

Running head: DIVERSITY IN THE WESTERVILLE, OHIO DIVISION OF FIRE.

Diversity in the Westerville, Ohio Division of Fire.

Johnny D. Ross

Westerville Division of Fire

Westerville, Ohio

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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: _____

Johnny D. Ross

Abstract

The problem was that the Westerville Division of Fire had not developed a plan to ensure recruitment of a diverse workforce. Traditionally the Fire Division has experienced the majority of applicants to be white males. The purpose of this applied research project (ARP) was to identify possible strategies for the recruitment of personnel to achieve a more diverse workforce. Descriptive research methods were used to find out how other fire departments address diversity recruitment, determine the desired level of diversity for the Fire Division, investigate the demographics of the community and Fire Division, and identify issues that have prevented the recruitment of a diverse workforce. Research was conducted through the use of a survey of Ohio Fire Chiefs Association member departments, personal interviews, and U.S. Census data from the internet. Results were compiled from these sources to answer the ARP research questions. Research revealed that 90% of departments that responded to the survey felt that recruiting a diverse workforce was important. Only 15.4% of departments had a formal process in place to encourage women and minorities to pursue fire service employment. It was also discovered that entry requirements and limited interest in the fire service by women and minorities present a challenge in improving diversity. Recommendations were made that the Westerville Division of Fire should further collaborate with the Human Resources Manager to implement strategies that are currently in the planning process. This will be a city wide initiative that involves the leadership from all city departments and leaders in the community to have impact on employee recruitment.

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Introduction

Nationwide, the fire service is faced with the challenges of recruiting and maintaining a diverse workforce. According to the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) Diversity Initiative, there is a sizable difference in our population make-up and its representation in the fire service. Also, there is a concern on how upcoming waves of retirement will affect diversity that has been achieved thus far (Fox, Hornick, Hardin, 2006). Historically, the Fire Division has had a very limited representation of minority and female firefighters. The problem is that the Westerville Division of Fire (WFD) has not developed a plan to ensure the recruitment of a diverse workforce.

The purpose of this applied research project (ARP) is to identify strategies for the recruitment of personnel to achieve a more diverse workforce. Descriptive research methods were used to answer the following research questions:

What are the issues that prevent the Westerville Division of Fire from attaining a more diverse workforce?

What are the demographics of the community and the Westerville Division of Fire?

What is the desired level of diversity for the fire division?

What strategies do other fire departments and other agencies use to recruit a diverse workforce?

Background and Significance

In 1860 the citizens of the Village of Westerville passed Ordinance Number Six that created the Franklin Fire Guards of Westerville (Eierman, 1966). This was the beginning of the Westerville Division of Fire nearly 150 years ago. The Fire Division

has evolved from a volunteer organization serving a small village to a full-time career department that provides emergency services for the City of Westerville and the residents of Blendon Township.

The City of Westerville is a northeast suburb of Columbus located in Central Ohio. Westerville is the largest suburb in Central Ohio (Westerville, n.d.). The Fire Division response district is sixteen and one-half square miles and has a population of approximately 47,000. The City of Westerville was the third municipality in the United States to adopt a Council/Manager style of government and currently operates on an approximate \$120 million budget (Westerville, n.d.). The Fire Division budget is just over \$13 million and is collected by means of a property tax levy.

The Westerville Division of Fire operates from three strategically located fire stations. The main Fire Station is Station 111 and is the location of the Administrative Offices for the Division that oversees Operations, EMS, Training, and Prevention. Station 111 houses a Rescue/Pumper, Ladder Truck, Medic Unit, Incident Command Vehicle, Joint Hazardous Materials Mobile Command Unit and a Rescue Boat. Satellite stations are Station 112 and Station 113. Station 112 houses a Pumper and Medic Unit while Station 113 houses a Paramedic Engine, BLS Squad and Rescue Boat.

The Fire Division employs 88 sworn and 2 civilian personnel. The organizational structure is the traditional paramilitary rank system and includes the following: Chief, 2-Deputy Chiefs, 4-Battalion Chiefs, 12-Lieutenants, 30-Firefighter/Paramedics, 36 Firefighters, and 3-Fire Inspectors. The administrative staff is supported by an administrative assistant and a secretary. The organizational chart is shown in Appendix A.

The purpose of this applied research is to identify strategies for the recruitment of personnel to achieve a more diverse workforce. Chief Bernie Ingles, along with the other department heads of the city, have been given direction by the city manager to look into the diversity issue as it pertains to the recruitment of personnel throughout the city (personal communication, September 20, 2010).

This research relates to the United States Fire Administration's operational objective of responding appropriately in a timely manner to emerging issues (United State Fire Administration [USFA], 2008, II-2). This also relates to the USFA revised operational objective to improve the fire and emergency services' professional status (United States Fire Administration [USFA], 2010, II-2). The need for the Fire Division to respond to the needs of the community is imperative. The Fire Division has received some feedback from community leaders expressing their concern about the lack of diversity in the make-up of the city's workforce. The challenge is to determine the most effective strategies and tactics to respond to this issue.

During the Executive Leadership course at the National Fire Academy, Unit #2 discusses using feedback to shape future decisions. The Fire Division has had feedback from some leaders in the community expressing their concern about the diversity of the workforce in the City of Westerville. Furthermore, Unit #7 introduces the importance of succession planning in an organization. It is important for the Fire Division to respond to the need of succession and recruitment, and to implement practices to strive towards hiring a diverse workforce to meet these needs. This research relates to this in the attempt to identify strategies to ensure diversity in future employee recruitment efforts (National Fire Academy [NFA], 2005).

Literature Review

The challenges that fire departments face in dealing with recruiting a diverse workforce appear to be present from coast to coast. Fox et al. (2006) describes a demographic representation in the Fire Service of just over 5% of firefighters in the United States are women as compared to a population of over 50%. Fox et al. goes on further to state that only 8.4% of firefighters are Black in contrast to the population of 12.3%; 8.6% of firefighters are Hispanic as compared to a 12.5% population.

Some fire service leaders are concerned that they must lower standards in order to attain a diverse workforce. This also creates a sense of resentment in the incumbent workforce and brings up a concern for firefighter safety and feelings of diminishing the highly respected status of the position of firefighter. In addition to these concerns, several other barriers such as language, age, culture, religious belief, nationality, and sexual orientation are barriers that must be considered when considering the effectiveness of diversity recruitment (McNeil, 2008).

Statistics from the U. S. Bureau of Labor in 2003 suggest that the fire service was the least diverse of any occupation in the protective services sector. This group includes security officers, police officers, and firefighters. It is important that the leadership in the fire service take this issue seriously. Chiefs need to assess their own values and attitudes to work towards the promotion of a diverse workforce. The behavior that leaders demonstrate will have impact on how their organization will embrace and accept a culturally diverse organization (McNeil, 2008).

