



# Management Efficiency Assessment of the Interagency Wildland Fire Training and Related Services

## Executive Summary

The Interagency wildland fire agencies maintain a goal of “managing wildland fire while providing for firefighter and public safety.” Other considerations include “values to be protected, social and legal issues, environmental/ecological benefits and impacts, and economic efficiencies.” The achievement of these goals requires personnel who are skilled, qualified, and available to fill the needed wildland fire positions. The primary mission of interagency wildland fire training is to fulfill the skill development portion of this need.

In performing this Management Efficiency Assessment, the Team adopted several assumptions and constraints:

- The recommendations of this assessment should not negatively affect States and other non-Federal stakeholders. The goals of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy indicate that Federal, State, tribal, local, interagency, and international coordination and cooperation is essential in order to deal successfully with the ever-increasing and more complex fire management tasks.
- The interagency approach to wildland fire training is a strength, embedded in policy, and must be maintained.
- Budgets for the 2008 and 2009 fiscal years are expected to remain at current levels. Fire management programs and activities must be economically viable.
- Current policies and requirements will remain in place. For PMS 310-1 training, current NWCG standards for content and instructor qualification must be met. Most of the skills in wildland fire management are relatively unique to incident and fire management. They are not common to other types of professions or trades, so training content and delivery must primarily come from subject matter expertise internal to the wildland fire community.
- The Geographic Area organization in place providing comprehensive interagency wildland fire support will continue in its current configuration. Each Geographic Area will continue to require its own training organization.
- Most of the training courses (75% of class sessions and 80% of interagency wildland fire students) are delivered locally with little or no cost to participants. The outcome of this assessment should not negatively affect current low-cost delivery of training.
- No significant changes in workload requirements are anticipated. There may be some changes in the focus of the training as a result of changing workforce demographics identified through the many agency and departmental workforce and succession planning efforts.

- Expected retirements and subsequent recruitments may require a shift in training resources (e.g., entry level versus mid-level, additional distance learning) however, the overall workload is not anticipated to change.
- Costs associated with trainees (labor, travel, etc.) were not included in the Team's analysis.

Because of the critical nature of wildland fire activities and the need to mobilize resources between agencies and locations, a jointly agreed upon minimum standard for most wildland fire positions is necessary to assure safety, efficiency, effectiveness, and interoperability. PMS 310-1 establishes minimum standards for certification (qualification), including training, experience, physical fitness level, and currency standards for most wildland fire positions. The PMS 310-1 establishes that the training portion of the qualification standard is a performance-based training system requiring trainees to demonstrate successful position performance to become qualified.

The execution of interagency wildland fire training occurs through four separate sources of learning products, processes, and services: National Wildlife Coordinating Group (NWCG), Agency-Specific, Geographic Area-Specific, and Support Training programs.

The data presented in this report is based on a survey year June 1, 2006 – May 31, 2007. Data was collected from the Incident Qualification and Certification System (IQCS), the field, and other data sources.

Training was delivered at 1,351 known locations throughout the United States. There are over 6,976 class sessions delivered to over 115,000 students annually. The bulk of the classroom training is the 100-200 entry-level courses delivered to 80% of the students – generally at the local unit level. Training coordination and management is achieved through NWCG and Agency-specific and Geographic Area specific organizations working with dedicated professionals throughout the fire community using individualized systems to plan, schedule, and implement the training.

More than 4000 subject matter experts served as instructors and represent over 77 Federal positions/series and additional non-Federal positions. Some contract instructors are used, but subject matter experts handle the bulk of instruction on a collateral assignment basis. Instructors serve an average of 130 hours per year. The total instructor labor cost of \$16,812,533 is generally assumed by the agency program offices; it is not paid for by a centralized instructional fund pool.

Participants in the training programs, in addition to the five federal land management agencies, include other Federal, State, and county personnel and some international participants. The five primary Federal agencies have approximately 52,195 individuals who received an Incident Qualification Card in FY 2007.

NWCG performs the bulk of the training development work, including nearly all the courses required for certification in one of the 250 incident positions (about 103 courses plus job aides). The National Advanced Fire and Resource Institute (NAFRI) provide development and revision for 15 of the advanced fire management courses. Development of Agency-Specific, Geographic-Specific and Support Training courses takes place in multiple locations.

Federal personnel supporting interagency wildland fire training total 455 full-time equivalents (FTE) for all components; 56% are instructors working an average of 130 instructor hours each annually. The remaining FTE is personnel engaged in other training component activities.

