

# **AN APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY OF A FIRE DEPARTMENT ORGANIZATION**

Executive Leadership

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Prince William County (Virginia) Department of Fire and Rescue (Fire Department) is located in a rapidly growing region. The growth had caused an increased demand for service. The amount of resources needed for more service delivery had lagged behind that increased demand. The problem the Fire Department had was that a trend had emerged for an increasing demand for service that had not included a corresponding increase in resources to meet those demands causing a strain on its members that could not be sustained if the trend continued.

The Fire Department provided high quality service that resulted in among the highest citizen satisfaction rates for Prince William County Government services. Fire Department members had demonstrated commitment to meeting and exceeding customer expectations. The Fire Department therefore, had the capacity to achieve excellence. The purpose of this research project was to identify ways in which the Fire Department could build upon the best of what it currently had been doing to thrive in conditions where productivity must increase and where the overall experience levels of its members have decreased.

An appreciative inquiry action research methodology was used to conduct the study. Two questionnaires were used to perform two facilitated interview processes of a sample of Fire Department members to identify the organizational core values and identify “the best of what is” within the Fire Department. A focus group consisting of Fire Department members was used to identify possibilities for improving on the best of what is currently occurring in the Fire Department. Four research questions were addressed:

- 1) How can the Fire Department improve its capacity to learn?;
- 2) What are the core values of the Fire Department?;
- 3) What are the examples of the best of what is currently occurring in the Fire Department?, and;
- 4) What are the possibilities for improving upon the best of what is currently occurring in the Fire Department?

The research supports a recommendation for the Fire Department to pursue the adoption of the learning organization model. The Fire Department should consider adoption of the core values that surfaced from the research and pursue prioritization of the eighty possibility propositions for implementation to build upon the best that was occurring in the Fire Department.

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## INTRODUCTION

Prince William County, Virginia is a rapidly growing jurisdiction in the Washington D. C. metropolitan area. The demands for fire and rescue services have correlated positively with that growth. But due to the high competition for limited County Government funding, the Prince William County (Virginia) Department of Fire and Rescue (Fire Department) has not kept pace with that growth. The Fire Department has also continuously adapted to new technology and practices as well as adding new services based on the wants, needs, and desires of the community. These conditions have led to a continuing practice of doing more with less. As a result, the Fire Department's members are being tasked to pursue an increasing productivity rate without the requisite resource interventions.

The problem the Fire Department had was that a trend has emerged for an increasing demand for service that has not included a corresponding increase in resources to meet those demands causing a strain on its members that cannot be sustained if the trend continues. The service demand is increasing with respect to both the range and depth of service due to an increasing population and desire for greater sophistication and choice of services. The problem is exacerbated by diluted member experience levels due to the addition of staff because of increasing service hours that were once the responsibility of volunteers and an increase in the attrition rate due to a relatively high percentage of members who are retiring.

The Fire Department however, does have the capacity for excellence. Citizens continuously express satisfaction with fire and emergency medical services. Fire Department members are committed to meeting and exceeding high professional

standards of education, certification, and performance. And, the Prince William County Government considers public safety services strategically important to the quality of life for the community. The purpose of this research project is to identify ways in which the Fire Department can build upon the best of what it is currently doing to thrive under conditions where productivity rates must continue to increase while the overall experience levels of its members are decreasing.

An action research methodology was used as the research model. Research information was obtained at the George Mason University Library, the Learning Resource Center of the National Emergency Training Center, and on-line. The research questions to be answered were:

1. How can the Fire Department improve its capacity to learn?
2. What are the core values of the Fire Department?
3. What are the examples of the best of what is currently occurring in the Fire Department?
4. What are the possibilities for improving upon the best of what is currently occurring in the Fire Department?

The topic of this research paper relates to the assessing organizational culture and managing change modules of the Executive Leadership course by evaluating the core values and identifying organizational development change interventions that are considered from an affirmative perspective rather than from an organizational deficit perspective. The introduction of a relatively new form of action research referred to as appreciative inquiry into this research project also has a relationship to the developing decision making skills module of the Executive Leadership course.



## **BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE**

The Fire Department is a fully paid fire and EMS agency that works in partnership with 12 volunteer fire and rescue departments within Prince William County, Virginia. Formed in 1966, the initial organizational responsibility was to perform Fire Marshal duties to include fire investigation and to enforce the Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code. Currently, the department provides a wide range of sophisticated, high quality services to include fire suppression, heavy tactical rescue, water rescue, advanced life support and basic life support emergency medical services, hazardous materials incident response, disaster preparedness, response, and recovery service, fire prevention, public education, and fire and arson investigation.

In addition the Fire Department operates a modern fire and rescue training center for use by the entire combination fire service and shares responsibility for the Office of Public Safety Communications with the Prince William County Police Department after a consolidation that was done in 1996. The Office of Public Safety Communications is the public safety answering point for the emergency 9-1-1 calls and for police, fire, and Emergency Medical Service dispatching. The Fire Department performs its own management and administration that includes accounting service, geographic information system administration, safety, personnel management, and planning.

The primary hours of emergency response service are from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday excluding holidays. The volunteer fire and rescue departments have primary service responsibility for all other hours. The Fire Department service hours were increased by two hours per day in 1996 because of the difficulty volunteers had in staffing units during the morning and afternoon rush hour periods. The

implementation of this expanded service is still in progress and expected to be completed in 2002. The Fire Department has also expanded the hours of service for three medic units and one partially staffed engine company to cover 24 hour per day, 7 days per week since 1988.

The Fire Department experienced a growth rate during the 1970s that was consistent with a surge in the population. During the 1980s, the population grew at an unprecedented rate, increasing from 144,703 in 1980 to 215,686 in 1990 (Office of Information Technology, 1998, p. 4). The Fire Department growth increased in each of the fiscal years during this 10-year period. However, the growth rate of the Fire Department did not keep pace with the growth rate of the County's population. The Fire Department went through a downsizing process in fiscal years 1991 and 1992 due to an unexpected fiscal downturn. The Fire Department once again began to experience organizational growth starting in fiscal year 1994. However, the growth since 1994 has been focused on increasing the hours of Fire Department service that were previously the exclusive responsibility of the volunteer fire departments.

Despite not keeping pace with the increases in demand for services the Fire Department has experienced many opportunities for employment and promotional growth that has diluted experience levels. Twenty-six percent (N=61) of the Fire Department members were on a probationary status in December 1998 due to being promoted or hired since December 1997. Further, 49% (N=114) of the Fire Department members had less than 2 years experience in their current rank as of December 1998. The relatively high number of promotions and rapid hiring of new members are primarily due to increasing service coverage of the Fire Department to hours that were once the

sole domain of volunteers as well as due to an increasing volume of retirements along with normal attrition. These conditions are expected to continue through the next five.

Although Fire Department members have fulfilled all the service requests and improvements that have been asked of them, wide spread anecdotal evidence has surfaced about excessive work demands. Prince William County is projected to have continued growth with an estimated population reaching 384,000 persons by 2020 (Office of Information Technology, 1998, p.3) that will result in continued increases in demand for Fire Department services.

The Prince William County Office of Executive Management conducted a study in 1997 that included a comparison of the ratio of employees per 1,000 residents to four other Virginia fire departments for fiscal year 1997. Those fire departments included Fairfax County (1.52 per 1000), Chesterfield County (1.46 per 1,000), Henrico County, (1.37 per 1,000), City of Chesterfield (1.83 per 1,000). The Fire Department had .93 employees per 1,000 population compared to an average of 1.54 employees per 1,000 residents for the comparison jurisdictions (Prince William, 1997, p.16). Between fiscal years 1992 and 1998 Fire Department employees have increased 19% from 193 to 238, while total fire and rescue emergency incidents responded to increased 31.3% from 18,126 to 23,804. Other workload indicators increased as well. For example, development related plans reviews conducted by the Fire Marshal's Office increased by 29% during the same period from 1,625 to 2,077 per year (Prince William, 1997, p. 17).

