

**A Survey of Educational Program Needs for the
Florida Association of Counties County Commissioner Training Program**

Rodney L. Clouser

INTRODUCTION

Florida Cooperative Extension has partnered with the Florida Association of Counties (FAC) and the Florida Counties Foundation (FCF) since 1998 in surveying Florida County Commissioners and County Administrators approximately every two years. The survey collects information regarding attendance at FAC-FCF sponsored events, willingness to pay for educational programs, worth of events and programs attended by commissioners and administrators, desired locations for educational activities and, most importantly, the type and amount of training needed by commissioners on various topics that would assist them as an elected policy maker.

The results of the 2005-06 survey are presented as an executive summary that follows. In addition, for the first time the executive summary, survey questionnaire and PowerPoint presentation of results are being made available via a link for those who would like to view or print the entire document.



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Rodney L. Clouser¹

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2006 County Commissioner and County Administrator Educational Survey

1. The survey response rate was large. A total of 250 surveys or 56.3 percent of all surveys were returned. The usable survey response rate was 55.4 percent (246 total surveys).
2. Almost three of every four commissioners (73 percent) who responded to the survey had been in office eight years or less.
3. Eighty-five percent of commissioners and administrators responding to the survey were from counties with a population less than 500,000.
4. Ninety-four commissioners or 48 percent of commissioner respondents to the survey are CCC (Certified County Commissioners) graduates.
5. Seventy-six percent of CCC graduates (some have not graduated yet) indicated they were interested in some type of postgraduate CCC curriculum and 71 percent of them would prefer a policy-based postgraduate curriculum.
6. Only thirty-eight percent of respondents support use of nationally or professionally recognized speakers if it would double the registration price of CCC events.
7. Survey respondents are open to use of technology in securing a maximum of six hours of credit towards certification: 75 percent would be likely to use web-based classes, 67 percent would be likely to participate in streaming video classes, 30 percent would be likely to participate in real time distance education classes and 40 percent would be likely to participate by use of taped (DVD, VCR) classes. There was little support (17 percent) for phone conference classes coupled with computer graphics.
8. More than six in ten respondents support authorization of computer-based classes for CCC credit.

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9. The overall top-voted training topics in the *policy and procedure* area were growth management, land use planning and zoning, alternative revenues, economic development, strategic planning and community visioning and natural resources issues related to water and land use. The top training topics in the *people and personal* area were strategic thinking and planning, leadership skills, developing a policy framework, conflict resolution and listening skills.
10. When asked to rank only the three top training topics the most requested topics in the *policy and procedure* area were growth management, budget and financial management, alternative revenues, land use planning and zoning and strategic planning and community visioning. The most requested training topics in the *people and personal* area were leadership skills, strategic thinking and planning, developing a policy framework, constituent services and conflict resolution skills.
11. Preference for workshop locations in rank order is Orlando, Tallahassee, Tampa, Gainesville, West Palm Beach and Jacksonville.

SUMMARY

Participation and returns of surveys by county commissioners and county administrators are at high levels. Prior to University of Florida Cooperative Extension becoming involved with the survey in 1998 the typical response rate was about 15 percent. In 1998, the survey response rate increased to 32 percent and, in 2002, the response rate was over 56 percent. Survey respondents indicated support for receiving some educational training through use of technology rather than at a location specific site.

From an educational standpoint, the most important education needs of those serving as county commissioners or administrators are:

- ***Policy and procedure topic areas:*** growth management, land use planning and zoning, alternative revenues, economic development, strategic planning and community visioning and natural resources issues related to water and land use.
- ***People and personal topic areas:*** strategic thinking and planning, leadership skills, developing a policy framework, conflict resolution and listening skills.



1. How long have you been a county commissioner?
 2 years or less 2 to 8 years 9 to 12 years More than 12 years

2. What is the population of your county: 75,000 or less 75,001 to 499,000 Over 500,000

3. How often do you attend FAC events each year? Often Occasionally Rarely Never

4. Have you attended any County Commissioners Certification (CCC) courses in the past? Yes No

5. If so, rate their value to you in your job: (*check one*)
 Always useful Never useful Sometimes useful No opinion

6. Of the following locations for CCC workshops, which would you prefer most? (*check one*)

<input type="checkbox"/> Orlando/Orange County	<input type="checkbox"/> Tampa/ Hillsborough County
<input type="checkbox"/> Tallahassee/ Leon County	<input type="checkbox"/> Jacksonville/ Duval County
<input type="checkbox"/> Gainesville/ Alachua County	<input type="checkbox"/> West Palm Beach/ Palm Beach County

7. Are you a CCC graduate: Yes No

8. If yes, would you be interested in continuing in an “post graduate” curriculum? Yes No

9. If yes, would you prefer that the “post graduate” curriculum be: (*check one*)
 A skills building program which addresses topics such as leadership development, conflict resolution, communications skills, or other practical skills useful to commissioners; OR,
 A policy issues approach addressing such topics as growth management, public finance, budgeting, environmental issues, or other policy issues?

10. Would you be interested in including site visits to other counties as part of the “post graduate” program?

- Yes No Not sure

11. Would you support utilizing nationally recognized or professional speakers in the CCC programs even if the registration fees doubled from \$125 to \$250? Yes No Not sure

12. What is the best method for sending you information about education events or other FAC programs?

- Email US Mail Fax

13. In recent years, new technology has become available to do CCC training in different formats. If a maximum of 6 hours CCC training could be secured by using technology, how likely would you be to participate using the following technology?

- a. Web based computer technology (written material with short tests):
 Very Likely Likely Somewhat Likely Unlikely Not at all
- b. Streaming video computer technology (like watching a TV show on your computer):
 Very Likely Likely Somewhat Likely Unlikely Not at all
- c. Live real time training from a distant site (a teacher at a distant site broadcasting live):
 Very Likely Likely Somewhat Likely Unlikely Not at all
- d. Taped (DVD, VCR) training at a specific site in your county:
 Very Likely Likely Somewhat Likely Unlikely Not at all
- e. Phone conference coupled with computer based graphics :
 Very Likely Likely Somewhat Likely Unlikely Not at all

14. Would you support authorizing CCC credit for taking the computer based classes?

- Yes No No preference

15. Would you prefer a commissioners’ education program that provided computer based courses?

- Yes No

Comments on any of the previous items: _____

16. What amount of training do commissioners need on the following Policy and Procedure topics to do their job better? (*circle a number for each topic*)

	Amount of training needed				Not Sure
	None	A little	Some	A lot	
a. Alternative revenues (i.e. MSTU's,, impact fees, special assessments)	1	2	3	4	0
b. Intergovernmental issues: annexation, CRA, urban service areas, etc..	1	2	3	4	0
c. Public finance (bonding).....	1	2	3	4	0
d. Budgeting and financial management	1	2	3	4	0
e. Charter Government and Home Rule	1	2	3	4	0
f. Legislative Process.....	1	2	3	4	0
g. Legal Aspects – Major legal and case law considerations.	1	2	3	4	0
h. County government form & function	1	2	3	4	0
i. County government services (across the board).....	1	2	3	4	0
j. Technology – E-government	1	2	3	4	0
k. Economic development	1	2	3	4	0
l. Natural resources: water/land use	1	2	3	4	0
m. Personnel policies/Labor law/employee relations	1	2	3	4	0
n. Ethics, Government in the Sunshine/Sunshine law	1	2	3	4	0
o. Strategic planning and community visioning.....	1	2	3	4	0
p. Growth management	1	2	3	4	0
q. Health & human services	1	2	3	4	0
r. Homeland Security.....	1	2	3	4	0
s. Public safety (including but not limited to terrorists' threats)....	1	2	3	4	0
t. Land use, planning and zoning	1	2	3	4	0
t. Other:	1	2	3	4	0
u. Other:	1	2	3	4	0

17. Of the topics listed in question 16, which are the most important to helping Commissioners do a better job? (*please identify by alphabetical character the top 3 training needs*)

_____ Most Important _____ 2nd Most Important _____ 3rd Most Important

18. What amount of training do Commissioners need on the following Personal skills to do their job better? (*circle a number for each topic*)

	Amount of training needed				Not Sure
	None	A little	Some	A lot	
a. Leadership skills.....	1	2	3	4	0
b. Conflict resolution	1	2	3	4	0
c. Constituent relations ..	1	2	3	4	0
d. Customer service ..	1	2	3	4	0
e. Strategic thinking and planning.....	1	2	3	4	0
f. Diversity training.....	1	2	3	4	0
g. Stress management	1	2	3	4	0
h. Time management; balance work and home life.....	1	2	3	4	0
i. Listening skills.....	1	2	3	4	0
J. Media/Presentation skills	1	2	3	4	0
k. Negotiating skills	1	2	3	4	0
l. Developing a Policy Framework (issues, alternatives, consequences)	1	2	3	4	0
m. Team Building.....	1	2	3	4	0
n. Computer skills useful to commissioners.....	1	2	3	4	0
o. Other:	1	2	3	4	0
p. Other:	1	2	3	4	0

19 Of the topics listed in question 18, which are the most important to helping Commissioners do a better job? (*please identify by alphabetical character the top 3 training needs*)

_____Most Important _____2nd Most Important _____3rd Most Important

**PLEASE RETURN SURVEY TO IFAS FOR RECEIPT NO LATER THAN
JANUARY 6, 2006. USE THE ENCLOSED ENVELOPE OR
 FAX TO THE FAC OFFICE AT (850) 488-7752.**

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE.

