appendix A: Techniques for Public Participation

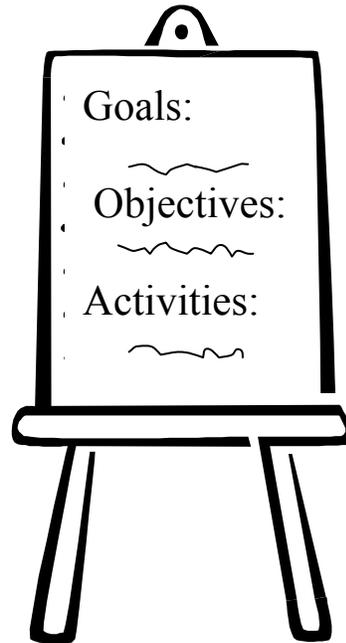


## **Technique 1 – Informal Small Group Discussion**

One of the most common ways people communicate in Alaska is through informal discussions – at the post office, store, or tribal office. The plan coordinator should keep a notebook to record comments and concerns gathered in this traditional way. Remember, it can be important for people to be able to comment without having to give their names.

## **Technique 2 – Public meetings**

Public meetings are a good way to present information to the public and get comments from community members. Such meetings are one of the best ways to involve everyone in community planning. Flexible public meetings should be held throughout the planning process to address specific issues or steps of planning. For example, hold a public meeting in the beginning to get early input from residents. Hold additional public meetings to gather traditional and local knowledge, and to get input on Goals, Objectives, and Activities and how to best prioritize these.





A public meeting should be posted to attract all interested community members. During a public meeting, a facilitator may be needed to help with brainstorming, visioning, and some type of structured technique may be used.

**Requirements for a successful meeting:**

- Post notices within the community for good meeting attendance, such as at the post office, A/C store, etc.
- Consider incentives for attending the meeting (raffle, food, etc.).
- Reserve a meeting place (community center, classroom, gym).
- Develop an agenda and have a stated purpose for the meeting.
- Copy handouts beforehand.
- Have a facilitator or meeting chairperson.
- Write and display important points on a black board or flip chart, or use an overhead projector.
- Have a secretary or note taker record the discussions and provide notes to interested participants.
- Allow participants to share their opinion in writing, as not everyone feels comfortable sharing his or her opinion in a group setting.



**Techniques for Increasing Attendance at Public Meetings:**

- Have a public meeting in conjunction with a potluck/doughnuts/good food. Invite community dancers or a speaker to open the meeting.
- Put up large, colorful flyers throughout the community (post office, store, school, airport, clinic, etc.) inviting everyone interested.
- Personally invite people. Tell them their input is essential (it is!) and will directly affect the plan's outcome.
- Plan meetings at times when nothing else is going on (you may not have many attendees during a basketball tournament or a fishing opening).
- If someone doesn't show for the first meeting don't count him or her out. Invite everyone to every meeting – some people need more time to warm up to the process.



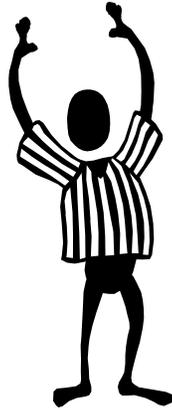
### Technique 3. Facilitation



A facilitator is a leader who helps a group work towards a decision based on general agreement. A facilitator should be a leader who is respected, confident, and perceptive. The Planning Coordinator may be the facilitator. Sometimes an unbiased facilitator must come from outside the group or even outside the community, particularly if there are people or groups at the meeting that do not get along. However, if an outside facilitator is invited, he or she should be aware of community issues and culture.

#### A facilitator should:

- **Lead:** A facilitator should provide a group with leadership.
- **Focus:** Provide a focus for the group.
- **Stimulate:** Encourage constructive discussion between group members.
- **Support:** Bring out information from quiet members of the group and allow new ideas to be submitted.
- **Participate:** Promote new discussion when the group is interacting poorly or off the subject.
- **Build Team:** Form a close, productive team.



**A facilitator should act as a referee.**

**The facilitator should:**

- **Regulate:** Maintain order and discourage participants from talking at the same time or dominating the meeting.
- **Protect members:** Ensure that all comments are treated equally and that no one is “put down” for their input.
- **Deal with Problems:** Control problem people within the group and allow everyone to participate freely.
- **Keep Time:** Adhere to the meeting timetable to ensure completion of the agenda.
- **Be sensible:** Take a detached look at the discussion and view each point on its merits.
- **Encourage Feedback:** Promote discussion of each point raised by all members of the group.

