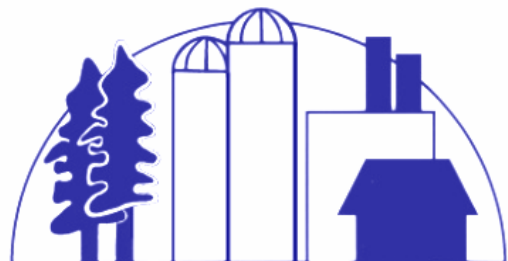# The Wisconsin Planning Experience:

Results from the Community Planning Survey

Rebecca Roberts
Chin-Chun Tang

March 2004

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

Contents

List of Figures

Introduction

In January 2004, the Center for Land Use Education (CLUE) initiated a state-wide online survey of planning professionals. The purpose of this survey is two-fold. First, we are interested in documenting the varied experiences of Wisconsin communities with planning. While some communities are initiating community planning for the first time in response to the State's Comprehensive Planning Law, others have a long history of planning for land use, natural resources protection, economic development, and other local issues. By documenting and sharing the experience of communities with different challenges, resources and successes, we hope to enable other communities to learn from these experiences and improve the effectiveness of planning state-wide.

Second, we are interested in improving research and outreach activities conducted by the Center for Land Use Education and other organizations that provide support for local planning initiatives. The survey results will guide CLUE staff in the future development of educational materials and the provision of technical assistance to local communities.

The survey and report are structured to examine the following aspects of community planning:

- Prevalence of local planning resources and support,
- Typical planning activities and challenges,
- Effective methods of community involvement,
- Incentives to encourage community involvement, and
- Role and expertise of external assistance providers in local planning.

A description of the methodology and limitations associated with this study are included at the end of the report.

Survey Respondents

To provide context for the survey results, participants were asked to provide the following information about themselves and the communities they are involved with:

- Current position
- Employer
- Type of community (urban, suburban or rural)
- Recent planning projects
- Past experience with planning (positive or negative)

The majority of survey respondents work as professional planners and are employed by municipal governments. About a half work for rural communities. In the past five years, survey respondents have worked on an average of five projects. Comprehensive and land use projects are completed most frequently. Ninety percent have been involved in at least one multi-jurisdictional project in that same time period. Most respondents report positive or somewhat positive experiences with planning.

Profession of Survey Respondents

As shown in **Figure 1**, the majority of survey respondents (57%) work as professional planners. Planning directors, planners, planning analysts, interns, GIS professionals and private consultants are included in this description.

A smaller number of survey respondents are zoning personnel (16%). Zoning administrators, support staff, and directors of planning and zoning departments are included in this category.

Figure 1: Profession of Survey Respondents
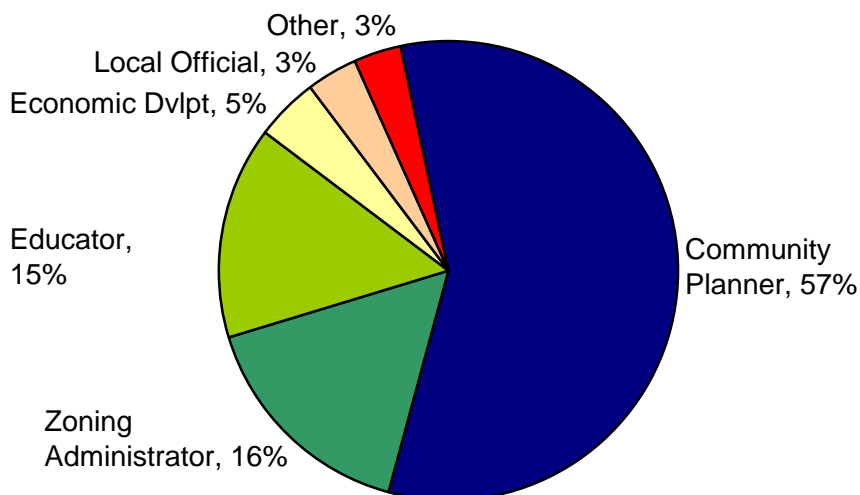
Professionals from the fields of planning, zoning, Extension, economic development, and local government participated in the survey.

Survey Respondents

Almost an equal number of survey respondents categorize themselves as educators (15%). County-based Community Natural Resources and Economic Development (CNRED) educators and other Extension faculty and staff comprise this category.

A small number of community and economic development professionals, local government officials, and interested citizens responded to the survey.

Employment

The vast majority of survey respondents (65%) work for municipal governments. Of these, roughly half are employed at the county level, about a third work for cities, and just over one-tenth work for villages. Only a handful of municipal planners are employed by towns.

UW-Extension is the next largest employer for survey respondents (16%), followed by private consulting firms (10%). The remaining survey participants work for regional planning commissions, non-government organizations and state agencies.

Municipal government employs a large percent of planning professionals. Counties and cities provide the most jobs.

Figure 2: Employment of Survey Respondents

Regional Planning Commissions, 5%

Other, 7%

Consulting Firms, 10%

UW-Extension, 15%

Municipal Government, 65%*

Towns - 4%
Villages - 11%
Cities - 34%
Counties - 51%
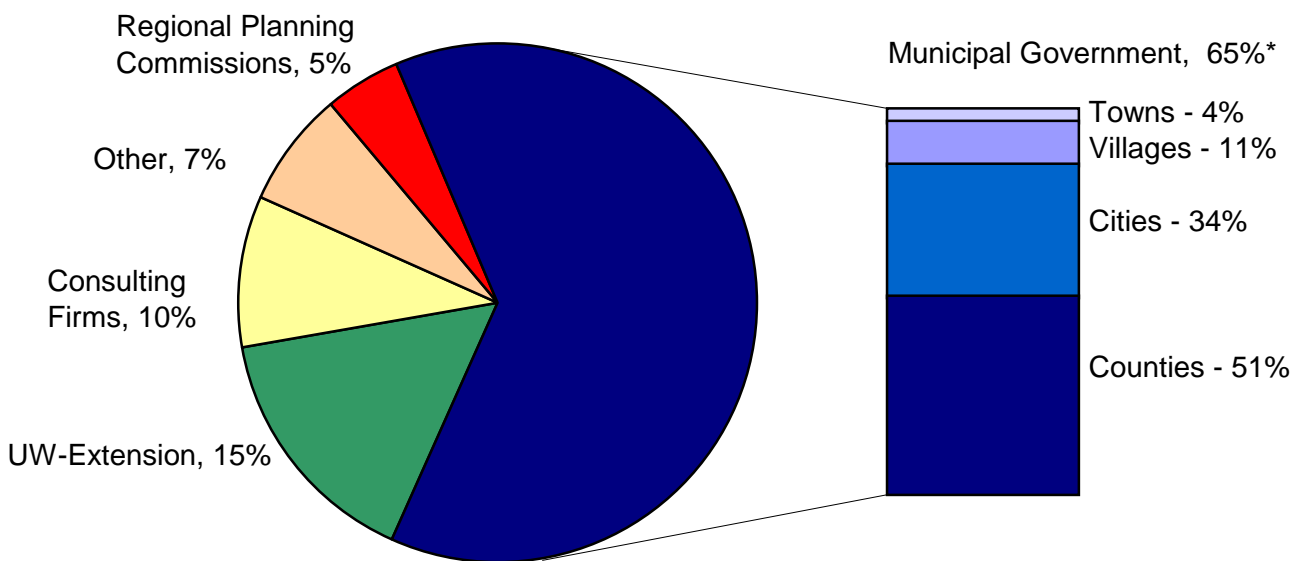
*Town, village, city and county employment calculated as percent of municipal total

Survey Respondents

Type of Communities

Nearly half of survey respondents characterize the community or communities they work with as rural (47%). The remaining survey respondents are split. About a third work for suburban communities (30%), while the rest work for urban communities (23%).

Figure 3: Type of Communities

Urban, 23%

Rural, 47%
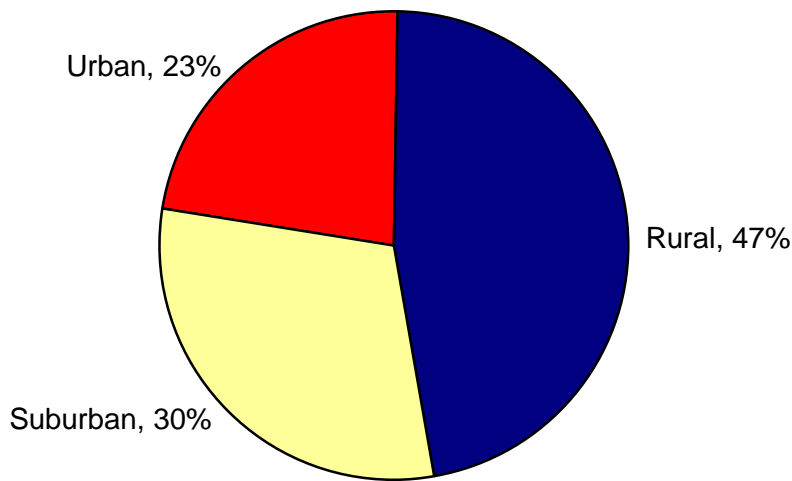
Suburban, 30%

Nearly one-half of survey respondents work with rural communities. The remainder work with urban or suburban communities.

