

**Running Head: ANALYSIS OF EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING
DIVERSITY IN THE NORTH CHARLESTON FIRE DEPARTMENT**

Executive Leadership

Analysis of Effective Strategies for Improving Diversity in the North Charleston Fire
Department

Eric L. Phillips

North Charleston Fire Department

North Charleston, SC

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CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

Signed: *(electronically submitted) Eric L. Phillips*

ABSTRACT

The City of North Charleston Fire Department (NCFD) does not have an effective plan in place to improve workforce diversity through recruitment, training and retention. The purpose of this applied research project is to identify effective strategies for the comprehensive recruitment, training and retention of minorities in the NCFD. The type of research methodology used for this project was evaluative research methodology. The research questions to be answered by this project include the following: (a) What current recruitment activities are performed by the NCFD and other municipal fire departments in the county, state and region to attract minority candidates? (b) To what extent are fire departments aligning diversity efforts with the International Association of Fire Fighters' Diversity Initiatives? (c) What administrative considerations must be made to implement employee retention plans?

The procedures for this applied research project (ARP) included review of departmental policies, fire service journals, magazines and other articles via electronic resources. Additionally, strategies suggested by national-level fire service agencies were researched, forming the basis of a survey, composed by the researcher. The methods for distribution and receipt of the survey were telephone, email, direct mail, and in-person. The surveys were circulated among departments within the same county as the NCFD, within the state of South Carolina, and in other states.

Of the fifty departments that were contacted, the majority responded. Committed to providing a model for improvement in the area of diversity, the International Association of Fire Fighters has outlined several strategies that may be applied in various settings to promote the attainment of a more diverse workforce. Therefore, it is recommended that the NCFD take a

proactive approach to the recruitment of a more inclusive workforce.

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the United States, citizens rely upon the service of trained first responders, including our nation's firefighters. However, all too often, communities are served by fire departments that are not reflective of the diversity which exists within its borders. As a government-supported agency, it is incumbent upon administrative officials to address diversity within its ranks. Furthermore, by partnering with other agencies and organizations to monitor, assess, plan and respond to the needs of the community, fire departments can develop and consistently update effective recruitment, training and retention plans. The City of North Charleston is located in the coastal county of Charleston, in South Carolina. The urban area is centrally situated among several cities and smaller towns, and has a diverse population which includes a rapidly growing Spanish-speaking community.

The National Fire Department Census Database is an online address listing of U.S. fire departments registered with United States Fire Administration (USFA) to conduct special studies, guide program decision-making and improve direct communication with individual fire departments. (USFA, 2012) Utilizing this resource, as well as contacting personnel of fire departments known through the Researcher's affiliation with the Dr. Carl Holmes Executive Development Institute and enrollment in the Executive Fire Officer's Program at the National Fire Academy, a list of potential fire departments to survey was created. Local, regional and national fire departments were contacted in an effort to obtain comprehensive data regarding diversity planning as it pertains to hiring and retention.

According to the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF), in their 2006 diversity initiative, "diversity recruitment requires recognition of the need to diversify, an awareness of effective methods, a commitment to a program and strategies, and the assignment of resources"

(IAFF, 2006). The identified effective strategies of their study formed the basis of the Researcher's 2012 Survey. The overall objective established by the IAFF for their Diversity Initiative was to identify effective recruitment, selection, and retention practices to achieve a fire service workforce reflective of the community served.

The National Society of Executive Fire Officers developed the Firefighter Code of Ethics, which states "never discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, creed, age, marital status, national origin, ancestry, gender, sexual preference, medical condition or handicap" (USFA, 2012). With this in mind, the importance of not only embracing the idea of diversity but, promoting the implementation of strategies to recruit, hire, train and retain a diverse workforce is critical and timely. While not the direct purpose of this study, the IAFF specifically wanted to address the underrepresentation of people of color, women, gays and lesbians in the Fire Service.

There are numerous business, financial, and legal reasons why an emphasis should be placed on increasing diversity within an institution. In exploring the reasons for supporting diversity, it should be noted that addressing an organization's diversity plan or lack thereof causes a paradigm shift. Over time, changing beliefs and values leads to changes in actions, attitudes and long-term behaviors. By examining the diversity plans of various departments, the Researcher intends to be proactive rather than reactive in future endeavors. The paramount goal of a Fire Service agency is to serve every community member, regardless of race or other factor, however, as the IAFF reports, it also depends on the entire community and country for its funding and support and wants to better understand, communicate with, and enlist multi-cultural community support (IAFF, 2012).

In an effort to address the need for increased diversity among fire service personnel, this researcher analyzed the IAFF Diversity Initiative as well as journal articles. The problem was that the City of North Charleston Fire Department (NCFD) does not have an effective plan in place to improve workforce diversity through recruitment, training and retention. The purpose of this applied research project is to identify effective strategies for the comprehensive recruitment, training and retention of minorities in the North Charleston Fire Department. The type of research methodology used for this project was action evaluative research methodology. The research questions to be answered by this project include the following: (a) What current recruitment activities are performed by the NCFD and other municipal fire departments in the county, state and region to attract minority candidates? (b) To what extent are fire departments aligning diversity efforts with the International Association of Fire Fighters' Diversity Initiatives? (c) What administrative considerations must be made to implement employee retention plans?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Formed in 1937 with only one station and one engine, the North Charleston (NCFD) became a paid service in 1962. (NCFD, 2011) Within 10 years of this milestone, the City of North Charleston was incorporated and the department then became two separate entities, the City of North Charleston Fire Department and the North Charleston Fire District (NCFD, 2011). The two departments were again merged in 1996 to become the North Charleston Fire Department. In recent years, the department has grown to include innovative technology and training. The NCFD has thermal imagers in each station, a confined-space rescue team, a

hazardous materials team, a marine firefighting team, and each firefighter in the department is trained to a minimum of IFSAC Firefighter One (NCFD, 2011).