The number of active volunteers decreased 15% from 985 in fiscal year 1993 to 844 in fiscal year 1997 (Prince William, 1997, p. 15). Volunteer membership data was not available prior to fiscal year 1993. However, Fire Department staffing interventions

have been implemented to compensate for decreasing volunteer participation in some sectors of the Prince William County fire and rescue system.

The Prince William County fire and rescue system has had 2 major studies conducted to address service and morale problems and contentious policy issues within the last ten years. The first study involved a Blue Ribbon Commission appointed by the Board of County Supervisors in 1988 after a serious Emergency Medical Services delivery failure receiving high public scrutiny occurred. Many of the recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission were either rejected or have not yet been fully implemented. An external consulting study was commissioned by the Prince William County Government in 1994 to identify system problems and to recommend solutions after a morale problem within the Fire Department became public knowledge and response time deficiencies surfaced once again to be a public issue of concern.

One of the focusing events to trigger the consulting study involved a mass resignation of 19 Fire Department members who, as a group, accepted employment with a neighboring jurisdiction's fire department. Exit interviews of those resigning members indicated low job satisfaction as a primary reason for leaving. The high percentage of resignation that came at one time caused two tactical units to be placed out of service and staff personnel to be reassigned to staff the remaining field tactical units. The impact on the depth of staffing caused job satisfaction to further erode.

Both the Blue Ribbon Commission and the consulting study serve as examples of the deficit problem solving orientation that had been pervasively exercised by management to identify methods to achieve fire and rescue service delivery improvements. These studies have possibly caused some within the system to doubt

the system's ability to effectively function. Others have expressed frustration with a perceived inability of the system to resolve system related problems. The impacts of those studies have been indicators for a need for a more affirmative approach to management and leadership that can build upon what the system and its members are doing well rather than focusing on deficiencies.

In 1995, the Fire Department held a retreat that included representation from each rank level and from a cross section of various workgroups within the Fire Department. The purpose of the retreat was to identify and place into writing the set of the organization's values. The values that surfaced and were agreed upon by the group were: teamwork, customer service, be nice, mutual trust, safe team environment, and growth and nurturing.

The Fire Department membership had demonstrated an acceptance of these values and there have been a number of steps taken to operationalize these values into practice. However, the outcome of the retreat may have been influenced to some degree by the conditions at that time. There is a current interest by the Fire Chief to revalidate these values to determine if any changes are justified.

The Fire Department does have a number of strengths on which to build upon. The University of Virginia Center for Survey Research conducts an annual random survey of Prince William County citizens to measure their satisfaction with County Government services. In the 1998 survey, of those respondents asked about fire and rescue services, 97.8% indicated satisfaction with emergency medical services and 96.8% indicated satisfaction with fire protection and fire prevention services (Wood and Guterbock, 1998, p. 39). These ratings represented the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> highest ratings

respectively for County Government services. These ratings are indicators of the ability the Fire Department has to provide quality service that meets the needs and desires of the community it serves.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The typical essence of Western management described by Senge is to “extract ideas from the heads of people at the top of the organization and place them in the hands of the people at the bottom” (1994, p. 9). The traditional paramilitary management model typically practiced by many fire service agencies follows the condition Senge describes. An alternative model of management has emerged that involves seeking new opportunities for organizational life that makes organizations more effective while allowing people to realize their personal vision. The review of the literature relating to the learning organizational model presents an opportunity to consider alternative management and leadership practices for the Fire Department that are focused on enhancing and expanding the collective awareness and capabilities of its members.

Organizational learning occurs when the members of an organization are able to observe the effects of their actions, when they recognize the problems that remain unsolved and the new problems that may be created, and when they adapt and change to solve such new problems (Foil and Lyles, 1985 p. 803; Hedburg, 1981, p. 3). As a result, organizations are able to learn when members improve their understanding on the basis of observed results about what works, what does not work, and why (Kettl, 1994, p. 21).

The learning organization will embrace error (Korton, 1980, p. 498). The learning organization will look for problems, correct those that it can, and seek to change from other quarters when necessary to remedy other problems as opposed to denying that a program is failing or insisting that some other group of people are responsible for the failure. The learning organization takes advantage of existing local knowledge and the technology of those who have been coping with the problems the program seeks to resolve. The evaluation of existing technologies to include those that have been inadequate allows program developers to understand the priorities and constraints of the target group (Korton, 1980, p. 499).

The learning organization links knowledge to actions in order for implementing agencies to “build up from the teams that created the original program” (Korton, 1980, p. 499). Peters and Waterman (1982) also see this as a way to ensure that the initial dedication and enthusiasm of project founders and “champions” are used and rewarded. In the programs that Korten identifies as successful, the initial organizational structure comprised teams of clients, researchers, and administrators, which allowed for the “rapid, creative adaptation” necessary to build new knowledge into the developing programs. In contrast, the traditional blueprint approach treats programs and organizations as entities that exist independent of the people who created them (Korton, 1980, p. 500). Characterizing this approach, Korten writes,

What remains is an idea reduced to paper while the operating organization - the vibrant social organism which encompasses the skills, commitment, knowledge and systems required to give the idea life and adapt it to the local circumstances as required - has been discarded (1980. p. 499).

In some respects, Korten's model may be too straightforward for the American fire service, where customers rarely present a unified set of demands, and multiple constraints on program procedures, staffing, and funding tend to be the norm. What Korten's study may be saying is that customer support, which is so important to program success, can be built through community participation in program development.

Criticisms of public sector agencies as being unable to learn offer different remedies. Landau (1973) calls for self-correcting organizations, committed more to the core of the Weberian bureaucratic model, which he identifies as the exercise of technical knowledge rather than power. In essence, in order to be self-correcting, government agencies must be more rational, more empirical, and much more open to continuous reexamination. Landau believes that too frequently in government agencies, "rationalization replaces verification", (1973, p. 540) a phrase closely resembling Korten's idea of embracing error. The ways to bring about self-correction experienced by the Fire Department include periodic program audits, the use of operations research, and cost analysis in the context of searching for errors rather than trying to rationalize it. Interestingly enough however, Korten, who maintains that interpretive case narratives over statistical analysis is preferred rejects such self-examination methods (1980, p. 498). The possible reason for this is that quantitative analysis is many times used to disguise failure and tends to close citizens out of the examination process.

Argyris and Schon's analysis of organizational learning (1978) points out another hurdle associated with change, that is learning to tell how deep organizational change must go. These authors refer to the concept of single-loop learning for organizations



that believe they are not effective when they depart from their own established procedures and goals. These single-loop learning organizations believe that it is the speed and adequacy of reestablishing their routines that will determine its success. What these organizations do not recognize is that when the routines and goals of the organization are no longer adequate for the problems faced, returning to them will only make the problem worse. (Argyris and Schon, 1978, p. 84) This is where double-loop learning enters. Double-loop learning organizations not only consider that the organization is off course, but also challenge its very conception of how to reach its goals that are outmoded and take action to replace them (Morgan, 1997, p.86). This more radical learning process will require significantly different tactics for the Fire Department than a good control system. Such a change typically involves deep organizational conflict (Gortner, 1997, p.117).

Cybernetics is a relatively recent concept focusing on the study of information, communications, and control. Morgan contends that cybernetics leads to a theory of communication and learning that stresses the following principles:

1. Systems, such as fire department organizations must have the capacity to sense, monitor, and scan the environment;
2. Systems must relate this information to the operating norms that guide system behavior;
3. Systems must be able to detect significant deviations from these norms, and;
4. Systems must be able to initiate corrective action when discrepancies are detected (1997, pp. 84-86).