Recent Planning Projects

Wisconsin communities are working on a wide range of planning projects. When asked to identify planning projects survey respondents have worked on in the last five years, three-quarters reported working on comprehensive planning (75%). A significant number also identified land use planning (65%). Nearly half of survey respondents identified shoreland, open space, economic development, and transportation projects. Less than one-third identified utility, watershed, cooperatives services, agriculture and forest planning projects.

In addition to the survey options identified above, a small portion of survey respondents (7%) report working on 'other' types of planning projects, such as:
- Land and water conservation
- Recreation
- Tourism
- Historic preservation
- Downtown revitalization
- Neighborhood revitalization
- Sewer service area

Figure 4: Number of Recent Projects

No. of projects	Response rate
0	1%
1-3	36%
4-6	38%
7-9	16%
10+	9%
	100%

Survey Respondents

Figure 5: Recent Planning Projects
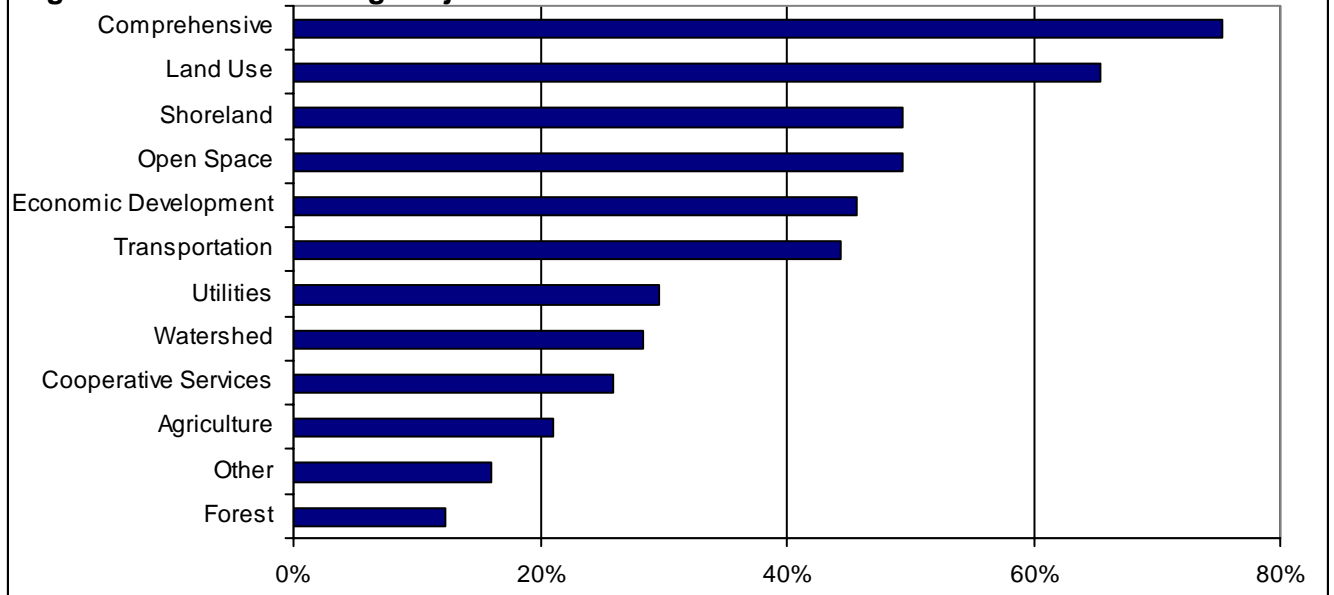
On average, respondents identified just fewer than five planning projects they had worked on in the last five years (mean = 4.6). Ninety-nine percent of those who responded to this question report working on at least one project in this time period. At the opposite extreme, nine percent report working on ten or more projects.

In total, ninety percent of communities report working on at least one multi-jurisdictional planning project in the last five years.

Ninety percent of respondents have worked on multi-jurisdictional planning projects.

Past Experience with Planning

When asked about their past experiences with planning, the majority of participants (69%) described 'positive' or 'somewhat positive' experiences with planning. Only a small portion (11%) reported 'negative' or 'somewhat negative' planning experiences. The remaining twenty percent provided 'neutral' responses.

Figure 6: Past Experiences with Planning

'Positive'	'Somewhat Positive'	'Neutral'	'Somewhat Negative'	'Negative'
36%	33%	20%	9%	3%

Financial Resources

We asked a series of questions to determine the level, source and adequacy of financial resources available for community planning in Wisconsin. Survey respondents were asked to identify the following:

- Total operational budget for planning
- Percent of planning budget derived from local funds, external funds and in-kind services
- Cost issues associated with hiring a consultant, regional planning commission, or other assistance organization
- Approximate cost of most recent comprehensive, community or land use planning project
- Sources of external funding

The Local Planning Budget

Operational budgets for planning in Wisconsin communities range from $0 to over $1.7 million. The median budget is $200,000, while the average budget is $281,000 (excluding communities with no planning budget). When asked to describe funding sources, respondents indicated that approximately two-thirds of funds are generated locally, such as through taxes or general purpose revenue. Nearly a quarter of the budget is derived from external sources, such as grants. In-kind services account for less than one-tenth of local planning budgets.

Planning Budgets
Maximum
$1.7 million

Mean
$281,000

Median
$200,000

Minimum
$0

Figure 7: Budgetary Sources for Planning

In-kind Services 9%

External Funds 23%

68% Local Funds
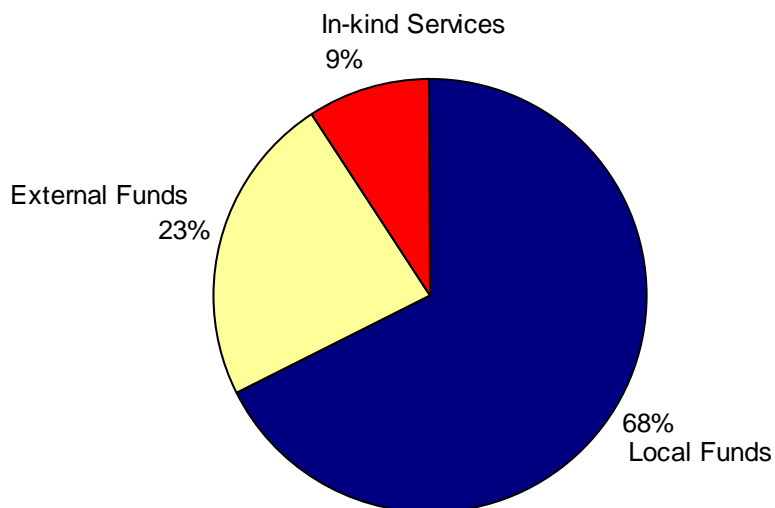
Financial Resources

A great degree of complexity is reflected within the reported budget figures. Budgets were reported for cities, villages, towns, counties and regions of various sizes and degrees of urbanization. Additionally, planning services are provided by a diverse range of groups in each community, including citizen volunteers, staff, and paid consultants. Many communities, particularly rural and small towns, do not employ paid planning staff. Some rely solely on citizen volunteers to serve on a plan commission. A few local commissions receive a stipend, but many do not. Some communities contract with outside organizations to provide major planning services, such as their county planning department, a regional planning commission, or a private consultant. Eighteen percent of communities report that hiring one of these consulting services is cost prohibitive.

Many survey respondents had a difficult time completing the questions regarding budgets. Some were unable to answer because they were unfamiliar with their community's budget. Others did not work for a single community (such as a consultant) and could therefore not respond. Other survey respondents commented that planning budgets could vary significantly on an annual basis depending on current projects. For example, many communities are currently updating or creating a new comprehensive plan, which is quite costly. Yet, such an undertaking only occurs once every five, ten or twenty years.

In yet other communities, it is difficult to track the source and amount of money spent on planning. Many communities rely extensively on in-kind services from citizen volunteers, local departments, organizations, state agencies, UW-Extension, and other University resources. The value and time provided by these organizations is difficult to estimate and is not accounted for in the local planning budget. As reported by one survey respondent, "it is just part of the job" for these groups. In other communities, the budget of the planning and zoning department is combined, which makes it difficult to determine how much money is specifically allocated for planning, as opposed to regulatory enforcement, for example.