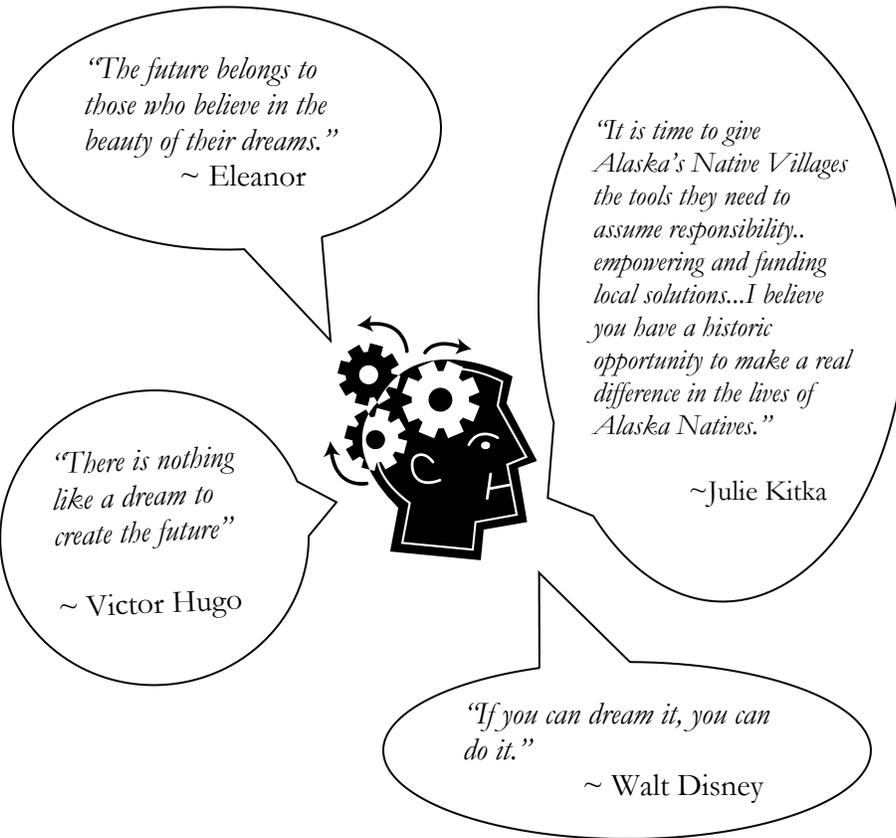


## Technique 4. Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a process where a person or group generates as many ideas or solutions to a problem as possible in a set amount of time.

- Brainstorming sessions are frequently used when a group is starting a planning process or a new phase of planning.
- A group should have brainstorming sessions without criticism or evaluation to come up with possible solutions.
- A free-thinking atmosphere will encourage bright ideas that may seem outrageous at first but outstanding in the end.
- A brainstorming session will also help reduce conflict by helping participants see other points of view and possibly change their perspective on problems.
- Finally, brainstorming sessions are beneficial because all participants have an equal status and an equal opportunity to participate.
- It may be particularly useful to give participants a chance to write down their thoughts or opinions in brainstorming sessions, as not everyone feels comfortable sharing ideas in a group setting.





**Brainstorming Session Rules:**

- No criticism.
- Wild ideas are welcome.
- The greater the number of ideas, the better.
- Combinations and improvements to ideas are excellent.
- Everyone is encouraged to contribute.
- Listen and contribute.



## Technique 5. Public Survey

A survey can determine public opinion and can be useful in community planning.

- A survey can be written (a questionnaire), or it can be spoken (an interview). An interview can be conducted either face-to-face or over the phone. A better response rate is usually obtained by having someone do the survey in person.
- Surveys can include multiple-choice questions or open-ended questions. Open-ended questions allow people to say or write what they want, but are harder to analyze.
- If the community is small enough, you might consider surveying every adult or every household to determine the entire community's views and to allow everyone to feel heard. When a community is too large to survey everyone, a representative group of people can be questioned.