Market research was conducted to explore the capability and interest of commercial vendors to perform interagency wildland fire training development, delivery, instruction, management, and administration. The research consisted of three separate, but related, activities including:

- Formal market research conducted in compliance with Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Part 10;
- Informal internet research; and,
- Assessment of current contract support. (The agencies currently obtain services from commercial vendors primarily for class instruction and support of specific course development requirements.)

The market research demonstrated a lack of interest and capacity from the private sector in providing broad based, wide spread programmatic training development, delivery, management, and administration.

The internet contains many commercial vendor websites expressing capability to provide instruction for wildland fire training. These sites predominantly include retired subject matter experts interested in providing instruction. The sites also include miscellaneous academic institutions offering courses in wildland fire-related subjects. The research also demonstrated the capability and interest of several vendors to provide limited support to development of wildland fire training.

Instruction, including class preparation and classroom presentation, represents the most prevalent use of current private sector contractor support. The use of private sector contractor support for other aspects of training, such as development, is on a case-by-case basis depending on the specific requirements.

The Team concluded that the current interagency wildland fire training organization meets the needs of its customers and is a credit to the many individuals who work together to make it succeed. There are no known future changes to mission, customer base, or workload that would require significant organizational/resource changes to the current operations.

The Management Efficiency Assessment identified a number of areas, listed below, that have a large potential for savings and improvements and that require additional evaluation.

### **Training Staffing Support**

- Evaluate zone and local areas to determine the need for staffing of positions with training as a primary duty.
- Conduct analysis in all Geographic Areas to determine the most efficient staffing for the workload of each Geographic Area.

### **Workforce and Succession Planning**

- Eliminate the “wants” based qualification track model and replace it with one that is designed to meet workforce succession planning needs at the local, geographic, and national levels and support the aptitude of individuals (and ability to succeed in specific tracks).
- Create incentives for individuals selecting less populated qualification tracks (e.g., Logistics, Plans, and Finance).
- Obtain management commitment to individual’s qualification path, ensure that they perform a supportive role in helping the individual achieve their goals, and reinforce commitments to make qualified individuals available to meet mission requirements.

### **Training For Position Task Book (PTB) Trainers / Coaches / Evaluators**

- Develop and provide training to the Unit Leader/Single Resource Boss level and above to enable them to perform adequately as a Trainer/Coach and Evaluator.
- More consistently use Training Specialists on Incident Management Teams Type 1 and 2. This helps assure matching trainees with Trainer/Coach/Evaluators who have sufficient skills to be effective in those roles.

### **Interagency Wildland Fire Training Funding**

- On an interagency basis, determine the needed training organization. This effort should be conducted locally and geographically with full involvement of the interagency wildland fire community.
- Fund all programs at a consistent level based on Federal apportionment, and provide funding to both Geographic Area and local/zone levels. Use the respective agency budget processes to secure the funding.
- Use interagency agreements to establish funding processes and review them annually.
- Adopt a consistent funding policy that minimizes the collection of tuition.

# Summary of Recommendations

## Management Efficiency Assessment on Interagency Wildland Fire Training and Related Services

*The assessment team did not identify recommendations by priority or provide a timeline.*

### Category and Description of Recommendations

#### Training Staffing Support

Evaluate zone and local areas to determine the need for staffing positions with training as a primary duty.  
Analyze all Geographic Areas to determine the most efficient staffing for the workload of each Geographic Area.

#### Workforce and Succession Planning

Eliminate the “wants-based” qualification track model and replace it with one that is designed to meet both workforce succession planning needs at the local, geographic, and national levels and support the aptitude of individuals (and ability to succeed in specific tracks).  
Create incentives for individuals selecting less populated qualification tracks (e.g., Logistics, Plans, and Finance).  
Obtain management commitment to individual's qualification path, ensure that they perform a supportive role in helping the individual achieve their goals, and reinforce commitments to make qualified individuals available to meet mission requirements.

#### Training for PTB Trainers/Coaches/Evaluators

Develop and provide training to the Unit Leader/Single Resource Boss level and above to enable staff to more adequately perform as Trainers/Coaches and Evaluators.  
More consistently use Training Specialists on Incident Management Type 1 and 2 Teams to help to assure matching trainees with Trainer / Coach / Evaluators who have sufficient skills to be effective in those roles.

#### Interagency Wildland Fire Training Funding

On an interagency basis, determine the needed training organization. Each locality and geographic area should determine needs separately with full involvement of the interagency wildland fire community.  
Fund all programs at a consistent level based on Federal apportionment, and provide funding to both Geographic and local/zone levels. Use the respective agency budget processes to secure this funding.  
Use interagency agreements to establish funding processes and review the processes annually.  
Adopt a consistent funding policy that minimizes the collection of tuition.