The Cost of Major Planning Projects

Survey respondents were also asked to estimate the cost of their most recent comprehensive, community or land use planning project. Responses ranged from $8,000 to $1.3 million. The median response was $100,000 and the average was $206,000. Much like the budget question, these figures should be considered in light of the variety of responses received.

Project Costs
Maximum
$1.3 million

Mean
$206,000

Median
$100,000

Minimum
$8,000

Financial Resources

Cities, villages, towns, counties and regions of different sizes and degrees of urbanization responded to this question. We did not feel that we had a large enough cross-section to break out the answers by jurisdiction. In addition, a high percentage (90%) of communities report working on multi-jurisdictional planning projects in the last five years. We believe that some communities reported the total cost of their most recent planning project for all jurisdictions involved, while others estimated the cost for a single jurisdiction. According to data from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (DOT), three-quarters of all Wisconsin communities involved in comprehensive planning are also involved in a multi-jurisdictional effort (2004). Multi-jurisdictional could mean as few as two communities working together, or an entire county or region working collaboratively, which demonstrates why it is difficult to estimate and compare project costs.

External Funding Sources

When asked to identify external funding sources, communities most frequently report applying for the Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Grant Program. Roughly two-thirds of communities applied for a grant through this program. According to data from the Wisconsin DOT, roughly eighty-five percent of Wisconsin communities that worked on a comprehensive plan between 2000 and 2004 received this grant (2004). External funding, in combination with the state's Comprehensive Planning Law appear to be major incentives to encourage local planning. Communities also sought out many other sources of funding. Nearly

Communities most often apply for the Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Grant to support local planning.

Figure 8: Sources of External Funding

Source	Percent
Comprehensive Planning Grant Program	65%
Community Development Block Grant	31%
Wisconsin Land Information Program	16%
DNR Lake Protection and Classification	15%
WI DOT TEA-21 Grant	14%
Coastal Management Program	14%
DNR River Protection Planning	5%
Other	4%
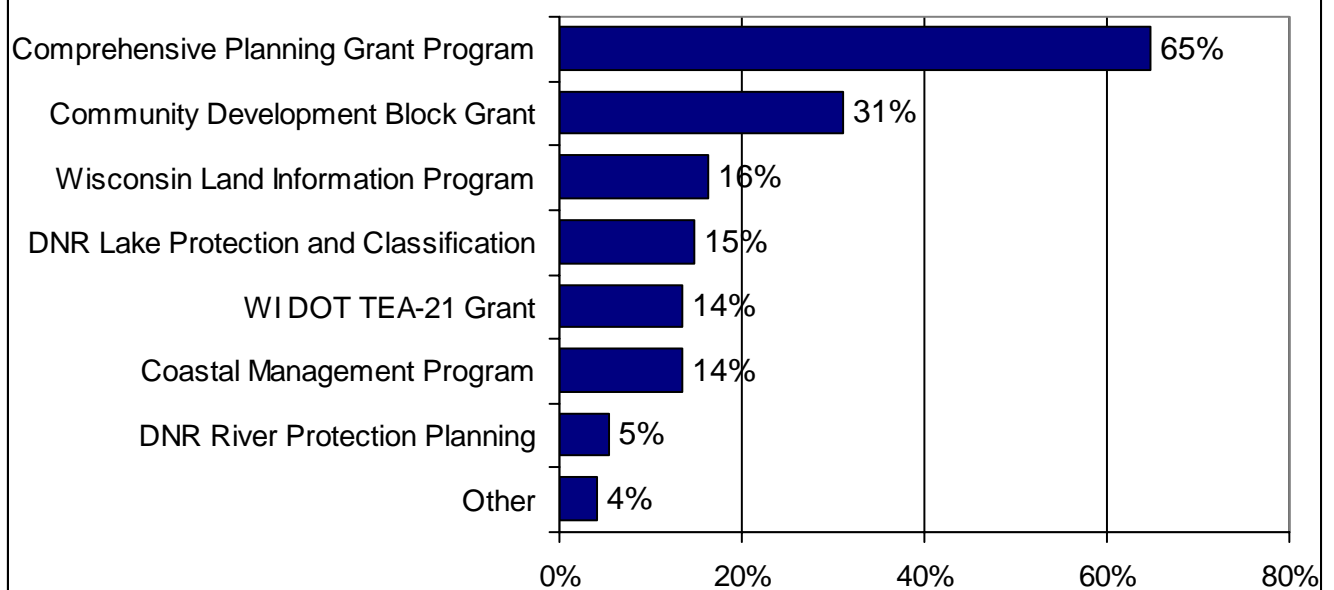
Financial Resources

one-third received Community Development Block Grant funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which they indicated were used for planning purposes. Additionally, about fifteen percent applied to each of the following programs: Wisconsin Land Information Program, Wisconsin DNR Lake Protection and Classification Grant, Wisconsin DOT TEA-21 Grant, and the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program.

Almost ninety percent of survey respondents report applying for at least one funding source. Less than half report applying for two or more funding sources.

Figure 9: Number of External Funding Sources

No. of funding sources	Response rate
0	12%
1	41%
2	25%
3	16%
4	4%
5	1%
	100%

The Planning Process

To identify activities that are regularly included in local planning process and areas where communities typically struggle, communities were provided with a series of planning activities and asked to identify the following:

- Activities included in their most recent planning project
- Overall difficulty of each activity selected
- Specific challenges associated with each activity

The following 12 planning activities were included in the survey:

- Preparing for the planning process (referred to as 'pre-planning')
- Data collection
- Data analysis
- Visioning
- Goal and objective development
- Alternative future/scenario development
- Land use mapping
- Strategy selection
- Plan review and approval
- Plan implementation
- Monitoring progress
- Plan revision

Planning Activities

From the survey responses, we were able to determine that ninety-nine percent of survey respondents had, at a minimum, begun to prepare for a planning process at the time of this survey. Nearly three-quarters of respondents had already adopted a plan. Roughly two-thirds were implementing a plan in their community, and just over half worked on revising a plan. Only one survey respondent indicated they were unable to complete the planning process after beginning 'pre-planning' activities.

Assuming that the planning activities identified above occur in a more-or-less linear fashion, we were able to account for communities responding to the survey midway through a planning process and identify which activities occur more or less frequently than others. The trend line drawn in **Figure 10** shows the level of planning activity expected by communities. According to this graph, fewer than expected communities are developing future scenarios as a regular part of a planning process. Strategy selection is another activity reported slightly less frequently than expected. Land use mapping is the only activity that is completed more often than predicted by the trend line. This could be due to the high number of communities completing 'land use' plans.

Ninety-nine percent of survey respondents have begun to prepare for a planning process.

The Planning Process

Following plan adoption, planning activity appears to slow down. Fewer than expected communities completed implementation activities. Moreover, many communities that were expected to complete monitoring and revision activities had not yet done so. There may be several explanations for this decline. First, the decline could reflect communities that are struggling with implementation and monitoring activities, perhaps due to several challenges, such as financing, political leadership or other difficulties with the process. (Planning challenges associated with each activity are described in the following sections of this report.)

Second, the decline may be explained by the fact that 'post-planning' activities occur over a significantly longer time horizon. While a plan can be developed in a matter of months or years, it may take communities five, ten or even twenty years before they can meaningfully implement, monitor and revise a plan. Post-planning activities will not be accurately reflected in the survey results if many communities recently completed plans. Third, declining planning activity following plan adoption could simply reflect plans that are 'sitting on the shelf'. Communities may be beginning new planning processes without implementing, monitoring or revising their old plans.

Planning activity appears to decrease after communities have adopted a plan.