The population make-up of the United States is changing quickly. According to the Pew Research Center, the majority of the population will no longer be non-Hispanic whites on or before the year 2050. The Hispanic/Latino and Asian populations are expected to triple during this time frame. In addition, the African American population is expected to double and account for 14% of the total population of the U.S. (Sagen, Pini, 2008).

The language that is spoken in the country is also changing. The U.S. Census Bureau's 2006 American Community Survey suggests that nearly 20% of households speak languages other than English and that 12% of our population is foreign born. This is not only the case in metropolitan areas but is also becoming more prevalent in rural communities (Sagen, Pini, 2008).

One very important concern facing the fire service as our population changes is the ability to communicate fire prevention safety education to our citizens. There are cultural practices that utilize incense and candles that can be a fire hazard. Different cooking methods practiced by other cultures can also present fire safety concerns. The origin countries of many of these populations have not received exposure to the fire prevention strategies that are common place here in the United States. It is the responsibility of the fire service to convey these risks to the public and offer solutions to help promote fire safety. This is a great challenge with the language barriers that exist and the lack of trust that may be present. These trust and language barriers can be addressed by having members of the fire service that can speak the languages and understand the beliefs this ever growing part of U.S. communities (Sagen, Pini, 2008).

Historically, the fire service was a place that hired like personnel to those currently serving as firefighters. This practice continued well into the 1950's. On rare occasions a minority firefighter would be hired and the minority communities were pleased that any firefighters at all resembled the make-up of the population. This was looked at closer with the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960's. During this period of unrest, there were allegations of performance issues with employees of color and resistance to sharing the same spaces for eating and sleeping. This continued into the 1970's as women starting making a presence in the fire service; there were accusations of women being emotionally unstable and lacking the upper body strength to perform as a firefighter. Fortunately, a forward thinking group of fire service leaders observed these racist and sexist diversions and realized that this was a bad image for the fire service. There were also countless hours and large amounts of monies spent to deal with lawsuits and the administrative issues to remediate this predicament. This was a great hindrance that affected the efficiency and effectiveness of many departments in the United States (Osby, 1991).

Many fire departments across the country have good ideas but lack follow through. This often is the case when looking at the issue of diversity. Some of the areas where there is no follow through are the allocation of adequate budgets and resources to implement diversity initiatives. Great ideas are only that, if the organization cannot show an end result (Walter, 1999).

Personnel of your organization need to fully understand what diversity is. For success to occur there needs to be buy in from existing employees. Staff needs to be trained in diversity and a process must be in place to reeducate as needed. The training

must be proactive and reactive to past situations. Examples have to be shown from the top down with the proper attitude towards the desire to diversify the workforce. And of course, the more involvement of personnel at all levels in the implementation and continued training will aid the successful outcome of initiatives (Walter, 1999).

Walter (1999) recommends that fire service organizations focus on total diversity. This includes the integration of EMS and volunteers vs. career employees that are also diversity issues. We need to be cognizant that diversity is more than the sex and race of employees, but the change of the traditional services that are provided from fire departments. The key is flexibility because diversity is ever evolving. Diversity in the workplace is a great challenge, but with the application of a common sense approach the fire and emergency service can empower its' creative personnel to unleash and follow through on ideas that strive for a more diverse work force.

Legal action against fire departments across the country happens all too often. Litigation is not about emergency medical services, firefighting, or other services that the fire service provides. The lawsuits are over behavior of employees who have different gender, ethnicity, religious beliefs, and sexual preferences. When departments take disciplinary actions against employees for discriminatory behavior the reaction from the employees are that they have not been properly trained. Employers must be proactive and conduct training on workplace violence, discrimination, and harassment (Holton, 2002).

The Milwaukee Fire Department took this challenge seriously in 1996. They developed a comprehensive diversity program to make sure their employees had a complete understanding of department expectations for their behavior towards their

customers and co-workers. They utilized a seven step diversity model. **Step one** is having management and labor committed to the same goal of a diverse workforce. If the union is unwilling in the initiative there will not be buy in from the rank-and-file members and the program will never experience any success. **Step two** is the development of a committee with members from management and labor. Dedicated committee members are required to plan, develop, and implement the program. **Step three** is to research and investigate a mission statement. This will give direction to the diversity committee. The mission statement must be all-inclusive to gender, race, religion, ethnicity, and sexual preference. **Step four** is the presentation of the program to all members of the department. Attendance for training must be mandatory for all personnel. The use of the same instructors is also very important to ensure everyone in the organization receives the same message. **Step five** is to present the ethnic breakdown of the community your department serves to employees. A responsive organization must know who their customers are in order to better meet their needs. **Step six** is to explain to members during training the rules and regulations concerning diversity. Employees must have a clear understanding of what is expected while they are on duty. This part of the presentation can include the legal advisor for the community to interpret ordinances and laws that pertain to diversity. All members must sign in during the mandatory training to provide accountability that all have been introduced to diversity and employee expectations. **Step seven** is to use video based scenarios that show employees role playing in different situations to inspire discussion and interpret the proper behavior to reinforce what is expected by all personnel (Holton, 2002). Holton (2002) stated the following:

Diversity is not about numbers and percentages. It is about respecting each individual's background and beliefs. We all have perceived ideas about certain groups and beliefs. A good diversity program should not try to change anyone's beliefs but should hold each fire service member accountable for negative behavior toward another member or citizen while representing the organization (p. 151).

A diverse workplace involves a change in culture. This can be quite the challenge in an organization where the leadership was part of the development of the current environment that needs to change. Cook (2002) shares that, "Chief Officers who spent their early careers in a culture that did not value diversity will find it especially difficult to change a similar culture" (p.143). That does not mean those chief officers cannot make change even if they were products of that culture. It is their responsibility to change a dysfunctional culture. Organizational vision must be shared and the fire chief must take care to understand the importance of what is said. The chief should take every opportunity to share the vision in a consistent manner (Cook, 2002).

When discussing workplace diversity the concept of affirmative action comes to light. Affirmative action is the action of deliberately using gender or race as the preference for hiring or promoting personnel. This a highly debated subject that dates back to the presidency of Lyndon Johnson who enacted an executive order that required federal contractors to develop specific goals and timelines for the recruitment and hiring of minorities and women. There are still federal affirmative action programs that require the encouragement of minority hiring all the way to having specific percentages of federal contracts being set aside for minority companies and workers (Rukavina, 1995).

Several Ohio fire departments were under federal direction in their hiring practices several years ago and those obligations were met. Many departments are now faced with the retirement of those employees hired to meet affirmative action orders and will once again have a workforce that is not representative of the populations that they serve.