LOOK FOR THE NEW 2006-08 CURRICULUM AND SCHEDULE NEXT SPRING



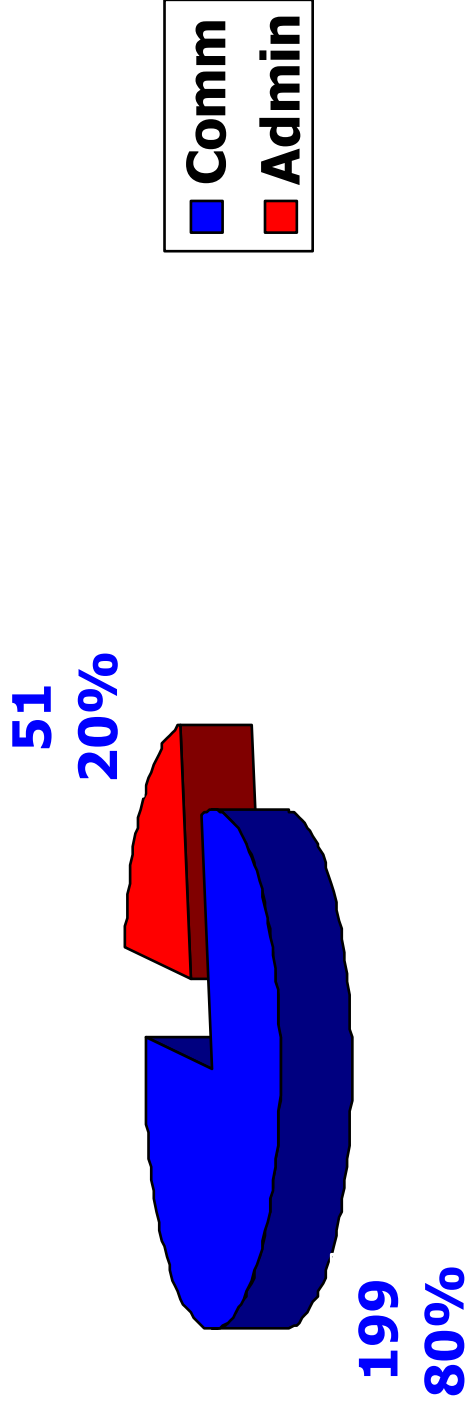
2006 County Commissioner Educational Survey

Rodney L. Clouser



Survey Response Rate

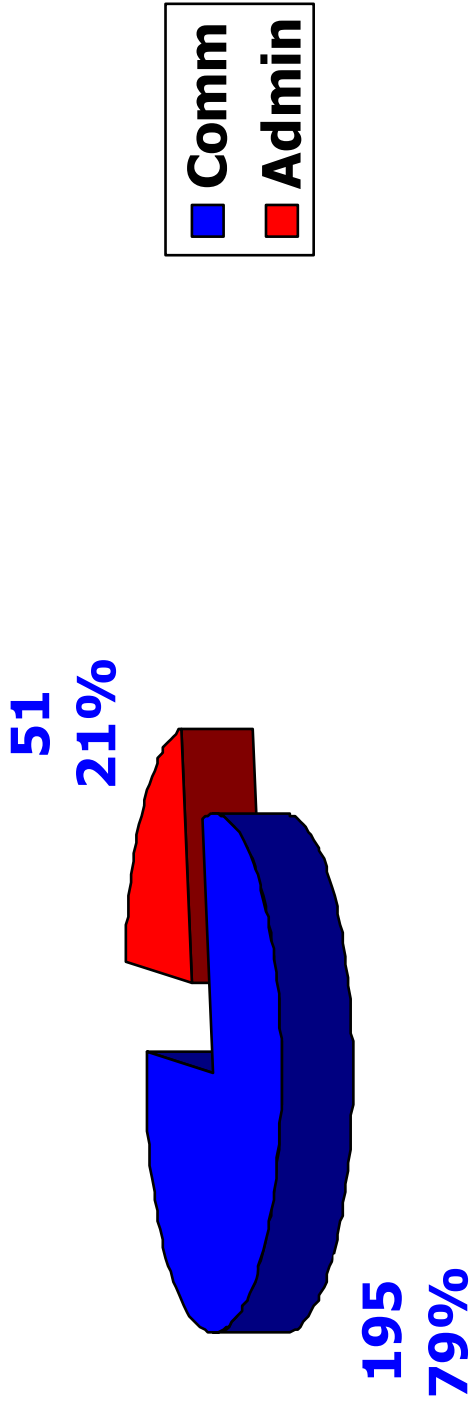
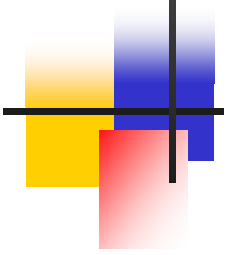
Overall Response Rate: 56.3%

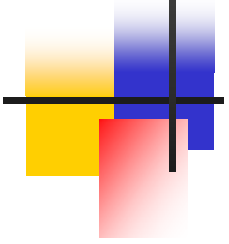


Useable Survey Response Rate

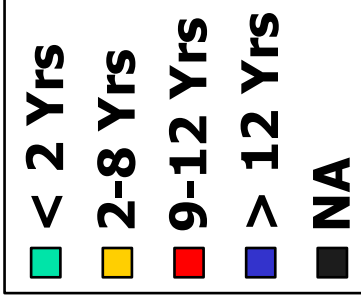
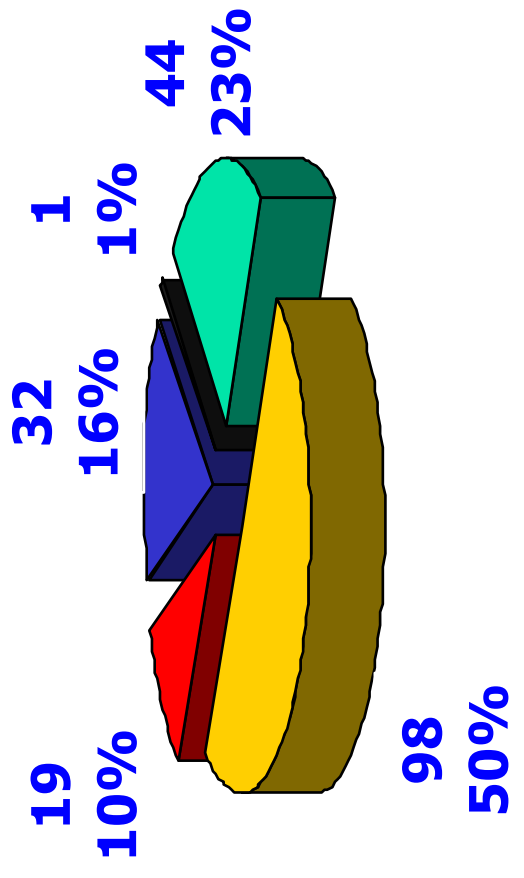
246 Total Surveys (55.4%)