Figure 10: Planning Activities
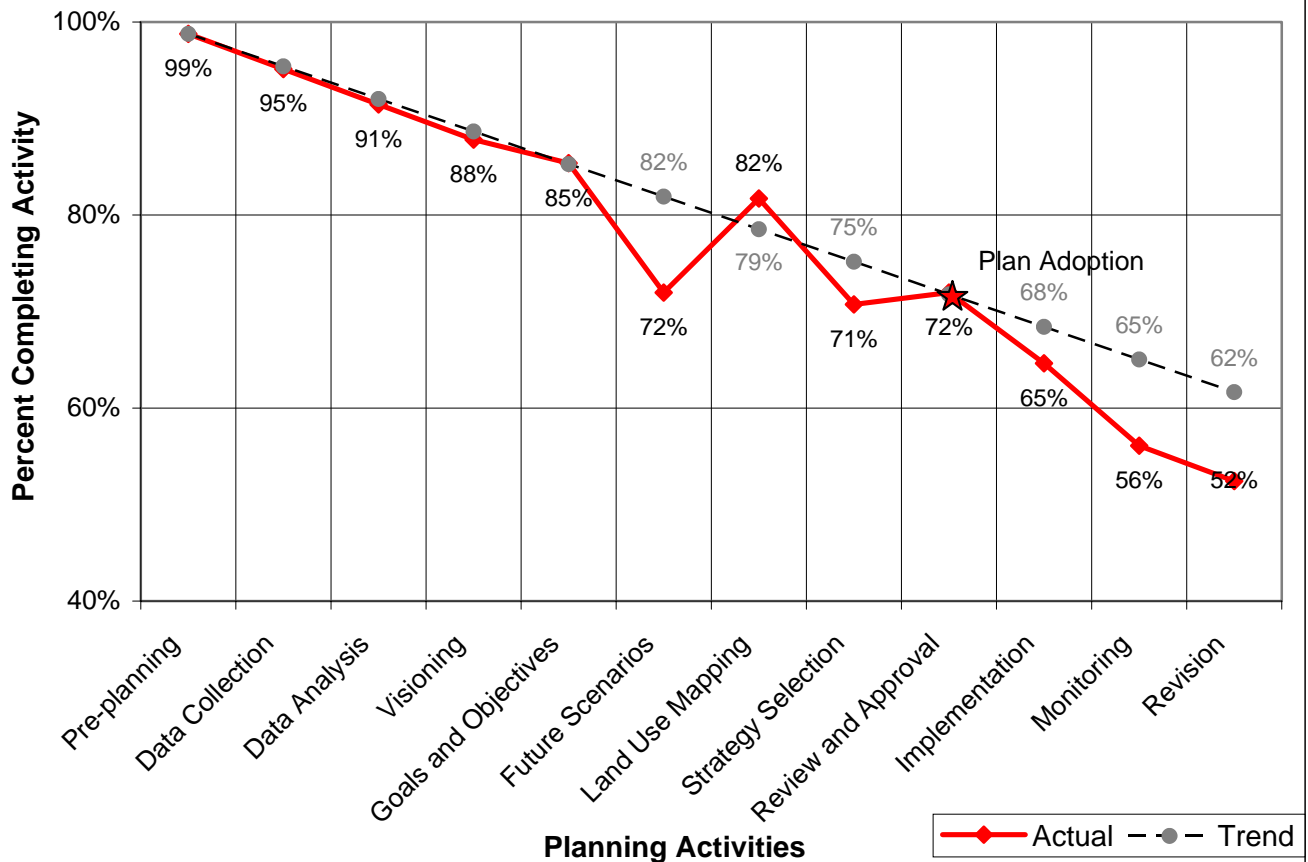
The Planning Process

When interpreting this series of questions on planning activities, participants were asked to respond based on their 'most recent planning project'. In a related question, we asked which types of projects they worked on in the past five years. Three-quarters of communities were working on comprehensive plans. Two-thirds were working on land use plans. Shoreland, open space, economic development and transportation plans were also frequently completed by survey respondents. We did not ask survey respondents to identify which types of project they were working on specific to this question. Therefore, we cannot determine if some planning activities are associated with certain types of planning projects over others. (For example, does a comprehensive planning process involve different types or numbers of activities than a natural resources or economic development process?) Finally, we suspect that some survey respondents answered this question based on cumulative past experiences with planning. This would further blur the distinction between activities included in different types of planning projects.

Difficulty of Planning Activities

After identifying the activities included in their most recent planning project, survey respondents were asked to rate the difficulty of each activity. Pre-planning, data collection, data analysis, and land use mapping were ranked as some of the *least* difficult activities to complete. Similarly, consultants and regional planning commissions are frequently contracted with to complete these activities. Plan implementation was

Implementation is considered the most difficult planning activity.

Figure 11: Difficulty of Planning Activities

Legend: Easy, Moderately Easy, Difficult, Very Difficult

Activity	Easy	Moderately Easy	Difficult	Very Difficult
Pre-Planning	16%	58%	25%	1%
Data Collection	17%	60%	21%	3%
Data Analysis	16%	64%	18%	3%
Visioning	7%	45%	44%	4%
Goals and Objectives	7%	58%	32%	3%
Future Scenarios	5%	39%	43%	13%
Land Use Mapping	32%	44%	20%	5%
Strategy Selection	3%	42%	47%	7%
Review and Approval	12%	35%	42%	11%
Implementation	6%	28%	45%	21%
Monitoring	23%	40%	28%	10%
Revision	8%	50%	33%	10%

The Planning Process

ranked as the single most *difficult* activity. Visioning, future scenario development, strategy selection and plan review and approval were other difficult activities. Many of the activities that were completed less frequently than expected (see previous section) were also ranked as the more difficult activities to complete.

Local Planning Challenges

To identify challenges associated with each planning activity, respondents were provided with a list from which they could select multiple challenges. They were also able to specify additional challenges not included on the list. In no particular order, items that were consistently identified as top challenges for many planning activities include:

- Lack of financial resources
- Time constraints
- Limited skill and/or experience with a particular activity
- Difficulty reaching consensus
- Lack of public involvement or support
- Lack of political support

Specific challenges identified for each activity include:

Challenges Associated with Preparing for the Planning Process

1. Limited time to prepare for planning (46%)
2. Limited financial resources (36%)
3. Lack of consensus (26%)
4. Lack of political support (25%)
5. Limited skill and/or experience with process design or scheduling (11%)
6. No appropriate models available (10%)
7. Limited skill and/or experience with budget preparation (7%)
8. Other (4%) –
   - *Education needed for participants to develop plans*
   - *Necessary to bring local officials up to speed*
   - *Limited understanding of importance of planning*

Almost fifty percent of communities lack time necessary to adequately prepare for planning.

Challenges Associated with Data Collection

1. Format of data collected incompatible (35%)
2. Data not available (32%)
3. Limited financial resources (31%)
4. Could not identify source of data (17%)
5. Limited skill and/or experience with data collection (13%)
6. Could not identify data to be collected (6%)

7. Other (10%) –
   - *Difficult to work with source to obtain data*
   - *Time consuming, limited staff time*
   - *Difficult to coordinate data sets with consultant*
   - *Tendency to get stuck collecting all possible data before performing analyses*

Challenges Associated with Data Analysis

1. Limited skill and/or experience with data analysis (24%)
2. Limited skill and/or experience with impact analysis (24%)
3. Difficulty displaying data for public to understand (23%)
4. Limited financial resources (21%)
5. Lack issue expertise to interpret data (12%)
6. Inadequate computer software (9%)
7. Inadequate computer hardware (4%)
8. Other (4%) –
   - *Time consuming, limited staff time*

Challenges Associated with Visioning

1. Lack of public involvement (50%)
2. Public skepticism of visioning (43%)
3. Difficulty reaching consensus (36%)
4. Results of visioning too general (24%)
5. Value of visioning questionable (18%)
6. Limited skill and/or experience with facilitation (10%)
7. Other (11%) –
   - *Idealistic, often described as 'fluff'*
   - *Skepticism from elected officials/community leaders*
   - *Visions can be dominated by vocal minority*

Diverse public involvement is critical for a community to develop a shared vision.

Challenges Associated with Goal and Objective Development

1. Difficulty reaching consensus (44%)
2. Lack of public involvement (41%)
3. Difficulty articulating goals or objectives (26%)
4. Function of goals and objectives not understood (26%)
5. Objectives are not measurable (20%)
6. Lack data/trend analyses (6%)
7. Limited skill and/or experience with facilitation (3%)
8. Other (10%) –
   - *Difference between goals, objectives, and policies not understood*
   - *Time consuming to reach consensus*
   - *Kept general to allow for broad consensus, difficult to agree on details*

Communities have a difficult time reaching consensus when developing goals and objectives.

The Planning Process

Challenges Associated with Alternative Scenario Development

1. Lack of public involvement (36%)
2. Limited skill and/or experience generating futures (25%)
3. Limited skill and/or experience analyzing impacts (25%)
4. Limited financial resources (20%)
5. Inadequate computer software (12%)
6. Inadequate computer hardware (8%)
7. Other (20%) –
   - *Difficulty reaching consensus*
   - *Many stakeholders with differing views*
   - *Influenced by political agenda of interest groups, officials or opponents*
   - *Public unwilling to accept consequences of choices*

Challenges Associated with Land Use Mapping

1. Controversy over land use or private property rights (28%)
2. Limited financial resources (16%)
3. Limited skill and/or experience with mapping (12%)
4. Lack of public involvement (12%)
5. Inadequate computer hardware (4%)
6. Inadequate computer software (3%)
7. Other (12%) –
   - *Nonexistent or outdated mapping to work with*
   - *Time consuming, much detailed needed*

Property rights issues play a major role in land use mapping controversies.

