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FROM: Bill Allen, State Director, USDA Rural Development

SUBJECT: Position Paper on Planning and Standardization issues included in the Interagency
MOU Signed in 2000

DATE: September 25, 2001

Thank you all for attending this meeting at the Denali Commission this morning to discuss a couple of the items in the MOU, i.e. Planning and Standardization. I believe we all recognize the need to require planning - Community Comprehensive Plans, Feasibility Studies and Business Plans. A fear I have is that we are asking, no requiring these plans, but the real intent and the purpose is lost. Instead of the intent and purpose of planning, i.e. "It is visionary, yet realistic. It anticipates a future that is both desirable and achievable. It provides a structure for inspired but practical decision making and follow through." PLANNING IS COMMON SENSE !!!!!

As the saying goes "IF YOU FAIL TO PLAN, YOU PLAN TO FAIL".....

Basic application of a PLAN would be used in the community budget process. The PLAN should guide the budget; the PLAN and the budget are interactive. The PLAN should manage for results and etc.

But, my fear is that the PLAN is just being used to satisfy our requirements for funding and the rest of the reasons for developing a community plan are thrown out the window.

I'm told that some of the larger communities have the funds to hire consultants to write a plan. But there again, whose plan is it and is it really applicable to the vision of the community leadership?

The real question is "Are the smaller villages being left behind because they can not afford to pay \$25,000 -\$50,000 for a planner? I submit to you this morning a plan to advance to you that would satisfy a recommendation in the MOU we are all a party to.

The Plan comes in two parts. A program involving University of Alaska Native students who are enrolled in the Masters programs at the College of Rural Alaska. The notion is that the students will be funded to provide assistance to the leadership in the various small communities in writing Comprehensive Plans. A detail of how this would work is an issue for discussion this morning if you, in fact, believe this concept has merit.

If you agree that we should give this idea a try, the first step for us is to figure out how we can develop a standardized planning format that students and the communities could use that would satisfy the requirements across all agency lines.

Pat Poland in his report to the Lt. Governor on the 1st year implementation review of the MOU stated under the heading of *ISSUES TO ADDRESS* "Barriers to developing community plans still exist. On the one hand, there are no common standards to define what a community plan should encompass. On the other hand, funding for community plans is still limited." We can develop a set of *common standards* for the communities to follow through a standardized format for the planning document. If we can also involve our University students in the planning process, the bill at the end of the day will be considerably less for a better product in my opinion.

Simultaneously, we could address the issue of a standardized funding assistance application. We need to identify requested data that is common to all applications and consolidate that information in a single form or data bank to reduce the redundancy. It will make life easier and less intimidating for both the applicant as well as the funding source.

Consider this. Let's establish a panel of 6 individuals, 3 from the State and 3 from the federal government. Provide the panel with funding and assign it the objective of hiring a contractor with experience in pulling together data from multiple sources for common use. The panel could assemble the necessary documents and review them to determine common data requests. From this work, a standardized application format or a database could be produced. When complete, it could be used to provide the information that funding agencies need for their special and exclusive purposes.

I would like to entertain discussion on this approach.