98.4 % Of All Returned

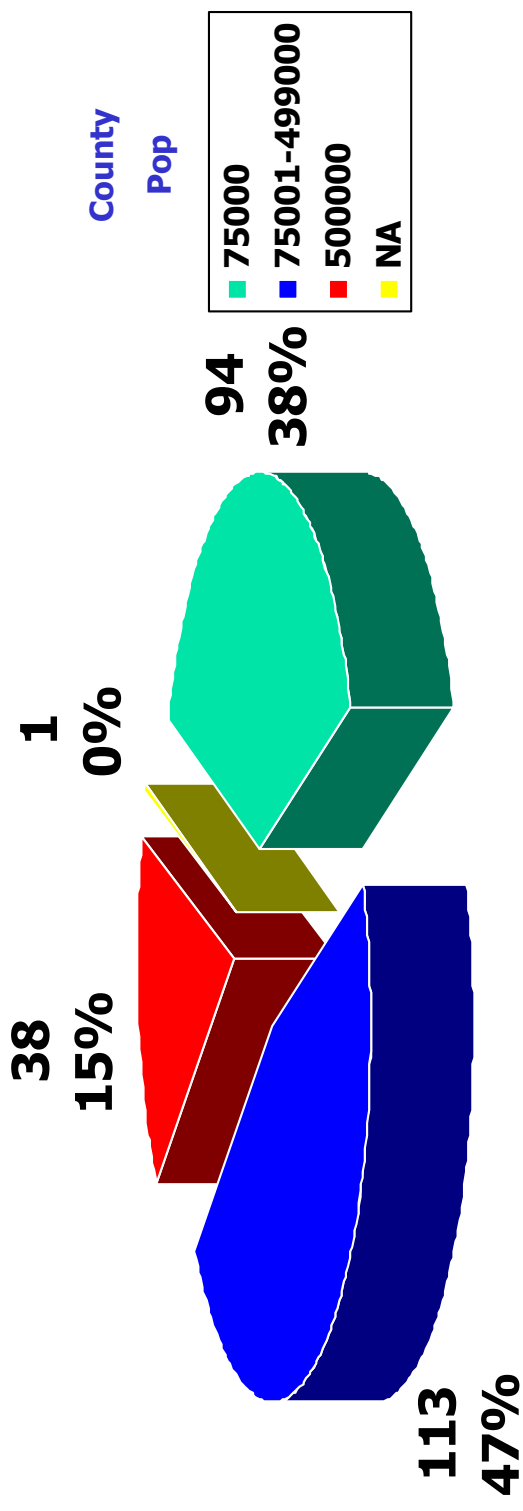


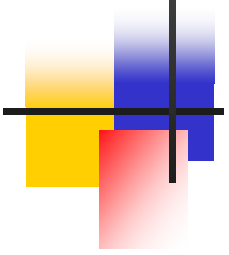


Years As County Commissioner

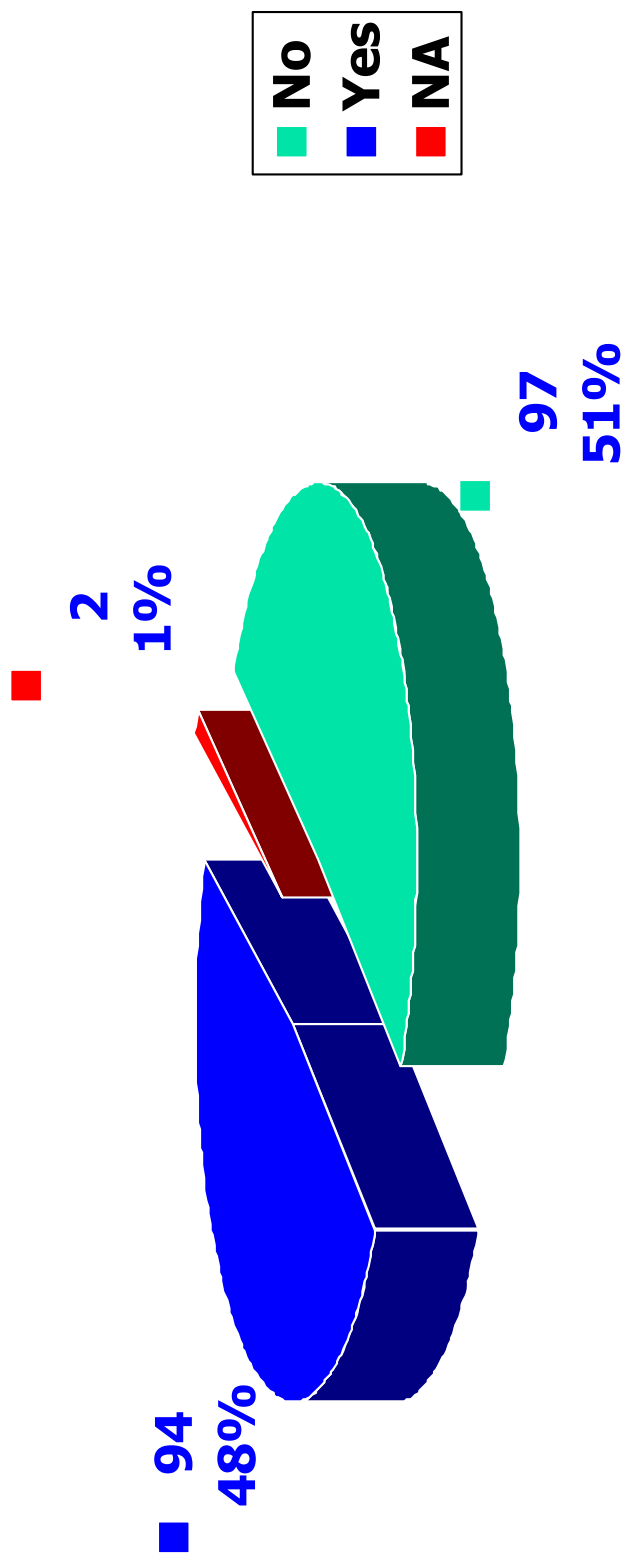


Commissioner and Administrator Respondents By County Size

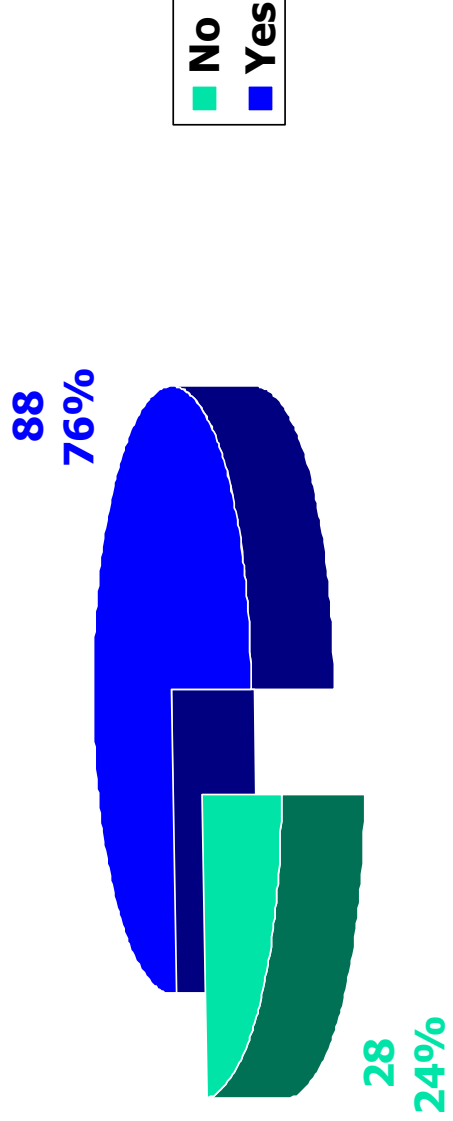
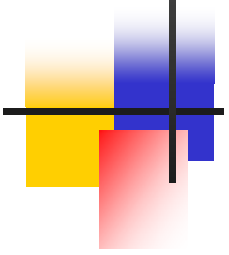




CCC Graduate?

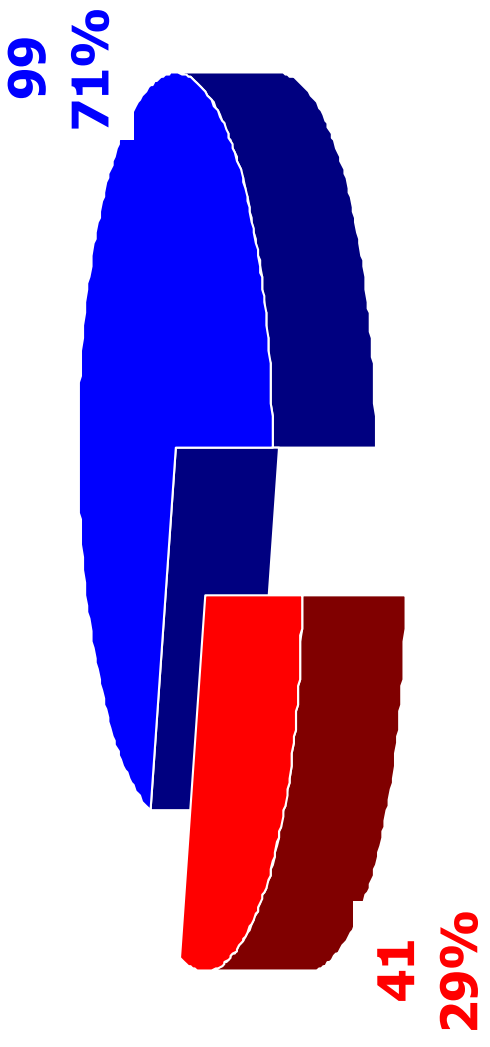
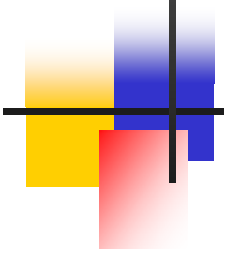


Interested In Post Graduate Curriculum?

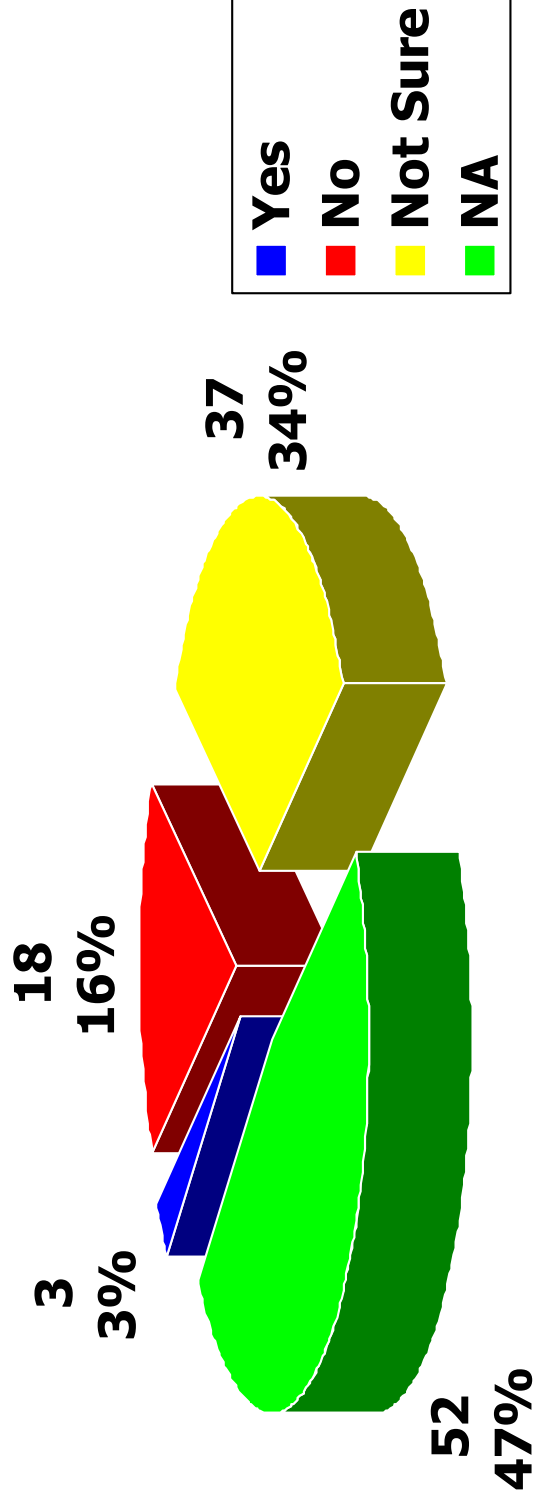
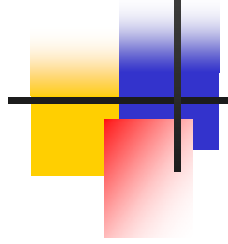


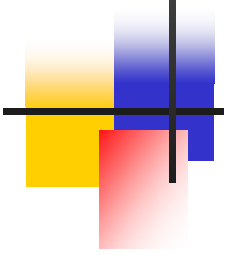
No
Yes

Post Graduate Curriculum: Skills or Policy Based?

