

IMPROVING DIVERSITY: A STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

Improving Diversity: A Strategic Analysis of Current Recruiting Practices and Improving  
Diversity in the Candidate Pool.

John D. Petrie II


Prince William Co. Dept. of Fire Rescue

Prince William, Virginia

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Certification Statement

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the 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:  \_\_\_\_\_

## Abstract

When this research project was initiated, the author's Department of Fire and Rescue was in the midst of an active hiring process for the February 2009 recruit academy class. The Personnel Section had been directed to hire 30 fire and rescue recruits, of which a goal of 40% (12 employees), should be someone other than a white male in order to increase the diversity of the department. The problem was that the Prince William County Department of Fire and Rescue's (PWCDFR) candidate pool did not potentially have enough diversity to meet the diversity goal of 40%. As a result, a lack of diversity could impact the ability to deliver the highest quality service to the citizens. Additionally, the organization may not reflect the racial, ethical, and gender population the organization serves.

The purpose of the research was to evaluate the organization's recruitment strategies and then implement practices that help increase the diversity in the department workforce. In order to accomplish the purpose of this applied research project, an evaluative research method was used to analyze current recruiting practices and find better ways to increase the diversity in the Department of Fire and Rescue while continuing to hire the best candidates, regardless of race and gender.

The research was accomplished by answering six research questions concerning the current diversity composition of the department. These questions addressed current department diversity, current recruitment strategies, recruitment strategies to increase diversity, regional organization comparison, and diversity goals for the department.

In January 2009, after this research was completed, recruit class 09-1 was hired. The class consisted of 32 people, of which 10 were non-white. This number accounted for one third

of the class being diverse. As a result, the candidate pool did not support the hiring goal of 40 percent.

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## Introduction

The problem is the Prince William County Department of Fire and Rescue's (PWCDFR) current candidate pool is not ensuring diversity within the organization, which could impact the ability to deliver the highest quality services to citizens. Potentially, the organization may not become reflective of the racial, ethical, and gender population of the County we serve.

The purpose of this research project is to evaluate the organization's recruitment strategies and suggest practices that will help to increase the diversity in the department's workforce.

This project will use the evaluative research methodology to identify methods for improving diversity and provide answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the current workforce composition in the Department of Fire and Rescue as of September 30, 2008?
2. How does the organization's diversity compare to the diversity in the community it serves?
3. What are the organization's current recruitment strategies and programs?
4. How can the organization improve its recruiting efforts to increase the diversity of qualified people in the candidate pool?
5. How does the Department of Fire and Rescue compare with other fire and rescue departments in the region?
6. What is the overall diversity goal in the Department of Fire and Rescue?

## Background and Significance

Prince William County, Virginia is a vibrant community that is rich in history and diversity. It was founded in 1731 by the second son of King George II, William Augustus. The

county is located approximately 35 miles southwest of Washington, D.C. and is comprised of over 389,052 people (Prince William County Government, 2008). Geographically, the county encompasses over 348 square miles (222,615 acres) and is the home to the Manassas National Battlefield Park, Marine Corps Base – Quantico, and the Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

The Department of Fire and Rescue (DFR) consists of 452 uniform and non-uniform members and is divided into 3 Sections. They are the Operations Section (emergency response and EMS operations), Systems Support Section (training, human resources, health and safety, planning and information, management services, and logistics), and Community Safety Section (fire marshal’s office, emergency management, and public education).

The mission of the Department of Fire and Rescue is to protect lives, property and the environment through timely, professional, humanitarian services essential to the health, safety, and well-being of the community (Prince William County [PWC] Government, 2007).

The table below shows the estimated population breakdown as of the 2007 Community Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. This information was retrieved from the County’s demographics website (PWC, 2008).

Table 1 – Race and Ethnicity in Prince William County, VA

	1990 % of Total	2000 % of Total
<b>Reporting One Race</b>		
White	83.30%	68.90%
Black/African American	11.60%	18.80%
Am. Indian/Alaska Native	0.30%	0.40%
Asian/Pacific Islander	3.00%	3.90%
Other	1.70%	4.30%
<b>Reporting Two or More Races</b>		
	N/A	3.60%
	99.90%	99.90%

The current racial and gender composition of the Prince William County Department of Fire and Rescue is shown in Table 2.

Table 2 – Diversity of Uniform Personnel in the Department of Fire and Rescue

Table 2.

Category	Number of Employees	Percentage of Workforce
Asian Females	1	0.24%
Asian Males	3	0.73%
Black Females	5	1.22%
Black Males	31	7.56%
Hispanic Females	2	0.49%
Hispanic Males	19	4.63%
Native American Females	0	0.00%
Native American Males	3	0.73%
White Females	37	9.02%
White Males	309	75.37%
Total	410	99.99%

The foundation of the Executive Leadership course is to enable leaders to look at issues from varying perspectives and be able to formulate solutions while making transformational change within the participant's organization. Increasing an organization's diversity is an adaptive problem which requires a new way of thinking; changing behavior and values, as well as paradigms within the organization. Additionally, this project is linked to the United States Fire Administration's Operational Objectives which are:

1. Reduce the loss of life from fire-related hazards, particularly among these target audiences:
  - a. 14 years and younger age group
  - b. 65 years and older age group
  - c. Firefighters
2. Help communities develop comprehensive all-hazard risk reduction plans.



3. Appropriately respond in a timely manner to emergency issues.

The primary goal of having a Fire and Rescue agency that is reflective of the diversity in the community is to enable its citizens to build trust and a level of service expectation from the agency, while reducing their vulnerability to threats of all types.

