



RUBA Community Feedback Survey:

JUNEAU REGIONAL OFFICE SUMMARY

RUBA PROGRAM EVALUATION

The Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development, Division of Community and Regional Affairs contracted with Information Insights to conduct a comprehensive and objective evaluation of the RUBA Program in December 2006. Although demand for RUBA Program services has steadily increased since the program's establishment in the early 1990s, a comprehensive and objective program evaluation had not previously been completed. The Division's primary objective in voluntarily conducting a program evaluation was to collect information related to: 1) program performance; 2) program effectiveness; 3) community feedback; 4) partner agency feedback; and 5) overall program impact.

The RUBA Program Evaluation, completed July 2007, yields significant information related to community needs, program strengths, program weaknesses, and service delivery opportunities. Program evaluation findings suggest program strengths include: 1) staff knowledge and experience; 2) UTM course content and delivery; and 3) the RUBA Assessment process as a means of providing utility management capacity benchmarks. Project findings suggest program weaknesses include: 1) growing emphasis on the RUBA Assessment process; 2) RUBA Program understaffing; 3) limited frequency of training opportunities; and 4) inadequate program recordkeeping and documentation.

RUBA Program Evaluation findings have the potential to guide service delivery decisions, inform decision-making regarding program direction, and improve overall program effectiveness and long-term community impact.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

One of the most important components of the RUBA Program Evaluation was the collection of community feedback via a statewide mail-out survey and on-site key-informant interviews conducted in select communities during April and May 2007. Community feedback was gathered by mailing surveys to 288 people in 146 communities who have either used RUBA Program services or worked directly with RUBA Program staff during the recent past. On-site interviews were also conducted with 12 key-informants from seven communities located across Alaska.

The purpose of the mail-out survey and key-informant interviews was to systematically gather community input regarding perceptions of the RUBA Program, satisfaction with RUBA Program services, community needs, recommendations to improve service delivery, and the RUBA Program's overall community impact.

This report, *RUBA Community Feedback Survey: Juneau Regional Office Summary*, summarizes mail-out survey findings for the communities served by the Juneau Regional Office. The report is organized into five substantive sections: Respondent Profile, Utility Profile, RUBA Program Technical Assistance, RUBA Program Courses and Workshops, and RUBA Program Staff.

Community survey results provide a foundation for Juneau RUBA Program staff to better understand community perceptions of the RUBA Program, utility management assistance needs, and overall satisfaction with RUBA Program services.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The statewide community feedback survey was conducted during May 2007. In total, 146 rural communities located across Alaska were identified as having received RUBA Program services during the recent past and therefore included in the community survey. Generally two key-informants from each community were selected to participate in the survey. Selection of key-informants was based on three primary criteria including: 1) current ties to local water/wastewater utility; 2) local government involvement; and 3) likely to have had prior interaction with the RUBA Program.

Statewide survey response rates indicate 65% of communities (e.g., at least one key-informant survey response) and 42% of key-informants responded to the community survey (Table 1).

Table 1. Statewide Response Rate

Level	Total	Responses	Response Rate
Community	146	95	65%*
Key-Informant	288	122	42%

* At least one key-informant per community responded.

Community survey findings within this report are based solely on responses provided by key-informants from the communities the Juneau Regional Office serves. In total, 22 key-informants from eleven communities received a community survey. Juneau Regional Office survey findings indicate 64% of communities (e.g., at least one key-informant survey response) and 41% of key-informants responded to the community survey (Table 2).

Table 2. Juneau Regional Office Response Rate

Level	Total	Responses	Response Rate
Community	11	7	64%*
Key-Informant	22	9	41%

* At least one key-informant per community responded.

As previously noted, analyses throughout the following substantive report sections are strictly limited to mail-out survey responses from communities served by the Juneau Regional Office. In short, survey results represent the perceptions, attitudes, and opinions of nine individuals located in seven communities that have benefited from Juneau Regional Office RUBA Program services.