Voluntary surveys do not put people “on the spot”. They may be a good way to get an idea of general attitudes outside the public meeting process.





### **The Survey Process:**

- Stage 1:** Determine what information is needed and whether a survey is the best way to get the information.
- Stage 2:** Make a survey time line and budget.
- Stage 3:** Determine how many people to question to get an accurate representation of the community.
- Stage 4:** Design the survey by writing well-thought-out questions that provide answers to things you truly need to know.
- Stage 5:** Practice the survey with someone to determine whether it is easily understood.
- Stage 6:** Select and train interviewers.
- Stage 7:** Have residents complete the survey.
- Stage 8:** Tally the survey results.
- Stage 9:** Analyze the data and use the findings in the Planning process to help create Goals, Objectives, and Activities.



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## Technique 6. Intensive Interviewing

Unlike surveying at random, where many people are asked questions to determine the opinions of the community as a whole, “intensive” interviewing involves talking to key people or those who have a special knowledge of an event or process. This can be a helpful way to gather data.



- Some of the best information related to community planning could come from people who may be unable or unwilling to attend public meetings or respond to written questionnaires.
- Elders or long-time community leaders may have traditional or local knowledge that could be important in the community planning process.



## **Special considerations must be taken when interviewing people in the community.**

- The interviewer may want to start with small talk, thanking the person for taking the time to answer questions, before moving on to business.
- The interviewer should ask simple, factual questions in the beginning and move towards more complex ones.
- Open-ended questions usually work best in interviews.
- All the questions should be prepared beforehand and should be simple, short, and clear.
- The interviewer should be a good note taker or use a tape recorder, if the person being interviewed is comfortable with it.





**Sample Open-Ended Interview Questions:**

- What resources does this community have and need?
- How do you see the future of our community?
- What is your primary concern with \_\_\_\_\_ (ask about a specific dimension such as the economy, environment, etc.)?
- What overall goal would you like to see for \_\_\_\_\_ (ask about a specific dimension)?
- What ideas do you have for solving \_\_\_\_\_ (explain problem)?
- Are there any improvements you'd like to see in \_\_\_\_\_ (for example, health care or public safety).
- How do you feel about local employment opportunities?
- Do you have any ideas for methods of stimulating the economy?
- What role do you want our community entities to play in providing \_\_\_\_\_ (for example, cultural preservation, environmental protection, etc.)
- What is your primary concern with regard to housing in our community?
- What are the goals for our community with regard to efficient land use?



## **Appendix B: Simplified Handout on Planning Process**





**Planning is important because it helps a community chart its future and build things in an orderly fashion.**

**Planning may help to:**

- Make the community strong – planning can bring people together to think about their future. A unified community is healthy and strong.
- Promote pride in the community.
- Make things happen and guide change.
- Look to the future and get things done instead of avoiding decisions.
- Solve old problems by setting new goals.
- Save money – planning may keep the community from making expensive mistakes.
- Balance what your community is with what it has and wants to become.
- Create a framework from which you can evaluate new projects or elements of change in your community.
- Get funding – agencies that provide money for projects like to see a plan. A plan shows them that your community is organized and has thought about how it will operate and maintain new projects and programs. By having a good plan, you are more likely to get funding.

*Based on Alaska Sanitation Planning Guide for Small Communities. State of Alaska Department of Community and Economic Development. June 1999.*

**The following page contains a table listing the steps and tasks of the planning process.**

## PLANNING PROCESS

Step	Task Checklist	What does it mean?
1. Getting ready to plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Keys to Success<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Gain Commitment</li><li>- Form a workgroup</li><li>- Open a dialogue with the public.</li><li>- Recruit a planning coordinator.</li></ul></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Do people want to plan?</li><li>● Who is leading?</li><li>● Are we ready to begin our plan?</li></ul>
2. Telling your story	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Gather and organize information</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● What is here?</li><li>● Where have we been?</li><li>● How does the community look overall?</li></ul>
3. Identifying Assets, Values, and Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Hold community meetings to determine Community's Assets, Values, and Vision</li><li>● Write Values and Vision in condensed form</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● What do people treasure about the community?</li><li>● What are the talents and strengths of the people?</li><li>● What are the assets that reside in the place, culture, and economy?</li></ul>
4. Identifying and Prioritizing Goals, Objectives, and Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Identify information in the form of Goals, Objectives, and Activities (by planning dimension)</li><li>● Prioritize for direction on how to implement the plan</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● What are our Goals for the community?</li><li>● What are our Objectives?</li><li>● What actions can we take to meet these objectives and goals?</li><li>● What are our priorities?</li></ul>
5. Putting the Plan Together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Develop a draft Community Plan</li><li>● Have the community review the draft</li><li>● Develop a final Community Plan</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Put our decisions in writing so that everyone else will know what we want, and how to achieve it</li></ul>
6. Putting the Plan into Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Organize and complete Activities, which lead to the accomplishment of achieving Objectives and fulfilling overall Goals</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Arrange action committee to start taking action steps</li><li>● Arrange funding</li></ul>