#### Literature Review

The focus of this literature review will be to conduct an analysis of other authors and what they have to discuss regarding the importance of and improving the diversity in organizations. This section will look at the importance that diversity places in the workplace, the changing demographics of the Nation as a whole, the challenges associated with recruiting and hiring African-Americans, women, and other protected classes of people, and what academia has to say about the topic of diversity in the workplace.

#### *Diversity in the Workplace*

The National Fire Protection Association ([NFPA], 2008) estimates that the United States firefighting workforce consists of approximately 288,000 people. Consequently, only 5.2% are women, 10.1% are black, and 6.3% have Hispanic origins. Based on this data, 21.6% of the firefighting workforce in the United States is someone other than a white male. The Society for Human Resource Managers (SHRM) predicts that minorities will make up half of the working-age population by the year 2039 ("Workforce Trends", 2008).

The United States is the fastest growing industrialized nation in the world and is growing at a rate of one percent each year (O'Sullivan, 2006). O'Sullivan says that 60% of the population growth is natural, while 40% is due to immigration. The National Center for Policy and Higher Education predicts that the white male workforce will decline from about 72% in 2000 to 63% in 2020. As a result, all minority workgroups will increase from 28% to 37% for

the same time period (The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2005). The theory for this declination of white workers is that this demographic is aging and reaching retirement while the younger workers have more diverse backgrounds. Additionally, urban and sub-urban sprawl is leading to the increasing minority populations in many areas.

In the DVD published and distributed by the Virginia Office of Emergency Medical Services (OEMS), titled *Creating a Diverse Work Force in Fire and EMS* (OEMS, 2007), various members of other Virginia fire and rescue agencies were interviewed and discussed the role that diversity plays in the community and workforce. In the video, Fire Chief James Gray, Jr. (Hampton, VA Fire Department) said that “we live and work in diverse communities which therefore require diverse ideas to better serve the citizens.” Fire Chief (Emeritus) Mary Beth Michos (PWCDFR) discussed the importance that diversity plays in the work place. Specifically, she said that “diversity is important in contributing to organizational growth, and if everyone was the same, then the organization would become stagnant.” Captain Felecia Edwards (Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department) said that “diversity in the work force allows for better communications between emergency responders and the patients they serve.” Moreover, Battalion Chief Bettie Reeves-Noble (Hampton, VA Fire Department) said that there are instances when “a person of color is more able to calm patients of similar race during an emergency and establish a better rapport with them.” Lieutenant Raul Castillo (Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department) said that departments are not reflecting the Hispanic community within their organizations. He also said that “Hispanics who are college educated are not interested in the fire service and therefore do not apply for employment.” Fire fighter Sekou Abdus-Sabur (Richmond, VA Fire and Emergency Services) discussed how the Nation’s history has predisposed how African-Americans view fire and rescue departments today. He said that

“African-Americans view fire departments as dominated by white males and is driven by the good ole boy system.” Abdus-Sabur also stressed the importance of how the times have changed and how it is the responsibility of other African-Americans to portrait a positive image of their respective fire and rescue departments. He closed his interview by saying “the key to changing the way people view fire departments is by effectively communicating how things have changed and to be patient because change takes time.” Finally, Chief Gray said that his organization has realized that advertising alone is not enough to increase diversity. More importantly, departments desiring to improve diversity must be involved in community outreach programs for more effective recruitment of targeted candidates.

#### *The Benefits of Diversity and Changing Demographics*

The fire service is currently being presented with many unique challenges such as employees that speak various languages, have varying religious beliefs, come from a myriad of racial backgrounds, and lifestyle variations (Morgan, 2002). Josh Greenberg (2004) said that an organization’s ability to thrive is dependent on its ability to embrace diversity and realize the benefits associated with it. According to Greenberg, diversity among team members brings a wide array of experiences, language skills, and ideas to the organization. He also states that a clear commitment to improving diversity from the leadership and management staff is crucial to attaining the goals and objectives of the workgroup.

Many corporations and companies in the private sector have long realized the benefits that diversity plays in the success of the organization. When several banks showed a commitment to increasing diversity, the client base also broadened, in that many minorities opened accounts at the banks that had diversity in their workforce (Jones and George, 2003).

Moreover, studies show that corporations that are diverse (heterogeneous) have greater performance than those that are homogenous (Baytos, 1995).

### *Recruitment Challenges*

Recruiting and hiring minorities in some fire and rescue agencies may require a culture change and paradigm shift in addition to a strong commitment from the top leadership. This was stated clearly by Chief Robert Osby (Fire Chief, 1991) in his article. He said that the leader of the organization must be more than just a supporter of diversity; more importantly, they must be an advocate for it.

The fire service is often viewed as a profession that is dominated by white males and is not friendly to people of color or women. Fire departments have been notoriously known for being rooted in traditionalism. Addressing the topic of diversity can be very frightening according to Brian Crawford (Fire Chief, 2004). He said that over the last 25 years, fire departments have become more representative of the communities they serve, but the change has been slow and arduous. Crawford also said that a major problem with improving diversity in fire departments is based in traditionalism. Specifically, he said:

Another big barrier for change in an organization is traditionalism. This excuse for not diversifying can be heard in the backrooms of today's fire stations but seldom in the boardrooms of fire service leadership organizations where it belongs. Traditionalism is when an organization won't let go of its past, blames all of its problems on the present and refuses to face the future (Crawford, 2004).

One important statement Crawford makes is that “organizations that are caught up in traditionalism are often unable to see their past faults, including discriminatory hiring practices.” He said the best way to overcome these challenges is by developing an “all-inclusive” approach

to public education and recruitment. Additionally, Susan Heathfield (2006) recommends allowing employees to be actively involved in professional associations and attend conferences where the targeted candidates are likely to congregate. She said that employers should use those opportunities to entice their potential candidates.