The NCFD is composed of more than 225 staff members, serving a 93 square-mile area with more than 99,000 citizens and visitors (NCFD, 2011). Assets include 12 fire stations, 11 engines, 3 ladder trucks, 3 heavy rescue vehicles, 1 collapse rescue tractor trailer and 1 rehabilitation truck. The mission, however, extends beyond fire suppression. Staff members of various ranks and positions participate in school festivals, faith-based programs, neighborhood and corporate events in an effort to provide fire safety information and prevention displays. NCFD roles include being medical first responders at sports and community events, providing assistance to boaters in distress, bike patrol, teaching fire prevention in schools and libraries, as well as serving as positive role models in mentoring programs, providing inspections for commercial facilities, or “pre-planning” a building for accurate information in the event of an emergency.

Due to the high visibility of firefighters in the community and the importance of trust to the development of relationships with citizens, diversity is a critical issue. By having a diverse fire and rescue agency, the community is able to identify with and communicate more productively with first responders. Therefore, recruitment strategies must be implemented in a variety of creative ways, utilizing cultural understanding.

Charleston County has a significant and all too common history of racial discrimination as it pertains to providing service for all of its citizens. According to historians, about 40 percent of African-Americans alive today can trace their ancestral roots to West Africa through the Sullivan’s Island/Charleston gateway. This number is about the same percentage of white Americans whose ancestors were processed through Ellis Island (Janiskee, 2009). Charleston,

South Carolina, was North America's main port of entry for African slaves. Thus, hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children endured the Middle Passage, and were sold from the slave marketplaces in Charleston County. Therefore, a legacy of distrust among the races, racial oppression, and legalized discrimination and subsequent segregation lasted throughout the antebellum period and for centuries beyond the Civil War. The southern United States, controlled by Jim Crow Laws, provided a separate and unequal system for providing public services. Attitudes, emotions and opinions about these inequities have been passed down from generation to generation. Even the fire department was once segregated by law. Built in 1943, Company 15 of Charleston was a fire house dedicated to the service of Black firemen who were not allowed to serve in any other company (Blakeney, 2013). Their jobs were to open structures, allowing White firemen to battle the blazes (Blakeney, 2013). Confined to specific tasks like removing dead bodies from buildings, they were not allowed to operate the hoses or other equipment (Blakeney, 2013).

Today, Black firefighters are not as rare in Charleston County, but there is still work to be done. There are female firefighters that are a valuable part of the fire service, unlike in the past. In the NCFD, there are enough females to run an Engine or Ladder Company. The NCFD also has a minimal number of bilingual employees. Diversity is acknowledged, however, there is no effective plan in place to improve workforce diversity through recruitment, training and retention. In the NCFD, for example, there is only 1 minority (Black) in the position of Battalion Chief and there are no minorities in higher ranks than that. In comparison to the nearest metropolitan department, the City of Charleston, likewise has only 1 minority (Female) represented in a position of rank higher than Captain.

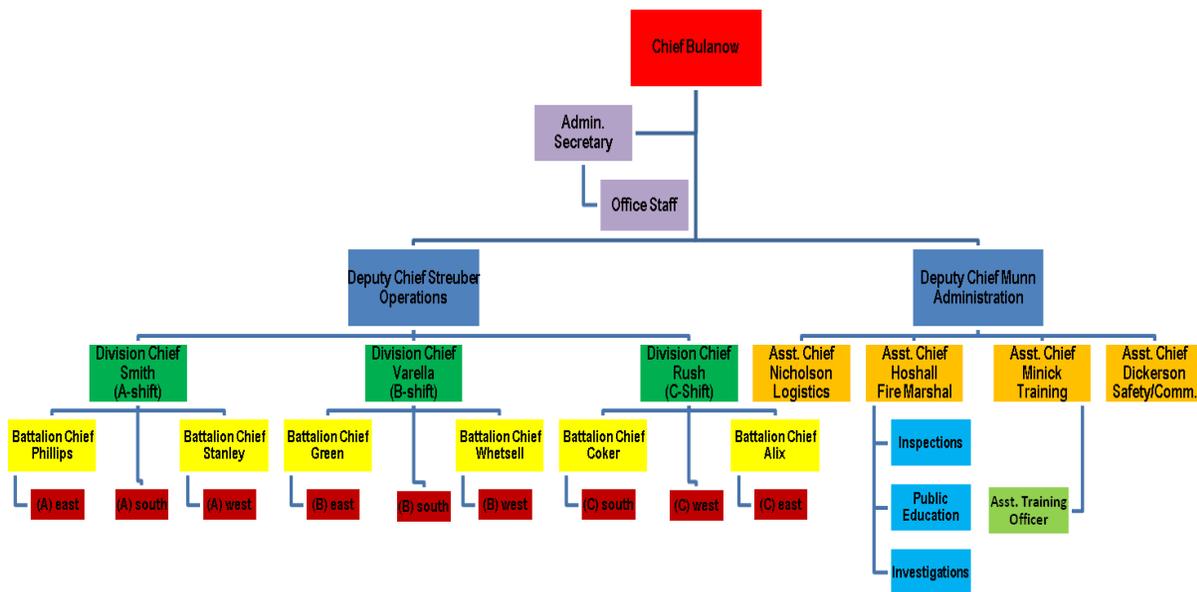
Herein lays the problem. The NCFD has access to best practices and strategies for recruiting a more diverse workforce, training them appropriately and implementing policies and procedures to retain them, however, current efforts are in need of evaluation. Interviews and survey results support this assertion. The International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) supports utilization of best practices, according to its 2006 Diversity Initiative (International Association of Firefighters, 2006).

The Executive Leadership class is designed to assist the executive-level fire officer in examining contemporary public sector and fire service issues using a case study approach. By analyzing the issue of diversity as it pertains to organizational management, the Researcher was able to discuss conflicts, observe obstacles, identify challenges and develop possible solutions. The various leadership styles addressed in the course, along with knowledge about leading gurus in the field of leadership, provided meaningful insight throughout the research process. According to John C. Maxwell, an internationally recognized leadership expert, speaker, and best-selling author, leadership teachings are designed to inspire, challenge and equip (John Maxwell Co., 2012). The late Steven Covey, another subject matter expert in the area of leadership, asserted “ trust is the glue of life...[it’s] the most essential ingredient in effective communication...[it’s] the foundational principle that holds all relationships” (Kruse, 2012). Therefore, to more effectively communicate within organizations there must be trust and dynamic leadership initiatives that embrace issues of diversity. Furthermore, communication methods must be identified and utilized as a strategy for presenting fire-prevention and safety education to multicultural communities.