A prominent leader in the fire service for the promotion of diversity is the Fire Chief from Madison, Wisconsin, Debra Amesqua. Chief Amesqua speaks of the commitment from the leader of an organization towards diversity. This is necessary for an organization to have a chance to improve the diversity of their workforce. Chief Amesqua believes that it is necessary for the Fire Chief or CEO of the organization to be personally involved in the recruiting process. This process must include compassion, teamwork, inclusion, and caring each and every day not just during recruitment. The final selection process of candidates includes a personal interview with the fire chief before someone is hired (Sagen, 2008). The fire chief must be a part of the process from start to finish and always be flexible with their approach to hiring a diverse workforce.

The fire service is charged to meet requirements for several initiatives to develop a diverse workforce. Large cities in the United States have had orders to develop and utilize affirmative action programs to hire specific races and females to meet quotas. The true test is to balance the validity of the employment process with the rights of all people to gain employment. The key for fire service leadership is to balance the validity of the process to ensure equal opportunity without sacrificing quality of personnel who are hired (Law, 1991).

Lowe and Barnes (2002) stated:

The fire service must acknowledge that diversity conflict exists and that it can result in decreased public safety performance. The sooner senior fire officers implement a diversity management process, the smoother the outcome. The community's citizens expect that the department's limited financial and human resources will not be wasted on non-value activities such as resisting diversity. As more departmental revenue is committed to rapidly growing emergency service needs, less revenue will be available for addressing issues that could be prevented by a proactive management approach that recognizes the individual talents of every member (p. 9).

Summary

It is apparent in the literature that the challenge of diversity will continue to have an impact on America's fire service. Difficult decisions are facing fire department leadership in response to this issue. Holton (2002) describes a diverse workforce as an organization that respects the various beliefs and backgrounds of its employees, not a percentage that describes its' sex and ethnicity. Training is an essential component of making the changes necessary in seeking organizational diversity. All personnel must have a clear understanding of expectations and acceptable behaviors in the workplace. Involving personnel from all levels of the organization in the development of strategies to address diversity can increase the success of programs that are implemented.

Procedures

A survey was developed using Survey Monkey and sent out to 79 Ohio fire departments utilizing e-mail. Questions were constructed to answer the four research questions in this ARP and establish points of correlation between respondents. Questions were reviewed by coworkers for accuracy and relevance. The e-mail list was developed from a contact list from the Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association (OFCA) and was sent to the chief of the respective department. The purpose of the sample chosen was to represent Ohio fire departments to gain a perspective of the state and region. Respondents were given 30 days to complete the survey. 40 respondents completed the survey, which is approximately a 51% rate of return. The sample size represented departments from very small volunteer organizations to metropolitan sized fire departments. A copy of the survey is located in Appendix B. A list of the fire departments that responded is in Appendix C.

An interview was conducted with Ann Lund. Ms. Lund serves as the Human Resources Administrator for the City of Westerville. Lund was interviewed on November 9, 2010 via telephone with documented e-mail follow up. Interview questions were crafted to answer the research questions: What are the issues that prevent the Westerville Division of Fire from attaining a more diverse workforce? What are the demographics of the community and the Westerville Division of Fire? What is the desired level of diversity for the fire division? What strategies do other fire departments and other agencies use to recruit a diverse workforce? The following questions were posed to Lund: What issues prevent the Fire Division from attaining a more diverse workforce? Please offer as many examples as you care to share. Has the City researched

the demographics of the community and compared it to the demographics of the Fire Division or other City Departments? If so, can you share the results? What is the desired level of diversity the Fire Division or other City Departments should strive to achieve? Are you aware of strategies that other employers utilize to promote a diverse workplace? Please include both private and public entities. Please feel free to comment on the subject of diversity recruitment, your comments are greatly appreciated. Question responses are shown in Appendix D (A. Lund, personal communication, November 9, 2010).

An interview was conducted with the Neal Semel. Mr. Semel serves as an Education Coordinator for the City of Columbus, Ohio. Mr. Semel has conducted several classes on diversity for the City of Westerville. Semel was interviewed on November 24, 2010 via telephone with documented e-mail follow up. Interview questions were crafted to answer the research questions: What are the issues that prevent the Westerville Division of Fire from attaining a more diverse workforce? What are the demographics of the community and the Westerville Division of Fire? What is the desired level of diversity for the fire division? What strategies do other fire departments and other agencies use to recruit a diverse workforce? The following questions were posed to Semel: What issues prevent the Fire Division from attaining a more diverse workforce? Please offer as many examples as you care to share. Has the City of Columbus researched the demographics of the community and compared it to the demographics of the Fire Division or other City Departments? If so, can you share the results? What is the desired level of diversity the Fire Division or other City Departments should strive to achieve? Are you aware of strategies that other employers utilize to promote a diverse

workplace? Please include both private and public entities. Please feel free to comment on the subject of diversity recruitment, your comments are greatly appreciated. Question responses are shown in Appendix E (N.Semel, personal communication, November 24, 2010).

Data was gathered from U.S. Census Bureau to determine the demographic make-up of the City of Westerville.

Research questions in this ARP were answered utilizing information gathered from the survey, personal interviews and data from the U.S. Census Bureau. The focus of each of these areas of investigation was with the intent to gain an objective point of view to answer each of the research questions.

Descriptive research techniques were used to identify possible strategies and recommendations that will be forwarded to the Fire Chief and City Manager for consideration.