When these four conditions are met, a continuous process of information exchange is created between a system and its environment allowing that system to pick up on changes and initiate appropriate responses. However, the learning abilities that these principles define are limited because the system can maintain only the course of action determined by the operating standards guiding it. Cyberneticians have drawn a distinction due to this condition, between the process of learning and the process of learning to learn (Morgan, 1997, p. 86).

The process that results from the four principles cited above further explains the single-loop learning model. Morgan uses the analogy of a home thermostat as an analogy of the single-loop learning model. The thermostat can adjust the temperature as the temperature changes in the house; however, it is unable to determine if the temperature it is regulating is appropriate to meet the preferences of the inhabitants (Morgan, 1997, p. 86). More useful cybernetic models include a double-loop to identify a process of questioning whether operating standards are appropriate. This kind of self-questioning ability underpins the activities of organizations that can learn to learn (Senge, 1990, pp. 72).

In single-loop organizations, members are typically encouraged to occupy and keep a predefined place within the whole, and are rewarded for doing so. Situations where policies and operating procedures are challenged tend to be the exception rather than the rule (Morgan, 1990, pp. 88-89). These single-loop learning conditions reinforce themselves and may actually act as a force to keep an organization on the wrong course.

Hedburg focuses on designing ongoing organizational search processes by creating tensions and incentives for search rather than on establishing new control procedures (1981, p. 59). The processes they advocate force organizations to be flexible and to redesign themselves in a continuous manner in reaction to new opportunities and knowledge.

In his recent work describing learning organizations as they are developing in the American business community, Senge adapts the principles mentioned by other authors cited in this research. However, Senge adds another dimension because he argues that learning organizations must have a different culture than traditional hierarchical, authoritarian ones of the past. This concept of culture is an important addition to the understanding of learning organizations.

Senge describes five component technologies or disciplines that must converge in order for business to develop a culture that will tap the expertise and commitment of every member at every level. When that is accomplished organizations “can truly ‘learn’,...[and] can continually enhance their capacity to realize their highest aspirations” (Senge, 1990, p. 6). Senge admits that his model may be harder to apply outside the business sector for he notes, “business has the freedom to experiment missing in the public sector and, often, in nonprofit organizations” (1990, p.15). The ability for the business sector to measure profit facilitates experimentation that can be evaluated, at least in principle, by objective criteria (Senge, 1990, p. 15).

The five technologies that Senge says are critical to success as a learning organization are:

1. Systems thinking. The ability to “see the big picture” or contemplate the whole of a phenomenon instead of any individual part of the pattern.
2. Personal mastery. The discipline of continually clarifying and deepening personal vision, of focusing on one’s energies, of developing patience, and of seeing reality objectively.
3. Mental models. The process by which individuals learn how to surface and challenge other individuals’ mental models (deeply engrained assumptions, generalizations, pictures or images) that influence how one understands the work and, therefore, takes action.
4. Building shared vision. The skill of unearthing a shared “picture of the future” that binds people together around a common identity and sense of destiny, therefore encouraging genuine commitment and dedication rather than just compliance.
5. Team learning. The skill of sharing “dialogue,” the capacity of members of a team to suspend assumptions and enter into genuine “thinking together,” and learning how to recognize the patterns of interaction in teams that undermine learning. (1990, pp. 6-10)

Inside organizations, despite whether or not there is an honest attempt to open communications, organizational specialization that is beginning to emerge in the Fire Department and diversity create impediments that require strenuous efforts to overcome. As a result, the use of the learning organization model has been exercised to foster total member communications in an open manner with understanding.

Luthans, Richards, and Sag state:

Every complex organization has a variety of subcultures – departments, divisions, levels of management, and the like. Each has its own special interests, mental model of how the [organization] works, and, quite possibly, its own language (jargon). Dialogue, as the discipline is now emerging, is a technique for helping individuals recognize and put aside these basic differences. Consequently, higher levels of collaboration are possible. (1994, p.13)

Dialogue is quite different from the common discussion that goes on within organizations because in discussion the goal of the participant is “to win,” or to get one’s view accepted by the group. According to Senge, the discipline of team learning starts with dialogue, in which “people become observers of their own thinking” and “individuals gain insights that simply could not be achieved individually” (1990, pp. 241-242).

The concept of dialogue has three basic conditions:

1. All participants suspend their assumptions, literally to hold them “as if suspended before us.”
2. All participants must regard each other as colleagues.
3. There must be a facilitator who “holds the context” of dialogue. This means that the facilitator understands and practices the process of dialogue so faithfully that he or she can “influence the flow of development simply through participating.” (Senge, 1990, pp. 243-244)

The concept of dialogue helps to “kindle a new kind of paying attention” to perceive assumptions taken for granted, the flow of polarization of opinions, the rules for acceptable and unacceptable conversations, and the method for managing the differences. The “crisis of perception” stems from the fragmentation of thought often

between people from differing specialties or subcultures of the organization.

Fragmentation is a condition of thought, and therefore, dialogue is one strategy for stepping back from the way of thinking produced by fragmentation and incorporates another way of thinking. Dialogue is a means to perceive the world with new eyes," not merely to solve problems using thought that created them in the first place. (Isaacs, 1990, pp. 358-359)

To a large degree, the emphasis on dialogue is to help reduce the impact of hierarchical status and power on organizational communications. This can be very difficult in fire service organizations. The presence of outside forces demanding to have influence on organizational decisions and processes makes the ability to achieve a learning state more difficult in the public arena (Gortner, 1997, p. 149).

Most approaches to studying problems are entrenched in a "problem solving" paradigm (Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1987). It is assumed that organizations are full of problems that need to be solved and that research equals problem solving. Various definitions of action research also support this contention (Harvey, and Brown, 1996). Similarly, the concept of organizational diagnosis implies the existence of a clinical condition that characterizes organizations. Such a deficiency model of organizational research calls for researchers to develop techniques to accurately identify and diagnose problems. Even the familiar case method in social science originates from a medical model where the history of the pathology is thought to provide insights into what treatments to pursue (Bushe, 1995, p. 14).

In contrast to the clinical or deficit oriented problem solving focus, appreciative inquiry provides an alternative by focusing on what is working in an organization.

Appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1987) may be seen as one of the most significant innovations in organizational analysis (Bushe and Coetzer, 1994). Most tools of organizational development and analysis are founded in a logical positivist paradigm that treats organizational reality as something that is fundamentally preexisting.

Organizations are treated under this paradigm not only as if they have problems, but as if they are problems to be solved (Bushe, 1995, p. 15). In contrast, appreciative inquiry is based on a socio-rationalist paradigm that treats organizational reality as a social construction and a product of human imagination. Another way of viewing this paradigm is that organizations are miracles to be appreciated (Thachenkery, 1996, p. 15).

Appreciative inquiry “refers to both a search for knowledge and theory of intentional collective action which are designed to help evolve the normative vision and will of a group, organization, or society as a whole” (Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1987, p.159). Cooperrider (1990) makes the theory of change embedded in appreciative inquiry explicit in a later paper on the affirmative basis of organization. Cooperrider offers the “heliotropic hypothesis” that social forms evolve toward the “light”, that is, toward images that are affirming or life giving (1990, p. 120). The basis for his argument is that all groups, organizations, or communities have images of themselves that underlay self-organizing processes and that social systems have a natural tendency to evolve toward the most positive images held by their members (Cooperrider, 1990, p. 121). Conscious evolution of positive imagery is therefore a feasible alternative for changing the social system as a whole (Bushe, 1995, p. 18).