Although leaders will inevitably face challenges when introducing or addressing diversity, their success is inextricably tied to the success of the organization. Ultimately, the

strength of an organization rests in its greatest resource—its people; and leadership cannot accomplish any of the organizational goals without the employees’ uniting to accomplish the work (McNeil, 2008). The United States Fire Administration has a goal of reducing risk at the local level through prevention and mitigation. There is a definitive link between having a diverse fire service team providing fire safety education and prevention programs in multicultural communities, building trust and improving communication. Reevaluation of the City of North Charleston Fire Department Diversity Plan and subsequent revision should include ongoing diversity training, policy review and an evaluative tool.

The North Charleston Fire Department is composed of two divisions, Administration and Operations. Division staffing levels are outlined in the table below. (NCFD, 2011)



LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), of the 1,100,450 firefighters who protected the United States in 2011, 31% were career firefighters and 69% were volunteer firefighters (NFPA, 2012). Arguably, there are few more important jobs in the nation than protecting the lives and property of our citizens. While serving the community is the main job of the fire service personnel, fire service organizations are faced with the dilemma of recruiting a diverse workforce which is a representation of the demographics they serve.

The International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) supports diversity and inclusion, and in so doing recognizes that local fire departments must respond to changing demographics through its mission statement, policies and procedures. Acknowledging that today's workforce has significantly changed over the past decade, the IAFC noted that the "diversification of the fire service is a positive by-product of this growing trend and furthermore asserted that women, African-Americans, Latinos and Asians, along with other ethnic groups are all major contributors to today's fire service" (International Association of Fire Chiefs, 2004). To this end, the IAFC endorses and encourages that all publications, particularly those of fire service orientation and their advertisers, be representative of the many different types of individuals, including minorities and women, in their depiction of today's fire and emergency service personnel (International Association of Fire Chiefs, 2004).

Changing demographics are having a definitive impact on fire prevention efforts in urban, suburban and rural fire departments across the country. These findings and recommendations are reported in the FIRE 20/20's *National Multicultural Community Fire Prevention Study*. According to the study, fire prevention is defined as: "all activities taken in advance of, and designed to avoid an outbreak of fire, i.e., public education, personal contact and

code enforcement” and risk reduction is defined as: “those programs, initiatives, and services that mitigate the risk of, or effects from, fire, injuries, illness, natural disasters, hazardous materials incidents, acts of terrorism, etc.” (Piotrowski, 2012). The daily work of fire service agencies is impacted by capacity of the department to effectively communicate a safety message to the community. Having a diverse workforce helps facilitate better communication. The survey noted that, in addition to multilingual skills and additional resources to develop and implement programs, having materials in other languages and proactive relationships with multicultural and high-risk community leaders were departmental needs related to more effective fire prevention and risk-reduction programs within multicultural and high-risk populations (Piotrowski, 2012). Critical to the success of departments serving diverse communities, departments must have staff that have awareness, experience or cultural training to enhance their colleagues’ knowledge about multicultural communities regarding topics such as cultural cooking, religious use of candles, traditional medical practices, orientation to family, authority, how decisions are made, trust issues with people in uniforms, gender issues, using children as translators, etc. (Piotrowski, 2012).

While one of the purposes of the study was to gather and present data from a full national complement of fire organizations across the United States regarding the needs that firefighters identify that would help to improve the effectiveness of fire prevention and risk-reduction programs within multicultural and high-risk communities, a correlation was made to assert that effective recruitment plans with diversity in mind further facilitate the goal of promoting fire safety and reducing risk in multicultural communities. The initial question posed in this analysis of effective strategies for improving diversity in the NCFD is as follows: *What current*

recruitment activities are performed by the NCFD and other municipal fire departments in the county, state and region to attract minority candidates?

A significant part of this study is focused on the observation and assessment of diversity at the local, regional and national level, therefore, the USFA strategic plan and subsequent articles, statistics and other information from the agency website was useful in the research phase of this project. While there are observable strengths and opportunities to evaluate when promoting a more inclusive workplace, there are also weaknesses and threats to success to consider. The positive features of diversity programs in business, and the reactions indicating the possible problems to be overcome as the cultural world comes into the business world from both a researched and experienced perspective is evaluated in a study by *Joseph W. Ruane*. In this study, he asserts that the acceptance of peoples differences in a spirit of respect for all sets an example of tolerance that is good for the organization (Ruane, 2010). In the case of fire service, this is also good for both colleagues and the community being served.

Retired Deputy Chief John McNeil, asserted that “some perceive diversity in the fire service as a management nightmare” (McNeil, 2008). He maintains that, for some, the concept, which is huge in scope, seems impossible to achieve. He cites not only diversification of members within an organization as a problem, but also intra-cultural difference and numerous other barriers. He also addresses the advantages of embracing diversity to accomplish organizational goals. He notes that “the collective intelligence of a diverse organization allows for many perspectives and different strengths in effectively meeting the department’s goals (McNeil, 2008).

PROCEDURES

The procedures used for this applied research project included a literature review of relevant materials obtained at the National Fire Academy's Learning Resource Center, as well as other Internet sources. In addition to the literature review, municipal departmental reports that were related to diversity training and recruitment were reviewed. Demographic and historical data was also gathered regarding Charleston County, fire service in the Charleston County region, the North Charleston Fire Department and North Charleston community.

After the literature was reviewed and potential objective outcome measurements were identified, a survey was created find out effective strategies for candidate recruitment that are implemented within Charleston County, in other South Carolina counties, and across the nation. The ten South Carolina counties included in this Applied Research Project study are: Charleston, Dorchester, Horry, Clarendon, Beaufort, Colleton, Williamsburg, Kershaw, Spartanburg and Richland. This survey was administered by personally contacting fifty fire departments. The survey was also distributed at a professional development conference held in South Carolina. Subsequently, telephone, and in-person interviews were completed with Fire Department officials across the United States. In addition to South Carolina, responses from fourteen states were collected. Surveys were received from individuals in Michigan, Illinois, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, Alabama, Texas, Florida, New Jersey, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Arkansas, and California. Respondents hold professional positions in each organization ranging from Support Staff positions to Fire Chief. These surveys were compiled and the percentages calculated to help quantify the observations and responses of fire departments surveyed.