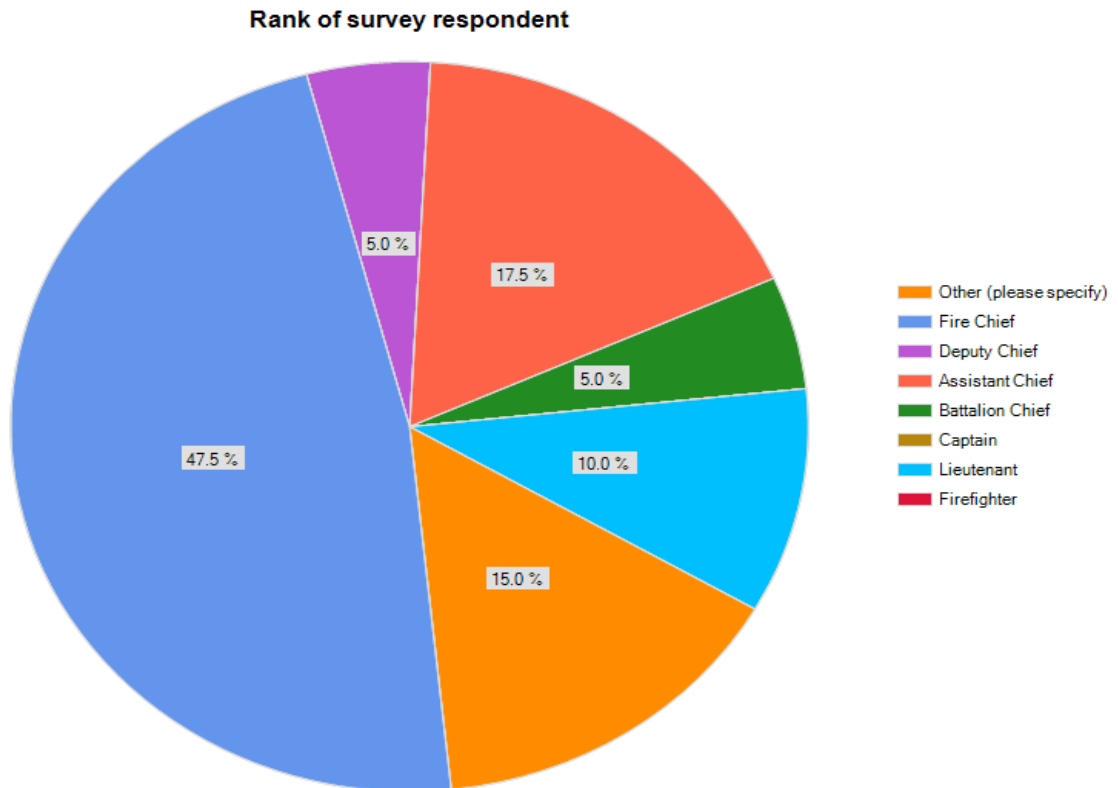
Limitations

There were some limitations that should be noted. The survey was limited to only Ohio fire departments which could be viewed as limiting factors to research. This researcher was concerned about legal issues that are many times governed by state law and chose to survey only Ohio fire departments. Also, only two professionals were interviewed to gain their insight.

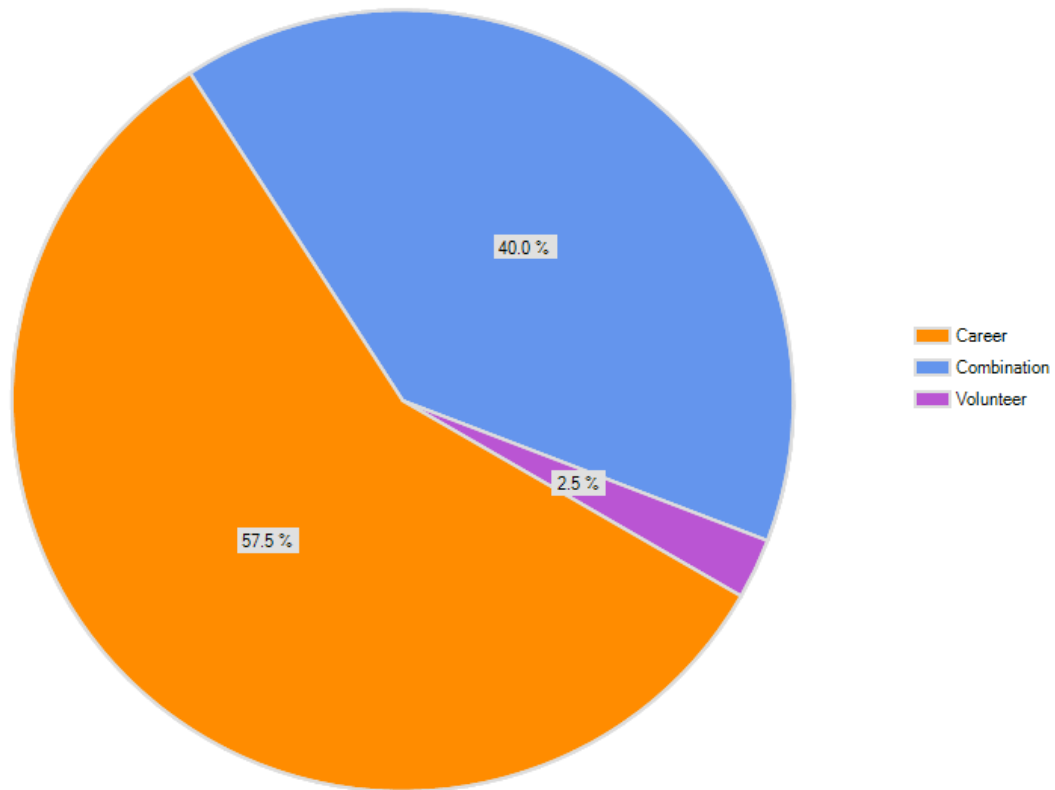
Results

Results were compiled from the survey of Ohio Fire Chiefs Association member departments, personal interviews, and data from the U.S. Census Bureau to answer this ARP's research questions.

The OFCA member survey had a 50% return of surveys sent out or 40 out of 79 departments who were polled. Of the departments who responded their population served ranged from 3,500 to 460,000. This accounted for very small volunteer departments to metropolitan agencies from large cities.



As the chart above depicts, the rank of the personnel that responded to the survey from the member departments of the Ohio Fire Chiefs Association did vary. The majority of responses were completed by the Fire Chief of the respective fire department. Also, most of the respondents were sworn personnel. 15% of respondents that selected the other category included: two Human Resources Analysts, Director of Compliance, Battalion Captain, Fire Marshal, and a union president.

