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### **ACEC and MML Foundation Enhance QBS Message with Distance Learning for Local Officials**

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In March 2003, the board of directors of the American Council of Engineering Companies of Michigan (ACEC/M) heard an interesting presentation. The Michigan Municipal League (MML) Foundation was undertaking a project called "Enhancing Local Government" that would create training resources for local public officials on CD-ROMs. They were asking ACEC/M to support this project by raising funds and giving technical advice for a resource on public infrastructure.

One important component of the project would explain how officials select their partners when undertaking an infrastructure project. In June of 1987, the legislature passed Concurrent Resolution No. 206 urging state government and others to select design professionals based upon qualifications. In the Resolution, the legislature named ACEC/M as one of the organizations to lead the effort to formulate criteria for the selections process, best known as Qualifications-Based Selection (QBS). Since that time, ACEC/M has made it a priority to educate owners and public officials on the process. The board of directors realized that the MML Foundation's program would be a major step in meeting their QBS objective of reaching local officials with the QBS message. Don Lund, ACEC/M 2002-'03 president, and Steve Wagner, then ACEC/M executive director, agreed to take the lead on raising the funds and providing material and experts for the CD-ROM.

ACEC of Michigan looked to member firms, the national ACEC, and several affiliates to support this effort. In all, twenty-six member firms and organizations contributed to the effort of raising the \$85,000 necessary to put this resource on the shelf.

In the section on "Selecting Partners," the Infrastructure CD-ROM defines QBS, the steps in the selection process, and the benefits of using qualifications and experience when choosing design professionals. Key officials were interviewed and state-of-the-art video clips were used in the module to share project successes and answer tough questions. The cities of Southfield, Port Huron, Brighton and Taylor were tapped as examples of the successful implementation and use of the QBS process.

The development of the CD-ROM expanded into neighboring states, as well. Don Mader, executive director of ACEC/Ohio, and Jim Bain, QBS facilitator from Indiana, were tapped for interviews. The project director wanted to ensure that users of the resource understood that Michigan is not alone; over 45 other states have laws that support the QBS process.

Key infrastructure projects were identified by the project director to be featured in the resource's section on "Nuts and Bolts." These projects are used to teach public officials unfamiliar with infrastructure just how roads, buildings and wastewater treatment plants are built. If they know the steps of construction, they will know more about the planning, hiring and financing processes in which they will be involved.

Through several case studies, local public officials can learn the steps of building infrastructure components. Original photography and videography show the building of a roundabout in Brighton, as well as the placement of a new roadbed over a former swamp in a Brighton neighborhood. Viewers can see how construction crews and machinery are used in all the stages of building. A comparable case study was used with the Southfield Library as Library Director Doug Zyskowski, and Owner's Representative Tom Marchesano, describe the various steps involved and the way the QBS process played a prominent part in the construction of that forward-looking facility. Both men praised the QBS system for the way it facilitated construction, and provided the context among Southfield public officials that could ease problem points.

For water and sewer plants, the production crew went to the Kuhn Drain Project in Madison Heights and to Genesee County. Construction of a 30-million gallon wastewater overflow drain was explained by the construction supervisors, who also provided step-by-step photographs they had taken during construction. Local officials can see the construction of two 10 million gallon fresh water storage tanks in the eastern part of Genesee County, and can also see the refurbishment of a 40-year-old wastewater treatment facility in Montrose. Each of these is described by the construction supervisor with original photography and videography.

One of the strongest projects described in the resource is the "Lansing Works – Keep GM" initiative that involved then-Mayor David Hollister with Ray Tadgerson of Capital Consultants. The combination of engineering a process for keeping a major industry, along with engineering the infrastructure components that made that retention possible, was too powerful to ignore. That initiative is featured in a section of the CD called "When Infrastructure Meets Economic Development," and contains interviews with Hollister, Tadgerson and Matt Cullen from General Motors.

All firms and organizations that made financial contributions towards completion of the CD, as well as donating their time, expertise and experience, were recognized in the section entitled "Infrastructure Sources." This displays PDF files of selected Web pages and provides direct Internet links to company websites. It is a ready "desk reference" resource for local public officials seeking qualified professional design firms.

"We have a CD-ROM resource that will familiarize local public officials with the basic nature and ingredients of municipal infrastructure, teach them about the benefits of using the QBS process in selecting design professionals, and provide a resource for understanding local issues that arise during the construction of major infrastructure components," said George Goodman, executive director of the Michigan Municipal League. "We're happy to be a part of an effort to provide local public officials with a dynamic educational resource," said Ron Brenke, executive director of ACEC/Michigan. "Letting municipalities know that they can utilize consultants as

‘trusted advisors’ in achieving cost-effective, long-lasting infrastructure improvements is important to our members.”

For copies of the "Public Official's Guide to Municipal Infrastructure" CD-ROM, contact: ACEC/Michigan, 215 N. Walnut Street, Lansing, MI 48933. Phone: 517-332-2066 or email: [mail@acec-mi.org](mailto:mail@acec-mi.org).