

Technical Evaluation

US Partner(s): University of Alaska, Russian American Center

NIS Partner(s): Yakutsk State University
Magadan International Pedagogical Institute
Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk Pedagogical University

Location of site visit(s): Yakutsk, Russia

Date of visit(s): October 31 - November 1, 1996

Date report submitted to IREX: December 6, 1996

A) Discuss the strongest aspects of the technical and professional work being done by this partnership.

• The partnership

The partnership between the universities in both countries has benefited greatly from the activities funded by the grant. Through this grant, the US partner gained a greater understanding of its Russian partners' needs and requirements. The activities planned under this partnership were part of a larger integrated program aimed at improving the capacity of the Far East partners. Furthermore, activities between the partners that were subsidized by other grants served to enhance and complement the activities of the IPP grant. In particular, the American Russian Centers (ARCs) in each location provided considerable support to the activities funded by this grant. The ARCs provided the partnership with better communications, access to equipment and staff, and most importantly assistance with facilitation between the Russian and US partners. The role of the ARCs should not be downplayed. In Yakutsk, for example, the center helps to further develop the Economic Institute's faculty members by employing them as business consultants. The on-going relationship between the partners enhances the sustainability of grant activities and will continue long after the grant ends.

• The development of joint business program

The entire grant program revolves around a central goal, to develop a joint business program between the US and Russian educational institutions. The partners are concerned with ensuring their continued collaboration in the future. Grant activities are consistently being directed towards this overall goal. This has resulted in improved communication and a better understanding of each other's abilities. The US and Russian partners communicate on a regular basis and are aware of the barriers facing them. Trying to work around these barriers maximizes the return on their joint efforts. Courses have been chosen and

developed with the long term goal of integrating them into a joint program of study. Pursuing this joint goal will result in a partnership that will continue in the future.

•International Departments

Yakutsk and Magadan Universities have international departments which focus on finding new international partners and sources of financing. These departments coordinate the work being done under the various grants and ensure the cooperation of the various groups involved. These departments facilitate business development of the universities. They identify potential new academic partners and donor organizations and solicit their cooperation and funding. The international departments also ensure that other programs being implemented by the Russian partner complement the work done under the IPP grant, rather than duplicate it.

•Students as a resource

Faculty in Yakutsk and Magadan emphasized that this grant's primary goal is to improve the education that the Russian students receive. According to the evaluator, both sites evaluated have put this into effect by using the students as a valuable resource. Students from Yakutsk and Magadan Universities have been given the opportunity to study in Alaska for at least a semester. Upon their return to Russia, the students serve as interpreters for visiting professors from the US, expert translators of business education materials, and consultants for local businesses. This not only benefits the partners, but also enhances the education of the students because they can put into practice what they learned in the US. In addition, the Russian university benefits from the youth, energy, and knowledge of these students. (If the university subsidizes their time in Alaska, the students are required to work for the university, but they are paid for their work.)

Discuss the weakest aspects of technical and professional work being done by this partnership.

•Lax reporting

It was evident from the annual and quarterly reports that the US partners are lax about reporting activities, achievements, and success stories produced under this grant. IREX is overseeing the activities of 22 subgrantees, each of whom received very generous grants. IREX, therefore has a unique perspective on the activities of all the subgrantees, and can provide this partnership with valuable information, such as new teaching resources produced by other subgrantees. In addition, IREX can provide technical assistance and help facilitate the progression of the grant. However, IREX cannot properly fulfill this beneficial role if it does not have full and timely information from the partners. It is especially disturbing to observe the lack of communication between the Russian partners and IREX.

•Communications facilities

Good communication is critical for any successful partnership. Magadan and Yakutsk cited their lack of reliable e-mail facilities as their most pressing problem. In both Magadan and Yakutsk e-mail access exists, but the locations are inconvenient and the quantity of equipment available is inadequate.

•Lack of access to information

The Russian Far East is an isolated region. Due to bad telephone lines, unreliable mail, and enormous distances, access to information is difficult. As a result, the partners do not have basic information about the other USAID programs in their region and other regions in Russia, other donors, and most importantly, about business and economics. This information would be useful in helping the Russian partners teach business and economics classes and find new sources of financing.