Cooperrider presents an irony to help describe that the greatest obstacle to the well being of an ailing group as that of the affirmative projection that currently guides the group. To affirm means to “hold firm” and it “is precisely the strength of affirmation, the degree of faith invested, that allows the image to carry out the heliotropic task” (Cooperrider, 1990, p. 120). As may be the case with the Fire Department, when the group finds that attempts to fix problems creates more problems, or the old problems never go away, it is a clear signal of the inadequacy of the group’s current affirmative projection. As a result, groups do not need to be fixed, they need to be affirmed and “every new affirmation projection of the future is a consequence of understanding the past or present” (Cooperrider, 1990, p. 120).

Appreciative inquiry is a method of change that attempts to generate a collective image of a new and better future by exploring the best of what is and has been. These new images create a pull effect that generates evolution in social forms. Four principles that drive the action research to create new and better images are that research should begin with appreciation, should be applicable, should be provocative, and should be collaborative (Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1987, p. 160). The basic process of appreciative inquiry is to begin with a “grounded observation of the best of what is”, then through vision and logic, collaboratively articulate “what might be”, ensuring the consent of those in the system to “what should be”, and collectively experimenting with “what can be” (Bushe, 1995, p. 17).

Appreciative inquiry as a methodology seeks to locate and heighten the “life-giving-forces” or core values of organizations (Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1987). An affirmation of the organization calls for an in-depth understanding of the Fire



Department's life-giving-forces. Life-giving-forces refer to the unique structure and processes of an organization that make its very existence possible. The life-giving-forces can be compared to the building blocks or central pillars of an architectural marvel and will vary with each organization (Thatchenkery, 1996, pp. 17-20). Life-giving-forces may be the ideas, beliefs, or values around which organizational activity occurs.

Appreciative inquiry is grounded in the concept of positive imagery. Possibility propositions that emerge from the organizational study to keep the best of what is at the conscious level to create more of the best (Hammond, 1996, p. 39). The propositions are presented in the present tense as if those things that can build on "the best of what is" are already occurring (Hammond, 1996, p. 42). The purpose of placing the propositions in the present tense is to maximize the benefit of positive imagery. Constructing proposition statements in the present tense leads to the "heliotropic propensity in human systems" (Cooperrider, 1990, p. 95). The placebo effect and the Pygmalion effect provide the theoretical basis for this phenomenon. Many carefully controlled medical studies have shown how the placebo can provide relief from symptoms because positive images resulting from a positive belief in the efficacy of the treatment ignite a healing response as powerful as conventional therapy (Cooperrider, 1990, p. 97).

In a study of the Pygmalion effect, researchers led teachers to believe that some of their students possessed incredibly high potential while others did not. The high potential students were randomly selected from the general student population. The students dubbed as possessing high potential began to overshadow all others in actual

achievement. The labeling of students as possessing high potential led to a self-fulfilling prophecy of outstanding achievement (Cooperrider, 1990, p. 98).

The major assumption of appreciative inquiry is that in every organization some things work. The analysis of appreciative inquiry involves how to do more of those things that work. The appreciative inquiry methodology is the basis of the action research conducted for this applied research project.

## **PROCEDURES**

The appreciative inquiry study of the Fire Department involved four steps. The first step was the identification of life-giving-forces or core values. The second step included expansion of the life-giving-forces or core values using appreciative interviews conducted by an appreciative inquiry team. The third step conducted a thematic analysis of the data to undertake organizational analysis. And the fourth step focused on constructing possibility propositions.

Two additional steps that remain are beyond the scope of the research study but should be pursued by the Fire Department after this project is completed and the Fire Chief is briefed on the research results. Those steps include conducting a consensual validation of the possibility propositions if the Fire Department has an interest to prioritize them for implementation. The final step will be for the Fire Department to create teams to implement the chosen prioritized propositions.

For step one, a questionnaire was developed to outline five questions that probed the respondent about their best experiences relating to five topics. Those topics included learning, being successful under a time pressure, when they felt most appreciated, their vision of the future, and an example of a customer service contact

that made energized them (See Appendix A). The survey questions were pilot tested by a randomly selected group of three Fire Department officers to identify grammatical errors, ambiguous wording, or potential presentation weaknesses. The instrument was subsequently revised based on feedback from the pilot test. A presentation was prepared to brief each group within the Fire Department that would be interviewed to familiarize them with the research methodology and purpose of the study at the beginning of each interview session (See Appendix B for presentation slides).

A stratified random sample of Fire Department work sites was conducted to select sites for the interviews that would include representation from each division within the Fire Department and a sampling of stations within each battalion. Each work site in the Fire Department was numbered. The selected sites were chosen based on a random number table to choose the work site by number. The interviews were evaluated to assure each rank level of the Fire Department was represented.

A group of five graduate students from George Mason University were approached to facilitate the interview rounds with Fire Department members. The outside facilitator approach was taken after the author made the first appointment for interviews and was told that the work site members would not be open and candid without confidentiality. As a senior officer of the Fire Department, the author would have inhibited openness and candor of the respondents. The graduate students accepted the assignment through their program chair.

Interviews were conducted at the work sites. The sample size was 70 Fire Department members. Participants were paired and instructed to interview each other using the prepared questions. The respondents would record the other's answers. The

respondents then reported the answers from their partner's interview to the group. The facilitators steered the interviews to hear more about what happened rather than why it happened. The facilitator recorded the story responses. The stories were condensed and transcribed to be used as qualitative data to identify value themes.

Each response was coded to a value that was imbedded in the story. A graduate student assisted the author in reviewing the condensed transcripts to achieve a .85 inter-rater reliability of the thematic analysis to derive the core values. Each rater independently coded the transcript data. Differences in coding were discussed until an agreement was reached for at least 85% of the cases. Once the inter-rating was completed all data where an agreement was not reached resulted in that data being withdrawn from further analysis. A number of agreements were made during this process by consolidating similar terms. For example, where one rater identified the value as teamwork and the other rater identified it as collegiality, the value was agreed to as being either teamwork or collegiality.

The core values that were identified were ranked based on its frequency of being surfaced in the stories. The top four or five core values were targeted as the Fire Department's life-giving-forces. However, a natural break in the frequency distribution of the data was also considered in making the final decision.

A second round of interviews was conducted to accomplish step two and to validate the identified core values. A random selection of work sites was conducted in the same manner as was done for the round one interviews. A set of interview questions was prepared to explore organizational factors that facilitate existence continuance of the life-giving-forces or core values. In other words, what are those

factors in the organization that sustain and nourish each of the identified life-giving-forces or core values? The organizational factors that were focused on were leadership, decision-making, resources, organizational practices, communications, organizational structure, and incentives. An attempt was made to minimize interviewing members who participated in the first interview. Since this interview process is more time intensive (approximately 30 to 45 minutes per interview) and the available time for both facilitators and respondents was limited, the sample size was set at 30 Fire Department members. The interview questionnaire was prepared and pilot tested with one graduate student to identify grammatical errors and ambiguous wording (see Appendix C for the second round interview questionnaire).

The second interview session was also facilitated with graduate students. The presentation to explain the appreciative inquiry process was made and the group was presented with the core value findings. The group was asked if they agreed with the core values that surfaced from the stories generated in the round one interview and if they believed that any core values were missing. The responses were then recorded. The groups were then paired off to interview each other and report back to the work site group in the same manner that was performed in the first interview. The graduate student facilitating the interview recorded the qualitative data.

The qualitative data was once again consolidated and compiled into thematic phrases to identify patterns or trends as step three of the project. A matrix was prepared to organize the response themes into cells to correspond with the particular life-giving-force and organizational factor (see appendix D). Because of the significant size of the matrix, the matrix is presented in the appendix section in single columns.