Challenges Associated with Strategy Selection

1. Difficulty reaching consensus (55%)
2. Lack of political support (45%)
3. Limited knowledge of strategy options (17%)
4. No method to evaluate alternative strategies (14%)
5. Other (14%) –
   - *Many stakeholders with differing views*
   - *Timeline running short; grant deadline*

Challenges Associated with Plan Review and Approval

1. Lack of support from elected officials (41%)
2. Too many competing issues (37%)
3. Lack of support from general public (36%)
4. Too complex (15%)
5. Other (17%) –
   - *Time consuming*
   - *Lack of public participation*
   - *Controversy over specific sites or individual interests*

The Planning Process

Challenges Associated with Plan Implementation

1. Lack of political support (55%)
2. Limited financial resources (40%)
3. Difficulty prioritizing strategies (23%)
4. No responsibility for implementation assigned (15%)
5. Lack of expertise to implement (13%)
6. Staff burned out (13%)
7. Other (12%) –
   - *Lack of political continuity*
   - *Difficulty implementing plan as written, urge to stray from plan*

Political support and continuity are challenges associated with plan implementation.

Challenges Associated with Monitoring Progress

1. Limited staff time (52%)
2. Limited financial resources (24%)
3. No monitoring plan in place (22%)
4. Lack of political support (22%)
5. No measurable indicators to monitor plan goals/objectives (13%)
6. Other (14%) –
   - *Lack of political continuity*
   - *Tendency to start planning again rather than monitor or revise*

Challenges Associated with Plan Revision

1. Limited staff time (47%)
2. Limited financial resources (35%)
3. Plan revision not a priority (28%)
4. Lack of political support (26%)
5. Other (14%) –
   - *Lack of political continuity*
   - *Fear too much change too quickly*
   - *Tendency to start planning again rather than monitor or revise*

Community Involvement

In order to gauge the importance of local involvement and support for planning from community members, survey respondents were asked to identify:

- The importance of five forms of public involvement
- Challenges associated with public involvement
- Actions to build public support
- Actions to build local official support

Public Involvement

The first in this series of questions asked survey respondents to rate the importance of five components of a public involvement program, including:

- Publicity – to raise awareness or build support
- Education – to create an informed public
- Public input – to gather public knowledge, opinions and feedback
- Joint decision-making – to involve the public directly in decision-making
- Incentives and rewards – to motivate the public to participate

Publicity was considered the most critical aspect of public involvement, followed closely by education and input.

Each component could be ranked on a five point scale ranging from (1) 'unnecessary' to (5) 'critical'. Publicity, education and input were all ranked equally high, with roughly sixty percent identifying each of these activities as critical. Less than forty percent of survey respondents ranked joint decision-making as critical. Respondents had mixed feelings about the use of incentives and rewards as shown by the

Figure 12: Importance of Five Public Involvement Components

	Publicity	Education	Input	Decision-Making	Incentives
1 - Unnecessary		5%		7%	17%
2 -					17%
3 -	11%	7%	7%	17%	33%
4 -	24%	31%	30%	37%	25%
5 - Critical	63%	57%	62%	37%	7%

Legend: ■ 1 - Unnecessary ■ 2 - □ 3 - ■ 4 - ■ 5 - Critical
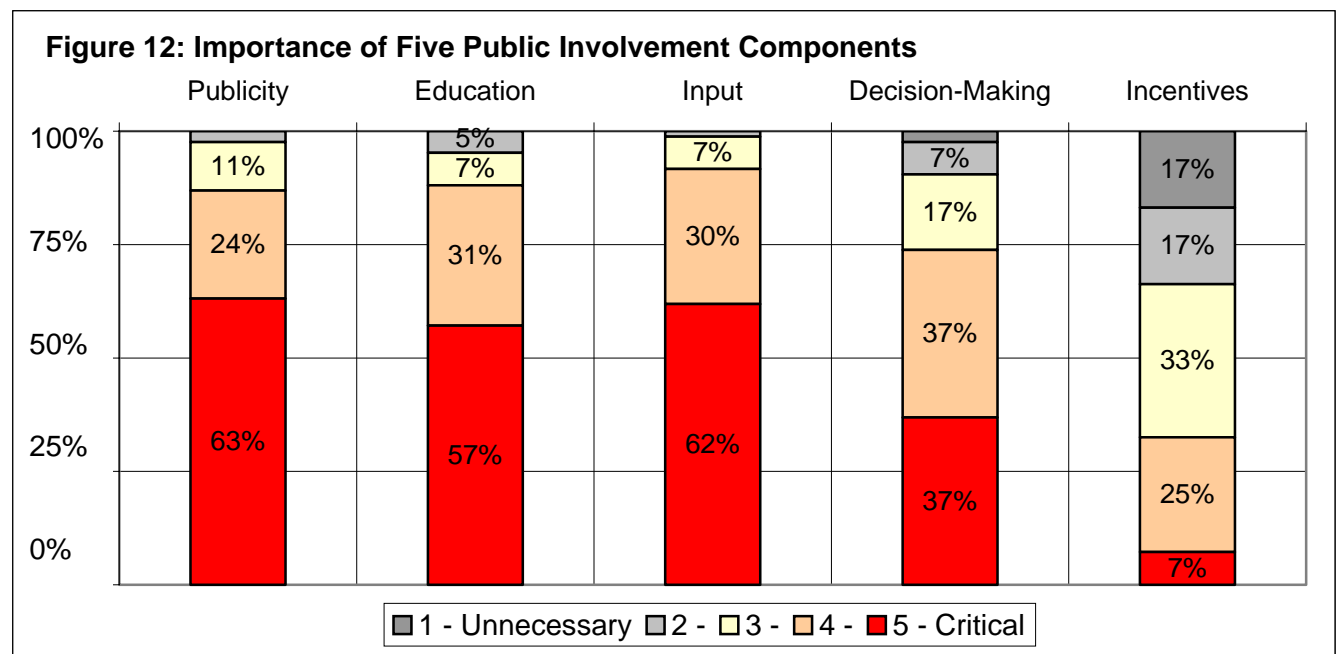
Community Involvement

distribution of rankings in **Figure 12**. About a third of respondents ranked incentives near the critical end of the scale (4 or 5), another third ranked them near the unnecessary end (1 or 2), and the remaining third was neutral.

Public Involvement Challenges

When asked to identify major challenges associated with involving the public in local planning projects, nearly two-thirds of respondents cited misinformation. Almost sixty percent also cited past negative experiences with planning and mistrust of local government. These were followed closely by lack of awareness and lack of citizen leadership. Clearly, Wisconsin communities are dealing with numerous and complex issues. Challenges were ranked as follows:

1. Public received misinformation (65%)
2. Past negative experiences (58%)
3. Public does not trust local government (58%)
4. Public is not aware of planning and/or planning issues (55%)
5. Lack of citizen leadership (55%)
6. Lack of motivating issues (46%)
7. Participants are not representative of community diversity (45%)
8. Public is opposed to planning and/or planning issues (38%)

Misinformation is currently the most pressing challenge for public involvement.

Community Support for Planning

Next, survey respondents were asked to rate the importance of support for planning from local officials, interest groups, and the general public. The same five point scale was used with (1) meaning 'unnecessary' and (5) meaning 'critical'. The support of local officials was ranked as most important. Over eighty percent of survey respondents felt that local

Survey respondents feel the support of local officials is critical to the success of local planning efforts.

Figure 13: Importance of Community Support

	Local officials	Interest Groups	General Public
	15%	16%	22%
	81%	53%	47%
		24%	28%

Legend: ■ 1 - Unnecessary ■ 2 - ■ 3 - ■ 4 - ■ 5 - Critical
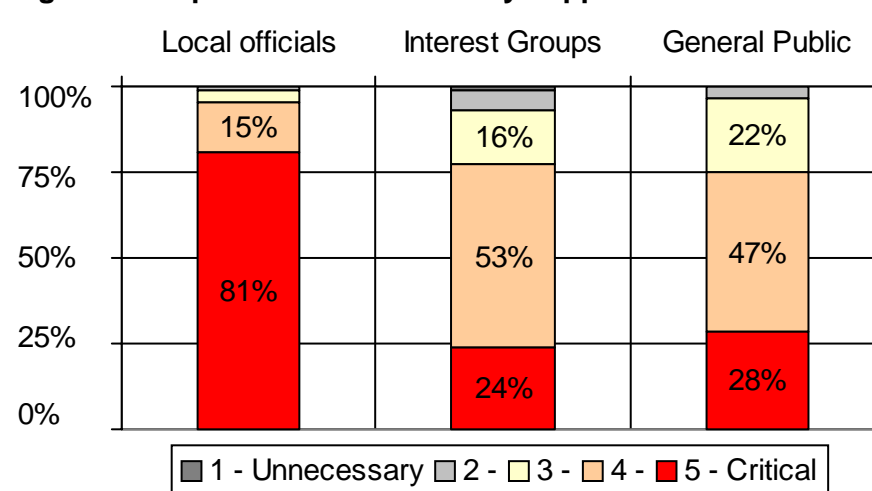
Community Involvement

official support was critical to the success of local planning projects. Only a quarter ranked the support of interest groups and the general public as critical. They did, however, feel that the support of these groups was important. An additional half of respondents ranked the importance of their support with a (4).