The Fire Department of New York City (FDNY) also faces similar recruitment challenges regarding females, blacks, and Hispanics. In 2006, the FDNY took a new approach to recruiting minorities into the department. Sewell Chan (New York Times, 2006) wrote that the city faced scathing reports and criticism as a result of a lack of diversity in FDNY. In an effort to improve recruitment, the FDNY has taken out advertisements on radio, newspapers, billboards, subway train cars, and buses. In the 10 year period between 1991 and 2001, only 6.6% of new fire fighters were minorities.

In summary, the Literature reveals that a lack of diversity is prevalent in many fire and rescue departments, as well as in other occupations in the public and private sectors. With this knowledge, organizations now have the ability to develop strategic plans to increase the diversity, performance, and success of their organizations.

#### Procedures

This applied research project will use the evaluative research methodology to review previous recruiting methods and candidate pool to determine if the organization has a diverse applicant pool from which to hire the best candidates from. If the candidate pool is not diverse enough, then the research will lead this author towards re-designing the recruiting methods to improve the diversity of potential candidates.

The first procedure used in this applied research project was to determine what the diversity composition is for the Department of Fire and Rescue. This was accomplished by contacting the County's Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Compliance Officer. She is the

person responsible for compiling and maintaining the diversity data for the entire county government. This information is compiled from the new employee information packet that all new county employees fill out and are kept on file in the Human Resources Office. This information is updated quarterly and for the purposes of this research project is up to date for the period ending the first quarter of FY 2009 (September 30, 2008). The title of the report is *Fire and Rescue Workforce Composition*.

In order to see if the Department of Fire and Rescue was keeping pace with other departments in the region, a comprehensive analysis was conducted by contacting each fire department's human resource officer and requesting their diversity breakdown. The information was gathered from several other fire and rescue departments regarding the level of diversity in their recruit schools from the previous two years (FY 07 and 08). The agencies contacted for this procedure were Loudoun County Fire and Rescue, Fairfax County Fire and Rescue, and Arlington County Fire and Rescue. These departments are all Northern Virginia fire and rescue departments and work together frequently. This information was compared to the recruit school diversity in the PWCDFR for the same time period.

Next, a twelve question survey was developed and sent to a large distribution list of fellow EFOP students, fire and rescue personnel nationwide, and to students in the Disaster and Emergency Management program at the American Military University. The survey was developed to ascertain information from fire and rescue departments with varying degrees of size and scope and was developed to build on the research questions and further analyze other department's recruitment strategies. The survey tool used for this project was a web-based program called Survey Monkey ([www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)). It is a convenient service that allows the user to design a survey questionnaire and create a link to the site to send to as many

people as the user knows. Additionally, the web program collects the data that the respondents submit and tabulates it into an excel spreadsheet. It also creates an Adobe PDF document that shows the details of each answered question in terms of percentages. The survey was available for approximately three weeks for people to access the site and respond to the questions accordingly. The user has the ability to choose how long the survey remains open to potential respondents.

An important component of increasing diversity in the organization is to determine if there is a goal established by the department or government leadership. This was accomplished by meeting with the Chief of the department and simply asking what his diversity goal for hiring the next recruit class would be. The Fire Chief provided the Personnel Officer clear direction on what his goal of a diverse recruit school would be.

Finally, a DVD titled *Creating a Diverse Work Force in Fire and EMS* was reviewed to glean any additional beneficial information regarding recruiting techniques to enhance the diversity of fire and rescue organizations. This video was created and distributed by the Virginia Office of Emergency Medical Services in Richmond, VA.

#### *Limitations*

One major limitation of the survey was that out of 134 respondents, only 128 (95.5%) completed the survey in its entirety. As a result, there may be some validity issues with the empirical data from the survey. Additionally, the people that responded to the survey may not have had the institutional knowledge of the organization to accurately answer the questions. Therefore, the validity of the responses may be called into question as well.

Another limitation is knowing specifically how many minorities are in the hiring process. The questions of race and gender are not asked on the application or resumes that candidates submit. Therefore, no empirical data currently exists to evaluate.

### Results

The results of this project are derived from a myriad of data that was reviewed and analyzed to determine if the organization was on track with recruiting minorities or would the department need to take a new approach to recruiting the targeted potential candidates. This section will detail the results of each procedure used during the research project.

*What is the current composition of diversity in the Department of Fire and Rescue as of September 30, 2008?*

Based on the information obtained from the County Government's EEO Officer, the Department of Fire and Rescue's diversity is approximately 75.5% white males; all other categories make up the other 24.5%. These percentages are based solely on the number of uniform people in the organization. There are over 50 non-uniform people that support all facets of the department and those numbers will be incorporated in the next research question. The data is compiled from information sheets that each new employee fills out once they are hired. Potential candidates cannot be asked questions regarding their race, age, or gender due to potential discrimination practices (United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2004). The PWCDFR is a relatively young organization. It was established in 1966 and is only 42 years old. There is still a significant number of team members working that have been employed in the department for more than 30 years.

*How does the organization's diversity reflect the diversity in the community it serves?*



Currently, the non-white population in Prince William County (PWC) is about 40.3% and about 59.7% of that PWC population is white. This information is derived from the demographics report on the county government's website (PWC Demographics, 2008). As of the end of the first quarter of FY 09 (July – September 2008), the current diversity in the DFR organization (uniform and non-uniform) is reported as 70% white males and the other 30% is comprised of females, African Americans, Asian/Pacific Islanders, Native American Indians, and Hispanics. When these statistics are compared with the community demographics, then the DFR is only 10% short of accurately reflecting the diversity in the community.