Brief survey questions were asked to identify specific actions that describe how other fire departments promote diversity by engaging in recruitment strategies in their service area, to be compared to the strategic guidelines of the *International Association of Firefighters Diversity Initiative*. The IAFF's overall objective for this project was "to identify effective recruitment, selection, and retention practices to achieve a fire service workforce that reflects the community served" (Fox, 2006). Additionally, departments were asked about their departments' efforts to support diversity in the workforce and ensure employee retention? According to the IAFF report, while Recruiting and Diversity have become "hot topics" in the Fire Service in recent years, a review of the demographics in the Fire Service shows a large gap between our population and its representation in the Fire Service (Fox, 2006). The report also notes that there has also been a growing awareness of the effect on diversity of the huge wave of retirements that is happening now and will continue happening for the next few years (IAFF, 2006).

A total of forty-one departments located in Charleston, Dorchester, Horry, Clarendon, Beaufort, Colleton, Williamsburg, Kershaw, Spartanburg and Richland counties, as well as fourteen other states from across the United States completed the survey. The participating departments are as follows: Ashley River (SC), Awendaw (SC), Beaufort (SC), Berwyn (IL), Burton (SC), Charleston (SC), Charlotte (NC), Chattanooga (TN), Clarendon County (SC), Colleton County (SC), Conway (SC), Detroit (MI), Folly Beach (SC), Frankfort (KY), Hamden (CT), Horry County (SC), Houston (TX), Isle of Palms (SC), James Island (SC), Kansas City (KS), Lake City (SC), Lugoff (SC), Miami- Dade (FL), Mt. Pleasant (SC), Myrtle Beach (SC), Newark (NJ), North Charleston (SC), North Myrtle Beach (SC), Orange County (FL), Palm Beach County (FL), Personnel Board of Jefferson County (AL), Philadelphia (PA), Pine Bluff (AK), San Jose (CA), South Carolina Fire Academy, Spartanburg (SC), St. Andrews (SC), St.

John's (SC), St. Paul's (SC), Sullivan's Island (SC) and Summerville (SC). The comprehensive results of the survey are found in the Appendix.

There were some limitations noted while administering the surveys. Some of the area departments contacted failed to submit responses to the surveys. The departments surveyed represent a diverse mixture of rural, urban, southern, northern, eastern and western geographic regions. Socioeconomic conditions differ greatly across this nationwide study. Statistics and perceptions and subsequently survey responses may vary due to such demographic factors. All data is self reported. Additionally, there is no data regarding how long each method had been used in a department.

Responses were received from all but one neighboring county of what is considered the South Carolina "lowcountry". While responses were received from the neighboring states of North Carolina, Tennessee and Kentucky, no responses were received Georgia, which borders our state from the south. Surveys from departments representing the Northeastern US, the Southern US, West coastal US as well as the Great Lakes region were received, however there were no surveys from the Midwest. While a promising 82% of the interviews were completed, the remaining departments were unable to complete in the process.

Although each participant was informed that this survey was administered in partial fulfillment of requirements for the Applied Research Project for the EFO course, Executive Leadership, rather than an indictment of their particular organization, they may have not answered the surveys honestly. Since surveys were distributed at a state-level conference, more completed surveys were received from within the state of South Carolina than from other regions. The forty-five surveys returned included career and combination fire departments.

Respondents ranged in rank from Fire Chief to Firefighter, and also included support staff positions. Details may be found in the Appendix.

Another limitation of significance is that 97% of the respondents were male and only 3% were female. In alignment with the IAFF study, US Census data was compared to Bureau of Labor Statistics data to determine a basis for analyzing representation in the fire service. The tables below show National (U.S.) statistics comparing U.S. population to reported representation in the Fire Service. The figures below are more current than the IAFF study, and reveal a disturbing trend. According to the IAFF study, the 2004 US Bureau of Labor statistics indicated that 5.1% (13,668) of firefighters in the United States were female (Fox, 2006). Eight years later, there is a decline in the already dismal figure.

Demographic Representation: US Census Bureau

	Black or African American	Hispanic	Asian	White
US Census 2011	13.1%	16.7%	5.0%	78.1%

2012 Firefighting Profession: US Bureau of Labor Statistics

	Total Employed (in thousands)	Women	Black	Hispanic or Latino	Asian
First-line supervisors of firefighting and prevention workers	64	0.5%	10.7%	6.6%	0.0
Firefighters	295	3.4%	7.7%	9.9%	1.1%

RESULTS

In this applied research project, three research questions were developed in consideration of the problem statement and the purpose of the research. The problem was that the City of North Charleston Fire Department does not have an effective plan in place to improve workforce diversity through recruitment, training and retention. The purpose of this applied research project is to identify effective strategies for the comprehensive recruitment, training and retention of minorities in the North Charleston Fire Department. The type of research methodology used for this project was evaluative research methodology. In addition to the literature review, municipal departmental reports that were related to diversity, training and recruitment were reviewed. Demographic and historical data was also gathered regarding Charleston County, fire service in the Charleston County region, the North Charleston Fire Department and North Charleston community. The results of the literature review and personal interviews are organized according to each research question.

(a) What current recruitment activities are performed by the NCFD and other municipal fire departments in the county, state and region to attract minority candidates? The activities/strategies that have been successful in the recruitment of women and minorities, according to the representative for the NCFD, are: participation in job fairs, participation in faith-based programs, participation in high school/ local college events, hosting open house programs, having a recruiting task force in place, word of mouth, production of brochures, flyers and banners, use of department/city website, participation in community events, advertisement in local newspapers, use of other websites/ social media, advertisement on radio, advertisement in minority publications and advertisement on cable/local access television. This multidimensional approach has yielded some success, however, there is still much to do. “Word of Mouth” is

credited for more awareness of job openings, but the drawback to this according to the IAFF is that, as a strategy, it is “not effective for recruiting for diversity if there is very little diversity in the department, and the current employees only recruit informally to family members and friends” (Fox, 2006).