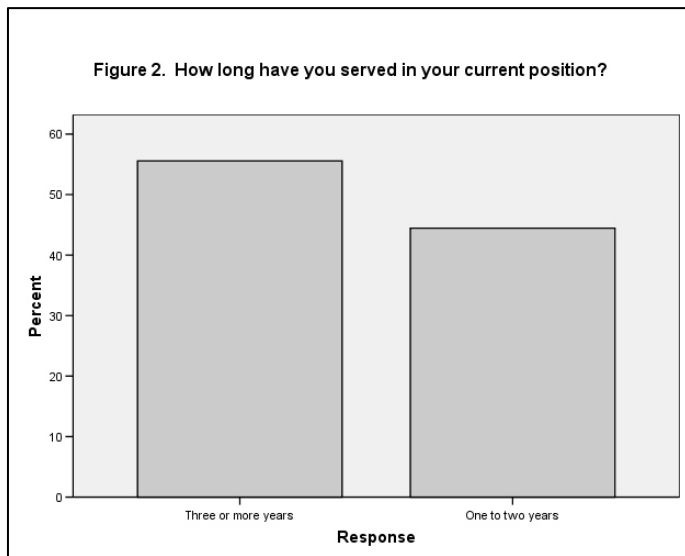
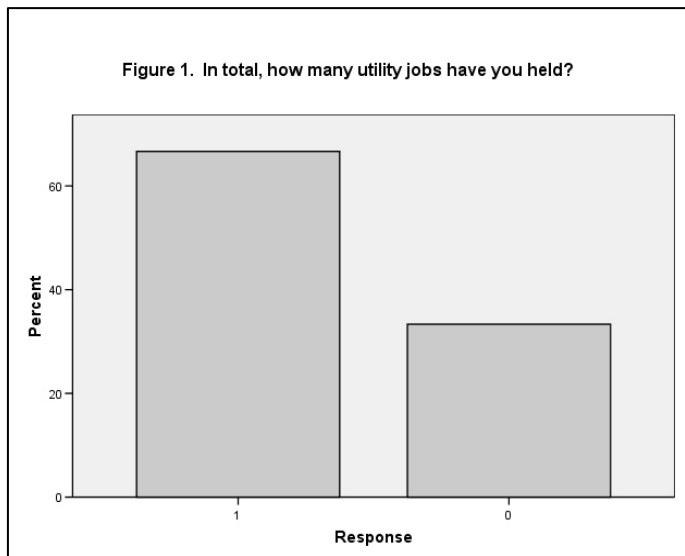
RESPONDENT PROFILE

Forty-five percent (45%) of respondents identify themselves as city clerks. One-quarter (22%) of respondents identify themselves as city administrators (Table 3).

Table 3. Respondent Positions

Position	Percentage
City Clerk	45%
City Administrator	22%
Other	33%

A majority (57%) of respondents have worked for rural utilities one to two years, and 43% have three or more years of utility work experience. Two-thirds (67%) of respondents indicate they have been employed in one utility-related job (Figure 1). One-third (33%) indicate they have never been employed in a utility-related job. A majority (56%) of respondents report being in their current position for three or more years; forty-four percent (44%) of respondents indicate they have worked in their position one to two years (Figure 2).



Eight of nine respondents (89%) summarized their top job priorities (Table 4). Overall, administrative duties are the highest priority among respondents regardless of ranking, followed by utility related priorities including electric, fuel, and water and sewer operations, operations management, and infrastructure upgrades.

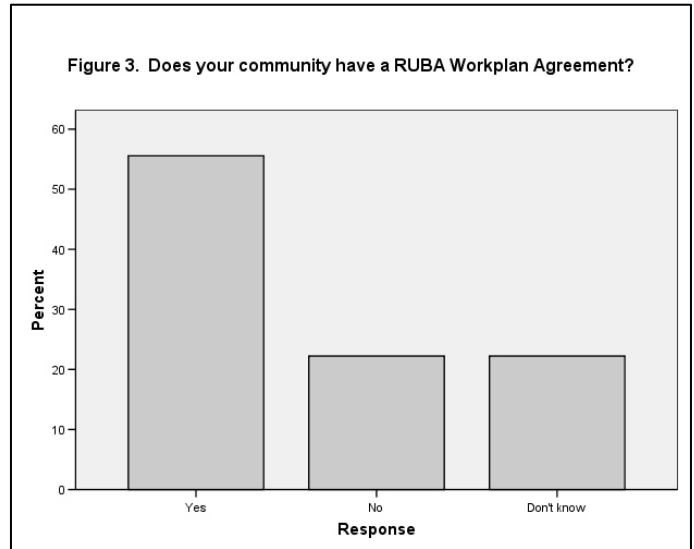
Table 4. Respondent job priorities

Respondent	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3
1	Administrative	Supervisory	Policy
2	Upgrade water plant	Repair wastewater facility	Transportation infrastructure upgrade
3	Daily operations management	Financial administration	Project management
4	Ordinances and resolutions	Council meetings and minutes	Elections
5	Keeping and maintaining files	Typing agendas for city council meetings and preparing ordinances	Typing minutes of meetings
6	Day to day operation of city hall	Accounts payable and payroll	City council related matters
7	Re-establish record keeping and accounting systems	Budgets and past audits	
8	Community management		

UTILITY PROFILE

City councils (89%) are most likely to manage, operate, and set utility policy in the respondents' communities. A majority (56%) of respondents indicate their utility has a RUBA Workplan Agreement (Figure 3). One-quarter (22%) indicate not having an agreement in place.