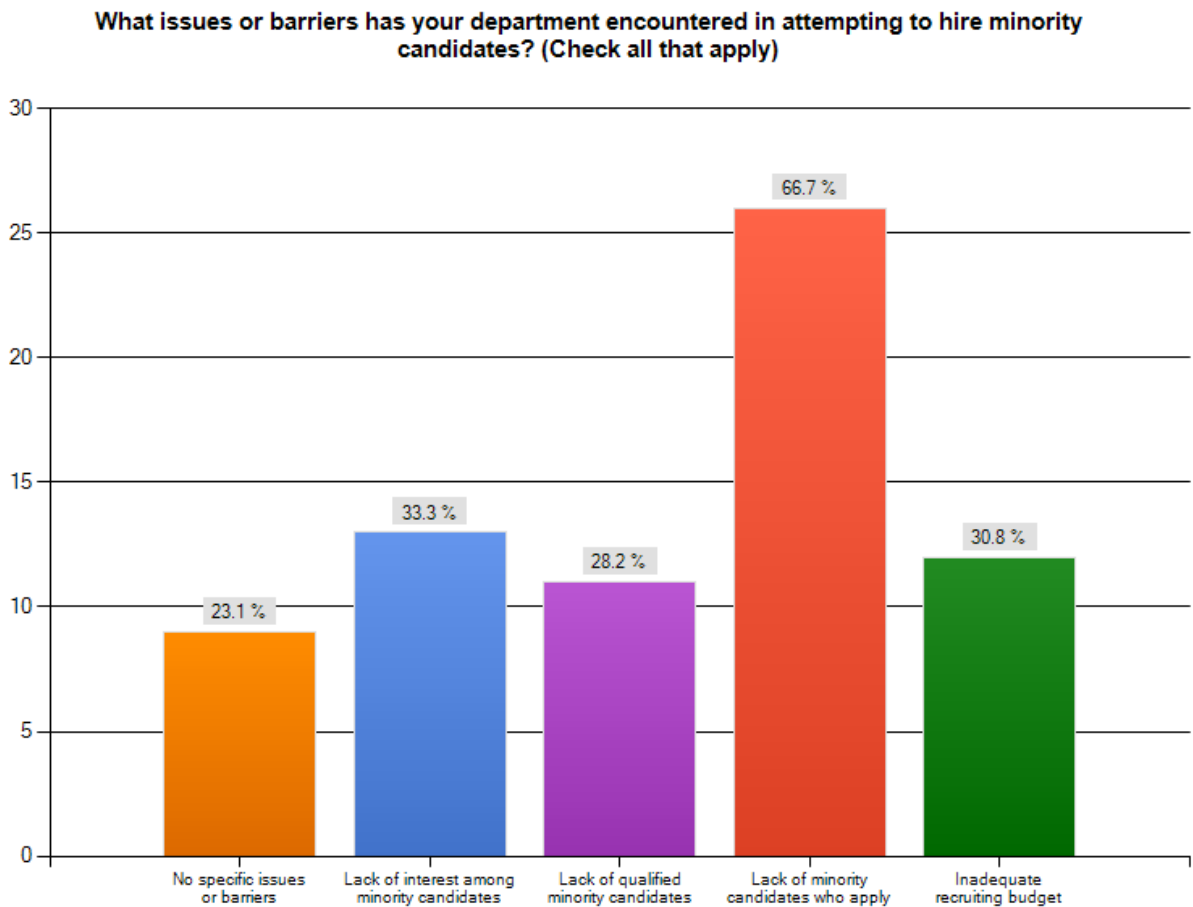
How would you describe your fire department?

The majority of departments who responded were either a career or combination organization with only two and one-half percent being a volunteer department. 90% of departments responded that diversity in their organization was important in their community. Even though this was described as an important organization dimension, only 15.4% of departments had a formal process to promote diversity when recruiting new employees. Also, 70% of departments had no specific methods that have proved successful in the recruitment of minority candidates.

When inquiring about the issues that prevent the Westerville Division of Fire from attaining a more diverse workforce, Lund suggests that the minimum entrance requirements the Fire Division requires such as, the completion of state firefighter training and paramedic training, reduces minority applicants because many do not have

the financial ability to obtain the required certifications. She also stated there is an apparent lack of interest in the fire service by minority applicants (A. Lund, personal communication, November 9, 2010).

Mr. Semel suggests that traditional gender roles discourage females from pursuing fire service careers. Also, the aversion of minority communities to what is seen as the authority role that the fire service represents reduces interest in actively seeking employment (N.Semel, personal communication, November 24, 2010).



The chart above shows the OFCA survey results when looking at the barriers departments have faced in the attempt to hire minority candidates. Over 66% of departments responded that the lack of minority applicants have the most impact on

diversity recruitment. The next most prevalent dimension is the lack of interest among minority candidates.

The demographic composition of the City of Westerville was researched on the U.S. Census Bureau web site.

Firefighting occupations (417):

State		Race						Hispanic origin (of any race)	Not of Hispanic Origin		
		Total	White	Black	American Indian and Alaska Native	Asian and Pacific Islander	Other races		White	Black	Other races
United States	Male	218,763	190,343	19,148	2,966	2,034	4,272	10,728	184,159	18,993	4,883
	Female	5,998	4,831	775	284	24	81	273	4,653	764	308
Ohio	Male	9,340	8,590	675	16	20	39	88	8,541	675	36
	Female	212	212	0	0	0	0	13	199	0	0

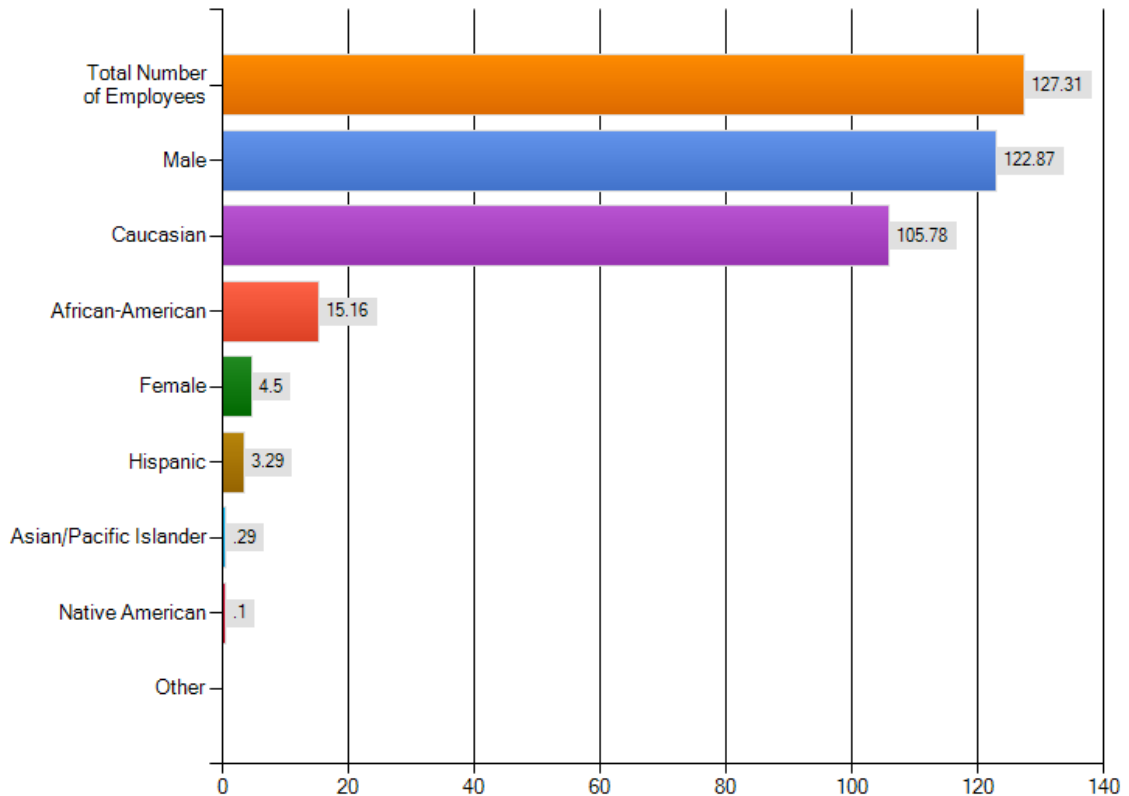
The above chart depicts the racial make-up of the fire service occupation according to the 1990 Census results for the United States and Ohio (U.S. Census, 1990).