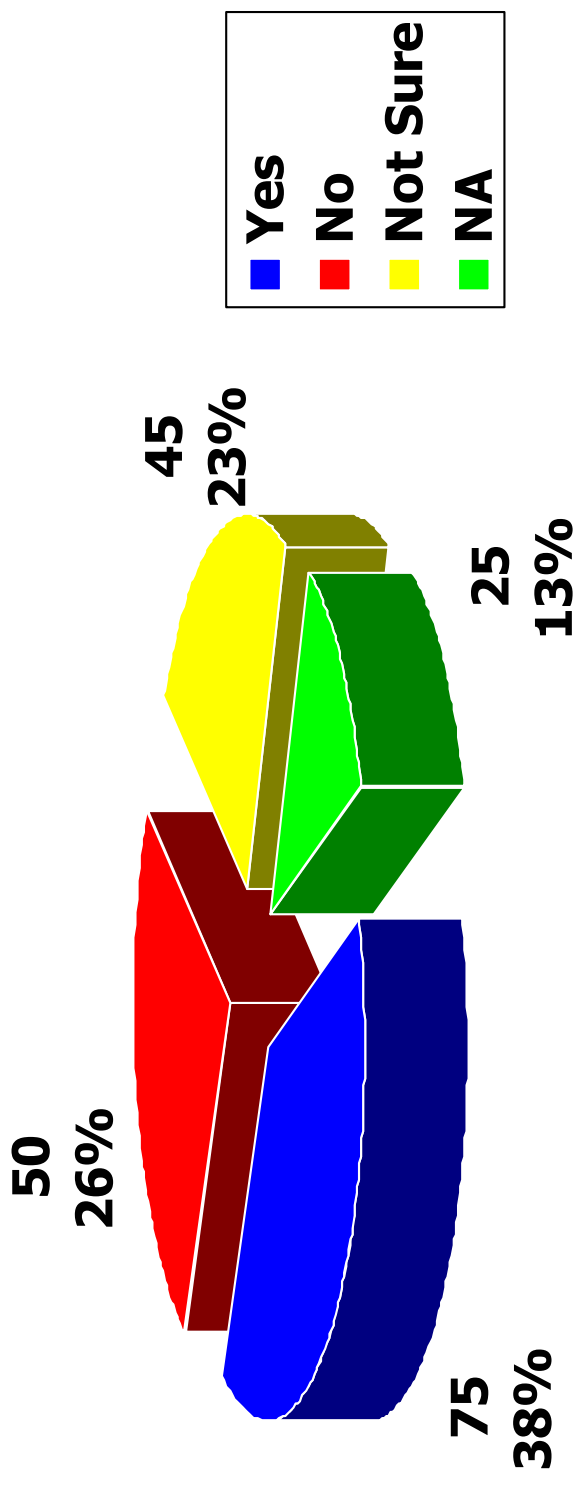


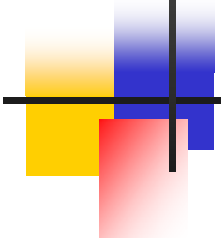
Visit Other Sites As Part Of Post Graduate Curriculum?



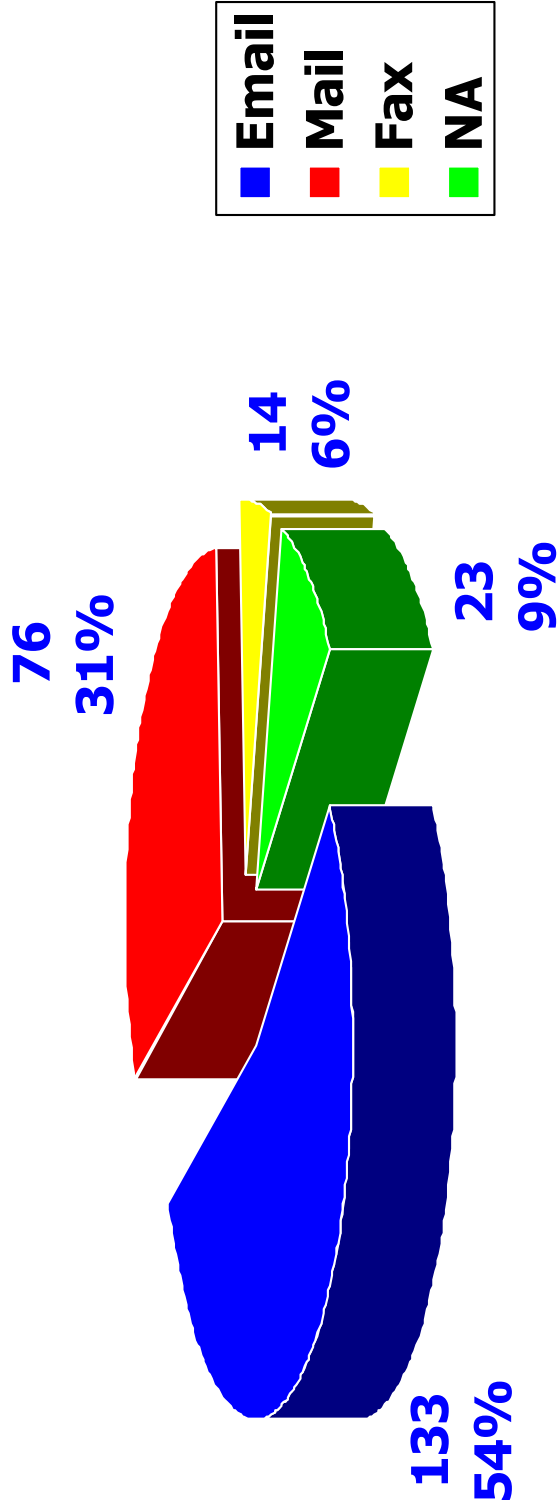


Nationally Or Professional Speakers?

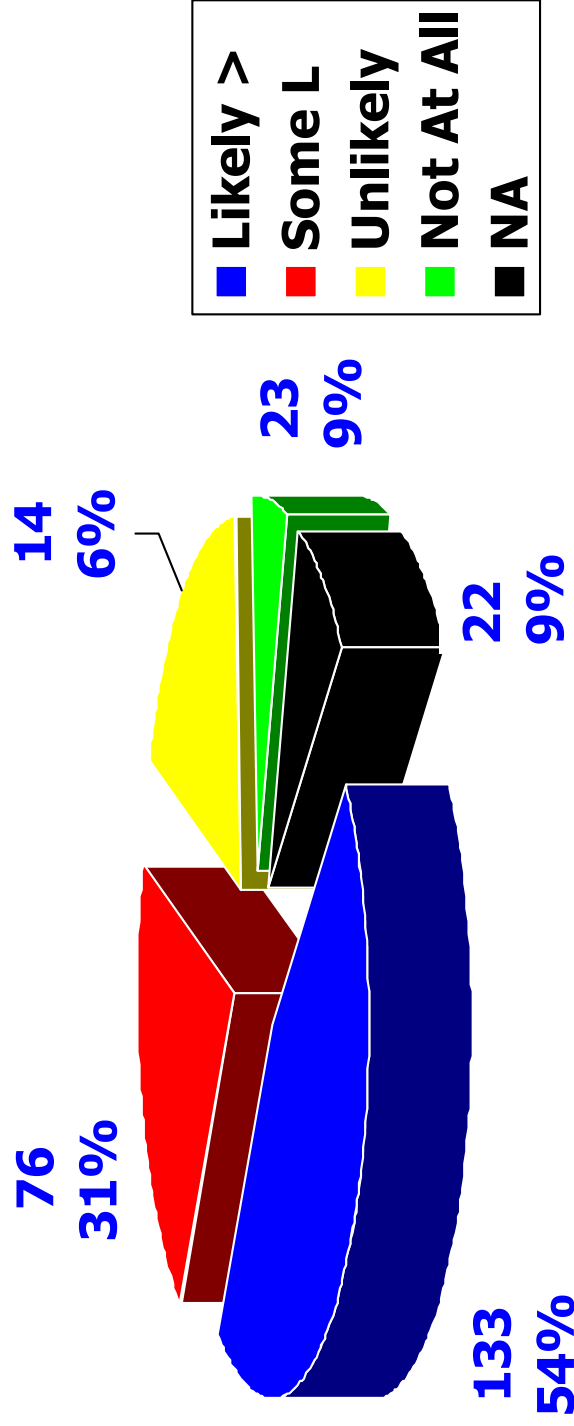




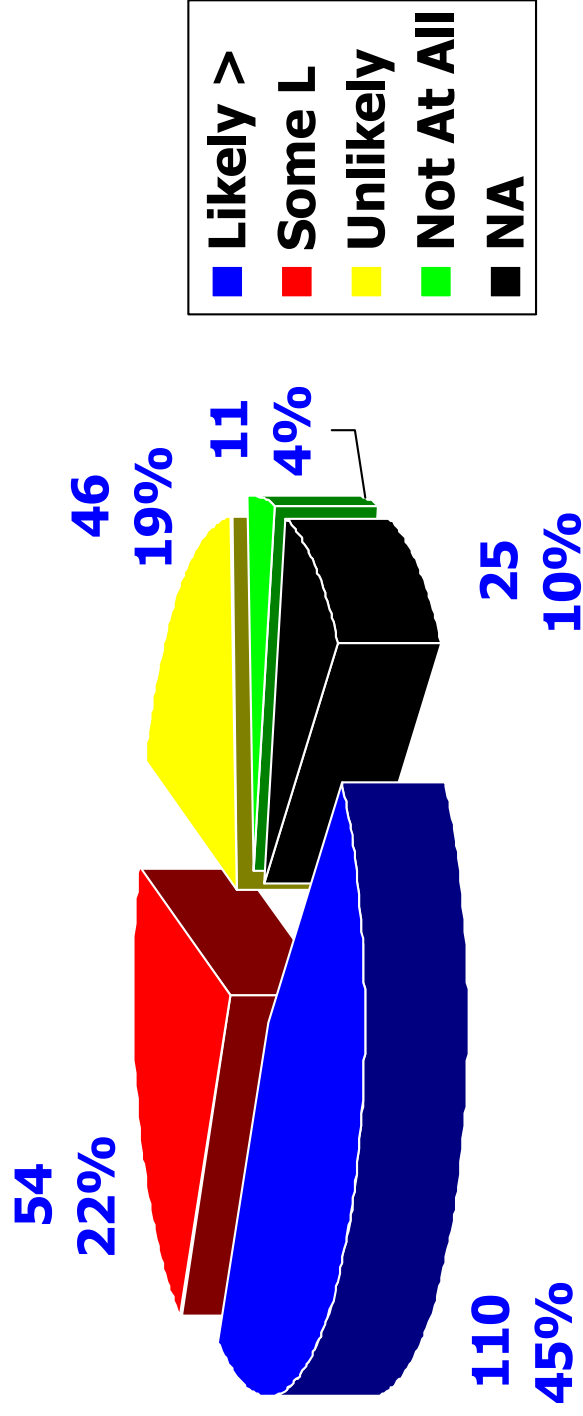
Best Method To Contact?