Twelve additional surveys from within Charleston County were returned. Trends observed within the county included: Participation in high school/ local college events, word of mouth, participation in community events, participation in job fairs and use of department/city website. According to the IAFF Diversity Initiative, participation in job fairs, community events/ churches/ schools can be very effective when departments “target the message and effort to groups at cultural events, not to general audiences and relationship building in the community gets you invited to cultural events (i.e. Cinco de Mayo, Martin Luther King Day)” (Fox, 2006).

Fifteen surveys were returned from other counties within South Carolina. Trends observed across the state included: Word of mouth, use of department/city website, participation in community events and implementation of a Cadet/Explorer program. When comparing traditional to innovative methods of recruitment, such as developing a cadet program, the IAFF study noted that “innovative recruiting requires more effort, resources, and is usually more targeted to a specific group or defined in terms of results desired” (Fox, 2006). Other examples of innovative approaches addressed in the study include recruiting in different cities and using ads designed specifically for women on cable television. Cited as a strategy that is almost universally considered effective, Cadet Programs are defined as a variety of programs that expose middle and high school students to the career opportunity in the Fire Service. These programs “provide a good career option, advanced preparation opportunities, and extend a

personal welcome to disadvantaged kids or to kids from backgrounds that are not part of the traditional recruitment pool” (Fox, 2006).

Seventeen surveys were returned from states outside of South Carolina. Trends observed among the responses are: Participation in Job Fairs, Participation in High School/ Local College Events, Word of Mouth, Participation in Community Events, Use of Department/City Website, Cadet/ Explorer Program, Advertisement on Radio, Advertisement in Local Newspaper(s) and Advertisement in Minority Publications. Especially when targeted to a desired group, the IAFF study notes that formal advertising is an effective tool when utilized along with other methods. The methods may be effective, in point of fact, because they are used in a targeted approach and in combination with other methods. It was suggested that women rely on formal methods, such as advertising, much more than men for finding jobs and additionally, advertising in all different media works for women, while radio and targeted advertising works better for Minorities (Fox, 2006).

b) To what extent are fire departments aligning diversity efforts with the International Association of Fire Fighters' Diversity Initiatives? When asked about departmental participation in a diversity recruitment program, most of the fire departments (61%) indicated that they do not presently have a diversity recruitment program in place. Nineteen (19) of the respondents (46%) indicated that their fire department does presently have a diversity recruitment program in place. Nonetheless, many of the effective strategies identified in the IAFF Diversity Initiative were acknowledged as being activities that have been successful in the recruitment of women and minorities in the surveyed departments.

The strategy which was most often cited (80% of responses) was “Word of Mouth”. “Use of Department/City Website” was the second most often cited response (78% of responses).

Of the twenty-eight named activities/strategies, only two (2) were not employed by any department (Advertisement via Network Television and Partnership with Veteran Groups). Two respondents (5% of the total) indicated that “other” activities/strategies than those listed were employed. Departmental participation in Community Events (68%), Job Fairs (61%), and Advertisement in Local Newspaper(s) (56%) were all best practices that were cited by more than half of the respondents. Although only 12% of respondents said that recruitment in other cities is pursued, approximately 1/3 (34%) of the respondents indicated that a Recruiting Task Force is in place. The same percentage of respondents, noted that a Cadet/Explorer Program is in place.

In terms of technology use, Production of Brochures was only cited as a strategy for 29% of respondents, along with Use of Other Websites. The Use of Newsletters was only cited by 10% of the departments. Participation in Faith-based Programs and Hosting Open House Programs was cited as a strategy for 24% of respondents.

While advertisement in local newspaper(s) was quite popular, other forms of advertisement were far less utilized by the surveyed departments. Advertisement on the Radio was cited by 20% of the respondents, followed by Advertisement via Cable/Local Access Television (17%) and Advertisement in Minority Publications (15%). The provision of details about the job, the process and the department’s values is important, according to the IAFF Diversity Initiative study. To this end, advertising is a key method to consider as a strategy for recruiting minorities. The following table compares advertising methods as cited by survey respondents.

Table: Advertising as an Effective Strategy for Recruitment

Strategy	Percentage of Occurrence
Advertisement in Local Newspaper(s)	56%

Advertisement on the Radio	20%
Advertisement via Cable/Local Access TV	17%
Advertisement in Minority Publications	15%
Advertisement in Major Metro Newspaper(s)	7%
Advertisement via Female Publications	5%
Advertisement via Minority Radio/TV Stations	5%
Advertisement via Female Radio/TV Stations	2%
Advertisement via Network TV	0%

A minimal number of respondents (4 or less) responded that they utilize Public Service Announcements, Host Orientation/Informational Sessions, Provide Preparation Assistance or send Direct Mail Interest Cards. None of the responding departments advertised via Network Television or partnered with Veteran Groups.

(c) What administrative considerations must be made to implement employee retention plans? When asked what strategies/ procedures have been implemented by the department to support diversity in the workforce and ensure employee retention, seven options were provided to respondents, including the choice “other”. An overwhelming majority of responding departments (37 or 90%) cited Enforcement of Harassment/ Discrimination Policies. Among the conclusions of the IAFF Study is the assertion that “communication about the department’s diversity and inclusion intent and commitment is critical” (Fox, 2006). Furthermore, for retaining Minorities and Women, and for using the current employees to recruit others, the enforcement of harassment policies is critical (Fox, 2006).