This was the most recent occupational data from the U.S. Census Bureau. The 2010 Census lists the female population in the Ohio as 51.4% and Westerville as 52.6% (U.S. Census, 2000).

According to Ms. Lund, the City of Westerville conducted some preliminary research of the demographics of the community. Westerville’s population is less than 5% percent minority within the city limits. The school system is more diverse with a higher percentage of minority students. Lund did not have information to the specifics of the schools systems’ demographics. Because the school system boundaries encompass the

Columbus Public School System the minority levels will be higher. Currently, the City of Westerville employs 10 full-time minority employees that accounts for 2.5% of the workforce (A. Lund, personal communication, November 9, 2010).

What is the demographic make-up of your department? (Survey Average Results Shown)

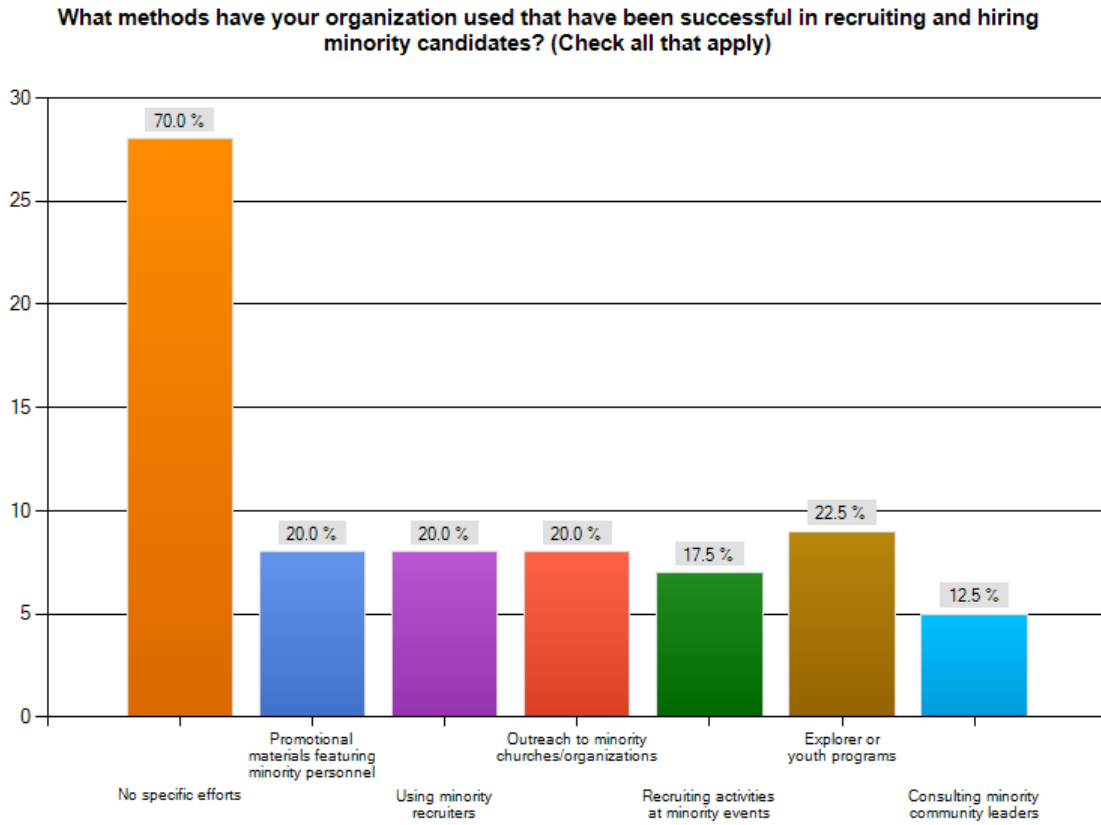


The above graph shows the results of the OFCA survey as to the average demographic make-up of the fire departments who responded. A Male-Caucasian workforce accounts for the majority of fire service jobs.

When exploring the desired level of diversity for the Fire Division, Ms. Lund stated that the City of Westerville would like to achieve a 3% to 5% minority level of employment (A. Lund, personal communication, November 9, 2010). Mr. Semel stated that most Equal Employment Opportunity Laws set goals to reach a substantial

equivalency to the demographics of the community an organization serves (N.Semel, personal communication, November 24, 2010).

In the search of what other fire departments and other agencies use to recruit a diverse workforce, Ms. Lund stated that the City of Westerville is striving to employ the following strategies: ask community leaders to assist with recruitment and networking to find applicants, use social media tools to communicate with school age adults who are seeking career opportunity information with government, recruit in targeted minority areas such as churches, minority schools, and neighborhoods, and to promote employment in general trade publications/internet sites most frequently viewed by minority applicants (A. Lund, personal communication, November 9, 2010).



The graphic representation above shows the OFCA survey results of successful strategies that responding departments have utilized to increase diversity recruitment. Although 70% of the departments had no specific methods, the use of minorities in recruitment efforts is represented as a strategy that is utilized.

Departments were offered the opportunity to add additional comments concerning Fire Department Diversity Recruitment at the end of the OFCA survey. 17 of the 40 departments offered further comments. Three dimensions appeared to be prevalent in the responses. The first was the lack of minority interest in the fire service including women and minority races. Second was the entrance requirements that several departments have reduce minority groups from applying because they do not have access to the required training. Lastly, was the issue of maintaining minimum testing requirements, including both didactic and physical tests, and remaining inclusive of female and minority race candidates during the recruitment process.

Discussion

Our nation is going through some challenging economic times that are affecting the United States fire service. Organizational change is even more challenging during economic downturns. This does not mean that a proactive approach to recruiting a diverse workforce should be placed on hold until times improve.

Several different dimensions concerning the recruitment of a diverse workforce surfaced during this research. Data suggests that just over 5% of the nation's fire service is represented by females as compared to a population in the United States of over 50% (Fox et al., 2006). Currently, females represent approximately 2% of the workforce at the Westerville Division of Fire. Fox et al. states that the U.S. fire service is made up of

8.4% Black and 8.6% Hispanic. WFD currently employs no Hispanic workers and 1% of the workforce is Black. This is well below what is represented in the U.S. The OFCA survey results revealed 4.5% female, 15.16% African American, and 3.29% Hispanic.

The subject of standards was discussed as a concern that fire service leaders have when attempting to recruit women and minority races. The challenge of creating an equal opportunity for both women and men of all races without the reduction of standards during the testing process presents a challenge (McNeil, 2008). This was also listed as a concern that some leaders brought up in the comments section of the OFCA survey. WFD uses the same testing procedures for applicants, regardless of gender or race. National standards are utilized in the development of the testing process.

The spoken language in communities across the U.S. is changing from being exclusively English. 20% of households speak other languages and the challenge of communicating in emergency situations and fire prevention activities is difficult (Sagen, Pini, 2008). Central Ohio has the second largest Somali population in the U.S. and the Hispanic population is ever growing. The need for recruiting employees from these ethnic groups to aid in communication is apparent. The ability to understand the population they serve allows fire departments to better carry out their mission.