Recommendations for Improvement:

•Lax reporting

The Russian partners act as if it is the responsibility of the US partners to communicate with IREX and USAID. In Yakutsk, for example, the partnership staff was surprised to learn that information about its short courses had not been made available to IREX and once they were aware of it, were quite willing to provide information directly. Communication with IREX would greatly improve if the Russian partners systematically provided IREX (in Moscow or Washington) with reports. For example, they could provide statistical information about how many and which staff members attended seminars organized by the University of Alaska in Yakutsk.

IREX could make a provision in each contract and budget for a staff member to be hired in both Russia and the US specifically to coordinate communications. This staff member could be held accountable for reports and other communications more easily than a large organization such as a university. This would provide a measure of needed autonomy for the Russian partner. In a number of cases in the past, the staff working on the grant were pressured by someone higher up in the university to send inappropriate university staff members (e.g., from another department) for training in Alaska.

•Communication facilities

The staff working on the IPP grant in Yakutsk and Magadan should be provided with their own computer, e-mail access, and e-mail account. In Yakutsk, the e-mail capacity already exists in the university but in another building. An individual e-mail address needs to be

assigned by the department of Informatics. Short distance radio modems will allow the staff to access the e-mail node from their location. In Magadan the partner should be provided with its own e-mail address and access.

•Lack of information

The Russian partners should be provided with information about other activities funded by USAID in their region and other regions of Russia. This information can be obtained directly from USAID, the Business Collaboration Center in Moscow, and the G-7 implementation group which manages the SIG database (headed by Susan Johnson).

B) What do the Russian or Ukrainian partners see as the "criteria for success" for their partnership project activities? How close are they to attaining them?

•Development of a joint program of study

In Magadan and Yakutsk the most important criteria for success is bringing the partners closer to developing a joint program of study with their partners in Alaska. This goal is the driving force behind this grant and other activities by the partners. Both institutes have developed courses that are recognized by institutions in their respective countries. Students from Yakutsk and Magadan have been able to transfer credits from their home institutes to Alaska University and vice versa. In addition, the Russian partners capacity to teach business courses has been enhanced as a result of this grant and courses specifically tailored to the Far East have been developed. The partners regularly exchange study plans and curricula and continuously modify the courses taught under this grant to adjust to new needs and requirements. It is important to note that this has become a two-way partnership. Russian faculty have taught a number of short courses in Alaska and they plan to teach full courses next year. However, developing a joint program of study is a long process and although work has progressed satisfactorily over the past year and a half, much still remains to be done. The Russian partners are quite aware of this and speak about future activities they are planning with the University of Alaska. For example, the partners plan to modify their train-the-trainer programs. They hope to send fewer professors from Russia to Alaska, but for a longer period of time. In addition, they are discussing the possibility of incorporating a long-distance study component into their program.

•Building local staff capacity

The partners in Magadan and Yakutsk, especially the latter, are concerned with the on-going development of their business and economics faculty. This process began before the grant started. It is evident that staff in Yakutsk and Magadan have refined their teaching methods as a result of the activities of this grant. In Yakutsk the professors have begun

teaching new business courses and have incorporated new materials into existing courses. In Magadan, 13 business courses are being designed by US and Russian professors in the partnership. The courses are first designed by the US professors, and are then refined for local needs by the Russian professors. Most of the courses that have already been designed are now being taught by the Russian professors, which builds local staff capacity. This is an on-going process that has progressed considerably under this grant.

•Ensuring the relevancy of the program for the students

According to those interviewed in Magadan and Yakutsk, the true success of this grant will be measured by its usefulness and relevancy to the students. The Institute hopes to accomplish this by involving the students as much as possible in developing the curriculum. The students assist with translating materials, interpreting lectures, and reviewing courses. They have expressed satisfaction with the new course materials, teaching methods, and the changing attitudes of their professors towards teaching as a whole.

The students were dissatisfied, however, with their inability to access information about business and economics. The library contains very little current economic or business texts, periodicals, and other publications. In addition, there is no access to Internet nor e-mail, which means students can not access current business and economic information through electronic bulletin boards, mailing lists, or the World Wide Web.