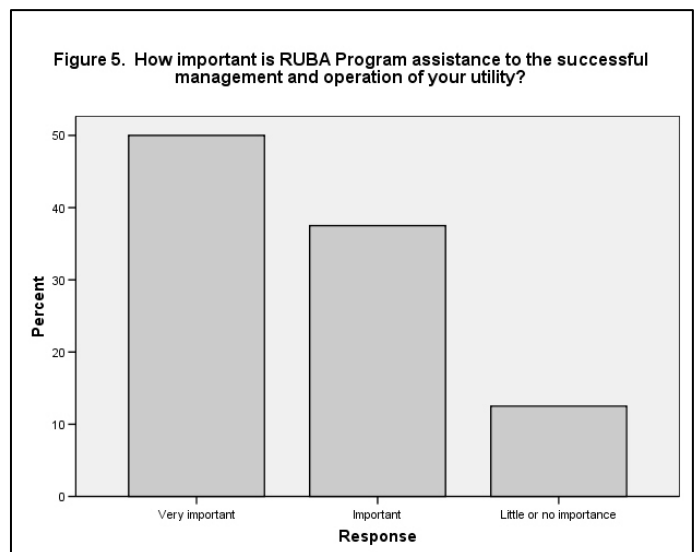
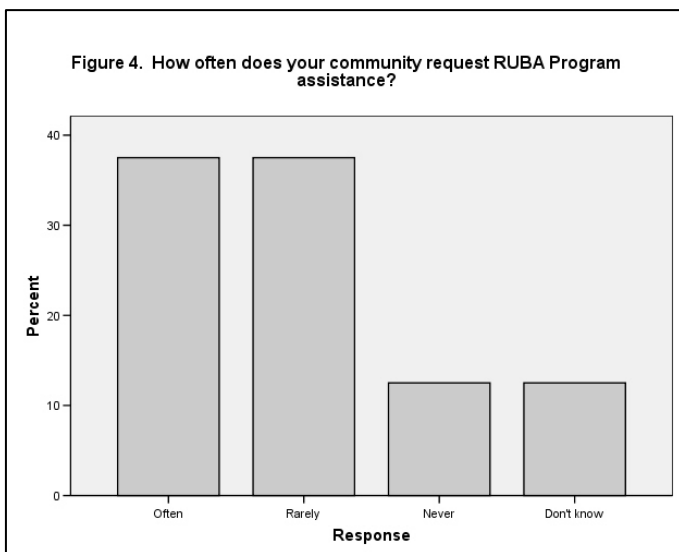
Three-quarters (75%) of respondents report no delays in community utility projects due to an inability to meet RUBA Assessment indicators. One respondent reports a two-year delay in community utility project construction caused by not meeting RUBA Assessment indicators. All respondents (100%) indicate meeting RUBA Assessment indicators before the start of a utility project construction or improvement activity is either very important (88%) or important (12%) to overall project success.



RUBA PROGRAM TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Thirty-eight percent (38%) of respondents often request RUBA Program assistance (Figure 4). In contrast, half (50%) of respondents indicate they rarely (38%) or never (12%) request RUBA Program assistance.