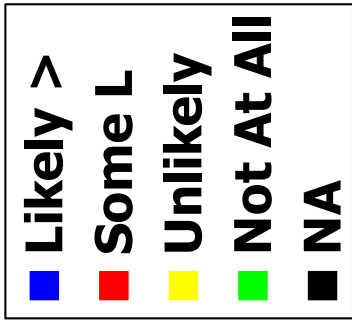
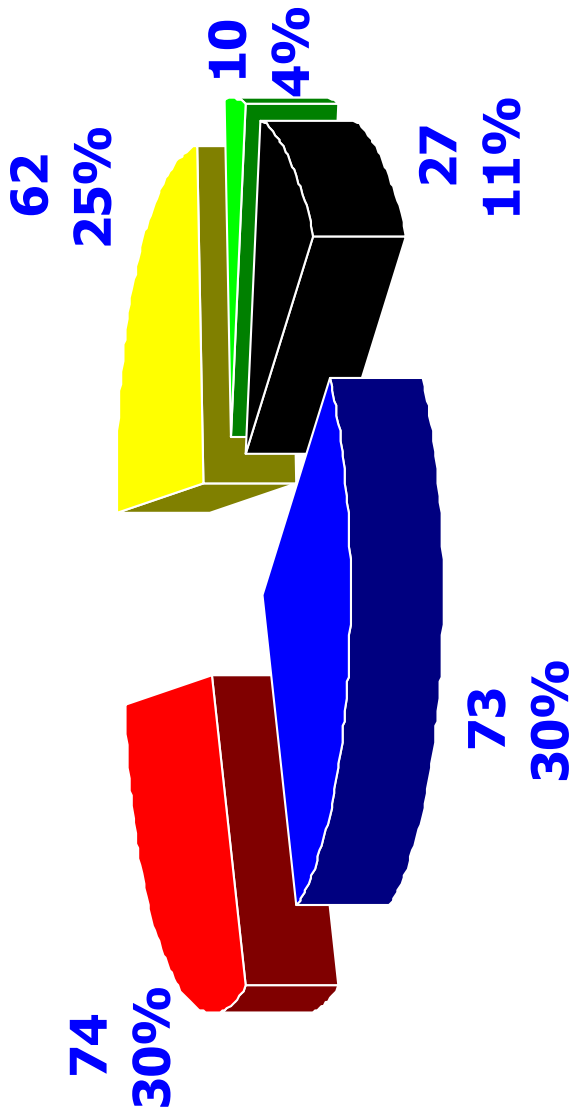
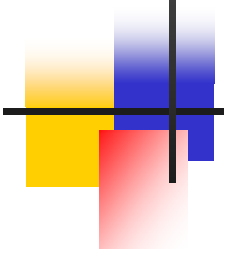
Training Using Technology: Web Based



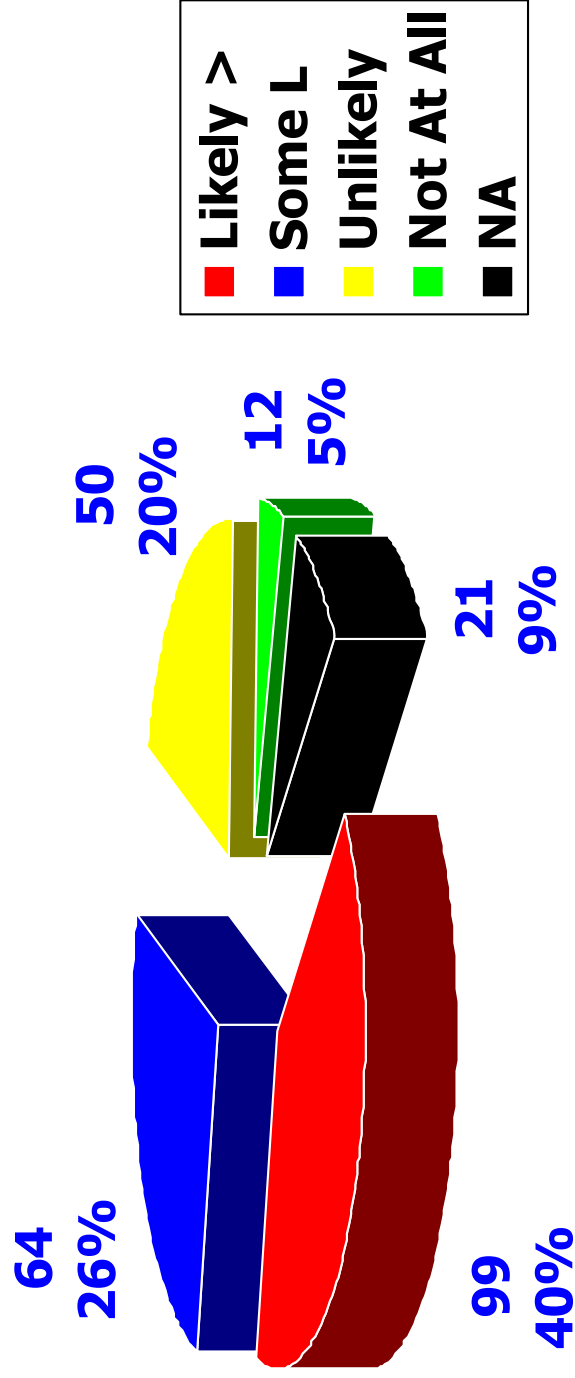
Training Using Technology: Streaming Video



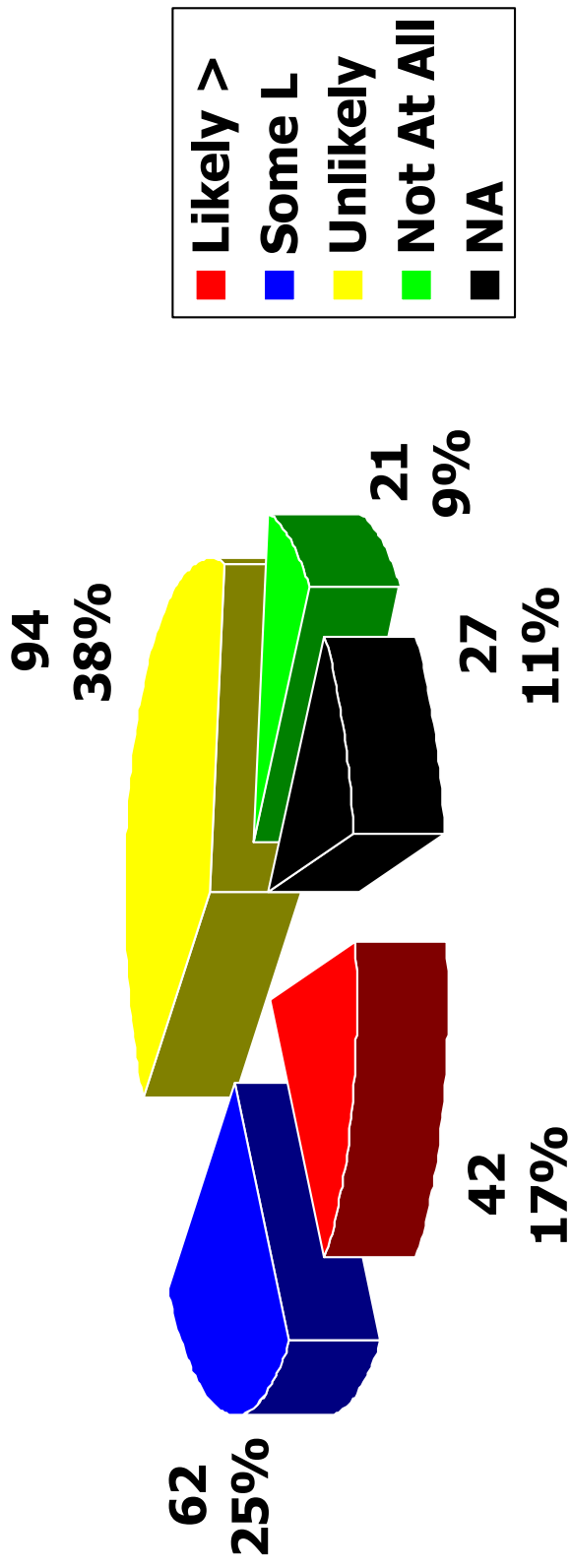
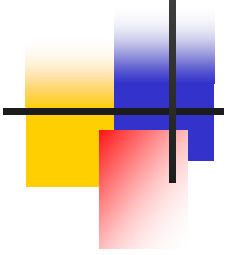
Training Using Technology: Live Real Time