•Economic principles comic book - Magadan

A comic book is being developed in Magadan to explain basic economic principles to high school students. The comic book has been drafted and translated into Russian. It is a good teaching tool and is well written. It presents the basics of economics in simple terms, using examples to which students can relate. Also, the comic book format makes learning fun and provides a break from the usual formal teaching methods employed in Russian classrooms. The next step will be to print the comic book in Alaska.

A teacher's guide for the comic book is being developed by Ms. Golobokina. She is now in the process of preparing a second draft. The teacher's guide is an important accompaniment to the comic book, as often the high school teachers for this course have minimal training in economics themselves. Unfortunately, there is no clear plan for the distribution of the comic book and the teacher's guide. Although it does not appear that this activity will be completed by the end of the grant, the Russian and US partners are committed to see it through.

•Design of 13 business courses - Magadan

The Magadan International Pedagogical Institute considers one of the criteria of success of this grant to be the completion of the 13 business courses that are being designed by Russian and US professors. A US professor first writes the course in English and sends it

to the Russian partnership, where it is translated into Russian. The Russian professor then edits the course material and expands it with information relevant to Russia. Six of the thirteen courses have gone through this process and are now awaiting final revisions by professors from the Russian Academy of Economics and Business in Moscow (Plekhanova). Five of these courses have been co-taught by a team of Russian and US professors. The remaining seven courses have been received in English from the US professors and are now being translated into Russian.

It is important to the institute in Magadan that these courses are relevant to their students. Consequently, they have been involving the students in the translation of the course materials. In addition, five of the six completed courses have already been taught to the students and has led to further refinement of the materials. There is still much work to be done and it is doubtful that it will be completed by the end of this grant.

Recommendations for Improvement:

•Development of a joint program of study

The partners are exchanging study plans, but they have not yet fully agreed to a curriculum for their joint program of study that would be valid in both Russia and the US.

•Building local staff capacity

The short courses conducted by US professors in the US and Yakutsk are building the capacity of the Yakutsk teaching staff. Staff would be trained more effectively, however, if the training period in the US was longer. In addition, it would be beneficial if fewer people were sent to Alaska, but for a longer period of time (preferably a full semester). When in the US, Yakutsk professors should work on a team with US counterparts. The best models for this type of work have been observed in Pskov (IPP/University of Massachusetts) and also in Lviv and Donetsk (IPP/ University City Science Center). In these cases, courses were developed by both the Russian or Ukrainian professors and the US professors. In the US the Russian or Ukrainian professors first attended the course they planned to teach, and then returned to their respective countries to co-teach the course with the US professors. The course was then further refined by the bi-national team. This model leads to true cooperation and ensures that the courses incorporate both Western theory and philosophy, and local market information.

•Ensuring the relevancy of the program for the students

Because Russia is in a constant state of economic and social change, the professors are often behind their students in knowledge about current trends. This makes it difficult for the Russian professors to present material and use methods that are relevant to their students. The partners should therefore encourage the Russian professors to conduct outside consulting assignments in their fields, as it is important for the professors to acquire real-life experience. The partners can facilitate this process by encouraging the

ARCs to sub-contract the Russian professors to consult for their US and Russian clients. For example, they could conduct market research or write a business plan. Without this real-life experience, the professors may have difficulty internalizing new economic and business theory, and may lose credibility with their forward-thinking students.

•Economics principles comic book - Magadan

Delays in the development of the comic book and its teacher's guide are due to problems in sending drafts between the Russian Far-East and Alaska. Establishing reliable e-mail communication between the partners will help alleviate this problem. In addition, other methods of sending hard copies should be explored. Sending one kilogram of printed material between Moscow and Magadan, for example, currently costs \$92. Some airline companies such as Transaero and Aeroflot will accept small cargo shipments and perhaps could be used for sending materials between the partners.

•Design of 13 business courses - Magadan

Delays in the development of the 13 business courses by this partnership have been related to difficulties in translating large volumes of specialized materials. The university in Magadan has involved its students in this process, which has benefited the students. However, to speed the translation process, a dedicated Russian translator specializing in business and economic texts should be hired. This translator should coordinate the translation process, ensuring that each part of the translated material is completed on time. He or she should also act as the final editor for the translations.

(Also, please see section entitled "Building local staff capacity".)