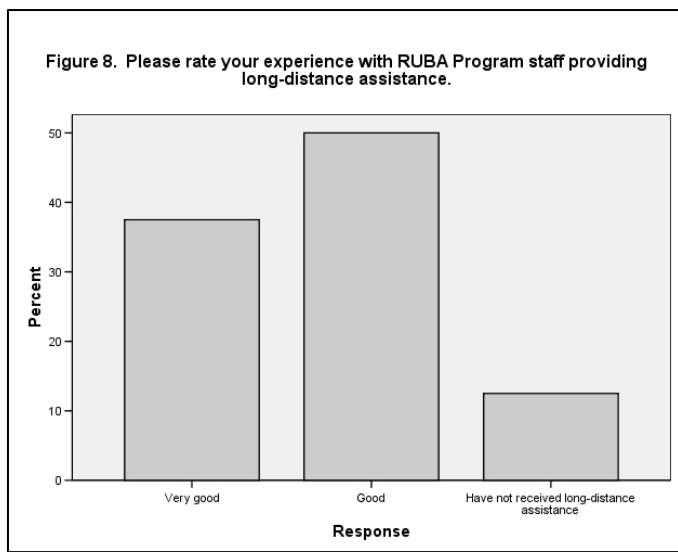
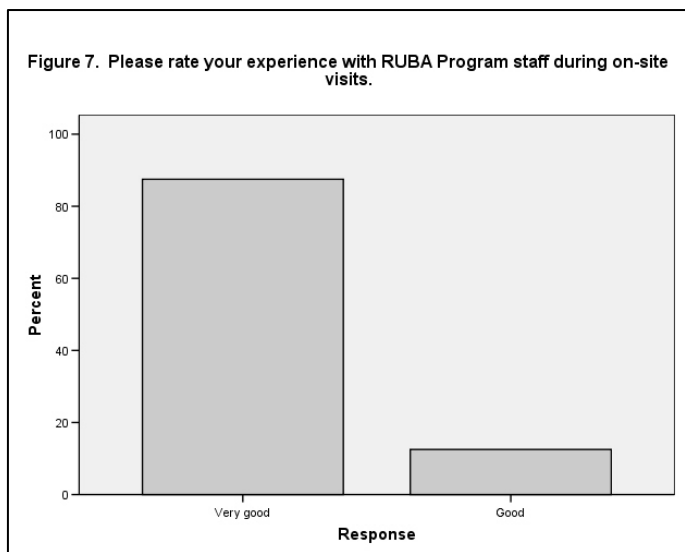
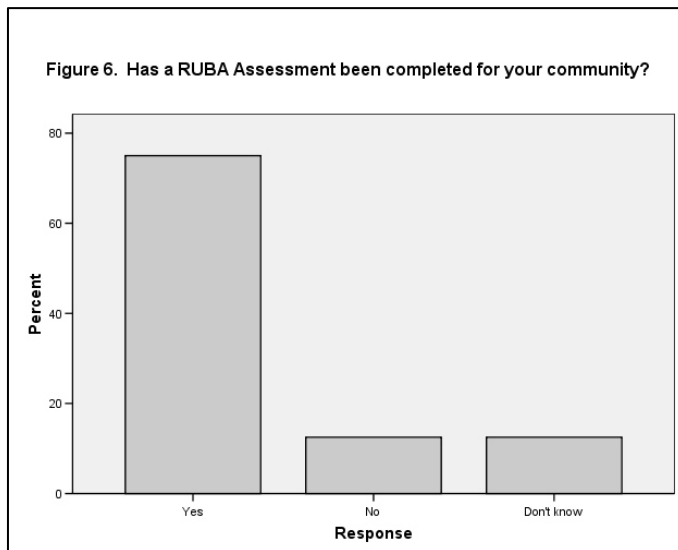
Eighty-eight percent (88%) of respondents indicate RUBA Program assistance is either very important (50%) or important (38%) to the successful management and operation of their utility (Figure 5).



Three-quarters (75%) of respondents report having completed a RUBA Assessment (Figure 6). For utilities with a completed RUBA Assessment, half (50%) of respondents report meeting all RUBA Assessment indicators; one-third (33%) of respondents indicate not meeting RUBA Assessment indicators.

All respondents (100%) indicate RUBA Program assistance is either very important (83%) or important (17%) to helping utilities meet RUBA Assessment indicators. Three-quarters (75%) of respondents indicate relying on RUBA Program staff assistance to address utility management issues. The remainder (25%) handle these problems internally (13%) or through assistance from a non-RUBA entity (12%). Of particular note, no respondents report a failure to address utility management issues.

All respondents (100%) rate their experience with RUBA Program staff during on-site visits as either very good (88%) or good (12%) (Figure 7). Eighty-eight percent (88%) of respondents rate their long-distance RUBA staff assistance as either very good (38%) or good (50%) (Figure 8). One respondent (12%) reports not receiving long-distance assistance.



After experiencing RUBA Program assistance, half (50%) of respondents indicate overall utility management significantly (17%) or moderately (33%) improved (Table 5). Nearly half (40% - 43%) of respondents report improvement in the areas of finance, personnel system, organizational management, and utility planning.

Seventy-five percent (75%) of respondents anticipate using RUBA Program assistance often in the future; only one respondent (13%) expects to rarely use RUBA Program assistance.

