

Tanana (Too'gha) Activity Report

John Fischer, LGS/RUBA, Northern Regional Office
Bill Abbott, TCC RUBA, Northern Regional Office

General Information:

There were two site visits through this reporting period. The first of which was Bill Abbott's first RUBA trip, and it was arranged to meet Too'gha board members and employees, as well as Tribal Administration and City Council members. I met the Utility Manager and John Fischer and Bill Abbott reviewed quarterly accounting and tax reports. Bill attended the July Too'gha board meeting and received good insight into the organization as well as met people affiliated with Too'gha. During the first visit, Bill observed the payroll process and calculations, and the record keeping procedures. Since it was his first visit he observed most of the activities, including the quarterly report process.

By the second site visit John and Bill met the new Too'gha employees who replaced the Utility Manager – part-time bookkeeper/utility manager, and part-time operator. Since they had new employees John and Bill reviewed the RUBA Agreement with the bookkeeper/utility manager and assisted her with other relevant activities to help provide more focus. Due to the complications of completing a Utility Assessment, mix of yes and no for the same question, the RUBA personnel decided to delay the completion until the new water/sewer facility is on line, when ordinances and ownership/management issues are better defined. John worked with the Utility Manager on billing issues, while Bill prepared and discussed with the Utility Manager the FY 01 budget. A good deal of time was spent on developing a reasonably sound budget for Too'gha. It will be presented at the October Too'gha board meeting.

With the introduction of new employees, Too'gha seemed to be running smoothly. Quickbooks was reconciled and on target. The Utility Manager received a donated computer, so RUBAs helped set it up and installed QuickBooks on the new computer. The Utility Manager made plans to attend the OIT training course in Minto. A priority at Too'gha is to develop a Utility Ordinance and have it in place before the new facility is on line; this priority will be a long-term goal that will be worked on over the winter season.

Observations and Recommendations:

Finances – Stable finances were experienced during the quarter.. The new Utility Manager has been spending time on necessary items. The two heat exchangers went out and she found some used ones to last until the new facility come on line. The budget for next year was complete, she is waiting to present it at the next meeting.

Accounting Systems – Once the QuickBooks software was purchased, and reinstalled (somehow it was deleted from the computer), the new Utility Manager was able to learn a great deal about the program especially since she was new to the program. She brought everything up to date concerning billing, learned about the reconciling process, and she also started doing payroll in QuickBooks.

Tax Problems – There were no tax problems in this quarter. Our last site visit was before the end of the quarter/fiscal year, so we did not process any paperwork related to taxes. The Utility Manager mentioned afterward that she received help with the paperwork.

Personnel System – So far Too’gha seems to be hanging in there, although it is difficult to judge how the current arrangement will work with two part-time employees instead of one full-time Utility Manager. The next FY ’01 budget is seeking to increase the hours to 30 hour/week, it just did not work as yet for two full-time employees in the budget. A project to do related to personnel is to update the existing personnel policies and procedures manual, at least by the time the new facility is on line.

Organizational Management – Good organization prevails. The operation of the utility seems to be okay thus far, considering that there are two part-time positions now at Too’gha and not one full-time position. It may be difficult to sustain an operable organization that only has 40 hours available between two people, especially since there is continuous work that can be done on a full-time basis. Having no position with an exempt-level status will potentially run Too’gha into some overtime issues if and when an employee exceeds the eight hours in a day or 40 hour in a week.

Leadership/Governance –With representatives from both the city and the IRA, and one person from the community at-large, there seems to be a strong board that presents/reviews alternatives to issues. The board has chosen to have the project bid out, in hopes that the city will win the bid and keep some business within the community rather than purchase new equipment on behalf of Too’gha.

Operation of Utility – The operation of the utility is good. Since the Too’gha board has elected to rent equipment and have bids submitted, the project has been held up. Thus, the old washeteria will be in place over the winter. This presents some of the same issues from the last report, with “free showers” in the Laundromat. Due to the expense of fixing this problem, it will persist until the new facility is up and running; the expense outweighs the revenue at this point. Also, the lift station requires manual activation for the pump to operate; this leads to the personnel issues and seeking full-time employees.

Ranking

1 = Inadequate

4 = Adequate to meet minimum requirements

7 = Exceeds requirements

Category	1	4	7
Finances		X	
Accounting Systems			X
Tax Problems		X	
Personnel System		X	
Organizational Management			X
Leadership/Governance			X
Operation of Utility			X