The columns of the matrix would be labeled with the life-giving-forces or core values and the rows were labeled with the organizational factors. The author and one graduate student rated the responses to target an inter-rater reliability factor of at least 85% of the cases. Cases that could not be agreed on after conferring with each other were eliminated from further analysis.

The fourth step involved preparing possibility propositions. A possibility proposition is a statement that bridges the best of 'what is' with one's own image of anticipation of 'what might be'. It is challenging to the extent to which it stretches the realm of the status quo and helps suggest real possibilities that represent potentials for the organization. A possibility proposition builds on the life-giving-forces and heightens our attention to them, thereby releasing energy to make visions a reality. Three elements interact in creating a possibility proposition. Those elements include the continuance of the "best of what is", a transition capability for change, and novelty of something that "can be". (Hammond, 1996, pp. 39-43) If a proposed proposition lacks one of the elements it will be discounted. For example, a proposition that is novel and is a continuance of the "best of what is" but lacks transition capability will not be feasible to implement.

One Fire Department member from each rank level (n=6) was convened with the author as a focus group to finalize the possibility propositions. The author prepared one round of possibility propositions prior to the focus group meeting to have a foundation on which to build from due to time limitations. Input was also provided from each of the graduate students who facilitated interviews. The focus group was provided the following instructions; 1) Locate peak examples of participation, "the best of what is". In

order to meet the continuance element each possibility propositions must be drawn from the qualitative data from the second interviews. 2) Analyze/interpret how and what kind of organizational practices positively increase or support participation. 3) Extrapolate from the “best of what is” to envision “what might be”. Challenge the status quo by expanding the realm of the possible. Be imaginative and inspiring. Let your creativity envision a collectively desirable future for the Fire Department. 4) Construct a proposition of what is possible and state the proposition in affirmative language, as if the proposition were already true and happening fully in current reality keeping the novelty-transition-continuance model in mind.

The focus group performed an exercise to select their top 10 possibility propositions from the full list of propositions. Each focus group member then rated each of the top 10 possibility propositions on a scale from 1-5 to measure how important they believed the proposition was to pursue on a priority basis. One represented the least important and 5 represented most important. The rater was instructed to use each rating number only twice to have an even distribution of 1 through 5 ratings. The ratings were then totaled. The highest rating represented the highest priority. This rating was designed to narrow the possibility propositions to a challenging yet attainable number for the Fire Department to pursue as the top priorities. The focus group was asked to indicate if they believed the final ratings were justified.

### **Limitations**

The appreciative inquiry methodology is continuing to develop from an early stage as an organizational development intervention. Researchers such as Cooperrider have resisted creating a manual or explicit steps to conduct an appreciative inquiry

because of their concerns about creating a technique that would become nothing more than a “fad of the month” (Hammond, 1996, p. 4). It is also apparent that the methodology is evolving. The relatively recent introduction of the theory relating to the concept of appreciative inquiry as a method of organizational intervention along with the inexperience of the author in applying the methodology resulted in a research study with lessons learned. Those lessons could have resulted in a more effective research project if those lessons were known in advance.

Although there is not necessarily a detailed outline of steps to follow to conduct an appreciative inquiry analysis, there is fortunately a fairly well accepted set of parameters for distinguishing what is and what is not a legitimate appreciative inquiry. In order to conduct the study the author had to insert judgement into the specific actions that needed to be performed to accomplish several steps of the process based on either obstacles or unanticipated reactions of respondents that were not addressed in the literature. For, example, respondents from the first group selected expressed through their officer that they were not comfortable in answering questions in the presence of the author who is a senior manager of the Fire Department.

Because of the comments made by these participants that were interpreted as indicators for confidentiality, the author solicited the help of four graduate students from George Mason University to assist in the facilitation of interviews. The pace of the study was also impacted by inexperience due to the higher than expected time intensity in collecting and interpreting the data. The use of voluntary external facilitators required the scheduling of interviews around the availability of both the randomly selected participants and the facilitators resulting in substantial delays. The use of voluntary



facilitators also limited control of the project by the author. The facilitators exercised some minor degree of autonomy in conducting the interview sessions that may have caused some inconsistency in the application of the methodology. There is no evidence however, that the research was flawed in any way.

The interview respondents were so accustomed to deficit oriented problem solving and decision making that some had difficulty staying focused on providing responses that would give an appreciative perspective of their experiences and observations within the Fire Department. Two of the facilitator reported that several respondents “vented” to them about problems they perceived or directly observed within the department. After these members had an opportunity to express themselves the facilitators reinforced the purpose of the methodology to refocus the group to surface the best of what is within the Fire Department. Less than 3% of the data collected involved negative or organizational deficit comments. Since the literature gave no indication of how to react to this situation, those data were not rejected. However, they did not add any substantive meaning for interpretation.

The heavy workload of Fire Department members created a limitation on the ability to collect data through the interview process for three primary reasons. First, some members were restricted from participating either by themselves or their supervisor because they had no discretionary time in their schedule. Second, other members could not allocate enough time to complete interviews because of scheduling conflicts that could not be resolved, resulting in incomplete interviews. Finally, members who were in service on tactical units were frequently dispatched to respond to emergencies during the interview creating unavoidable disruptions that affected

continuity of the interview. The limitation on Fire Department members' time to participate in the interview process negatively impacted the volume and in some cases the quality of data when compared with what could have been expected without time limits.

The members with no discretionary time may have been able to provide a perspective that was not provided by the respondents who did participate in the interview. Respondents located at stations in high-density areas were disrupted more frequently than respondents in low-density areas and consequently had less complete responses. The groups assigned to high-density regions may have had differing perspectives than those in the low-density areas because of the environmental condition in which they work.

### **Definitions**

**Appreciative inquiry:** an action research organizational development methodology that looks for what works in an organization to prepare a series of statements that describes where the organization wants to be, based on the high moments of where it has been. The methodology assumes that because the statements are grounded in real experience and history, people know how to repeat their success. (Hammond, 1996, p.7)

**Double-loop learning:** an ability to exceed detecting and correcting error in relationship to a given set of operating norms by questioning whether the operating norms are appropriate (Morgan, 1997, p. 87).

**Heliotropic hypothesis:** a hypothesis offered by Dr. David Cooperrider that social forms evolve toward images that are affirming or life giving.

**Learning organization:** a process where individuals working within an organization observe the effects of their actions, recognize the problems that remain unsolved and the new problems that may be created, and adapt and change to solve those problems (Hedberg, 1981; Senge, 1994).

**Life-giving-forces:** the unique structure and processes of an organization that make its very existence possible. They may be ideas, beliefs, or values around which the organization activity occurs. Appreciative inquiry practitioners use the term interchangeably with core values.

**Organizational culture:** the perspectives, values, beliefs, myths, and behavior patterns commonly held within an organization.

**Possibility propositions:** statements conducted in the fourth step of the appreciative inquiry process that describes where the organization can be based on the high moments of where it has been. The statements are prepared in the present tense to facilitate the benefit of positive imagery. (Hammond, 1996, p. 44, Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1990, p. 5)

**Single-loop learning:** an ability to detect and correct error in relationship to a given set of operating norms (Morgan, 1997, p.87)

## RESULTS

The research provides a basis to conclude that the Fire Department can pursue new approaches to learning that can build upon a foundation of its current best practices.

The results of this research are presented to respond to the four research questions.