*What are the organization's current recruitment strategies and programs?*

The DFR currently conducts recruitment at various events such as job fairs around the Northern Virginia region, the annual Virginia Emergency Medical Services Symposium in November, and career fairs at the local High Schools. Additionally, advertisements have been placed on numerous websites such as the Virginia State Fire Chiefs Association, Career Builder, and the county government's website. This past year also showed a renewed commitment to increasing the print ad campaign around the region and to outlying areas approximately 50-60 miles away from PWC.

In addition to the current strategies, the Chief of the Department directed the Personnel Section to pursue hiring the 2009-1 Recruit Class with a goal of 40% diversity. By all indications, the current candidate pool will allow the DFR to attain this goal, but it places considerable constraints on the hiring staff.

*How can the organization improve its recruiting efforts to increase the diversity of qualified people in the candidate pool?*

For most fire and rescue organizations, the best method for recruitment is by word of mouth from existing employees. The DFR must take steps to engage its affinity groups to help recruit and encourage people of diverse backgrounds to apply. Currently, the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) Local 2598 also hosts or supports the Fire Fighters for Diversity organization. This is a group of team members which is made up of African American men and women, Hispanic men and women, and any others who would like to have a voice in that respective organization. Engaging this group in actively recruiting potential candidates could make significant strides in increasing the diversity of the DFR's candidate pool.

*How does the Department of Fire and Rescue compare with other fire and rescue departments in the region?*

To answer this question, a comparative analysis was conducted by contacting several jurisdictions that neighbor Prince William County and requesting the diversity percentages in their recruit classes/hiring processes. This data was obtained from each fire and rescue department's personnel or human resources officer.

Loudoun County, VA neighbors PWC to the north and has essentially the same organizational composition as this author's department. They are one of the fastest growing localities in the nation. In 2007, Loudoun County hired 32 recruits; 71.9% were white males and the other 28.1% were minorities. During the 2008 hiring process, Loudoun County hired 17 recruits; of which 10 were white males (58.8%) and seven were minorities (41.1%).

Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department (FCFRD) borders PWC to the north and is the largest jurisdiction in Virginia. During FY 2007, FCFRD hired 29 recruits; only nine were white males (31%) and the other 20 were minorities (62.2%). For FY 2008, FCFRD hired 23

recruits; again, only six were white males (26.1%) and the other 17 people (74%) were minorities.

Arlington County Fire Department (ACFD) is bordered by Fairfax County, the City of Alexandria, and the Potomac River. ACFD hired 10 recruits during FY 2007. That recruit class was composed of four white males (40%) and six minorities (60%). During FY 2008, ACFD hired 24 recruits; 14 were white males (58.3%) and the other 10 recruits were minorities (41.7%).

During FY 2007, PWCDFR hired two recruit classes for a total of 50 people. The combined composition for these two schools was 27 white males ( 54%) and 23 minorities (46%). Additionally, in July 2008, the DFR hired another recruit class of 51 people. The class consisted of 33 white males (64.7%) and 18 minorities (35.3%). During a recent meeting with the Chief of the Department, the Personnel Section was instructed to hire the February 2009 recruit class with 40% diversity.

*What is the overall diversity goal in the Department of Fire and Rescue?*

During a recent meeting with the Chief of the Department, the Personnel Section was instructed to hire the February 2009 recruit class with 40% diversity. While no official goal exists in writing, the commitment from the County's leadership is to accurately reflect the diversity of the community we serve.

As mentioned in the *Procedures* section of this research project, a survey was sent out to a distribution list of other Executive Fire Officer Program participants and posted on this author's college website. The link was sent to literally hundreds of people across the country. The results of the survey will be covered in detail in this section.

This survey received 134 responses from departments in 33 states and the District of Columbia (Washington, D.C.) and represented 130 different fire and rescue departments. Three people did not provide any additional information other than the state their department was located in.

The first question asked; *How large is your Department’s workforce (uniform and non-uniform)?* The responses ranged from seven to 2,300 uniform personnel and zero to 500 non-uniform positions.

Table 3

Department Workforce	Response Percent	Responses
Uniform Personnel	100%	133
Non-Uniform Personnel	94%	125
	Answered Question	133
	Skipped Question	1

There are varying degrees of responses to this question. One of the limitations of this survey is that the questions may have been answered by people who are not in positions with the institutional knowledge or possession of the diversity data and statistics of the workforce composition.

The next question was asked to determine the size of the communities each respective department serves. The question asked; *What is the size of the community your department serves?* For this question, 132 people responded and two skipped the question as depicted in Table 4 on the next page of this research project.

Table 4

Population of Communities	Response Percent	Responses
<10,000	4.5%	6
10,000-25,000	21.2%	28
25,000-50,000	23.5%	31
50,000-100,000	24.2%	32
100,000-200,000	12.9%	17
200,000-300,000	4.5%	6
300,000-400,000	0.8%	1
>400,000	8.3%	11
	Answered Question	132
	Skipped Question	2

The majority of departments serve a population of 10,000 to 100,000 people. These statistics represent 68.9% (or 91) of the departments that responded to the survey. PWCDFR is in the minority of departments (0.8%) that serve a population of over 300,000 people.

Next, in order to determine if there is a correlation in community size and percent of diversity, the question was asked; *What is the percent of diversity in the community (city, county, township, etc.) your department serves?* This data is represented in Table 5 shown below.