# Appendix C: Workgroup Member Responsibilities

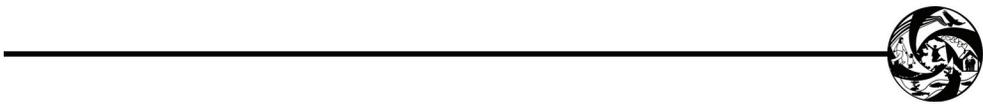


Workgroup members must:

- Voice the knowledge and opinions of those they represent at workgroup meetings.
- Take information, decisions, and questions from the workgroup back to those they represent.
- Actively attend workgroup meetings and complete special projects, as necessary.
- Represent the workgroup by listening to and answering questions outside of meetings. For example, if stopped at the store, the representatives should be prepared to listen and respond.



**Although everyone in the community is encouraged to attend planning meetings, it is usually the small workgroup that ultimately leads the planning process.**



## Appendix D: Sample Resolution



### **Resolution for Adoption of Community Plan**

WHEREAS, this community plan is important to the future growth and development of \_\_\_\_\_; and,

(community name)

WHEREAS, this plan was created through a public process which captured the values and goals of our community; and,

WHEREAS, this plan is a tool that helps us manage change in our community; and,

WHEREAS, this plan is intended to coordinate future community development and service delivery; and,

WHEREAS, we ask all public, private, and non-profit entities serving our community to recognize and use this plan;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that this plan is adopted by the community of \_\_\_\_\_; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the parties of this resolution agree to work together to pursue the values, goals, and vision expressed in this plan.

### **Certification**

We hereby certify that this resolution was duly passed and approved by the following parties:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Tribal Government

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Municipal Government

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
ANCSA Village Corporation

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



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## Glossary of Terms

**Activities:** Actions taken to meet a specific objective.

**Asset:** A useful or valuable quality, person, thing, or resource.

**Community Plan:** A document that reflects a community's story, and lists its goals and steps to achieving them.

**Community Planning:** Process of formulating methods and programs for the accomplishment of community improvement.

**Facilitation:** Helping make the process easier; an improvement.

**Framework:** A basic structure for developing a plan.

**Goal:** A broad statement that details what the plan intends to achieve, or the purpose toward which an endeavor is directed.

**Objective:** A specific and measurable way to achieve a broader goal.

**Planning Coordinator:** A person appointed or hired to lead and facilitate the community planning process.

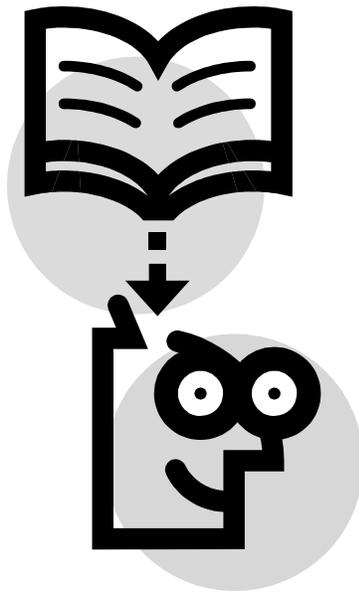


**Planning Dimensions:** Aspects of community life to be considered while planning: Culture & Tradition, Economy, Environment, Housing, Land, Public Facilities, Transportation, and Wellness & Safety.

**Self-Determination:** Freedom of a people of a given area to determine their own course of action.

**Stakeholders:** Everybody who has an interest in the plan.

**Value:** A principle, standard, or quality considered worthwhile and





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