1. How can the Fire Department improve its capacity to learn?

The Fire Department should develop the capacity to learn through the leadership's commitment to embed organizational learning and systems thinking strategies to react effectively to changing environmental conditions. The efforts taken to develop new members and newly promoted officers have followed a single-loop learning model. The Fire Department needs to develop the capacity to fundamentally question the appropriateness of its current practices in light of the challenging conditions it is now facing. The use of the double-loop learning model will provide a means for the Fire Department to learn how to learn. The Fire Department will need to establish the capacity to sense, monitor, and scan significant aspects of the environment, be able to relate this information to the operating norms that guide members, and be able to detect both deviations from the norm and opportunities for improvement.

A systems thinking approach by both individuals and teams within the organization would facilitate adapting to doing more with less, to the extent that is possible. This can be achieved if a balance can be struck between reflecting, identifying shared meaning, joint planning/deciding, and doing. Appropriate time spent on reflection, for example, can save disproportionately greater amount of time implementing by avoiding the need to have to redesign in mid-action or avoid having to change post implementation because of a demand from someone else that should have been anticipated. This follows the concept of learning faster by moving slower.

Team learning draws on the skills for building shared understanding in order for people to move toward achieving a common purpose in a collaborative or synergistic manner. Team learning also builds on the skills of shared vision, and on systems thinking as a mechanism for surfacing how one sees the world. Improved conversation

through techniques such as dialogue and skillful discussion are the primary medium that management teams build all of these capabilities. During dialogue, people learn how to think together, thus moving people into coordinated action together.

Personal mastery is necessary because an organization can only develop along with its members. Learning needs to be sparked by people's own interest and curiosity. Leadership can only set up conditions that encourage and support members who want to learn. If learning can be related to the member's own vision, then that member will more likely do whatever he or she can to keep learning alive.

## 2. What are the core values of the Fire Department?

A total of 381 responses to the eight questions posed to a sample of members (n=70) in the first round of interviews were evaluated. These responses were categorized into thirteen separate core values or life-giving-forces (LGFs). LGF and core value are synonymous terms within the appreciative inquiry methodology.

The most prominent LGF theme that emerged related to professional growth and development (n=117) that was imbedded in 30.7% of all responses. The next highest LGF theme was for service (n=97) that emerged from 25.5% of the responses. Specialization (n=14) represented 3.7% of responses. Recognition (n=21) and achievement (n=29) themes represented 5.5% and 7.6% of responses respectively. Teamwork (n=23) and collegiality (n=21) themes represented 6% and 5.5% of the responses respectively. The quality of life (n=32) theme had 8.4% of the responses. Diversity (n=3), change (n=7), economy (n=8), integrity (n=3) and commitment (n=6) related to a total of 7.1% of the responses. The total distribution of value themes that emerged from the interview data are summarized in Table1.

Table 1

The Distribution of Value Themes that Emerged from Interview Data

<u>Life-Giving-Force</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Growth & Development	117	30.7%
Service	97	25.5%
Recognition	21	5.5%
Achievement	29	7.6%
Teamwork	23	6.0%
Quality of Life	32	8.4%
Integrity	3	0.8%
Diversity	3	0.8%
Change	7	1.8%
Collegiality	21	5.5%
Economy	8	2.1%
Specialization	14	3.7%
Commitment	<u>6</u>	<u>1.6%</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Upon further analysis, the recognition and the achievement LGFs were combined into a single LGF (recognition and achievement). Teamwork and collegiality LGFs were combined into teamwork. And specialization and service LGFs were combined into Service. As a result, the five LGFs used in this analysis comprise 91.6% of the total responses. Table 2 summarizes the five life-giving-forces or core values of the Fire Department.

Table 2

The Response Distribution of the Five Fire Department Life-Giving-Forces

<u>Life-Giving-Force</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Growth & Development	117	30.7%
Service	111	29.2%
Recognition & Achievement	50	13.1%
Teamwork	44	11.5%
Quality of Life	<u>27</u>	<u>7.1%</u>
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>349</b>	<b>91.6%</b>

There was a natural break between the fifth highest value response (quality of life) accounting for 8.4% of the responses and the next highest value (economy) with 2.1% of the responses. Therefore, the 5 core values were selected based on the core values or LGFs above the natural break. The five core values for the Fire Department are therefore, growth and development, service, recognition and achievement, teamwork, and quality of life.

Respondents were asked during the second round interviews if the five core values identified reflected what they believed were the Fire Department's core values and if any core values were missing. All respondents (n=30) believed growth and development, service, and teamwork were core values. Twenty-nine respondents believed quality of life was a core value. Twenty-eight respondents believed recognition and achievement was a core value. Two respondents added that a missing core value was mutual trust. Others argued that teamwork is an extension of trust so it did not

need to be stated as a separate core value. The consensus of the validation process was that the five core values represented the Fire Department's organizational values.

### 3. What are the best examples of what is currently occurring in the Fire Department?

The strengths of the Fire Department were expressed as "the best of what is" during the second set of interviews that included a sample set of 30 members. The results are derived from the thematic analysis of the appreciative inquiry study second round interviews. The following table identifies the top nine data element themes from "the best of what is" for the Fire Department.

Table 3

#### Highest Rated Examples of the Best of What is Occurring in the Fire Department

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Data Element of the Best of What is in the Fire Department</b>	<b>Core Value</b>	<b>Organizational Factor</b>	<b>Correlation Factor</b>
<b>1*</b>	Team member of the month, county, other awards, etc.	Recognition & Achievement	Organizational Practices	12
<b>2</b>	Recognition & Achievement are implicit motivators by peers, mgmt, and self to do better for the organization.	Recognition & Achievement	Leadership	11
<b>T-3**</b>	Service excellence is provided via teams.	Teamwork	Organizational Practices	10
<b>T-3</b>	We provide service to the best of our ability.	Service	Leadership	10
<b>T-3</b>	Excellent training & education provided by Department	Growth & Development	Organizational Practices	10
<b>6</b>	Provide prevention (smoke detectors) & self-help to the community.	Service	Organizational Practices	9
<b>7**</b>	Organized into teams whose members cover each other.	Teamwork	Organizational Structure	7
<b>T-8*</b>	Receiving customer feedback provides great satisfaction.	Recognition & Achievement	Communication	6
<b>T-8</b>	We maintain balance between family and work.	Quality of Life	Communication	6



The asterisked elements in the table show a high relationship to each other. For example, (\*) customer feedback, while it is an intrinsic reward, could not be overlooked because it was discovered during the interviews that such feedback is a highly valued recognition by Fire Department members. Team relationships (\*\*) and service provided by teams, also, had the same kind of high correlation. The “T” designation in the rank column indicates a tie for the ranking with another data element. See Appendix D for the complete data correlation matrix derived from the thematic analysis that provides the ninety-three examples of “the best of what is” occurring in the Fire Department. Each column of the data correlation matrix is presented separately in the appendix to facilitate the presentation in a limited space.

The best of what is occurring in the Fire Department includes the following: 1) recognition initiatives such as team member of the month awards (n=12), 2) the intrinsic motivation to do better that stems from being recognized for good work by peers and management (n=11), 3) the service excellence that is derived from teams, 4) members who provide service to the best of their ability (n=10). 5) the Fire Department provides excellent training and educational opportunities (n=10). 6) the prevention and self-help programs provided by the Fire Department to the community (n=9). 7) team members cover each other (n=7), 8) high levels of satisfaction is gained from receiving feedback from customers who have been served (n=6), and 9) a healthy balance is maintained between work and family (n=6).