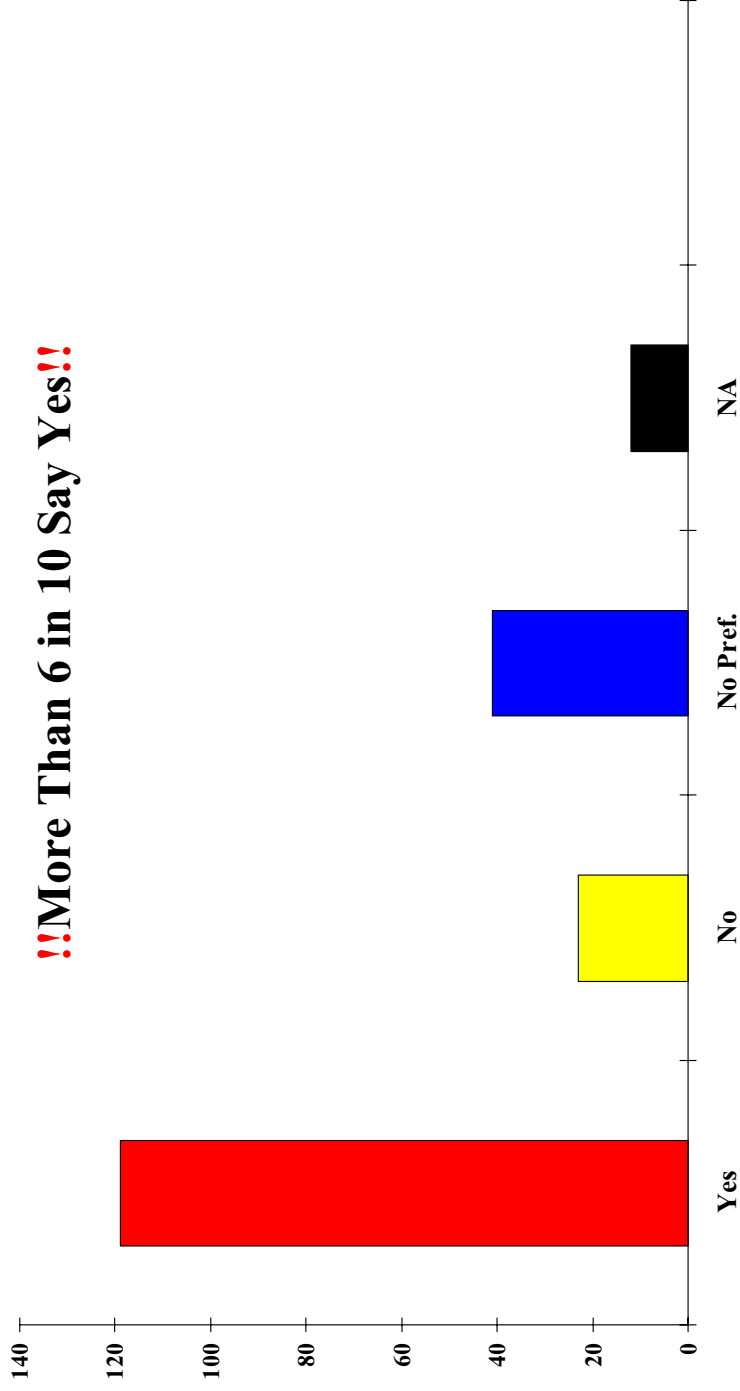
Training Using Technology: Taped (DVD, VCR)



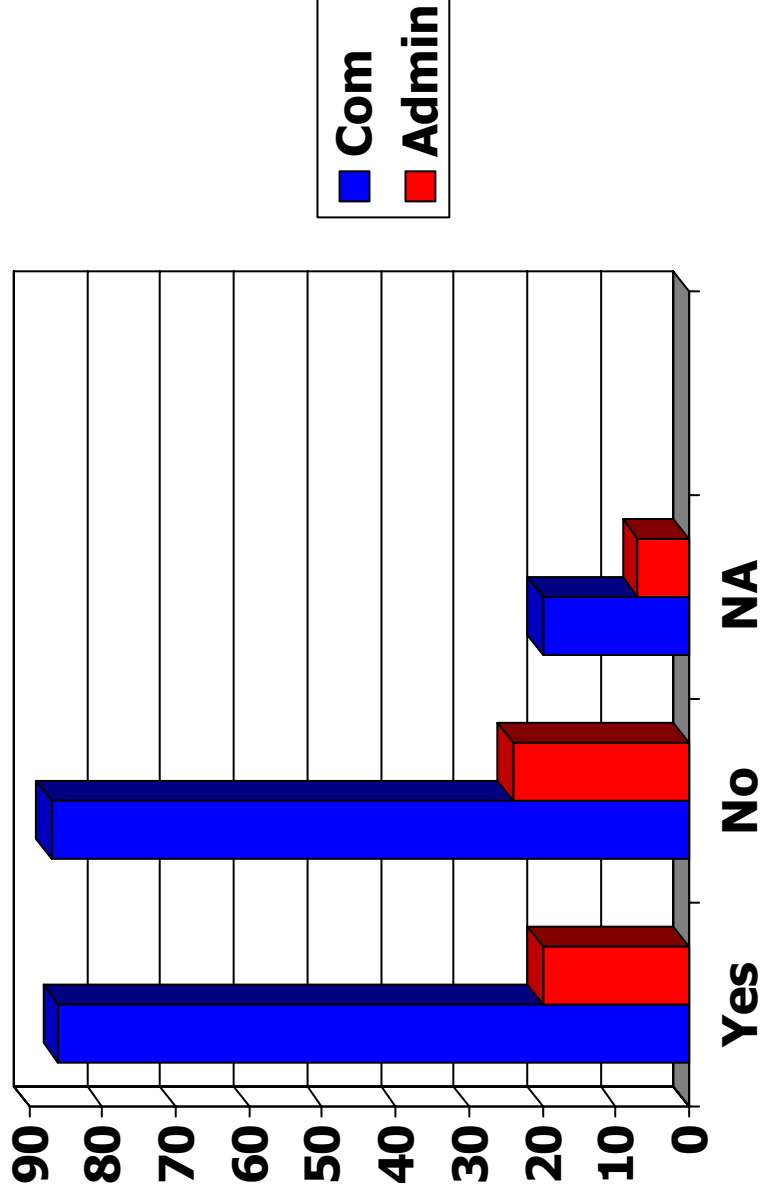
Training Using Technology: Phone With Computer Graphics

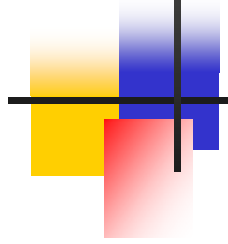


Authorize CCC Credit For Computer Based Classes?

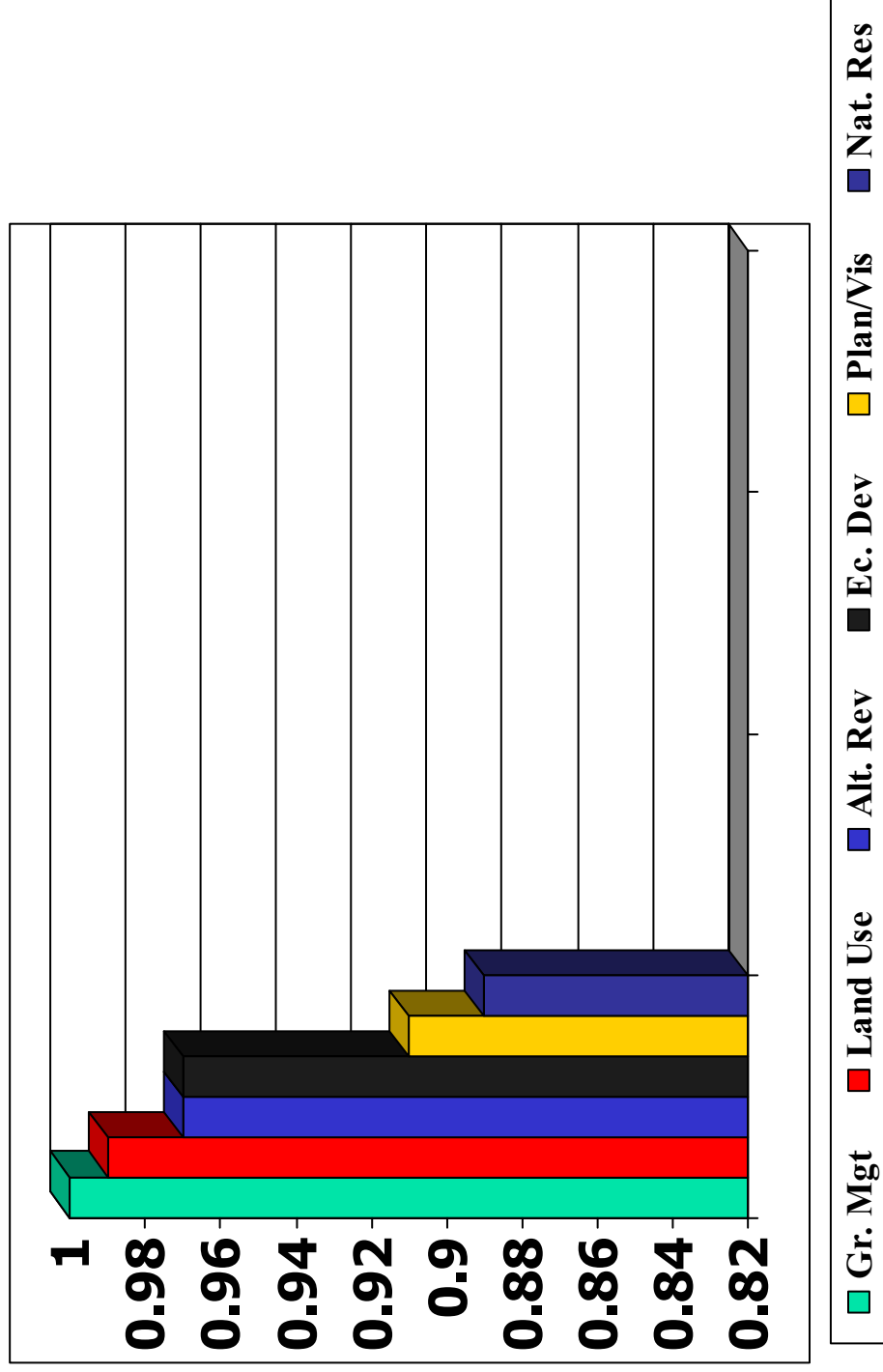


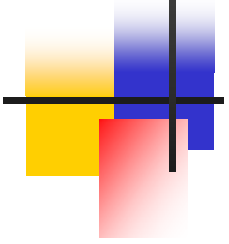
Preference For CCC Program That Provides Computer Based Courses