Techniques to Build Community Support

Lastly, respondents were asked to identify actions taken to build the support of local officials and the general public for planning. Involving each of these groups in the planning process was the technique used most often. Encouraging local supporters – both citizens and local officials – to build support among their peers and/or constituent also ranked highly. Other favored techniques in order of use include: meeting with opposition groups, involving neighboring communities, seeking external assistance, and launching a campaign to promote the value of planning. Providing incentives and rewards to build support was not widely favored.

Wisconsin communities build support for planning by involving local officials and the public.

Techniques to Build Local Official Support

1. Involve local agencies or departments in the planning process (70%)
2. Encourage local officials who support planning to build support among other local officials (55%)
3. Involve neighboring communities in joint planning (51%)
4. Encourage citizens who support planning to build support among local officials (46%)
5. Seek external assistance (39%)
6. Launch campaign promoting value of planning (33%)
7. Provide incentives or rewards for participation (1%)
   Other - Maintain ongoing communication with local officials
   Other - Provide education for local officials

Techniques to Build Public Support

1. Involve the public in the planning process (79%)
2. Encourage local officials who support planning to build public support (65%)
3. Encourage citizen leaders who support planning to build public support (58%)
4. Meet directly with opposition groups (56%)
5. Launch campaign promoting value of planning (32%)
6. Provide incentives or rewards for participation (5%)
   Other - Maintain ongoing communication using mass media, website, newsletter, direct mailings, etc.

Methods to Enhance Community Involvement

Various methods can be used to encourage the participation of the public, local governments, and partner organizations in planning and plan implementation. Methods range from providing financial or material incentives, such as training subsidies or promotional materials, to improving the logistics of meetings, or recognizing participants and their achievements. Survey respondents were supplied with a list of methods and asked to identify the techniques they use to engage each group in local planning projects.

Methods to Enhance Public Involvement

Survey respondents were first asked to identify methods to involve the public, including advisory committees, citizen groups and the general public, in planning. The most common method to involve the public was the use of flexible meeting times. Refreshments and snacks during meetings and formal invitations to participate were also widely used. Other suggested methods and the number of times they were used are displayed in **Figure 14**.

Figure 14: Methods to Enhance Public Involvement

Method	Frequency	Method	Frequency
Flexible meeting time	63	Stipend or travel reimbursement	13
Refreshments & snacks at meetings	56	Plaques or certificates	13
Formal invitation to participate	56	Recognition ceremonies	12
Press coverage	51	Parties, potlucks, dinners	12
Flexible meeting location	47	Subsidies for training, workshops, etc	10
Letters of appreciation	35	Free child care during meetings	5
Free parking	30	Car pool	5
Fieldtrips	23	Free promotional merchandise	4
Celebration of milestones	15	Free clothing	1
		Discount coupons	1

In addition to the methods indicated above, respondents also suggested the use of communication devices, such as mass email, literature drops and editorials to encourage public involvement. They suggested devising a clear protocol of responsibilities for all participants.

Methods to Enhance Local Government Involvement

Next, survey respondents were asked to identify methods to involve local units of government in planning, such as plan commission members, local officials, and agencies or departments. The opportunity for intergovernmental cooperation was cited most frequently. This was followed by recognition devises, including a formal invitation to

Methods to Enhance Community Involvement

participate, and press coverage. The frequency of other methods to engage local government in planning is shown in **Figure 15**.

Figure 15: Methods to Enhance Local Government Involvement

Method	Frequency	Method	Frequency
Opportunity for intergovernmental cooperation	58	Staff or equipment sharing	24
Formal invitation to participate	46	Agreements on cost-benefit sharing	18
Press coverage	45	Subsidies for training, workshops, etc	17
Refreshments & snacks at meetings	41	Celebration of milestones	9
Opportunity to fulfill institutional mission	33	Time off for participation after working hours	9
Letters of appreciation	29	Plaques or certificates	8
Fieldtrips	28	Parties/potlucks/dinners	7
Travel reimbursement	24	Recognition ceremonies	6

Methods to Enhance Involvement of Partner Organizations

Finally, respondents were asked to identify methods to engage partner organizations in planning, such as university research or service centers, non-government organizations, and state and federal agencies. A formal invitation to participate, the opportunity for the partner organization to fulfill its mission, and the learning opportunity created by the collaboration were cited as top methods to engage external organizations. Other methods are described in **Figure 16**.

Figure 16: Methods to Enhance Involvement of Partner Organizations

Method	Frequency	Method	Frequency
Formal invitation to participate	43	Opportunity for additional projects	24
Opportunity for partner to fulfill mission	41	Free parking	21
Learning opportunity for partner staff, students, etc.	37	Recognition ceremonies	8
Local information for partner research	32	Travel reimbursement	5
Refreshments & snacks at meetings	29	Plaques or certificates	5
Press coverage	29	Celebration of milestones	5
Letters of appreciation	26		

External Assistance

Many communities rely on the assistance of external organizations to provide data, technical assistance, training, education and other resources. To gauge the level of assistance currently available (particularly related to natural resources planning) and to improve access to assistance in the future, communities were asked to provide the following information:

- Preferred format for assistance
- Type and source of assistance received (related to natural resources)
- Challenges associated with external assistance
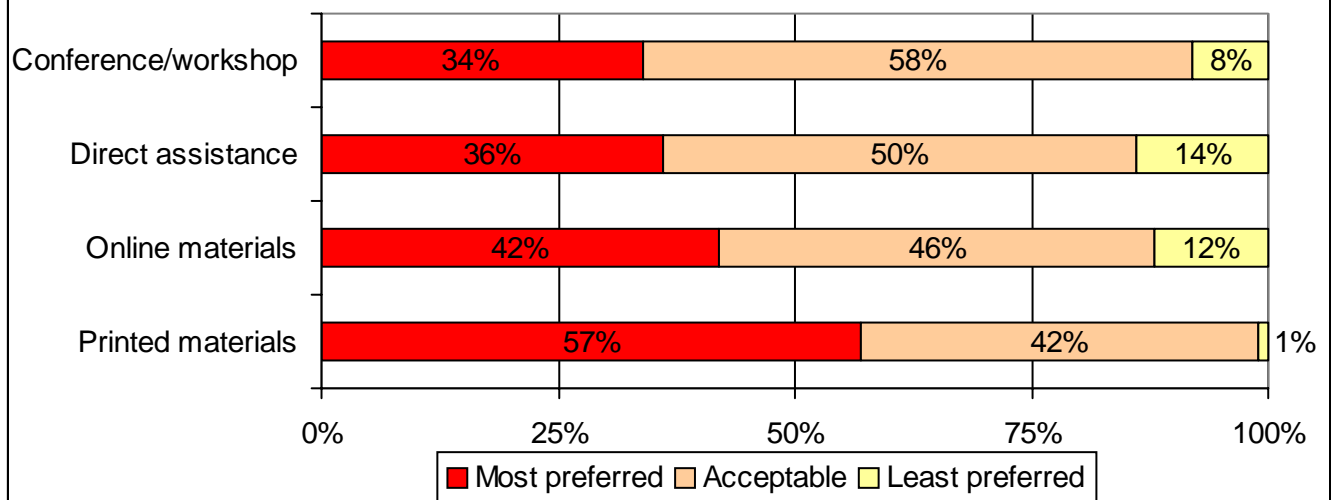
Format for Assistance

First, respondents were asked to rate their preference for receiving assistance from outside organizations using the following formats:

- Printed materials
- Online materials
- Conference or workshop
- Direct assistance from organization

The majority of survey respondents rated all forms of assistance highly. Over eighty-five percent considered all forms 'most preferred' or 'acceptable'. Printed materials were rated most favorably. Close to sixty percent ranked this format as 'most preferred'. Online materials, followed by direct assistance, and conferences and workshops, respectively, were rated as the next 'most preferred' methods. Contrary to concerns expressed by some planning practitioners and community members, online access to materials does not seem to be a problem, at least by the professionals responding to this survey.

Although printed materials are the preferred format for assistance, all types were rated favorably.