4. What are the possibilities for improving upon what is currently occurring in the Fire Department?

The following are the top 10 possibility propositions selected from the focus group to improve upon the best of the Fire Department with the scoring rating for each;

1. Compensation and benefits remain competitive with the Northern Virginia fire departments (rating score was 27). The focus group derived this statement from the “salary opportunities” theme. This expands on the growth and development and quality of life core values.
2. The work week schedule is changed to be more conducive to employee satisfaction (rating score was 25). The focus group derived this statement from the “maintenance of balance between family and work” theme. This expands on the quality of life core value.
3. Members feel safer because staffing of emergency response tactical units have been increased (rating score was 20). The focus group derived this proposition statement from the “organized into teams whose members cover each other” theme. It expands on the teamwork core value.
4. An elite team is organized to respond to other jurisdictions to provide disaster assistance (rating score was 18). The focus group derived this proposition statement from the “service excellence is provided via teams” theme. It expands on the service core value.
5. Proficiency pay is offered for a range of advanced certifications and college degrees (rating score was 18). The focus group derived this proposition statement from the “excellent training and education provided by the Department” theme. It expands on the growth and development core value.

6. Fire Department leadership arranges for several colleges and universities to offer classes in Fire Department facilities that are conveniently scheduled around members' work schedule (rating score was 15). The focus group derived this proposition statement from the "excellent training and education provided by the Department" theme. It expands on the growth and development core value.
7. College tuition is provided to members as an advance rather than through reimbursement (rating score was 12). The focus group derived this proposition statement from the "excellent training and education provided by the Department" theme. It expands on the growth and development as a core value.
8. Teams are kept together for as long as possible since only a minimal number of transfers are made (rating score was 6). The focus group derived this proposition statement from the "service excellence is provided via teams" theme. It expands on the teamwork core value.
9. Each member is trained for advanced responsibility prior to formal advancement in the Fire Department (rating score was 5). The focus group derived this proposition statement from the "recognition and achievement are implicit motivators by peers, management, and self to do better for the organization" theme. It is further supported by the "excellent training and education provided by the Department" theme as well. This proposition expands on the teamwork and growth and development core values.
10. An optimal number of Fire Department technicians are trained to the paramedic level to maintain continuous staffing for Advanced Life Support care for existing and future programs (rating score was 5). The focus group derived this

proposition statement from “the EMS career path” theme. This expands on both the service and growth and development core values.

The highest possible rating was 30. The possibilities are stated in the present tense as specified by the appreciative inquiry methodology to capture the concept of positive imagery. See appendix E for the complete accounting of eighty possibility propositions that surfaced from the appreciative inquiry study.

## **DISCUSSION**

Those who created action research in the 1950s were concerned with providing a research method that would lead to practical results as well as to the development of new social theory. A goal of this project was to use this research as an important tool to initiate social change within the Fire Department.

Despite the rigor of this research project any attempt to carry forward with action steps to move the Fire Department to follow a learning organization model of management should be carefully considered. Any commitment to move forward will require long-term effort with the leadership of the Fire Department setting the example for the members to follow. A new form of openness and empowerment would be necessary beyond any form of openness and empowerment that has been considered previously. The leadership style necessary to function in a learning organization may require an entirely new paradigm of thought for some Fire Department officers.

The commitment to put forward considerable effort must also come from the front-line members as well. Each member must be able to adapt to the continuous gentle pressure that a learning organization places on its membership. Rather than

express dissatisfaction with workloads and other unfavorable organizational conditions, the members will need to not only be skilled in with the concepts and practices of organizational development, but also to be willing to innovate to seek solutions and to accept change. Members also need to develop the skills to more consistently view the Fire Department from an appreciative perspective.

At least one respondent from each interview session made some comment about yet another Fire Department study involving surveys and interviews. Although there was not one refusal by a Fire Department member to participate in the project the comments were indicators of members of an organization who were becoming leery of studies, and research projects whose results do not meet their expectations or are not implemented. Failure of this research project to produce valid and concrete recommendations that can successfully be implemented can adversely impact the ability of others to conduct future research studies that requires involvement by the Fire Department's members within at least the near term.

Somewhat of a paradox surfaced with this research project between the applied research guidelines specified by the Executive Fire Officer Program and the Appreciative Inquiry methodology. The applied research guidelines focus the researcher on deficit oriented problem solving that is both necessary and justified in developing a student's research experience. In contrast, appreciative inquiry is not designed to identify and fix problems but rather affirm the organization and build upon the life-giving-forces and the best of what is occurring in the organization. This applied research study provided a unique opportunity to perform a project in which the pendulum is balanced between an appreciative analysis and a problem solving analysis

of an organization rather than having the analysis pendulum swung to one extreme or the other.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendations are made based on the findings of this research paper include the following:

1. The Fire Department should take steps to facilitate the adoption of the organizational learning model that promote systems thinking, personal mastery, building shared organizational vision, and team learning. These steps should include organizational development interventions such as the use of dialogue, creating a comfort level by members to take the necessary time to reflect and plan, and developing the capacity and interest within its members to practice double-loop learning.
2. The Fire Department should seek the assistance of trained facilitators, who are familiar with organizational development interventions, to help with the transition to a learning organization.
3. The Fire Department management should demonstrate a continuous commitment to the organizational learning model in order for the members to conclude that the transition is a sustainable one as opposed to being considered a passing fad.
4. The Fire Department should replace the existing stated organizational values with the five core values identified and validated through this research project.
5. The Fire Department should conduct a consensual validation of the possibility propositions through a survey to all its members. The survey should ask the members to rate how much of an ideal the proposition is, how much it may already be present in the Fire Department, and how soon members would want the

proposition to happen. The results will provide a prioritization from the members' perspective that Fire Department management can consider for implementation.

6. An implementation team or teams should be formed to implement the highest priority propositions the Fire Department has selected to be pursued.

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## APPENDIX A

## Appreciative Inquiry Questions

- 1) What has been the most personally rewarding learning experience you have had since becoming a member of the Department of Fire and Rescue?

Follow-up questions;

- a) What made this a quality learning experience for you?
  - b) How has this positive learning experience contributed to the success of the Department?
- 2) Describe an event involving customer service that really made you feel appreciated, valued and that also made you feel proud to be a member of the Department of Fire and Rescue.
  - 3) Think of a few recent examples of when you have been really challenged to meet a deadline or goal that you were successfully able to meet. Describe the one event that you believe had the most significant effect on you and contributed to the Department or your customers.
  - 4) What is your vision of the future of the Department? What would you like to contribute to make that vision become a reality?
  - 5) Think of an example of an emergency incident (or customer service contact (this is for civilian Department members)) that really energized you to want to learn more about a particular process or subject.  
Follow-up questions;
    - a) What did you do to learn more about this subject?
    - b) What did you learn about yourself from this experience?

APPENDIX B



# *Appreciative Inquiry*

*Applied Research Project for the  
Prince William County  
Department of Fire and Rescue*

# *Vocabularies Color Our Outlook*

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- *Job Dissatisfaction*
- *Neurotic Organization*
- *Role Conflict*
- *Low Morale*
- *Stress & alienation*
- *Executive burnout*
- *Inter-group conflict*
- *Depressed*
- *Mid-Life Crisis*
- *Low Self-esteem*
- *Dysfunctional*
- *Dependency*
- *X syndrome*
- *Obsessive-compulsive*
- *Paranoid/suspicious*

# *Different Approaches*

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## ■ *Problem solving*

- *Identification of problem -- Felt Need*
- *Analysis of causes*
- *Analysis of possible solutions*
- *Action Planning -- Treatment*

## ■ *Appreciative Inquiry*

- *Appreciating -- valuing what is*
- *Envisioning what might be*
- *Dialoguing what should be*
- *Innovating/Realizing what will be*



# *Basic Assumptions*

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■ *Problem solving*

*Organizations as  
problems to be  
solved*

■ *Appreciative Inquiry*

*Organizations as  
mysteries to be  
embraced*

# *Steps in Appreciative Inquiry*

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- *Defining Affirmative Topic*
- *Discovering Core Values / Energizing Properties*
- *Visioning the Ideal*
- *Consensus through Dialogue*
- *Constructing the Preferred Future*