Table 5

Community Diversity	Response Percent	Responses
White	98.4%	127
Black	94.6%	122
Asian	84.5%	109
Hispanic	94.6%	122
Native [American] Indian	54.3%	70
Other	35.7%	46
	Answered Question	129
	Skipped Question	5

When analyzing the results of this question, each department was evaluated for their diversity statistics and it was determined that the overall averages for the respondents was that 69.6% of the communities were primarily comprised of whites, 13% blacks, 3.9% Asian, 8.5%

Hispanic, 3% Native American Indian, and the other 2% were made up of Russians, Ukrainians, Brazilian, Middle Eastern, and unspecified. This question did not ask departments to delineate between genders, only race and/or ethnicity.

The next question in the survey asked each organization if their department represented the diversity in the community. Specifically, the question read; *Does the diversity of your department reflect the diversity in the community?* Table 6 provides the breakdown to this question.

Table 6

Representative Department/Community Diversity	Response Percent	Responses
Yes	20%	26
No	80%	104
	Answered Question	130
	Skipped Question	4

The results of this question are intriguing. Demonstrably, 80% of departments surveyed do not represent the diversity of the community they serve. Upon further analysis, it is difficult to determine if the answers to this question were based on factual empirical data or simply an opinion of the person filling out the survey. The next survey question may provide better insight with regards to representative diversity.

Departments were asked what the percentages of various genders and races were for their respective organizations in the question; *What is the current diversity breakdown (%) in your department's workforce?* Table 7 shows the responses to this question on the next page.

Table 7

Department Diversity	Response Percent	Responses
Male	100.0%	132
Female	95.0%	126
White	94.7%	123
Black	77.3%	102
Asian	66.7%	88
Hispanic	82.6%	109
Native [American] Indian	56.1%	74
Other	25.0%	33
	Answered Question	132
	Skipped Question	2

The analysis of the responses to this question shows that departments in general employ approximately 69% of their workforce as white males. Additionally, women make up 4.8%, 4.8% are black, 1% are Asian, and 2.6% are Hispanic. These numbers only total up to 82%. The other 18% are comprised of the various other races and ethnicities. There is a high degree of suspicion with this question that perhaps the question was not worded clearly. Regardless, the data generally appears to be accurate except for the category specified as other.

The question was asked, *Over the last five years, how many personnel has your department hired?* The responses to this question ranged from one person being hired to over 600 new members being employed from 2004 to present and 132 people answered the question, while two did not. As an average, about 48 new fire and rescue employees were hired over the course of five years.

Next, the survey asked representatives to provide how many people hired in the last five years were minorities. For this question, 132 people responded and two chose not to. Of those responding to this question, estimated averages of 8.9 minorities were hired overall for each organization over the last five years. Some departments did not hire any minorities, while others had a concerted effort to have a department that reflected the community it served.

Additionally, fire and rescue departments were asked about the methods they employed for recruitment purposes. Specifically, the question asked; *What methods does your organization use to increase the diversity?* Agencies were given a list of ten different events to choose from, and they were asked to choose all that were applicable to their respective organization. The results of this question are shown on the next page in Table 8.

Table 8

Methods of Recruiting for Diversity	Response Percent	Responses
Recruiting Task Force	24.2%	32
Minority/Community Groups	25.0%	33
Job Fairs	49.2%	65
Internet Advertising	36.5%	47
Open House	27.3%	36
Public Service Announcements	24.2%	32
Newspaper Ads	49.2%	65
National Trade Journals	11.4%	15
Brochures	28.0%	37
Word of Mouth	58.8%	75
Other	10.6%	14
None, we do not have a targeted recruiting effort	34.8%	46
	Answered Question	132
	Skipped Question	2

Approximately 34.8% of the survey respondents did not have any type of targeted recruitment effort towards minorities. Most fire and rescue departments (58.8%) found that word of mouth was the best tool available for recruiting diversity amongst the potential candidates. Other departments found that job/career fairs and newspaper advertising were also successful methods of recruitment. Very few agencies used recruiting task forces, minority/community groups, and national trade journals as methods for recruiting for diversity.

In order to evaluate how other departments increase the success rates for potential candidates in the hiring process, the question was asked; *What methods does your department*



*use to improve the success rate of entrance examinations for candidates?* The large majority of departments surveyed (48.5%) did not use any type of technique or program to improve the success rate of potential candidates to complete all stages of the hiring process. Additionally, the common practices among the remaining departments was to provide a study guide for written testing processes and offer Candidate Physical Abilities Test (CPAT) mentoring sessions. CPAT mentoring is a mandate as part of the licensure agreement between agencies and the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) and the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF).

Retaining diverse employees is as critical as recruiting and hiring them. Therefore, fire and rescue departments were asked; *What programs/procedures does your organization use to retain diversity in the workforce?* Respondents were asked to choose all of the methods that were applicable to their department. This information is shown in Table 9.

Table 9  
Methods of Retaining Diversity in the Workforce

	Response Percent	Responses
Mandatory Diversity Training	38.6%	51
Mentoring New Employees	33.3%	44
Commitment to Increase Diversity from the Chief	38.6%	51
Funding for Recruitment and Retention	11.4%	15
Clearly written policies regarding harassment/discrimination	68.2%	90
Strict enforcement of harassment/discrimination policies	65.2%	86
Other	> 1%	1
None	24.2%	32
	Answered Question	132
	Skipped Question	2

This table shows that the primary means of retaining employees of various races and genders is for departments to have comprehensive discrimination policies and procedures that are enforced by the leadership of the organization. Just as important based on this question, is the

commitment from the department's Chief on realizing and improving diversity within the organization. More than 32 of the departments surveyed did not have any methods for retaining minorities in their organizations.