The issues that prevent WFD from attaining a more diverse workforce was part of the interviews conducted and Ms. Lund brought up the entry requirements that the Fire Division currently has in place (A. Lund, personal communication, November 9, 2010). These minimum fire and EMS educational requirements have evolved over the years because of the labor cost associated with the fire service. Most departments have seen close to a 100% increase in the income of firefighters in the last decade making hiring

non-trained personnel an economic challenge. While this researcher agrees that entry requirements are a barrier, Central Ohio has several affordable community colleges and technical schools that offer this training. There are scholarships, grants, and other financial aid programs in place at these institutions. This also surfaced in comments made in the OFCA survey with many departments the size of WFD stating that they require the same entry level certifications.

As far as the desired level of diversity that the WFD should strive to attain, I fully agree with Ms. Lund and think that the City setting a goal of 3% to 5% is an admirable number (A. Lund, personal communication, November 9, 2010). This would also place WFD in the suggested level that Mr. Semel recommended to be in line with Equal Employment Opportunity Laws that encourage equivalency to the demographics of the community (N.Semel, personal communication, November 24, 2010).

It was quite interesting in the OFCA survey to find that 90% of responding departments thought diversity recruitment was important, but only 15.4% have a formal process to promote recruiting a diverse workforce. Also, 70% of departments responded that they did not have any successful diversity recruiting methods.

Ms. Lund and the OFCA survey respondents suggested some methods to utilize in recruiting diverse candidates. This included using community leaders, social media, minority leaders, and using publications that minorities view to promote employment opportunities (A. Lund, personal communication, November 9, 2010).

Recommendations

Based on the results of this Applied Research Project (ARP), the next step the Westerville Division of Fire (WFD) should undertake is to have discussions with the City of Westerville Humans Resources Manager, Ann Lund, to solidify strategies that promote diversity recruitment in the Fire Division. Ms. Lund has some formidable ideas to strive to encourage the recruitment of minority candidates (A. Lund, personal communication, November 9, 2010).

The Fire Division needs to reach out to local minority leaders to request their assistance in communicating the need for candidates in the fire service. Also, I would recommend reaching out to local community colleges who educate students with the minimum educational classes the Fire Division currently requires.

The consideration of partnering with area communities to recruit minority candidates is something to consider. I recommend the involvement of local labor unions and the Ohio Fire Chiefs to encourage the involvement of minority applicants. The OFCA survey and Ms. Lund suggest that there is a lack of interest in employment in the fire service and promoting the benefits and satisfaction of serving the public is a must to promote diversity within the ranks of the fire service in the future (A. Lund, personal communication, November 9, 2010).

The goal of having 3% to 5% minority employment is a great guideline for the future and hopefully WFD can accomplish this admirable goal without reducing the current hiring standards. The Fire Division must interest minority candidates and continue the commitment to the citizens of Westerville that they have come to expect in the community's fire service.

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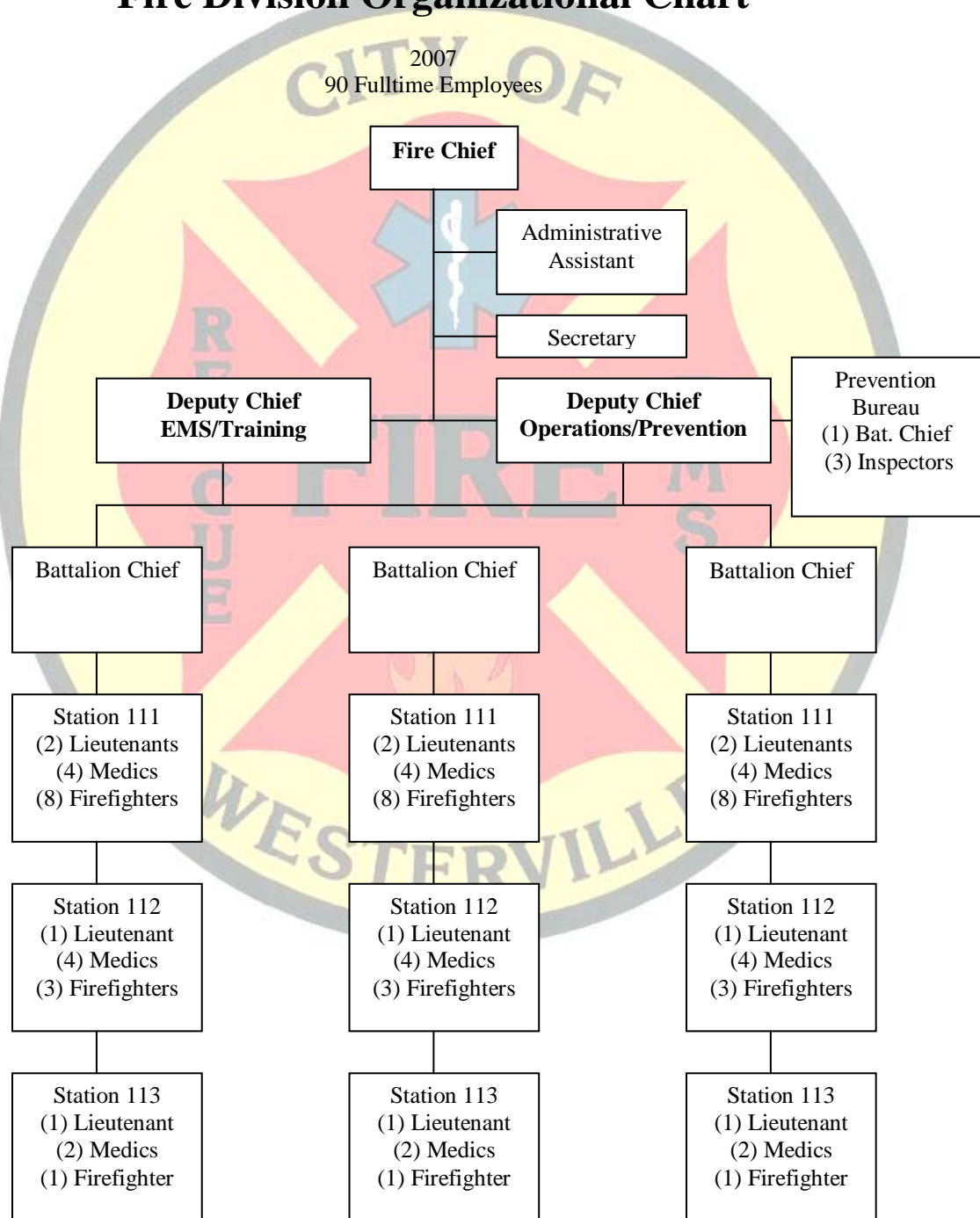
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Appendix A

