Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment & Retention Task Force

Subcommittee to Identify incentives to assist in the recruitment of volunteer firefighters in under-represented and at-risk populations

March 4, 2022- Subcommittee Report

Issue	Discussion	Recommendation	Method
Defining the At-Risk & Under-Represented Populations	• Fire Departments need to look at their own communities • Census data- where are these populations migrating? What are the populations migrating? • Cultural considerations • Essentially anyone who does not identify as a white male • Uneducated, below poverty line, troubled backgrounds, high frequency call populations (EMS) • More LGBTQ are taking training programs- overall positive environment • Surveys are difficult to produce to give a positive vibe	• Fire District surveys to identify different populations within the community • Fire Department surveys- annual evaluations of the department, leadership, etc. • Reach out to community-based groups who already included these populations and invite them to hold meetings or events at the firehouse. • Reach out to Realtors Associations- provide information to new homeowners about their local volunteer fire department	• App-based or QR code type of survey that are easy to take • Utilizing people who are educated in how to word survey questions to obtain appropriate wanted information • Create a "Best Practices" type of document to assist with listing the types of groups that *may* include these populations • Membership Committee to spearhead initiatives to reach out in communities • Fire Department Brochures- with specific information targeting specific populations. Various languages, in cultural locations, etc.
Antiquated Bylaws	• Out-dated bylaws have written Fire Departments of volunteers • GML 176.b only caps a percentage of out-of-district • Membership & Title "Types" (firematic, social, interior, exterior, etc) are not allowing others with skills to join in a different capacity	• Fire Department bylaws consider being overhauled to remove specifics and become more inclusive • Identify new ways to include more diverse membership types.	• Create or provide a modern version template of fire department Bylaws for considerations on what to help be more inclusive and appealing to under-represented populations
Public Education/ Lack of clarity about "A Job for Everyone" in the fire service	• Fire Departments are communities within communities • Firematic members are becoming 'burnt out' by filling many organizational roles within the Department • Someone with a specific skillset could fill another role to lessen the burden. • A lot of people are interested in joining a fire department but not at the "firefighter" level.	• Campaign • Commercial • Changing the conversation from 'do you want to be a volunteer?' to including the NEED for volunteers, the lack of volunteers and stressing the different jobs available for volunteers	• Utilize a fire service organization to create a campaign plan • Media services that can assist in media/Audio Visual type of promotional video • Volunteer Job Fairs- including all community-based volunteer organizations for people to see what volunteer options are available- held at the local volunteer fire station.

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Poor Leadership	• Tradition has overshadowed the importance of leadership • People being busy in everyday lives don't have the time to work on leadership skills/ development	• Training course(s) created to address and develop better leadership skills within the fire service- not lengthy, 4hr course.	• In-person or online type of training • Webinar • Conference
Mentorship	• Resources for new members to get questions answered • Prospective members may not join without timely and helpful communications • "Mentor" List with photos and 1-line backgrounds of members- new members can use to identify who they might relate to best. • At-risk populations can thrive off good mentorship	• Establishing Mentors for new members • Membership Committees • New Member Book with useful information- how 'things' work, SOGs, Bylaws, FAQs • Multi-teared program to process new members	• Possible OFPC course targeted on Leadership, Mentorship, Recruitment & Retention • Provide examples of what other FD's do, Membership Committees/Probationary Training
Education	• Language barriers • English as a second language is a roadblock • OFPC only delivers training in English	• Can we get training programs in other languages if needed, or get a translation service to assist?	•
Veterans	• People think of Vets as "old men" when that is changing in today's population • Can we find reciprocity for Veteran's training? • EMT reciprocity may be grated if it meets specific requirements.	• Reach out to Veterans Affairs Offices, American Legions, VFW • Veterans take advantage of NYS DOH reciprocity for EMT/Medic certifications • Can OFPC Standards Unit create reciprocity programs to fire training programs (give credit to what fire training they have taken in military)?	• NYS DOH advertising and assisting with the reciprocity certification process • Veterans In Fire Departments helping reach out to other Veterans
Burn-out of New Members	• Bylaws- yearly requirements are asking too much	• Prioritize training, THEN start requiring attendance at meetings, in-house training, fundraisers, etc. •	•
Time Commitments)	• More than one job now • Longer hours • More calls • More meetings • More people already working multiple "day" jobs	•	

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Improving Current Incentives	• Current $200 income tax credit	• Property Tax deduction? Or Renters credit? • Fire Department funded incentives for meeting monthly requirements- percentage of calls, drills, etc. • Car insurance credit? – volunteers drive their own vehicles to the fire stations.	• Car insurance • Fuel/gas cards, grocery cards, gym memberships • Work with insurance industry to create a car insurance credit.
Child Care	• Single-Parent OR Both parents involved in the fire service • Provide a means to bring more parents into the volunteer fire service • Need to have appropriate facility/area	• Fire Departments create a Child Care membership type. • Child Caregiver afforded all benefits and opportunities as any other firematic or otherwise fire department member	• Proper back-ground checks • Red Cross Babysitting Training • NYS has no minimum age requirements for childcare • Bylaws changes if required