Similarly, a majority of the responding departments (29 or 71%) indicated that they have Administrative (Executive) Support/Commitment from the Chief. With consideration that only 16% of the respondents hold the rank of Fire Chief, this acknowledgement of support is promising. Slightly more than half of the respondents (25 or 56%) cited that their organization has mandatory, ongoing diversity training. Additionally, one respondent noted that their department has diversity training that is not mandatory. 56% of responding departments indicated that they have an established mentor program for new hires. This is particularly interesting since only 29% (13) departments assert that they have a supportive budget. One respondent noted that they have an Internal Volunteer Recruitment Program in place. The least utilized strategy or procedure to support diversity in the workforce was the posting of Diversity Goals. Only 24% (11) of the respondents indicated that such statements are posted in the workplace. Finally, one respondent commented that their department has a “Rapid Advancement” practice in place. Each of the three indicated “other” comments have been noted. It should be mentioned that respondents had the option to select as many of the strategies as would apply to their department, therefore some strategies may be used in coordination with others.

The final question on the survey asked respondents to consider their work environments and categorize it as diverse or not. Specifically, respondents were asked if their workplace was composed of more than one racial/ethnic group and was it composed of more than one gender. A majority of those surveyed (89% of respondents) replied in the affirmative. Only 4% of respondents replied “No” and 7% of respondents opted to reply “Somewhat”. The Researcher replied that the NCFD is a diverse workplace. Current personnel data supports this assertion. When compared to current demographic data of the service area, the diversity of the NCFD,

however, is less evident. Of the 226 NCFD employees, 167 (74%) are White males. Blacks (male and female employees combined) account for 17% of the workforce. Women of any race comprise only 9% of the NCFD workforce. According to the U.S. Census, The population of North Charleston in 2010 was 97, 471, with Blacks comprising 47.2% of this figure and females comprising 50.4% of this figure (United States Department of Commerce United States Census Bureau, 2012).

NCFD Personnel Summary 2012

Males	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/Pacific Islander	American Indian/ Alaskan Native
	167	31	5	1	1
TOTAL: 205					

Females	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/Pacific Islander	American Indian/ Alaskan Native
	13	8			
TOTAL: 21					

DISCUSSION

The study of the outcomes and specific findings of this Applied Research Project provides information to guide the NCFD in the effective implementation of a revised operational procedure. Reevaluation of the NCFD Diversity Plan and subsequent revision should include ongoing diversity training, policy review and an evaluative tool. The time for reassessment of the department's role and capabilities of the in terms of the recruitment, training and retention of a more diverse workforce has come. The City of North Charleston Fire Department should reevaluate its strategies for candidate recruitment, including collaboration efforts with other nonprofit, faith-based, or educational institutions. By analyzing the needs of the community and responding to those needs by utilizing innovative action plans for recruitment, the department will improve the image of the fire service.

The research supports the notion that “ the demographics of the service providers should be such that the citizens feel that their culture, language, and beliefs are respected and understood when they are in need of services” (McNeil, 2008). In achieving a more inclusive workforce that significantly reflects the multicultural communities served, the fire department also provides the setting for more effective public education programs, as well as safer and more efficient fire operations. As a result of the improved relationships, the USFA goal of promoting fire safety and reducing risk in multicultural communities. A 2007 Fire 20/20 report notes that “the degree of firefighters’ cultural competence- or their ability to relate with sensitivity and understanding of other cultural backgrounds- greatly influences how high-quality services are delivered (FIRE 20/20, 2007)

The Diversity Initiative of the IAFF presents several recommendations for fire service organizations to create a more inclusive workforce. Many of the recommendations address recruitment strategies. These are listed below.

1. Specifically target the group you want to reach and recruit.
2. When targeting particular groups and when doing recruiting in general, use language to promote a message of inclusiveness.
3. Use some “formal” methods of recruiting such as advertising combined with establishing associations with minority and women-based organizations.
4. Give specific and detailed information about the job, necessary skills, requirements, salary and benefits.
5. In developing recruiting information and in advertising, remember to target the candidate’s family as well.
6. Use minority and women recruiters.
7. Communicate the value of diversity in all of your messages.

In addition to recommendations that address recruitment, are recommendations that address training and retention. The IAFF Diversity Initiative suggests the use of a fair and valid selection process that measures what is really required for the job, the requirement of only the education needed to perform the job, and provision of a mentoring program for new hires (Fox, 2006).

There is a need to revise and develop a more comprehensive diversity plan for the NCFD, to serve the local community more effectively, to align services with other local and regional fire departments, and to comply with national standards for inclusion and service in the profession. This plan should include ongoing diversity training, policy review and an evaluative tool.

The results of the questionnaire and interviews reveal that most of the departments are employing multiple strategies to promote inclusion, most department representatives feel that

their departments are diverse, and while the overwhelming majority of departments enforce harassment/discrimination policies, diversity goals and statements are not posted and there is more need for supportive budgets. A task force should be put in place to ascertain key community stakeholders that can assist the NCFD in its revision of diversity recruiting strategies.

Of greatest concern to this researcher, is the challenge that NCFD may face with providing mandatory ongoing training. Educating and retaining, and eventually promoting a more diverse workforce requires administrative support. The NCFD should focus on training. In the Executive Leadership course, organizational development, education and training resources were identified and distributed. The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), for example, is a tool for assessing individual and organizational cultural competence. The NCFD must address educating staff in an effort to promote inclusiveness, cultural sensitivity and tolerance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of the research conducted for this ARP, the researcher recommends that the North Charleston Fire Department take a proactive approach to the recruitment of a more inclusive workforce. Based on the literature review and the research, there are considerable cultural, legal and financial challenges; but with a highly trained staff, fully integrated plan, sufficient resources in place, and key support from Administration, the NCFD can effectively recruit, train and promote a more diverse workforce.

This researcher recommends the reformation of a Cadet Program. According to the research, such programs Build alliances with organizations that offer special programs for girls and racial/ethnic minority groups to teach them non-traditional skills and provide insight to non-traditional career options. This is also achieved by creating relationships with local schools in predominately minority or low-income communities by offering programs and simply being visible. The development of effective relationships with the schools provides a platform to communicate Fire Service culture and values.

Innovative Cadet Programs that are coordinated with academic leaders should focus on career preparation; provide internships and interactions with firefighters. In leadership terms, it's a "win-win" for schools and the fire department. To this end, partnerships with local high schools and technical programs that offer Adult Education classes should be pursued to additionally offer a joint Fire / EMT program. After piloting such a program at a station-level, this could be implemented at the city and county level to maintain consistency and efficiency across Charleston County. It is additionally recommended that the adopted plan be reviewed on an annual basis to reassess its procedures, update information and ascertain efficacy.