Table 5. Change in Utility Management Capacity

Management Capacity	Declined Significantly	Declined Moderately	Remained the Same	Improved Moderately	Improved Significantly	Don't Know
Finances	0%	0%	29%	29%	14%	28%
Accounting	0%	0%	50%	17%	17%	16%
Tax issues	0%	0%	33%	0%	17%	50%
Personnel system	0%	0%	40%	20%	20%	20%
Organizational management	14%	0%	29%	29%	14%	14%
Utility operation	20%	0%	60%	0%	20%	0%
Overall utility management	17%	0%	33%	33%	17%	0%
Utility planning	20%	0%	40%	20%	20%	0%

RUBA PROGRAM COURSES AND WORKSHOPS

A majority (71%) of respondents report RUBA Utility Management Training (UTM) courses are either very important (57%) or important (14%) to improving utility management and operations (Figure 9). Despite the perceived importance of UTM training, only one respondent (11%) reports attending a UTM course. This respondent rates the Organizational Management course as good.

The majority of respondents (60% - 100%) did not attend other workshops offered by DCRA (Table 6). No respondents report attending workshops on payroll tax, community planning, and elections. All respondents who attended the newly elected officials, city clerk training, QuickBooks Pro, financial record keeping, and planning commission workshops rate these workshops as very good or good.

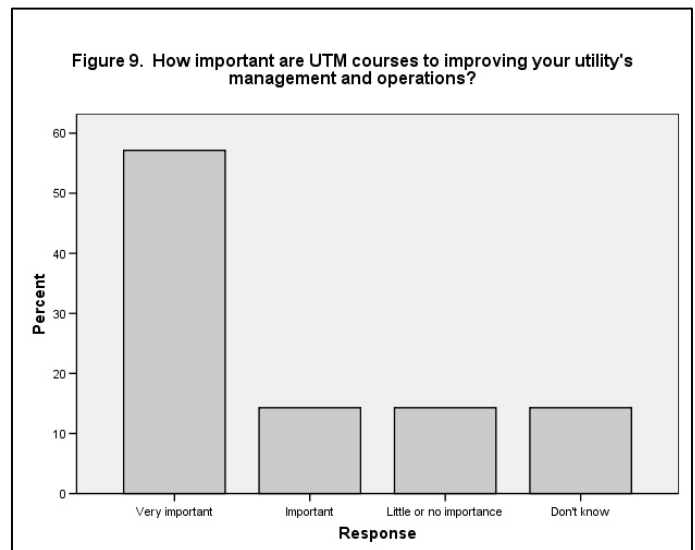


Table 6. Other DCRA Workshops

Workshop	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Undecided	Did Not Attend
Newly elected officials	0%	0%	20%	20%	0%	60%
City clerk training	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%	75%
QuickBooks Pro	0%	0%	0%	40%	0%	60%
Financial record keeping	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%	75%
Payroll tax	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Community planning	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Elections	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Planning commission	0%	0%	33%	0%	0%	67%

RUBA PROGRAM STAFF

One-third (38%) of respondents report having contact with RUBA Program staff often. Half (50%) of respondents report rarely interacting with RUBA staff. One respondent (12%) indicates no interaction with the RUBA Program.

Three-quarters (67% - 83%) of respondents rate RUBA Program staff assistance as very good or good in seven areas of staff assistance including: availability of staff assistance (83%), timeliness of staff assistance (83%), applicability to the community (83%), addressing the utility's current challenges (67%), addressing the utility's long-term challenges (67%), understanding the community as a whole (67%), and willingness to travel to the community (67%) (Table 7).

Table 7. Quality of RUBA Program Staff Assistance

Assistance	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Undecided	Don't Know
Availability of staff assistance	0%	17%	17%	66%	0%	0%
Timeliness of staff assistance	0%	17%	17%	66%	0%	0%
Applicability to the community	0%	17%	33%	50%	0%	0%
Addressing the utility's current challenges	0%	17%	17%	50%	0%	16%
Addressing the utility's long-term challenges	0%	17%	17%	50%	0%	16%
Understanding the community as a whole	0%	17%	17%	50%	0%	16%
Willingness to travel to the community	0%	0%	17%	50%	0%	33%

A large majority (88%) of respondents report the RUBA Program staff's ability to address questions and concerns is very good (50%) or good (38%) (Figure 10). All (100%) respondents indicate their overall experience with RUBA staff is very good (75%) or good (25%).