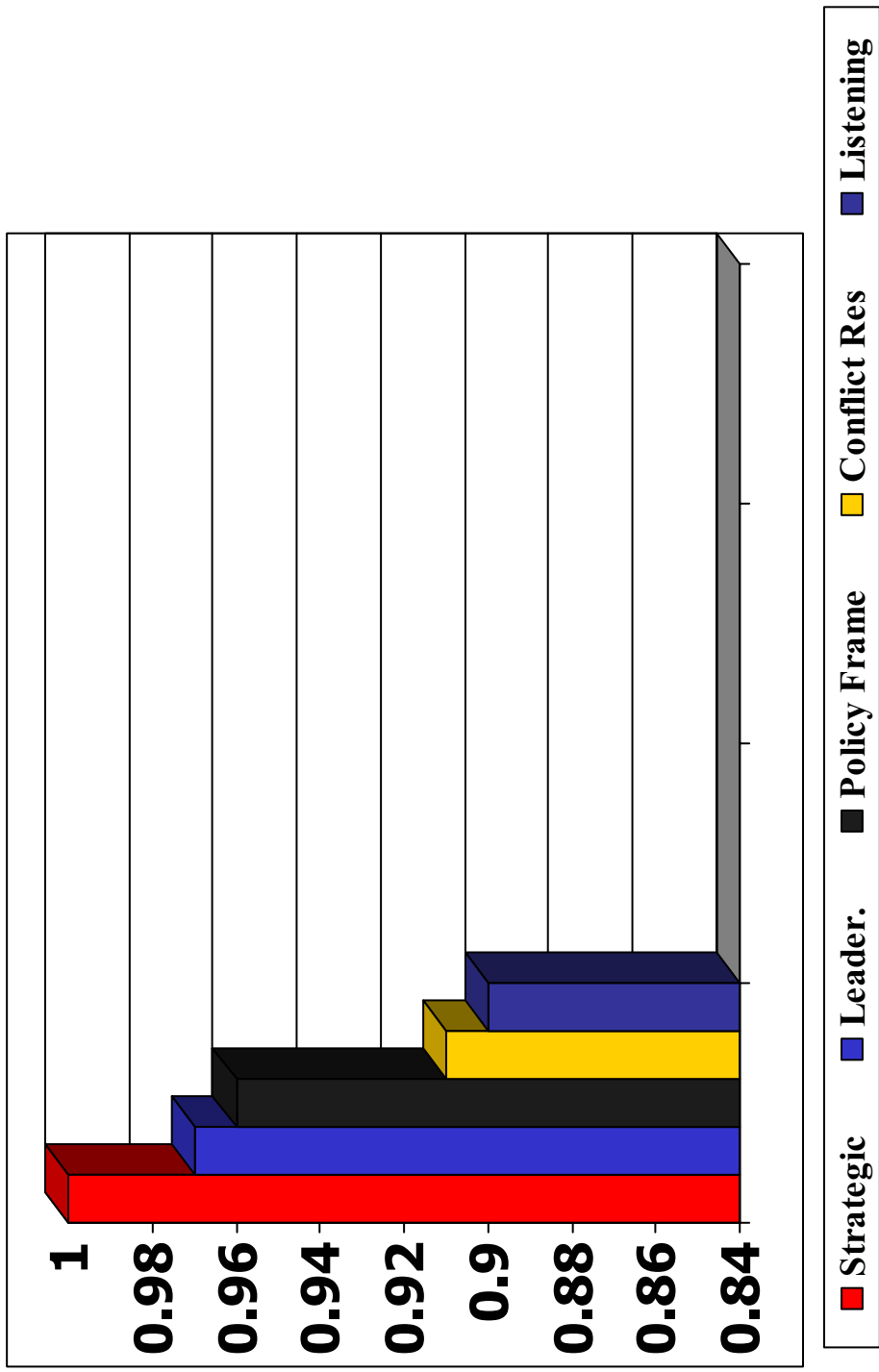


Top Six Policy and Procedure Programs (indexed to highest vote total)

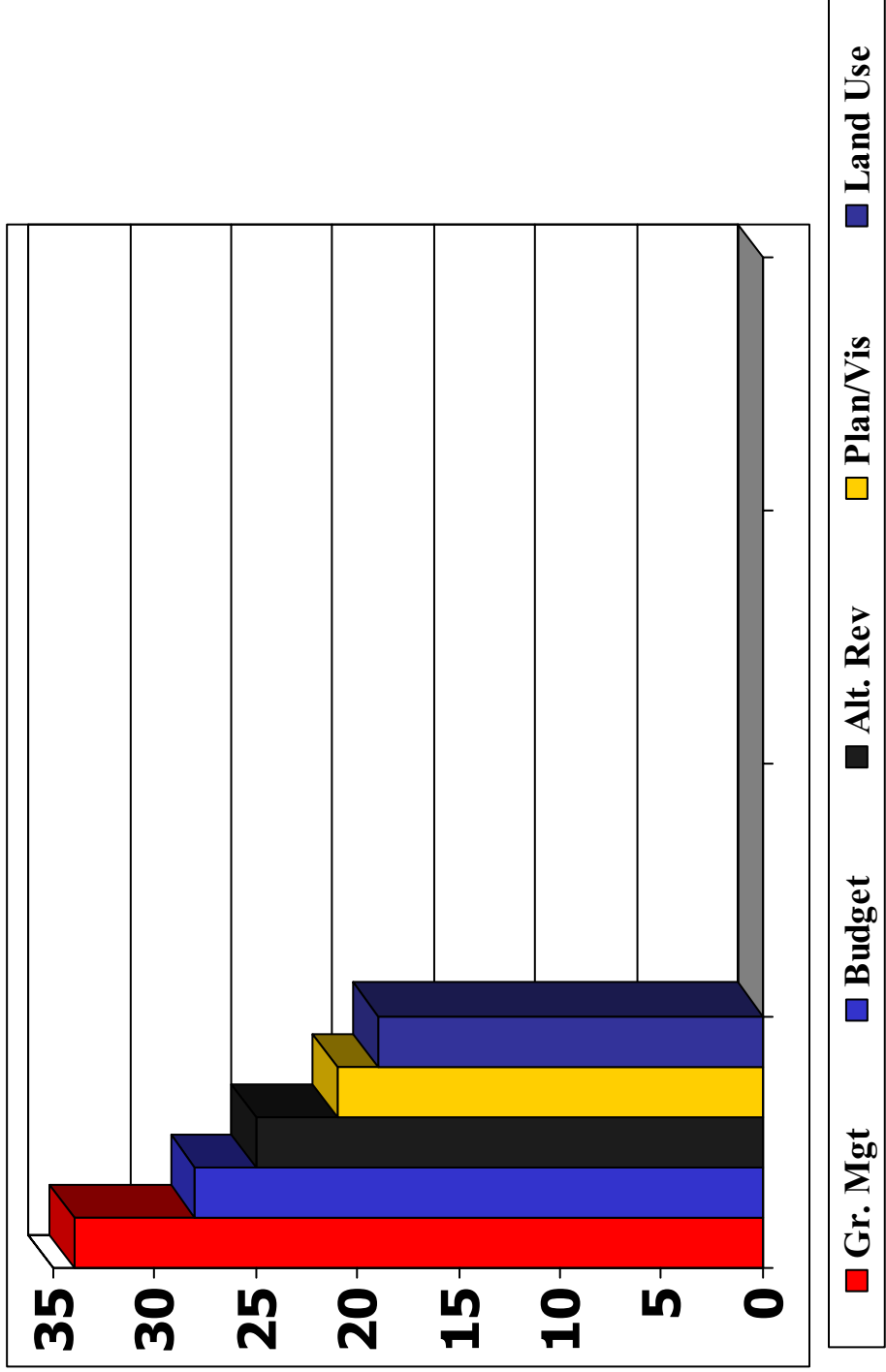
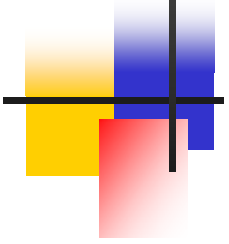




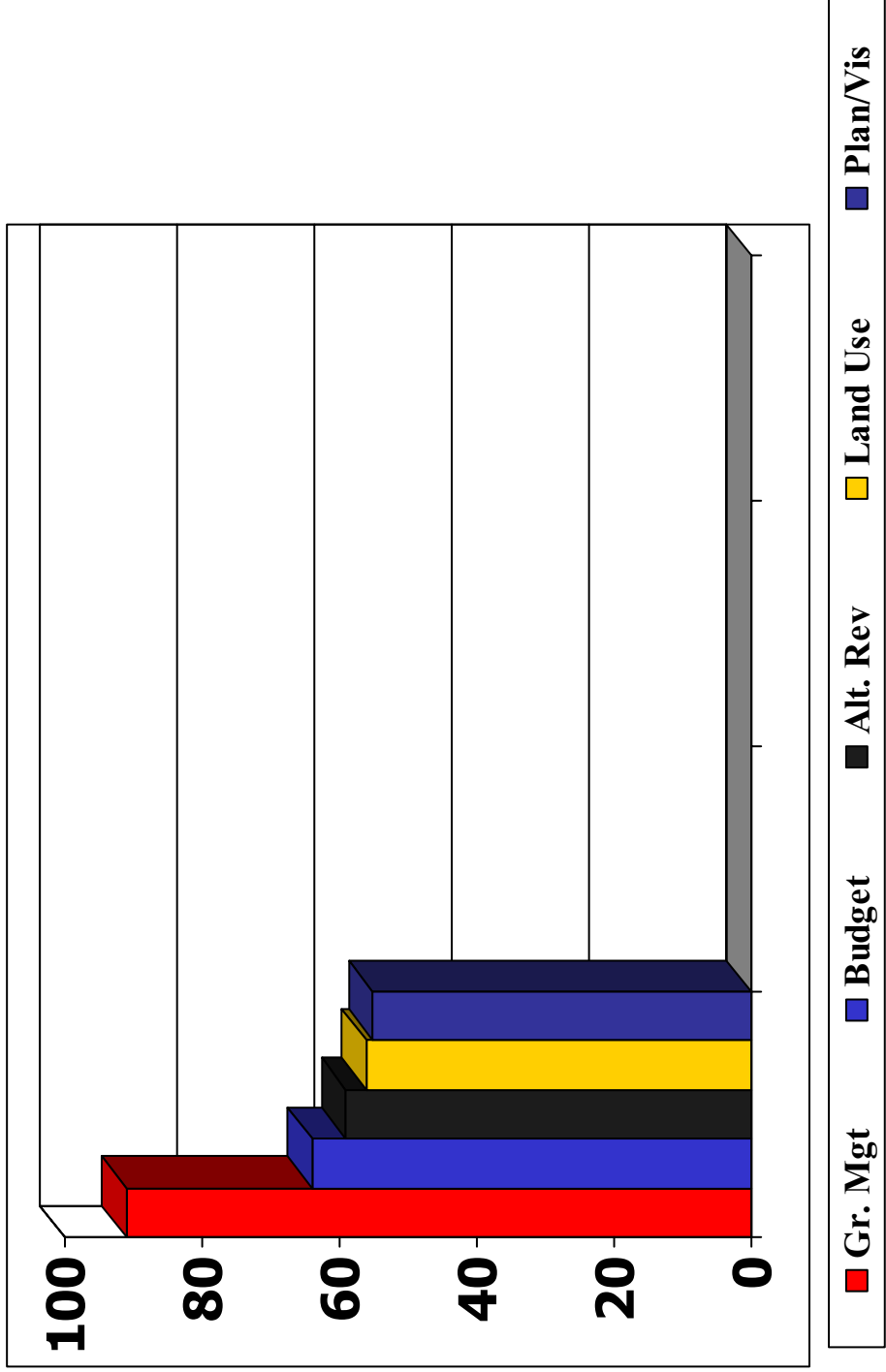
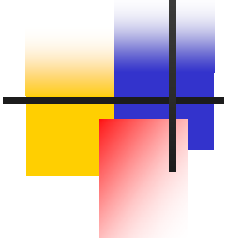
Top Five People and Personal Programs (indexed to highest vote total)