Figure 17: Preferred Format for Assistance

Format	Most preferred	Acceptable	Least preferred
Conference/workshop	34%	58%	8%
Direct assistance	36%	50%	14%
Online materials	42%	46%	12%
Printed materials	57%	42%	1%

External Assistance

Natural Resources Assistance

Survey respondents were next asked to identify if they received assistance from outside organizations related to natural resources planning or management. Two-thirds of survey respondents (67%) report receiving assistance for this purpose.

These respondents were asked to identify the organization(s) and type(s) of assistance they received related to natural resources. The following categories of assistance were suggested, which complement the planning activities previously identified:

- Educational materials
- Training
- Public involvement
- Design of the planning process
- Budget preparation
- Data collection
- Data analysis
- Visioning
- Goal and objective development
- Alternative scenario development
- Mapping
- Strategy selection
- Plan or ordinance drafting
- Other (able to describe in text box)

Overall, planning consultants (including private consultants and regional planning services) are called upon most frequently to assist local communities with natural resources planning projects. They generally help to develop and draft the technical components of natural resources plans, including data, maps, goals, objectives and recommendations. UW-Extension assists in complementary areas. They regularly provide communities with education, training, and assistance related to public involvement and visioning. State agencies (such as DNR and DOT), non-governmental organizations, county departments, and federal agencies also provide various types of assistance to Wisconsin communities.

Analyzing the forms of assistance provided, educational materials appear to be most readily available. Assistance for data collection and analysis is also readily available, followed by mapping and public involvement assistance. The number of times each type of assistance was provided by each set of organizations is displayed in **Figure 18**.

Two-thirds of survey respondents have received assistance on a natural resources project or issue.

Planning consultants and UW-Extension provide assistance for natural resources planning most often.

External Assistance

Figure 18: Type of Assistance Provided by External Organizations

	Planning Consult	UW-Extension	State Agencies	NGO's	County	Federal Agencies	*Sum*
Educational materials	13	30	20	7	2	1	*73*
Data collection	25	9	15	3	2	3	*57*
Data analysis	21	8	8	4	3	2	*46*
Mapping	22	5	10	2	3	2	*44*
Public involvement	10	19	3	6	2	0	*40*
Plan process design	14	17	1	3	2	1	*38*
Training	3	22	8	2	0	0	*35*
Goals and objectives	15	10	2	4	1	2	*34*
Draft plan/ordinance	12	4	8	3	2	1	*30*
Alternative scenarios	11	6	3	1	2	2	*25*
Visioning	6	8	2	2	0	1	*19*
Strategy selection	9	5	3	0	1	0	*18*
Budget preparation	9	3	3	0	1	0	*16*
Sum	*170*	*146*	*86*	*37*	*21*	*15*	

Challenges to External Assistance

When asked about barriers encountered when working with external organizations, respondents most frequently citied the 'limited availability' of organizations (36%). About a quarter of respondents 'did not know who to contact for help'. An equal number (14%) also cited 'incompatible working style or personality' and 'not what we were looking for' as other barriers to assistance. In addition to the categories suggested on the following table, a few respondents cited public mistrust of outsiders, and assistance that was too general, or not specific to local conditions.

Figure 19: Challenges to External Assistance

Challenge	Percentage
Limited availability	36%
Did not know who to contact for help	23%
Incompatible working style or personality	14%
Not what we were looking for	14%
Received misinformation	9%
Too much assistance	3%
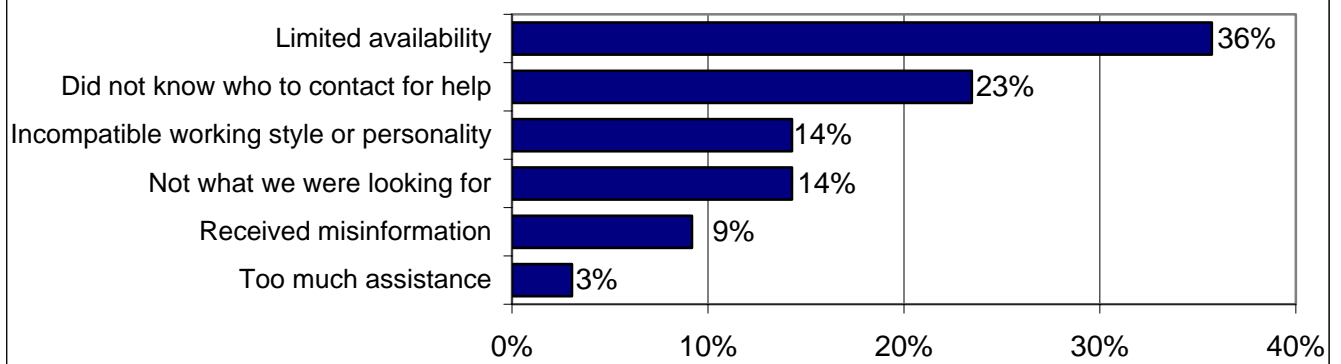
Discussion

This survey was designed to investigate and document the experience of local communities and professionals involved in planning in Wisconsin. We have documented a rich tapestry of experiences, including many challenges and frustrations, as well as success stories. Through these experiences, we have also discovered many commonalities and lessons that can be used by the Wisconsin planning practitioner. The following paragraphs highlight general findings and conclusions drawn from the survey results.

Background of Survey Respondents

The findings in this report, while based on a broad cross-section of professionals involved in planning, are limited to the experience of the individuals who participated in this survey. An understanding of their background is important for interpreting the results. The majority of individuals who completed the survey work as professional planners and are employed by municipal governments. About a half work for rural communities. In the past five years, survey respondents worked on an average of five projects. Comprehensive and land use projects were completed most frequently. Ninety percent were involved in at least one multi-jurisdictional project in the past five years. Most respondents report positive or somewhat positive experiences with planning.

Financial Resources

A lack of financial resources was identified as one of the most pressing planning challenges by survey respondents. Funding is an issue particularly when initiating or implementing a new plan or project. Funding concerns are also associated with data collection and land use mapping activities.

Currently, the State's Comprehensive Planning Grant serves as the major source of extramural funding for local planning projects. However, communities also identified a number of other less frequently utilized funding programs, many of which are sponsored by the State and Federal government. Though information on these programs is available state-wide, we need to encourage access to these resources among local communities. Many of the funding opportunities identified by survey respondents have specific funding goals, such as economic development or natural resources protection. When these issues fit within the scope of larger planning project, communities should be encouraged to apply for them.

In addition to the Comprehensive Planning Grant Program, many funding programs are available to support local planning efforts.

Discussion

Planning Process

Most planning processes reported by survey respondents include similar planning activities, such as data collection, analysis, visioning, goals and objectives, and mapping. Many processes do not include scenario development or strategy selection. These activities were considered difficult to complete, as was visioning. There appears to be a need to develop additional educational resources and technical assistance related to these activities. Survey respondents also report a drop in planning activity following plan adoption. Although this may be explained in part by communities recently adopting plans, other communities appear to be struggling with implementation and monitoring activities. Several communities, in particular, reported a lack of political continuity as a barrier to plan implementation. Some communities would likely benefit from an increased level of technical assistance related to the use and implementation of various regulatory, incentive, and other types of implementation tools.

Technical assistance is needed to help communities with plan implementation.

Community Involvement

Survey respondents most commonly cited involving local officials and the public in planning as a technique to build community support. At the same time, communities identified numerous challenges to involving the public in local planning projects. Among the top challenges were misinformation, past negative experiences, and mistrust of local government. It is difficult to erase the damage caused by any of these activities. It is particularly difficult for assistance organizations to play a lead role in overcoming these challenges. The responsibility falls upon local leaders, community groups, Extension agents, and other local supporters to re-build trust and support for local planning efforts. One suggestion is to launch an awareness-building campaign that is equally aggressive as some of the current anti-planning campaigns initiated across the State. Another option is to open up local processes as much as possible by involving community members from all walks of life, as well as the media. The involvement of these individuals will encourage communication about the project throughout the community.

Community members need to build trust and support for planning from the bottom up.

Lack of awareness and lack of local leadership were also considered major challenges. They can be combated through awareness-building techniques and leadership development programs. A major challenge is to make awareness and participatory techniques accessible and interesting to the public. Experimentation with more exciting and inventive techniques is needed. Communities may also want to consider recruiting participation and leadership in different places. A focus on involving the youth, elderly, cultural groups, and other marginalized groups is needed.

Discussion

Methods to Enhance Community Involvement

Survey respondents identified a wide range of methods used to enhance the involvement of the public, local government, and external organizations in local planning projects. Some techniques that were frequently used include: formal invitations to participate, letters of appreciation, flexible meeting times, refreshments and snacks during meetings, and press coverage.