The writer also recommends that the NCFD develop a more comprehensive diversity plan in reference to recruitment, training and retention. In doing so, the NCFD would serve the local community more effectively. A budgetary allotment is a prime consideration of the task at hand. Without financial commitment, any action plan is compromised. This plan should include mandatory ongoing diversity training, policy review and an evaluative tool. The NCFD must address educating staff in an effort to promote inclusiveness, cultural sensitivity and tolerance. While this can be achieved locally, there are also online tools, webinars, workshops and products that can be purchased to facilitate the training. The training should be done in collaboration with the Human Resources Department.

The research showed that, in addition to multilingual skills and additional resources to develop and implement programs, proactive relationships with multicultural and high-risk community leaders were departmental needs related to more effective fire prevention and risk-reduction programs within multicultural and high-risk populations (Piotrowski, 2012). Therefore, the Researcher additionally recommends that a Task Force be re-assembled to identify key community stakeholders who can assist in the development of a locally-relevant, comprehensive diversity plan.

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APPENDIX

Diversity in Fire Service Survey

Permission statement:

I hereby authorize the use of this information for the purpose of research. My name will be confidential, only be held by the researcher during the project, and will not be published.

Name _____ Position _____
Organization: _____ Phone Number _____
Address: _____
Email Address: _____

This survey is intended for Fire & Rescue organizations. The questions are based upon standards as addressed by the IAFF Diversity Initiative, Achieving and Retaining a Diverse Fire Service Workforce. The findings of this survey may be published as a part of an Applied Research Project for the Executive Fire Officer Program at the National Fire Academy. The valuable information and feedback that you provide will be used to make recommendations to improve minority recruitment, training and retention efforts in fire service organizations. Thank you for your participation in advance.

1. Does your department presently have a diversity recruitment program in place?

___ Yes ___ No

2. What activities/strategies have been successful in the recruitment of women and minorities?

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Participate in Job Fairs | <input type="checkbox"/> Participate in Faith-based Programs | <input type="checkbox"/> Participate in High School/ Local College Events |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Host Open House Programs | <input type="checkbox"/> Recruiting Task Force is in Place | <input type="checkbox"/> Word of Mouth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Production of Brochures/Flyers/Banners | <input type="checkbox"/> Use of Department/City Website | <input type="checkbox"/> Participate in Community Events |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advertise in Local Newspaper(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> Use of Other Websites | <input type="checkbox"/> Broadcast Public Service Announcements |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advertise in Major Metro Newspaper(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> Advertise on the Radio | <input type="checkbox"/> Cadet/Explorer Programs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advertise in Minority Publications | <input type="checkbox"/> Advertise via Female Publications | <input type="checkbox"/> Host Orientation/ Informational Sessions |

- Advertise via Cable/ Local Access TV
- Direct Mail Interest Cards
- Featured in New Stories
- Advertise via Network TV
- Recruit in Other Cities
- Mentoring Applicants
- Advertise via Minority Radio/ TV Stations
- Newsletters
- Preparation Assistance
- Advertise via Female Radio/ TV Stations
- Partner with Veteran Groups
- Other: Please Specify _____

3. What strategies/procedures have been implemented by your department to support diversity in the workforce and ensure employee retention?

- Ongoing Diversity Training (mandatory)
- Supportive Budget
- Mentor Program for New Hires
- Administrative (Executive) Support/Commitment from the Chief
- Diversity Goals & Statements are Posted in Workplace
- Enforcement of Harassment/Discrimination Policies
- Other: Please Specify _____

4. Can your Department be considered “diverse”? Consider the following: Is your workplace composed of more than one racial/ethnic group and is it composed of more than one gender?

_____ Yes _____ No

_____ Somewhat (*please explain:* _____)

5. Please feel free to write any additional feedback here:

Please return this form to:
Battalion Chief Eric L. Phillips
2500 City Hall Lane North Charleston, SC 29406
(843) 822-1156 fax (843) 745-1002
ephillips@northcharleston.org

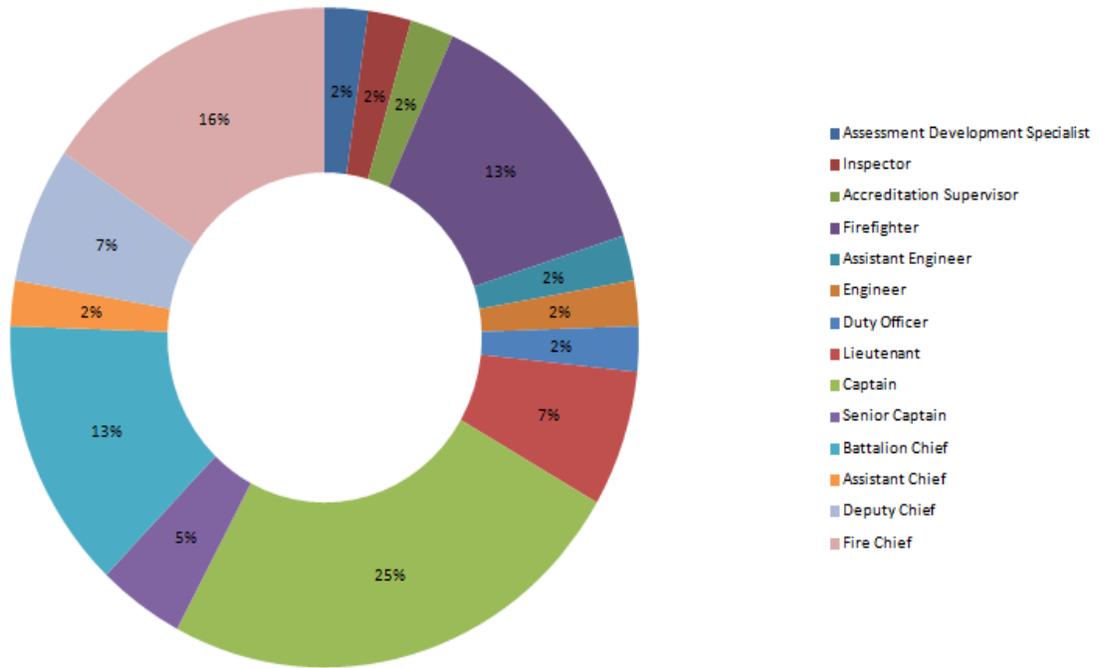
Diversity in Fire Service Survey

Demographic Responses

Professional Profile of Respondents:

Rank/Position	Number
Assessment Development Specialist	1
Inspector	1
Accreditation Supervisor	1
Firefighter	6
Assistant Engineer	1
Engineer	1
Duty Officer	1
Lieutenant	3
Captain	11
Senior Captain	2
Battalion Chief	6
Assistant Chief	1
Deputy Chief	3
Fire Chief	7

Analysis of Professional Profile of Respondents:



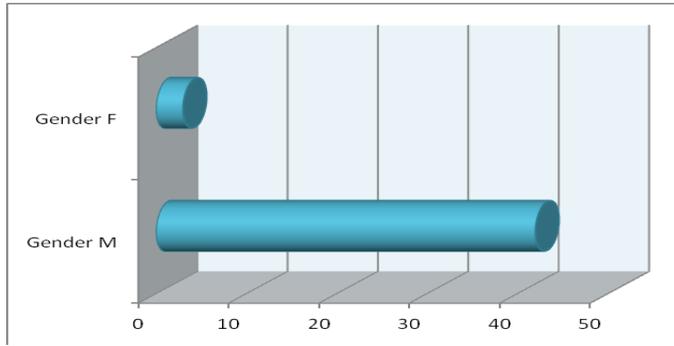
Diversity in Fire Service Survey

Demographic Responses

Personal Profile of Respondents:

Gender of Respondent

Male 42 (93%) Female 3 (7%)

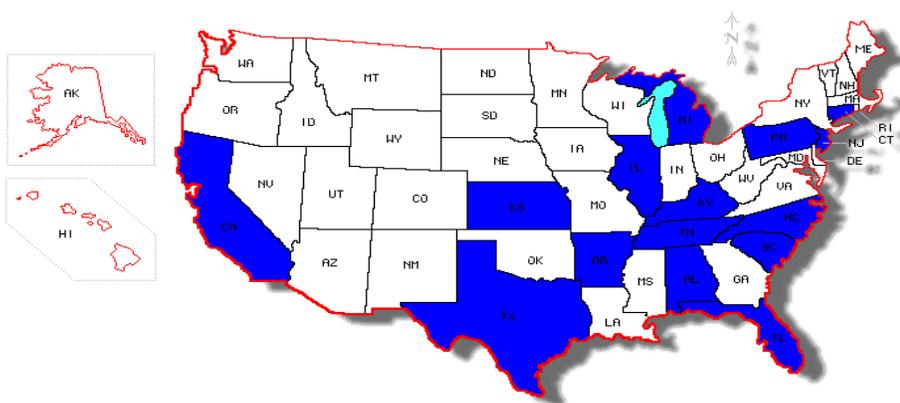


Demographic Responses

Personal Profile of Respondents:

Geographic Representation

Diversity in the Fire Service: Survey Responses



Diversity in Fire Service Survey

This survey is intended for Fire & Rescue organizations. The questions are based upon standards as addressed by the IAFF Diversity Initiative, Achieving and Retaining a Diverse Fire Service Workforce. The findings of this survey may be published as a part of an Applied Research Project for the Executive Fire Officer Program at the National Fire Academy. The valuable information and feedback that you provide will be used to make recommendations to improve minority recruitment, training and retention efforts in fire service organizations. Thank you for your participation in advance.

1. Does your department presently have a diversity recruitment program in place?

Yes **(19) 46% of responding departments** No **(25) 61% of responding departments**

2. What activities/strategies have been successful in the recruitment of women and minorities?

Strategy	Percentage of Occurrence	Departments Which Employ Strategy
Word of Mouth	80%	33
Use of Department/ City Website	78%	32
Participation in Community Events	68%	28
Participation in Job Fairs	61%	25
Advertisement in Local Newspaper(s)	56%	23
Recruiting Task Force is in place	34%	14
Cadet/Explorer Program is in place	34%	14
Production of Brochures	29%	12
Use of Other Websites	29%	12
Participation in Faith-based Programs	24%	10
Hosting Open House Programs	24%	10
Advertisement on the Radio	20%	8
Advertisement via Cable/ Local Access TV	17%	7
Mentoring for Applicants is available	15%	6
Advertisement in Minority Publications	15%	6
Recruitment in other cities is pursued	12%	5
Newsletters	10%	4
Advertisement in Major Metro Newspaper(s)	7%	3
Broadcast Public Service Announcements	7%	3
Hosting Orientation/ Informational Sessions	5%	2
Preparation Assistance is provided	5%	2

Advertisement via Female Publications	5%	2
Advertisement via Minority Radio/ TV Stations	5%	2
Other	5%	2
Advertisement via Female Radio/ TV Stations	2%	1
Direct Mail Interest Cards	2%	1
Department is Featured in News Stories	2%	1
Advertisement via Network TV	0%	0
Partnership with Veteran Groups	0%	0

3. What strategies/procedures have been implemented by your department to support diversity in the workforce and ensure employee retention?

25 Ongoing Diversity Training (mandatory) 13 Supportive Budget

25 Mentor Program for New Hires 29 Administrative (Executive)
Support/Commitment from the Chief

11 Diversity Goals & Statements are Posted in Workplace 37 Enforcement of Harassment/Discrimination Policies

3 Other: Please Specify

Rapid advancement, Diversity Training that is not mandatory, Internal volunteer recruitment

4. Can your Department be considered “diverse”? Consider the following: Is your workplace composed of more than one racial/ethnic group and is it composed of more than one gender?

40 (89% of respondents) Yes 2 (4% of respondents) No

3 (7% of respondents) Somewhat

(please explain: _____)