The last question in the survey asked departments; *Of the following, which are issues in your Department?* Respondents were asked to choose all of the options that were applicable to them or their department. The answers to this question are shown in Table 10.

Table 10

Diversity Issues Within Fire and EMS Departments	Response Percent	Responses
Hostile co-workers	9.4%	12
Lack of support systems	18.0%	23
Weak or non-existent diversity policies	21.9%	28
View that this occupation is white male dominated	26.6%	34
Other	7.8%	10
None of these are issues in my organization	48.4%	62
	Answered Question	128
	Skipped Question	6

Even with the perceived challenges of improving diversity in fire and rescue departments, over 48% of those surveyed indicated that discrimination or related issues were not challenges in their department. Many of the responses still indicate the perception that fire fighting and emergency medical services are predominately white male occupations.

As a summary of this section of the research project, PWCDFR is not unique with the challenges posed with regards to increasing the diversity of the candidate pool and subsequently the rank and file of the entire department. PWCDFR is still relatively young as a fire and rescue department at the time of this project was written.

## Discussion

This section will focus on how the various other authors' views of diversity in the workplace and the results of the research will correlate, contradict, and/or support the importance that diversity has in the workplace.

According to the NFPA (2008), the composition of the fire and rescue workforce is estimated to be 288,000 people, of which 21.6% is comprised of minorities. When a comparison is made of NFPA's diversity data and the DFR's workforce composition data for the first quarter of FY 2009, which is 24.5% diversity of uniform personnel; then it can be surmised that the DFR is slightly ahead of the national average for recruiting and hiring minorities into the fire and rescue workforce.

The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (2005) discussed how minority populations are increasing in the suburbs as a result of urban and sub-urban growth that is occurring. PWC is following this trend as the county has seen a significant influx of minorities over the last several years. According to PWC demographics (2008), minorities make up approximately 40% of the county's population. Couple the community data with the composition of the total workforce in the DFR (uniform and non-uniform) for the first quarter of FY09 and the data demonstrates that the DFR is only about 10% shy of reflecting the diversity in the community. As Chief Gray said in his interview (OEMS, 2007), "we live and work in diverse communities and we need diverse ideas to better serve the citizens." After analyzing the data nationwide for this PWC, this fire and rescue organization is very close to accurately reflecting the community it serves. A fire and rescue department that reflects the diversity of the community can build towards the USFA strategic objectives of increasing the ability to respond to emergencies in a timely manner and help communities develop an all-hazards approach

towards reducing risk and vulnerability. Citizens and communities are more likely to listen to public safety officials they trust and one way to garner that support is by having a department that represents the many faces of the community it serves. Josh Greenberg (2004) said that an organization is more likely to develop and thrive based on their ability to realize the benefits of diversity and embrace it. With approximately 30% of its team members being diverse, the DFR is on track to experience the benefits and growth that diversity brings.

Community outreach is an important method of reaching potential candidates. As Chief Gray stated in the interview (OEMS, 2007), recruiting is simply not enough. Departments have to participate in reaching out to members of the community. According to the survey that was sent out to other fire and rescue departments, over 58% of departments nationwide said that word of mouth is one of the most successful methods for recruiting potential candidates.

Chief Osby (Fire Chief, 1991) said that an organization's leader must be more than a supporter for diversity; they must be an active advocate for it. This premise is substantiated in the survey. Over 36% of the departments responding to the survey said that a commitment from the Chief was a critical component to attaining diversity in the workforce. More importantly, the leadership sets the tone for the department. Specifically, whether diversity initiatives will be embraced or rejected. Fire departments are rooted in tradition, which makes embracing diversity a challenge for some organizations (B. Crawford, Fire Chief, 2004). Crawford also said that departments that get caught up in traditionalism may be unable to see their potential discriminatory hiring practices. According to the survey, nearly 27% of respondents indicated that the fire and rescue occupation is predominately for white males. The uniform personnel of the PWCDFR comprise 75% of the workforce. With these statistics, people in the community could get the impression that minorities are not welcome or encouraged to apply. This premise

was reiterated during the OEMS video (2007) by firefighter Sekou Abdus-Sabur who said “that his African-American counterparts still have the perception that the fire department is the good ole boy network and for white males.”

In 2006, the FDNY revamped their recruitment methods to broaden the number of minorities in the candidate pool. They faced a lot of scrutiny about the lack of diversity in the department and therefore started a recruiting campaign that targeted radio, newspapers, subway cars, buses, and billboard signs (New York Times, 2006). The nationwide survey that was sent out also reflects that many other fire and rescue departments are also recruiting using very similar methods the FDNY used. In addition to the methods FDNY used, respondents to the survey also said their departments use job/career fairs, internet advertising, recruiting task forces, and brochures to spread information regarding employment with the fire and rescue department.

The results of this research project demonstrate that there are a myriad of recruiting methods for encouraging minorities to seek employment with fire and rescue agencies. Consequently, recruiting is simply not enough. The research and literature review shows that fire and rescue organizations have to be actively engaged in reaching out to the citizens in the community they are targeting for recruitment activities. Additionally, there must be a concerted effort to demonstrate a commitment from the organization’s leadership towards increasing diversity and subsequently creating a high-performance department that is equipped to deal with the challenges the community may present. It is imperative that leaders of fire and rescue organizations demonstrate patience during the process of increasing diversity. This endeavor is a process that takes time and is a journey rather than a destination. All of the research conducted in this project indicates that organizations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century only stand to benefit and succeed from diversity.