C) Describe the technical merit and appropriateness of the following program components:

1. Training

•Course Development in Business - Magadan

Developing courses in teams of Russian and US professors is beneficial because it requires constant interaction and communication. The courses produced are then a combination of Western theory and knowledge that is adapted to Russian economic conditions and culture. Regretfully, the development of these courses is taking longer than anticipated. In

addition, the partners do not interact enough for the subject matters to be fully internalized by the Russian professors.

•Faculty development of Yakutsk Economic Institute through five short seminars

The Yakutsk partner is dedicated to the realization of the goals of this grant. To ensure that the Russian faculty benefit fully from the grant, the professors are expected to attend the seminars regularly, are tested on course materials, and will only receive certificates upon successful completion of the course. The course participants evaluate the course content and then the partners adjust the content accordingly. Study plans and materials are regularly exchanged between the partners. As a result of this training, the teaching methods of the Russian professors have changed and new material has been added to the existing courses. In addition, a number of new courses have been developed, for example, "Management in Tourism," taught by Dr. Nikolai Bakatov. To take full advantage of this training, the Russian faculty have been attending intensive English language training three times a week for three hours per session.

Unfortunately, these seminars were held in the summer which made it difficult for the Russian professors to attend. Russian professors earn low wages during the school year and rely on additional income they can earn through selling fruits and vegetables on their summer lots or "dachas" (small summer cabins). Consequently, most professors are very reluctant to teach or be trained during the summer months, as it represents a great loss of income for them.

•Developing a joint program in business education by Yakutsk and Fairbanks
(Please see Section "B".)

Recommendations for Improvement:

•Course Development in Business - Magadan

(Please see section "B")

•Faculty training of Yakutsk Economic Institute through five short seminars

To make the training more effective, it should be longer and focused on a smaller group of people. It is recommended that five or six people should attend a full semester at Alaska University. The short courses are not long enough for the professors to fully internalize the new material. The training of the staff could be further enhanced if they were required to work as consultants for local businesses (perhaps through the ARC) to gain real life experience.

(Please also see section "B")

2. Products

The short courses on Marketing and Accounting, two of the 13 courses being developed through this grant, were in English which was a barrier to the Russian professors. In addition, it was evident that the US professors were either unfamiliar with Russian business or chose not to take it into consideration. Most of the material was relevant and useful only for the US and not for Russia.

Courses are first developed by the US professor, then translated into Russian, and are further edited and adapted for a Russian audience by a Russian professor. The two courses below have been evaluated on the basis of the course draft prepared by the US professor, before it has been revised by the Russian professor. The final, Russified version of any of the 13 courses is not yet available.

• Short Course on Marketing

These materials were developed with little input from the Russian professor. The US professor did not seem to understand how unfamiliar marketing, advertising, and the market economy is to many Russian students and professors. There also seemed to be a lack of understanding of how large a role monopolies play in the Russian economy.

The syllabus includes four Internet assignments to be completed by the students. Neither Magadan nor Yakutsk, however, have reliable and easily accessible Internet connections. There are also assignments which require certain books or journal articles, when access to these materials is limited. The syllabus also suggests that students attend an American Marketing Association (AMA) meeting which is not possible in Magadan, as there is no AMA chapter.

It was apparent that the US professor was not familiar with Russian business and that the Russian professor did not have much of a role in designing the course. The US professor asked questions such as, what would your life be like if there were no marketing. Most Russians would say, very much like it is now. Russia is still in the preliminary stages of building an effective market economy. In Russia, primitive "hit or miss" advertising is still the method most commonly used for marketing.

In this course, Russian culture has not been taken into account. Russian attitudes differ greatly from US attitudes towards barter and the concept of "win-win" situations. The course should be presented with these differences in mind. Throughout the course materials, American examples are used when Russian examples would be much more relevant.

• Short Course on Accounting

The accounting course also fails to take into account the differences in Russian business and law. It is unlikely that this course will have credibility and acceptance by a Russian audience, unless it is truly co-developed with a Russian professor and tax and accounting

experts. The course does not take into account such factors as barter, high exchange rate risks, or hyper-inflation.