Respondents were asked to rate RUBA Program activities (Table 8). All respondents (100%) indicate on-site community visits and correspondence with RUBA staff are either very important (50%) or important (50%). Most (86%) respondents suggest RUBA Assessments are very important (43%) or important (43%). Approximately one-third (33% - 40%) of respondents do not know whether UTM courses and RUBA publications are important RUBA Program activities.

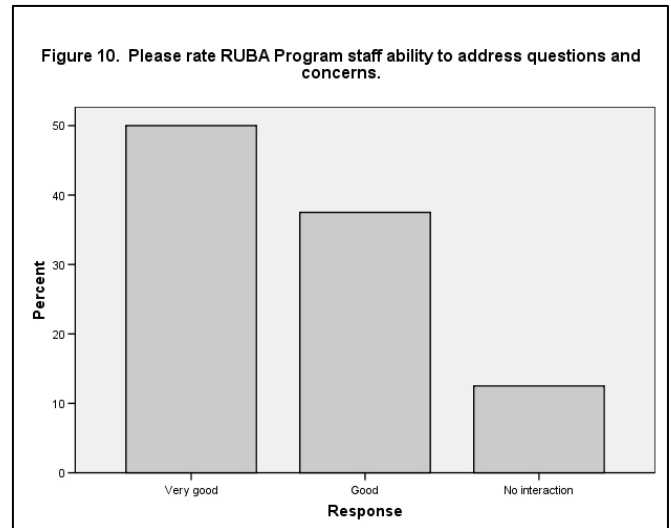


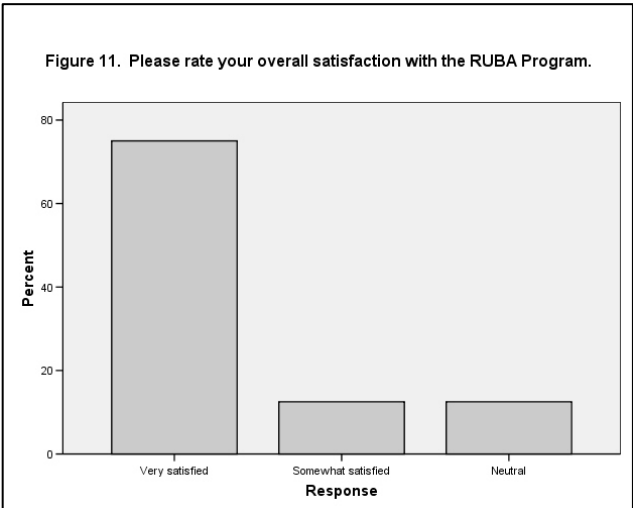
Table 8. Importance of RUBA Program Activities

Activity	Little or No Importance	Important	Very Important	Don't Know
RUBA Assessments	14%	43%	43%	0%
On-site community visits	0%	50%	50%	0%
Correspondence with RUBA staff (e.g., e-mail, mail, phone, fax)	0%	50%	50%	0%
UTM courses	0%	40%	20%	40%
Local government and planning workshops (e.g., elected officials, city clerk)	0%	50%	33%	17%
RUBA publications	0%	50%	17%	33%

A large majority (88%) of respondents are either very satisfied (75%) or somewhat satisfied (13%) with the RUBA Program (Figure 11). No respondents reported being unsatisfied with the RUBA Program.

Finally, respondents were asked to provide specific recommendations and criticisms intended to improve RUBA Program services. Two respondents give the following qualitative feedback:

- QuickBooks training on-site to address specific City staff concerns.
- No criticism, because RUBA helps communities know where our strong and weak links are.



SUMMARY

This report, *RUBA Community Feedback Survey: Juneau Regional Office Summary*, summarizes mail-out survey findings of the communities served by the Juneau Regional Office. Survey results represent the perceptions, attitudes, and opinions of nine individuals located in seven communities who receive RUBA Program services from Juneau Regional Office staff.

All respondents indicate meeting RUBA Assessment indicators before the start of a utility construction or improvement project is important, and all respondents indicate RUBA Program assistance is important to helping their utility meet RUBA Assessment indicators. Three-quarters of respondents rely on RUBA Program staff assistance to address utility management issues. One-quarter address utility management issues internally or with assistance from a non-RUBA entity.

Overall satisfaction with the RUBA Program is very high. Respondents' overall experiences with RUBA Program staff during on-site visits and through long-distance assistance are very good. Respondents intend to use RUBA Program services frequently in the future. Almost all respondents believe RUBA Program assistance is very important or important to the success of their utility's management and operations. All respondents conclude RUBA Program assistance is very important to helping utilities meet RUBA Assessment indicators.