### Recommendations

The recommendations stemming from this applied research project are only limited by the recruitment program manager's imagination and available funding sources. The first recommendation is based on developing a more comprehensive community outreach program. PWC is a very diverse community with a wide variety of ethnic and religious centers located within its boundaries. One of the sources cited earlier in this project indicated that their organization had met with church leaders and build a rapport, which enabled the staff of the fire and rescue department to display recruiting materials. These religious institutions could potentially offer the department candidates who possess higher integrity and dependability. Additionally, the DFR should pay close attention to various community events that occur and send out recruiting staff to meet people and recruit potential candidates. Examples would include any African-American and Latino heritage events that routinely occur in the county and the region.

The Potomac Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC) has a large commuter bus fleet that travels all over the Northern Virginia and Washington, D.C. region. One recruiting option would be to create a "rolling billboard" on some of the buses. This idea was recently put to use on one of the DFR Personnel Section vehicles. The vehicle shows the many faces of DFR engaged in various activities such as fire fighting, emergency medical services, honor guard, aero medical evacuation, and the arson canine and his handler. This vehicle is driven throughout the region for meetings and events. The idea would work well on the large commuter buses that travel the region every workday. Currently, staff members are working on pricing options for this initiative. The graphic design for the Blazer vehicle had an associated cost of \$5,000.

The next recommendation would be to meet with the DFR affinity group *Fire fighters for Diversity*. Its membership consists of members from the IAFF Local 2598 (Prince William Professional Fire Fighters) and represents the interests of minorities in the organization. The objective would be to actively engage this group of people to go out recruit in their social circles in an attempt to reach additional diverse candidates. The Personnel Section could provide them with the brochures and other recruiting materials regarding benefits, etc., to make their effort more efficacious.

Currently, the DFR offers a \$500 recruiting bonus for current fire and rescue employees who recruit other candidates. The caveat is the candidate must successfully complete recruit school for the member to garner the bonus. However, rather than make the bonus applicable to any newly recruited member as it is now, perhaps the bonus should only be paid out for concerted efforts in increasing the diversity of the DFR. In other words, current team members would receive a \$500 bonus only when they recruit someone that increases the department's diversity.

In closing, the quintessential key to recruiting for increasing the diversity in the organization really centers on community outreach and educational/informational sharing about the Department of Fire and Rescue. When the department shows the community that it is committed to improving the diversity in order to improve the organization and benefit the citizens by providing better services; it will begin to gain the trust of the minorities in the community and they will want to become part of a great team. Care must be taken in order to not give the impression that hiring for diversity is only to meet quotas, rather it is to increase the diversity of ideas and become a better synergistic organization.

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Appendix A

1. How large is your department's current workforce?

Uniform Personnel

Non-Uniform Personnel

2. What is the size of the community your department serves?

<10,000

100,000 – 200,000

10,000 – 25,000

200,000 – 300,000

25,000 – 50,000

300,000 – 400,000

50,000 – 100,000

>400,000

3. What is the percent of diversity in the community (city, county, township, etc.) your department serves?

White

Black

Asian

Hispanic

Native [American] Indian

Other, please specify

4. Does the diversity in your organization reflect the diversity in the community?

Yes

No

5. What is the current diversity breakdown (%) in your department's workforce?

White

Black

Asian

Hispanic

Native [American] Indian

Other, please specify

6. Over the last 5 years (CY2004 – Present), how many personnel has your department hired?

7. How many of those hired were minorities/protected classes?

8. What methods does your organization use to increase its diversity? Please check all that apply.

- |  |   |                                    |
|--|---|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recruiting task force                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Open house                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Brochures |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Minority  | <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth                | <input type="checkbox"/> Job Fairs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper Ads                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Service Announcements |                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Internet Advertising                              | <input type="checkbox"/> National trade magazines     | <input type="checkbox"/> Other     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> None, we do not have a targeted recruiting effort |   |                                    |

9. Of the choices listed in the previous question, please list the three most successful in your recruiting efforts.

First

Second

Third

10. What methods does your department use to improve its success rate of entrance examinations for candidates?

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Written test practice/Study guide | <input type="checkbox"/> Use females and minorities in videos/brochures |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CPAT mentoring sessions           | <input type="checkbox"/> Provide CPAT video to candidates               |

None

11. What programs/procedures does your department use to retain diversity in the workforce?

Please choose all that apply.

Mandatory diversity training       Funding for recruitment and retention

Mentoring new employees       Other       None

Commitment to increase diversity from the Chief

Clearly written policies regarding harassment/discrimination

Strict enforcement of harassment/discrimination policies

12. Of the following, which are issues in your department? Choose all that apply.

Hostile co-workers       Lack of support systems       Other

Weak or non-existent diversity policies

View that this occupation is white male dominated

None of these are issues in my organization

## Appendix B

Department:	City/Town:	State:
Tuscaloosa Fire and Rescue	Tuscaloosa	AL
Mobile Fire Rescue Department	Mobile	AL
Gila River Indian Community FD	Gila River	AZ
Payson Fire Department	Payson	AZ
Gilbert Fire Department	Gilbert	AZ
City of Yuma Fire Dept.	Yuma	AZ
Payson Fire Department	Payson	AZ
Fire Department	San Jose	CA
Newport Beach Fire Department	Newport Beach	CA
Solana Beach FD	Solana Beach	CA
San Gabriel Fire Dept	San Gabriel	CA
City of Tulare (CA) FD	Tulare	CA
Millbrae	Millbrae	CA
Monterey Fire Department	Monterey	CA
SMFD	Highland	CA
Santa Rosa Fire Dept.	Santa Rosa	CA
Westminster FD	Westminster	CO
Aurora Fire	Aurora	CO
Los Pinos Fire District	Ignacio	CO
Fort Lupton Fire Protection District	Fort Lupton	CO
Littleton Fire Rescue	Littleton	CO