- Draft of a Comic book

It was difficult to evaluate the comic book as a whole because its final version is not yet available. The product is an accessible, clear, and entertaining teaching tool. The basic economic theory covered in the comic book is well presented and explained, utilizing appropriate Russian examples. It will be a useful resource for high school teachers. It should not be used, however, with university students, as they will generally require more advanced material. The final draft of the teacher's guide is being written and is not yet available. Delays in the production of the comic book were caused by unreliable regular and electronic mail. A clear plan for the distribution of the comic book has not yet been developed. However, the Magadan Pedagogical University is planning to hold a conference in the spring or summer at which time they will publicize this product and attempt to solicit orders for it.

(Please see section "B" for additional information)

- Seminar materials from Yakutsk University Workshop

The seminar materials from the workshops held in Yakutsk are in folders in Dr. Maximov's office. These materials indicate that the courses taught were focused, short, and intensive. The courses were relevant to their Russian audience because the topics were agreed upon by both partners. Also, by requiring the Russian professors to complete homework reading and writing assignments, the course material was further reinforced.

Recommendations for Improvement:

Products developed under this partnership are relevant to all partners and should be exchanged. Although the Russian partners are aware that they should make these products available to the other partners in the Far East, they are reluctant to do so because they consider the products their intellectual property. IREX should be the mechanism for collecting these materials and distributing them among the partners.

It would be beneficial to attach a glossary of terms to the end of each product developed under this partnership. The terms can be easily translated using existing Russian-English business and economics dictionaries.

- Short Course on Marketing

The syllabus should be changed to include assignments that the students can do in Magadan, such as attending a local business association meeting or an association of advertisers, rather than the suggested American Marketing Association.

The course could use examples of Russian companies with local markets, such as A/O MMM, and global markets, such as Yakutsk Diamonds. It is beneficial to study the US history of marketing, but some Russian history must be included as well (e.g., why the barter system persists in Russia to this day).

•Short Course on Accounting

The course should be redesigned to make it more relevant to Russia. Some sections of the course can either be eliminated or greatly condensed, as they are irrelevant in present day Russia. Section IX, "The Certified Management Accountant (CMA)," for example, is not a necessary part of the course material.

In addition, some sections that are relevant only to Russia need to be added. Taxes are of particular importance to Russian business people, and a tax expert should be consulted to help adjust some of the tables and formulas.

Particular notice should be paid to issues facing Russian managers today, such as the barter system, hyper-inflation, and exchange rate risks. Because of the instability of Russian business infrastructure, these issues greatly impact the nature of accounting. Russian examples should be used as much as possible throughout the course. For example, in an environment of hyper-inflation, different accounting formulas must be used to calculate accurate revenues and profits.

•Draft of a Comic book

(See section "B" - "Recommendations for Improvement")

•Seminar materials from Yakutsk University Workshop

The seminar materials from the Yakutsk University Workshop are a collection of handouts and overheads. It will be difficult to use these materials as stand-alone products. Some of the materials have not been fully translated into Russian, and need to be if they are to be used as teaching tools.

D) What additional technical assistance do you believe the Russian or Ukrainian side could use to improve their work in general?

•Improved information resources

The Russian partners would benefit from the purchase of business and economics textbooks, periodicals, and resource information. This information would enhance the training of faculty staff and would improve the teaching received by the students.

•Internet

The Russian partner's access to up-to-date business and economic information would improve if they had reliable access to Internet and the World Wide Web. In addition, an Internet connection would provide sustainability to the activities pursued under this grant.

•Computer Equipment

A computer laboratory would benefit the courses and teaching methods at Yakutsk State University.

E) What new directions do you see as a natural follow-on for this project? Are there others working in the sector that this group might contact and/or collaborate with?

•Joint curriculum developed further

The joint curriculum developed by Alaska University and its partners in the Russian Far East should first be approved by the proper agencies in Russia and the US. The development of a joint curriculum, even if not yet fully approved by these agencies, would serve as a working document for the partnership to guide its future activities.

•Distance education

To enhance the development a joint program of study, some courses can be offered through distance education by the University of Alaska. The Russian partners cited the prohibitive cost of sending their students to study in Alaska. Distance education would provide a cost-effective way to provide more students in the Far East and Alaska with an international education. A distance education program would further enhance the training of the Russian professors as they could be tutors for the courses taught in Alaska. A distance education program would help sustain the joint academic program between the partners.