Some survey respondents had mixed feelings about the use of 'incentives,' particularly those involving financial or material rewards. One respondent made the comment: "giving materialistic rewards is unethical and may be misconstrued as 'bribery,' especially by newspaper reporters." Incentives do not need to include outright payment for coming to meetings, but in some cases could be used to defray the costs of participation. Some financial incentives, such as travel reimbursement and stipends for training or workshops were used by a moderate number of survey respondents. Most respondents provided refreshments and snacks during meetings. Overall though, respondents rarely used incentives involving additional costs.

Incentives can be used to offset the costs of participation.

When asked to rate the importance of incentives on a five point scale, about a third of respondents thought they were important, another third felt they were unnecessary, and the remaining third was neutral. Compared to other components of a public involvement program (publicity, education, input and joint decision-making), incentives were rated as the least critical. Furthermore, when asked about techniques to build community support among local officials and the public, incentives were rarely selected. This sporadic and sometimes infrequent use of incentives is not surprising. Parallel to Buckwalter, Parsons, and Wright's finding, the use of incentives by local governments for public participation is not widespread (1993). These findings also underscore the necessity of tailoring a public involvement program to local conditions. In some communities, it might be politically and culturally acceptable to offer incentives for participation, whereas in others it might not.

Public participation techniques, including incentives, must be tailored to the local community.

Despite mixed findings, incentives have the potential to motivate participation in community planning activities. Extension educators and local planning staff may want to consider consciously exploring incentive programs concurrent to the design of their planning process. Many incentives are free or low cost, such as recognition, press coverage, and mutually beneficial relationships. Others involve moderate expenses, such as providing child care, refreshments, snacks, travel reimbursement, etc. Funding for a wide range of participation techniques, including incentives, should be budgeted for in the local planning process in order to encourage the participation of all sectors of the community, including the public, local government agencies and officials, and outside organizations.

Discussion

External Assistance

According to survey respondents, planning consultants, UW-Extension, and state agencies are most frequently sought after to assist local communities with natural resources planning projects. Planning consultants most often assist communities with the technical components of natural resources planning projects, including the analysis and drafting of data, maps, goals, objectives, recommendations and ordinances. UW-Extension plays a large role in complementary areas, through education, training, and assistance related to public involvement and visioning.

When comparing the types of assistance provided to the difficulty of planning activities, there is a strong parallel. The activities ranked least difficult by survey respondents, including data collection, analysis and land use mapping, were among the forms of assistance that were provided most frequently. Education was also readily available, but was not ranked as a particular type of planning activity. It appears that these activities can be completed fairly easily by local communities as a result of the strong external assistance that is available to them.

When asked about barriers to receiving assistance, the top complaint of individuals was the limited availability of assistance organizations. Another common barrier was that respondents did not know who to contact for help. There are many state agencies, non-government organizations and university resources in Wisconsin that can be called upon to help local communities. Efforts to develop some sort of resource handbook should be considered so that communities can readily identify sources of external assistance available. Just recently, the Wisconsin Department of Administration published the Directory of Resources for Comprehensive Planning in Wisconsin (DOA, 2003).

Resources are needed to match communities with assistance providers.

Discussion

Conclusion

This survey documented a wide range of experiences with planning in Wisconsin. Local communities are faced with numerous challenges, including attracting and maintaining an adequate level of financial resources, skilled human resources, political and community support, and meaningful public participation, among others. Funding and assistance from local, regional and state programs and organizations play a vital role in supporting many local processes and participation programs. Nonetheless, there are many challenges which can only be solved by locals themselves. Addressing issues of misinformation, mistrust, and past negative experiences with planning, and building the support of local officials and the public, calls for many creative solutions. Local leaders, staff, Extension educators, and others will increasingly be called upon to explore alternative participatory techniques, including incentives when appropriate. In crafting local solutions, the results of this survey can be used as a starting point to explore common challenges and solutions that have and have not worked for other Wisconsin communities.

Methodology

Survey Design

We devised a total of fifteen multi-part questions to explore the following topics:

- Local planning resources and environment
- Planning process and challenges
- Community involvement in planning
- Methods to enhance community involvement
- External assistance
- Background information

To encourage respondents to complete the survey quickly, in its entirety, and to facilitate tabulation of the results, we avoided open-ended questions to the extent possible. Most questions required respondents to select from a list of options. Options were devised based on our experiences with planning projects involving partner communities. When appropriate, we provided space for respondents to record 'other' answers or additional comments.

We elected to administer the survey via the internet for several reasons: it is cost effective, we were able to contact our target population using existing listservs, and we anticipated a higher response rate using the internet (participants are able to respond with minimal time and cost). We were also interested in testing the effectiveness of an online survey as opposed to the traditional paper method.

We used Microsoft FrontPage software to design the web survey and Microsoft Excel to compile and analyze the results. Due to the limited storage capacity of Excel, we had to modify the survey design slightly so that all responses could be accurately imported and stored in the Excel spreadsheet.

Pretest

We subjected the survey to two levels of pre-testing. First, CLUE faculty and staff reviewed, tested, and revised the survey instrument several times. Next, the survey was sent out for external review. To ensure that the survey was user-friendly over the internet and questions were comprehensible to professionals from different fields, we selected three professionals representing target populations to pre-test the survey – a CNRED educator, a zoning administrator, and a planner.

Pre-testers received an email from us explaining the purpose of the survey and instructions how to test and comment on the survey. They were asked to participate as if responding to the real survey, submit the

completed results over the internet, and record the time required. We provided them with a list of questions to evaluate the survey and followed up with a phone call to gather their comments. Feedback from the pre-testers was very positive. We made minor changes before sending out the final version of the survey.

Distribution

To encourage the participation of Wisconsin planning professionals, such as local government planning and zoning staff, consultants, and UW-Extension educators, we sent out email invitations to the following groups:

- Wisconsin chapter of the American Planning Association (WAPA) listserv (exact number of email addresses cannot be determined, but within 520)
- UW-Extension Community Natural Resources and Economic Development (CNRED) listserv (71 email addresses)
- Wisconsin Zoning Administrators listserv (60 email addresses)
- Directors of the nine Regional Planning Commissions

The WAPA listserv contained email addresses for a wide range of planning professionals in Wisconsin, including private consultants, municipal planning and zoning staff, planning students, educators, practitioners in non-government organizations, and state and federal agencies. Because the WAPA listserv comprised a very diverse group of professionals, it is likely that a number of individuals received the email invitation multiple times. They were asked to complete the survey only once.

We received a total of 94 responses in two and half weeks. Six incomplete responses were discarded. A total of 88 responses were used for compiling the results.

Limitations

As with any survey, there are several limitations associated with this one. A primary limitation is the large scope of questions included in the survey. We asked respondents about planning in general and received responses related to a wide range of planning projects (ranging from comprehensive, to land use, economic development, natural resources, etc.). It may have been difficult for communities to generalize across multiple projects.

A related challenge was the wide range of planning professionals invited to participate in the survey. Zoning administrators, in particular had a difficult time responding to the survey. In some communities, the

Methodology

functions of both the planning and zoning department are combined with a small number of staff serving both. In other communities, the functions are fully separated. Zoning staff from the latter are not equipped to respond to the survey. Professionals who work for multiple communities, such as private consultants, regional planning commissions, and UW-Extension educators, also had difficulty completing some items on the survey. Many questions were geared towards the experience of a single community. Some professionals were unable to answer these questions, or had to make generalizations about their experience with multiple communities. The same can be said for respondents who participated in multi-jurisdictional planning efforts.

Finally, the design of the survey was limited due to the storage capacity of Excel. We had to modify our survey design slightly, eliminating some questions, and limiting the options provided in others, in order to accurately import and store the results in an Excel spreadsheet. As a result, the survey questionnaire is not as robust or flexible as we would have liked.

Buckwalter, Doyle, Robert Parsons, and Norman Wright. (1993). Citizen Participation in Local Government: The Use of Incentives and Rewards. Public Management, 75(9), 11-15.

Center for Land Use Education. (January 2004). Community Planning Survey. Available online: https://www.uwsp.edu/cnr/landcenter/survey/survey_introduction.htm.

Wisconsin Department of Administration. (2004). Comprehensive Planning Grant Program. Available online: http://www.doa.state.wi.us/pagesubtext_detail.asp?linksubcatid=368.

Wisconsin Department of Administration, Division of Intergovernmental Relations and the Wisconsin Land Council, State Agency Resource Working Group. (October 2003.) Directory of Resources for Comprehensive Planning in Wisconsin. Available online: http://www.doa.state.wi.us/dir/documents/Resource_directory101703.pdf.

Wisconsin Department of Transportation. (2004). Database of Wisconsin's Local Comprehensive Plans. Updated February 5, 2004. Available online: http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/docs/compplan-database.xls.