Fire Division Organizational Chart



Appendix B

1. EFO Survey - Fire Department Diversity

*** 1. Please list the jurisdiction location and population size your fire department serves.**

Jurisdiction

Population

*** 2. Rank of survey respondent**

▾

3. How would you describe your fire department?

Career

Combination

Volunteer

4. Do you feel that recruiting a diverse workforce is important in your community?

Yes

No

5. Does your agency have a formal process to promote diversity when recruiting new employees?

Yes

No

6. What is the demographic make-up of your department?

Total Number of Employees

Male

Female

African-American

Asian/Pacific Islander

Caucasian

Hispanic

Native American

Other

7. What methods have your organization used that have been successful in recruiting and hiring minority candidates? (Check all that apply)

- No specific efforts
- Promotional materials featuring minority personnel
- Using minority recruiters
- Outreach to minority churches/organizations
- Recruiting activities at minority events
- Explorer or youth programs
- Consulting minority community leaders

Other successful methods (please list)

8. What issues or barriers has your department encountered in attempting to hire minority candidates? (Check all that apply)

- No specific issues or barriers
- Lack of interest among minority candidates
- Lack of qualified minority candidates
- Lack of minority candidates who apply
- Inadequate recruiting budget

Other issues or barriers (please list)

9. Does your agency have a specific person(s) that lead(s) your diversity recruitment effort?

- No
- Yes

If yes, please provide contact information below

10. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Please fill free to add any comments concerning Fire Department Diversity Recruitment. (Your comments are greatly appreciated)

Appendix C

Departments That Responded To (OFCA) Survey

- 1 Delaware
- 2 Genoa Township
- 3 Porter Kingston Fire District
- 4 Basil Joint Fire District
- 5 Granville Township
- 6 Norwich Township
- 7 Lancaster
- 8 Madison Township Fire Department, Groveport, OH
- 9 Greenfield TWP
- 10 Jefferson Twp Madison County
- 11 Genoa Township
- 12 Worthington
- 13 Madison Township Fire Department
- 14 Prairie Township
- 15 Jefferson Twp. Fire Dept. (Madison County)
- 16 Orange Township
- 17 Township
- 18 Scioto Township - Pickaway County
- 19 72.5 vilages and twps
- 20 Prairie Township, Franklin County
- 21 Perrysburg
- 22 Westerville
- 23 Grandview Heights
- 24 ohio
- 25 Cincinnati, Ohio
- 26 City of Forest Park Fire Dept. / 1201 W. Kemper / Cincinnati, Ohio 45240
- 27 Cleveland, Ohio
- 28 Akron Fire Department
- 29 City of Canton
- 30 Gahanna/Mifflin
- 31 Dayton, Ohio
- 32 Violet Twp. (Pickerington), Ohio
- 33 Cleveland, Ohio
- 34 Gahanna (Central Ohio Franklin Co)
- 35 Violet Township, Fairfield County, Ohio
- 36 Violet Twp
- 37 City of Akron

- 38 Mifflin Township Division of Fire
- 39 City of Forest Park Fire Department
- 40 City of Forest Park, Ohio

Appendix D

Interview Responses
Ann Lund November 9, 2010
Answers in Red

1. What issues prevent the Fire Division from attaining a more diverse workforce? Please offer as many examples as you care to share.

Westerville Fire Division's minimum application requirements of a 240 Fire Card and an EMS card at the time of application to sit for the written test. Many don't have the financial ability to obtain the certifications on their own and in advance of a selection process.

Apparent lack of career interest in the fire service by minority applicants

2. Has the City researched the demographics of the community and compared it to the demographics of the Fire Division or other City Departments? If so, can you share the results?

Yes, the city has done some preliminary research of the demographics of the community. Westerville's population is less than 5% minority within city limits. The school system is more diverse with a higher percentage of minority students. I do not have that information. I know the percentage is higher due to the schools WIN-WIN agreement with the Columbus Public Schools. The city of Westerville has 10 full time minority employees to date which represents 2.5% of the workforce.

3. What is the desired level of diversity the Fire Division or other City Departments should strive to achieve?

The number the city wishes to achieve is to reflect the 3% community percentage in each city department not in total. The city hopes to reach from 3 to 5% minority employees in police and fire in particular.

4. Are you aware of strategies that other employers utilize to promote a diverse workplace? Please include both private and public entities.

Strategies we hope to employ in our city that have been used by other public and private employers are the following:

- Ask community leaders to assist with recruitment and networking to find applicants
- Use social media tools to communicate with school age adults who are seeking career opportunity information with government
- Recruit in targeted minority areas such as churches, minority schools, and neighborhoods
- Promote employment in general in trade publications/internet sites most frequently viewed by minority applicants.

Please feel free to comment on the subject of diversity recruitment, your comments are greatly appreciated. **Minority recruitment in public safety is a national problem. WFD is not alone.**

Appendix E

Interview Responses
Neal Semel, November 24, 2010
Answers in Red

1. What issues prevent the Fire Division from attaining a more diverse workforce?
Please offer as many examples as you care to share.

Traditional gender roles discouraging females from pursuing fire careers. Aversion of minority communities to what are seen as authority roles (police, fire). Relocation issues of living in less diverse communities. A lack of exposure to, and awareness of, uniformed services as viable career options for inner city residents and immigrants. Long time frames of interviewing, testing and training to obtain job discourages many applicants.

2. Has the City of Columbus researched the demographics of the community and compared it to the demographics of the Fire Division or other City Departments?
If so, can you share the results?

The goal of most Equal Employment Opportunity Laws is to reach substantial equivalency to the demographics of the community an organization serves. Anecdotally, I assume this is an unmet goal for many departments. For specific numbers you would have to contact the departments directly, or perhaps the Human Resources EEO office.

3. What is the desired level of diversity the Fire Division or other City Departments should strive to achieve?

The goal of most Equal Employment Opportunity Laws is to reach substantial equivalency to the demographics of the community an organization serves.

4. Are you aware of strategies that other employers utilize to promote a diverse workplace? Please include both private and public entities.

Strategies include; diversity recruitment, employee resource groups, training, diversity policies, segmental marketing. Most employers who successfully promote a diverse workplace, have strong support and leadership for diversity and understand and can articulate the business case for diversity.

5. Please feel free to comment on the subject of diversity recruitment, your comments are greatly appreciated.

Diversity recruitment is a tough road. People tend to be attracted to environments that include people similar to them. When an organization lacks certain demographic elements it is challenging to break the ice. People assume that if there is no one like me there, then it must not be a good place for people who look, think, believe, act or are otherwise like me. As our nations diversity increases, it will be more difficult to hire only a certain type of candidate and will necessitate a shift to more diverse workforces to maintain worker numbers.