•Development of case studies

As previously mentioned in this evaluation, Russian professors need to acquire practical experience in the subject matters they are teaching. This experience can be acquired through the development of case studies by teams of Russian and US professors. It would be preferable if these case studies were of local Far East companies to make the exercise more relevant to Russia. Using case studies can be an effective aspect of training for the Russian and US professors.

•Other groups that can be contacted for possible collaboration

The Business Collaboration Center (BCC): The BCC was established by USAID in Russia to act as a clearinghouse for information on business development projects. The BCC has collected a library of USAID funded products, including such publications as "Business Plan Writing Guide," "How to Find Investment," and "How to Conduct Negotiations."

United States Information Agency (USIA): USIA has funded the translation and publication of business and economics textbooks from English to Russian. Many of these textbooks are available in Russia and are reasonably priced.

IPP in Donetsk and Lviv: Four business courses were developed in Ukraine (in Donetsk and Lviv) that should be reviewed by this partnership.

IREX Eurasia Internet Program: This partnership should apply to be included in IREX's Internet program.

F) How do you assess the partnership's sustainability plan? What is your sense of how close the partners will be to meeting these goals?

Work funded by this grant is progressing at a reasonable rate. However, the partners have underestimated how long it will take to complete the goals in their sustainability plan and have only completed 50%-70% of these goals so far. I believe that they will complete the goals outlined in their sustainability plan, but not for another year.

The comic book, for example, may be printed by the end of the grant, but it will not be disseminated. The teacher's guide will not be completed by that time either. Of the 13 courses being developed in Magadan, only about one-half will be ready in Russian by the end of the grant. Only one-third of the courses will have been taught at least once by that time. In Yakutsk it is unlikely that a full curriculum for a joint program of study, agreed upon by the Russian and US partners, will be ready by the end of the grant period.

The activities funded by this grant and the concept of a joint degree program were designed to be sustainable. There are many indicators that this partnership is on its way to making its activities self-sustaining. In Yakutsk, faculty have incorporated new materials into business courses that they teach on a regular basis. In Magadan some already developed courses, such as Financial Accounting, are being taught and integrated into the regular curriculum. In addition, this partnership existed before it was part of the IPP grant and has some sustainable activities separate from this grant. This partnership will continue to exist and work beyond the life of this grant.

G) Other comments:

Due to weather conditions, it was not possible to make a site visit to Magadan (the evaluator attempted to fly there twice and waited for a total of four days). Telephone meetings, however, were conducted with Ms. Galina Golobokina of the Magadan Pedagogical University and Ms. Molly Davenport, Director of the Russian American Business Education Center.

The meeting for all the partners in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk was beneficial and should be repeated in the future to facilitate exchanges of information.

The partners reported problems with Russian customs when materials and equipment were shipped from the United States. There is an agreement between the US and the Russian governments regulating the tax-free status of technical assistance. In addition, it is possible to ship materials to a US embassy or consulate free of tax. The equipment is then leased to the Russian partner at no cost for two years.

Meetings held, sites visited, and events attended:

Popov, Rector of the Economic Institute of the Yakutsk State University

Vasily Maximov, Prorector, Yakutsk State University

Five Yakutsk students who went to Fairbanks and work with US faculty in Russia.

Anatoly V. Zhozhikov, Director, Center of New Information Technologies, Yakutsk State University

Vladimir A. Morov, Deputy Director, Center of New Information Technologies, Yakutsk State University

Nikolay Beketov, Professor, Department of Economics, Yakutsk State University

Anatoly N. Alekseev, First Rector, Yakutsk State University

Clifford J.P. Gilman, US Director, Sakha-American Business Education Center

Ivan N. Nikolaev, Russian Director, Sakha-American Business Education Center

Raisa Kuzmina, Professor at Economic Institute of Yakutsk State University

Natalia Cheraeva, Professor at Economic Institute of Yakutsk State University

Natalia Vasilieva, Professor at Economic Institute of Yakutsk State University

Nikolai Bikatov, Professor at Economic Institute of Yakutsk State University

Galina Golobokina, Department Head, Magadan International Pedagogical Institute (telephone meeting)

Molly Davenport, Director, Russian American Business Education Center, Magadan (telephone meeting)

Russian American Center in Yakutsk
Informatics Department in Yakutsk