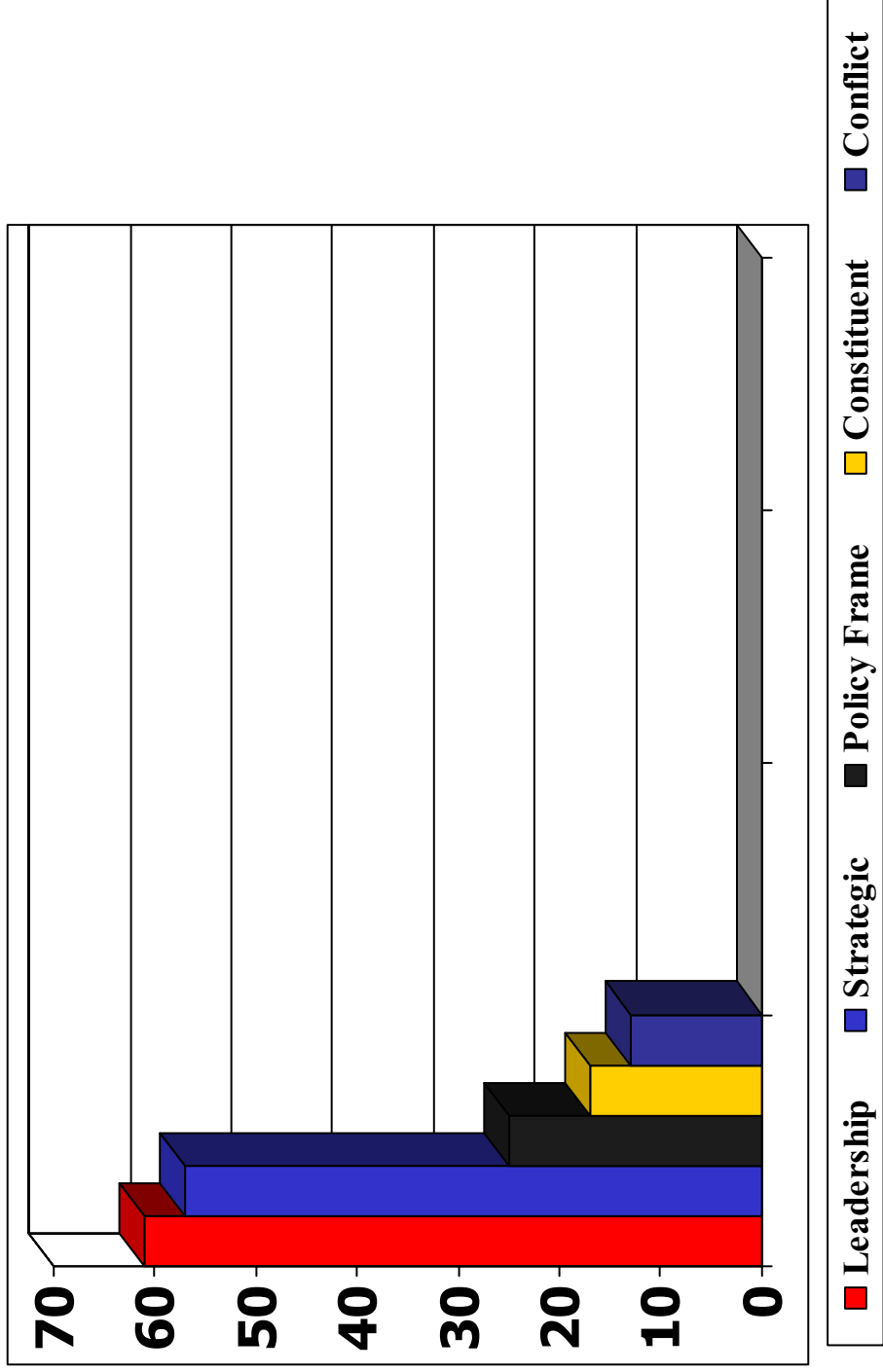
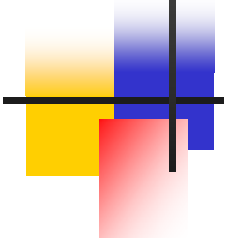
Most Important Policy and Procedure Program By Request



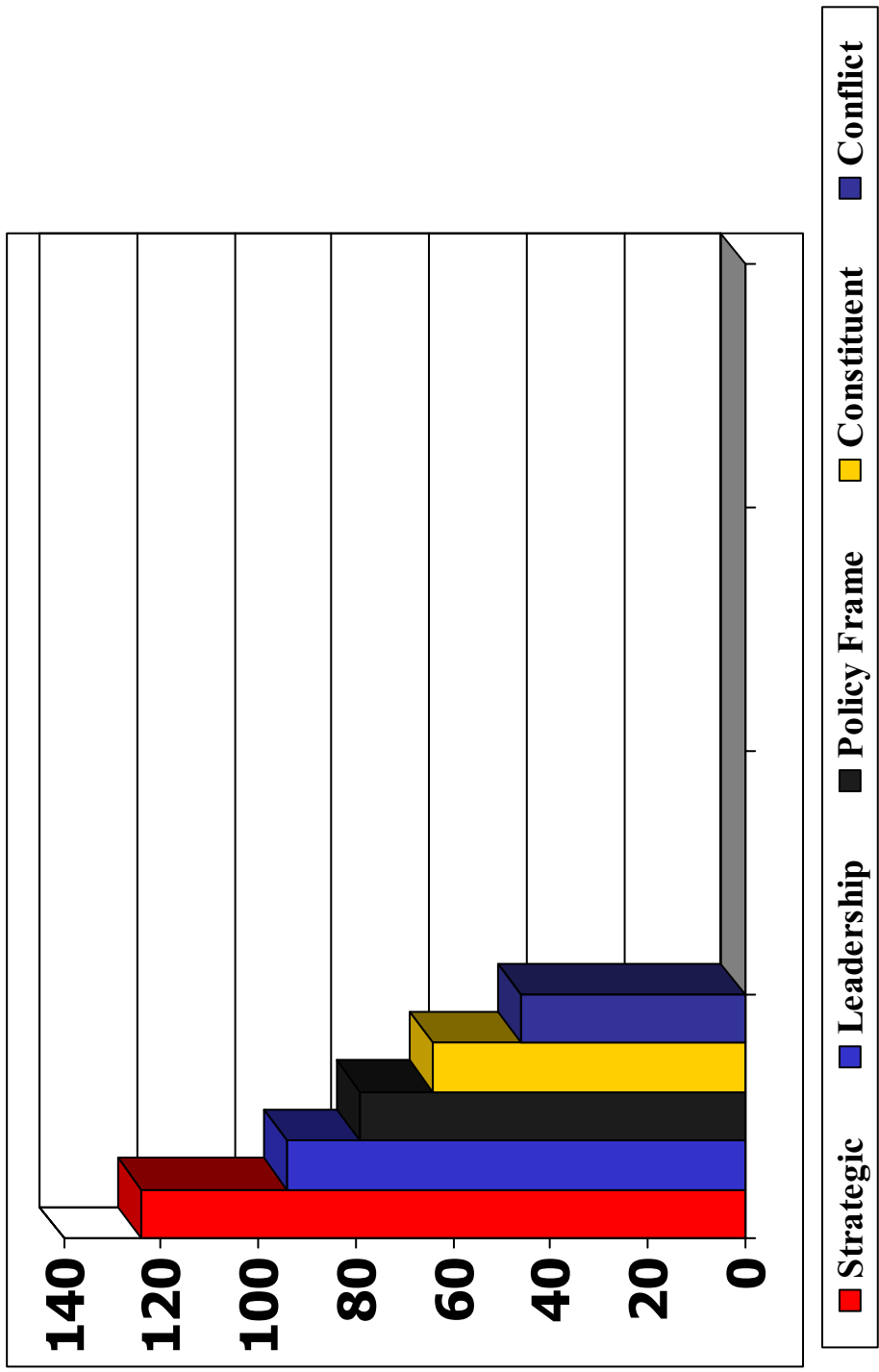
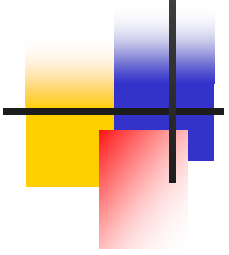
Most Requested Policy and Procedure Programs



Most Important People and Personal Program By Request



Most Requested People and Personal Programs



Most Preferred Location For CCC Workshops?