Larkspur	Larkspur	CO
Parker Fire District	Parker	CO
Vail Fire	Vail	CO
West Hartford F.D.	West Hartford	CT
Office of State Fire Marshal	Middletown	CT
East Hartford	East Hartford	CT
DC Fire	Washington	DC
Fire Rescue	Gainesville	FL
West Palm Beach Fire Rescue	West Palm Beach	FL
Largo Fire Rescue	Largo	FL
City of Palm Coast Fire	Palm Coast	FL
Gwinnett County Fire & Emergency Services	Lawrenceville	GA
Atlanta Fire Rescue	Atlanta	GA
Honolulu Fire Department	Honolulu	HI
Honolulu Fire	Honolulu	HI
Muscatine FD	Muscatine	IA
Sioux City Fire Department	Sioux City	IA
West Des Moines Fire Department	West Des Moines	IA
West Des Moines Fire Department	West Des Moines	IA
Pocatello Fire Department	Pocatello	ID
Lewiston Fire Department	Lewiston	ID
Glenview	Glenview	IL
isle-Woodridge Fire District	Lisle	IL

La Grange Park Fire Department	La Grange Park	IL
Washington Fire Department	Washington	IL
Mokena Fire Protection District	Mokena	IL
Washington Township/Avon Fire	Avon	IN
Wayne Township Fire Department	Indianapolis	IN
White River Township FPD	Greenwood	IN
City of Noblesville	Noblesville	IN
Lenexa, Kansas	Lenexa	KS
Garden City Fire department	Garden City	KS
Lenexa Fire Department	Lenexa	KS
Wichita fire department	Wichita	KS
Worthington Fire Prot. Dist.	Louisville	KY
Paducah Fire Department	Paducah	KY
St. George Fire Department	Baton Rouge	LA
St George Fire Dept	Baton Rouge	LA
Shreveport (LA) Fire Department	Shreveport	LA
North Andover Fire Department	North Andover	MA
Worcester Fire Dept.	Worcester	MA
C-O-MM Fire	Centerville	MA
Midland Fire Department	Midland	MI
Washington Township Fire Dept.	Washington Twp.	MI
Holland fire dept.	Holland	MI
Grand Traverse Metro FD	Traverse City	MI

Coon Rapids Fire Dept	Coon Rapids	MN
Kansas City Fire Department	Kansas City	MO
St. Joseph Fire Department	St. Joseph	MO
Joplin	Joplin	MO
Cottleville Fire Protection District	St. Charles	MO
Central Jackson County Fire Protection District	Blue Springs	MO
Lexington Fire and Rescue	Lexington	MO
NKCFD	N. Kansas City	MO
Nevada Fire Dept	Nevada	MO
Lumberton Fire Dept	Lumberton	NC
Morrisville Fire Rescue	Morrisville	NC
Walkertown FD	Walkertown	NC
Rocky Mount Fire Department	Rocky Mount	NC
New Bern Fire/Rescue Department	New Bern	NC
Cherryville	Cherryville	NC
Shelby Fire & Rescue	Shelby	NC
N/A	N/A	NC
Goffstown Fire	Goffstown	NH
Merrimack Fire Rescue	Merrimack	NH
Derry Fire Department	Derry	NH
Wolfboro Fire-Rescue	Wolfboro	NH
West Windsor Twp	West Windsor	NJ
Columbus Division of Fire	Columbus	OH



Genoa Township Fire Dept.	Galena	OH
Shaker Heights FD	Shaker Heights	OH
Bedford Heights, Division of Fire	Bedford Heights	OH
North Ridgeville Fire Department	North Ridgeville	OH
Perkins Twp. Fire Department	Sandusky	OH
X	x	OH
Miami Township Division of Fire/EMS	Miamisburg	OH
Tulsa Fire Department	Tulsa	OK
Owasso Fire Department	Owasso	OK
Hermiston Fire and Emergency Services	Hermiston	OR
Hermiston Fire	Hermiston	OR
Lebanon Fire District	Lebanon	OR
Crater Lake FD	Crater Lake	OR
Philadelphia Fire Department	Philadelphia	PA
Town of Hilton Head Island Fire/Rescue	Hilton Head Island	SC
Colleton County Fire-Rescue	Colleton County	SC
Sioux Falls Fire Rescue	Sioux Falls	SD
Kingsport fire	Kingsport	TN
Johnson City Fire Department	Johnson City	TN
City of Orange Fire Department	Orange	TX
Denton Fire Department	Denton	TX
Eules Fire Department	Eules	TX
Victoria Fire Department	Victoria	TX

Midland Fire Department	Midland	TX
Flower Mound Fire Department	Flower Mound	TX
Sugar Land Fire Department	Sugar Land	TX
Cypress Creek FD	TX	TX
Murray City Fire Department	Murray	UT
James City County Fire Department	Williamsburg	VA
Norfolk Fire-Rescue	Norfolk	VA
Longview Fire Department	Longview	WA
Spokane Valley Fire Dept.	Spokane Valley	WA
South King Fire & Rescue	Federal Way	WA
Central Kitsap Fire & Rescue	Silverdale	WA
Edmonds Fire Department	Edmonds	WA
Kent	Kent	WA
none	na	WI
Watertown	Watertown	WI
West Allis Fire Department	West Allis	WI
Eau Claire Fire/Rescue	Eau Claire	WI
Kenosha Fire	Kenosha	WI
Madison, WI, Fire Department	Madison	WI
Verona Fire Department	Verona	WI