
Appendix C: Site Visit and Phone Interview Methodology

The examples of best practices found throughout this report come from 34 jurisdictions we visited or called for in-depth interviews. We selected the jurisdictions based upon data collected from our snow and ice control survey and six focus groups held around the state. We used information obtained from the interviews to describe the effective snow and ice control practices found in Chapter 3.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the site visits and phone interviews was to supplement our survey information and give us a first-hand look at local governments' effective practices. Although the surveys indicated which jurisdictions used particular snow and ice control practices, they did not provide a detailed account of jurisdictions' experiences with those practices. We wanted to observe, when appropriate during our site visits, the practices first hand. Direct observation allowed us to examine the practices' convenience and usefulness. Observing the practices also provided information regarding their transferability, especially problems that other local governments might be able to avoid. Further, both site visits and phone interviews gave practitioners the opportunity to give us a complete description of their departments' practices, including: the history behind the practice; how, when, and why it works; its advantages and disadvantages; and its cost effectiveness.

METHODOLOGY

We used information obtained from our surveys and from six focus groups to select jurisdictions with a high number of potentially innovative or effective practices. We also looked for jurisdictions representing a range of types (county, city, and township), sizes (population), and locations (geographic distribution). Because of time constraints, we could

not interview all jurisdictions that appeared to have effective practices.

We selected 34 jurisdictions, all of which participated in the interviews. Once we contacted a jurisdiction and arranged an interview, we left the choice of interview participants to the discretion of the person we contacted. We conducted site visit interviews with 30 jurisdictions and phone interviews with the other four. Although we designed the interviews to be approximately 60 to 90 minutes in length and allowed another 30 minutes for observation during site visits, some visits lasted longer. The jurisdictions interviewed include the counties, cities, and townships listed in Table C1.

We obtained permission from those we interviewed to use their jurisdictions' name, as well as contact persons and phone numbers, if we included their practices in our report.

QUESTIONNAIRE

We designed 25 largely open-ended interview questions for the site visits and phone contacts. We developed the questions to obtain general information about the jurisdictions, information on the best practices, and concluding information. We repeated the questions regarding best practice information for each practice identified as effective in a jurisdiction. In this appendix, we condensed the interview schedule to save space, omitting much of the open areas used to record interview responses.

Table C1: Jurisdictions Visited or Telephoned

11 Counties	Population	
Anoka	243,641	
Douglas	28,674	
Hennepin	1,032,431	
Kittson	5,767	
Martin	22,914	
McLeod	32,030	
Otter Tail	50,714	
Polk	32,498	
Ramsey	485,765	
Waseca	18,079	
Washington	145,896	

20 Cities	County	Population
Albert Lea	Freeborn	18,300
Alden*	Freeborn	623
Bloomington	Hennepin	89,000
Chisholm	St. Louis	5,280
Edina	Hennepin	35,000
Hoyt Lakes	St. Louis	2,324
Jordan	Scott	3,000
Little Canada	Ramsey	9,081
Madison	Lac Qui Parle	1,935
Mankato	Blue Earth	31,510
Moorhead	Clay	32,000
Mounds View	Ramsey	12,638
New Hope	Hennepin	20,000
Owatonna	Steele	19,718
Paynesville	Stearns	2,285
Rochester*	Olmsted	76,000
St. Peter	Nicollet	9,200
Virginia	St. Louis	9,307
White Bear Lake	Ramsey	24,930
Woodbury	Washington	30,000

3 Townships	County	Population
Forest Lake Twp.	Washington	6,690
Hawk Creek Twp.*	Renville	228
Pine City Twp.*	Pine	973

Note: An asterisk (*) indicates jurisdictions interviewed by telephone.

Office of the Legislative Auditor

*Snow and Ice Control Best Practices Review***SITE VISIT AND PHONE INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE**

Site Interviewer:

Date:

Jurisdiction Visited:

Best Practice(s) Identified:

Individual(s) Interviewed:

I. General Questions

1. Have you defined a level(s) of snow and ice control service in your jurisdiction? *(For instance, main roads will be plowed in "x" hours; main roads will be cleared to the pavement; "y" tons of snow will be removed in "z" hours; etc.)*
2. If yes, have you had success in meeting this level?
 all of the time most of the time some of the time
 little of the time none of the time

Why or why not?

3. Thinking about your own jurisdiction and snow and ice control, are there factors which influence the practices you use? What characteristics make your particular jurisdiction unique? Are there elements which distinguish your jurisdiction from other jurisdictions? *(What characteristics require you to tailor or construct your activities differently?...size and population; geographic location; political structures or entities; administration; rules and regulations; tax base or burden; budget and expenditures; type of streets, roads and highways; environmental constraints; public needs and demands; etc.)*

II. Best Practice(s) Questions

1. Please describe this practice. *(What is it?...How does it work?...When do you use it?...Why do you use it?...Who uses it?...etc.)*

Interviewer Questions
(site-specific best practice questions devised by interviewer)

2. When did you first implement this practice? How long have you been using this practice?
3. Why did you initially implement this practice? What problems, if any, were you hoping to overcome?
4. Has your reason for implementing this practice been achieved? (*Have you solved your problem(s)? Have you accomplished your goal(s)? Have you realized your objective(s)?*) Why or why not?
5. Did you have any problems implementing this practice? If so, what? Why were these problems?
6. Have you had any problems with this practice since implementation? Have you made any modifications? If so, what problems and / or modifications? Why?
7. What are the benefits (advantages) of this practice? Why?
8. What are the drawbacks (disadvantages) of this practice? Why?
9. What do you estimate is the yearly cost of this practice? Upon what do you base this cost estimate?
10. Does this practice produce any type of savings for your jurisdiction? (*i.e. time, money, resources, hassle, etc.*) Why or why not? What types? Explain.
11. Do you believe this is an effective practice? Why or why not?
12. Have you evaluated the effectiveness of this practice? If no, how do you determine whether this particular practice is more effective than an alternative? If yes, what method(s) did you use to determine if this particular practice is more effective than an alternative?

13. Are the residents in your jurisdiction aware of this practice?

- no **(if no, proceed to question 14)**
 yes

a) If yes, what is their perception of this practice?

- excellent good fair poor
 they are not aware of the practice I don't know

Why? Upon what do you base your answer?

14. Are the members of your city council / county board aware of this practice?

- no **(if no, proceed to question 15)**
 yes

a) If yes, what is their perception of this practice?

- excellent good fair poor
 they are not aware of the practice I don't know

Why? Upon what do you base your answer?

15. Do you think other counties, cities or towns could also use this practice in their own jurisdiction? Why or why not?

16. What characteristics or attributes does a jurisdiction need to have if it is considering using this particular practice?

17. What "tips" or advice would you offer to a jurisdiction to help make this practice a success?

III. Closing Questions

1. Are there other unique and/or innovative snow and ice control practices in your jurisdiction of which we should be aware? If yes, what practices? Why are they noteworthy?
2. Are there other communities or jurisdictions with unique or innovative snow and ice control practices you believe we should contact? If yes, which jurisdictions?

3. Do you have any final comments, suggestions or recommendations concerning this project?

4. Do you have any questions you'd like to ask?

5. If we decide to note your jurisdiction as an example of a "best practice" in our report, may we include a name and phone number for interested jurisdictions to contact if they would like more information about your practice?