## *Sharing Positive Stories*

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- *Think of your most recent experience as a manager (or in any other role) when you felt very proud of yourself -- or an experience when you felt most valued, alive, excited or appreciated.*
- *What did you do?*
- *What made it a high point?*
- *What values are inherent in the experience?*

## *Interview questions-contd.*

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*What are your images for the future of the department? What would you like to contribute to make that happen?*

*Next steps:*

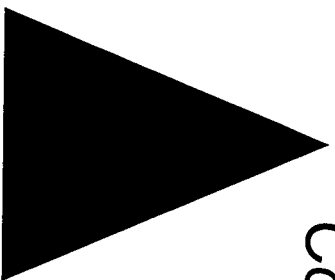
- *After you have identified the core values/themes we will figure out what needs to happen in our department to enhance and integrate the core values/energizing forces*

# *The Challenge*

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- *It is the artful blend of continuity, novelty, and transition that uniquely shapes every successful organization*

*Continuity*

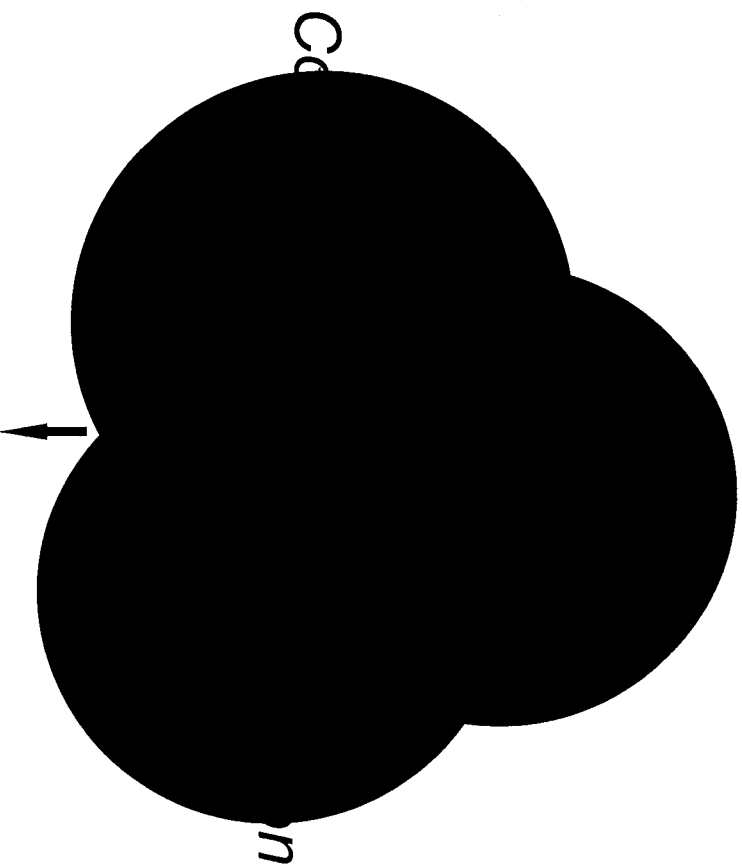


*Transition*

*Novelty*

# *Model for Anticipatory Reality Statements*

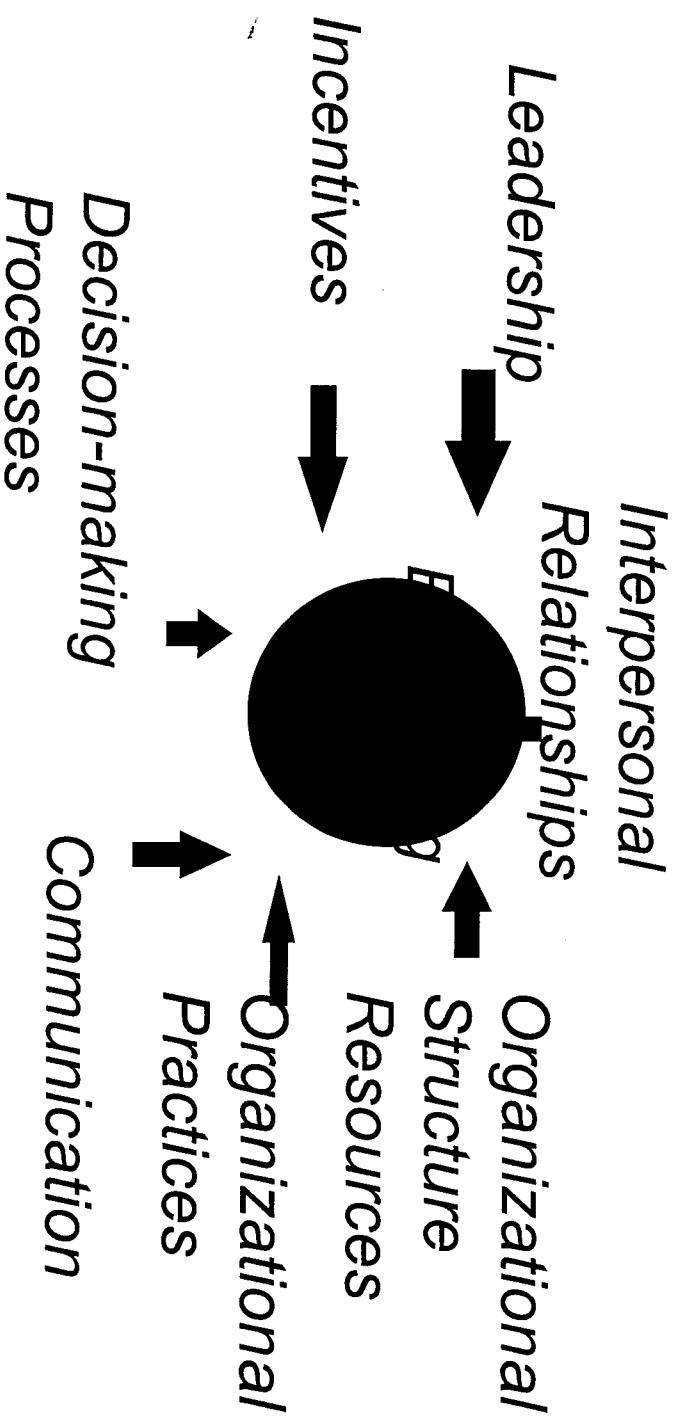
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*Provocative or possibility Propositions*

# *Relationship of Energizing Forces to the Organization*

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# *Writing Possibility Proposition Statements*

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## *Criteria*

- *Write it as if it has already happened. Use present tense*
- *Be specific. State the activity, skill, or practice you propose to create the new reality*
- *Examine how you feel about living in the new vision and reality*
- *Keep the Novelty-Transition-Continuance model in mind*



APPENDIX C

## APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (2<sup>ND</sup> ROUND)

1. Introduction
  - a. Explain the purpose of the interview. Assure confidentiality of responses.
  - b. Establish rapport. Make sure the interviewee feels comfortable and easy with the interview. Emphasize the fact that there are no right or wrong answers.
  
2. Priming/ context setting questions
  - a. Tell me something about what attracted you to this organization?
  - b. How did you start out?
  - c. What were your initial excitements and impressions?
  
3. Core values/LGFs identified in the 1<sup>st</sup> round and their definitions.

### Growth & Development

- Personal & Professional
- Learning
- On the job training
- Classroom

### Service

- Community
- Peers
- Educating/Mentoring

### Recognition & Achievement

- Community
- Management, promotions & awards
- Peers

### Teamwork

- Collegiality
- Sense of Community
- Within station or department
- Trust
- Honesty

### Quality of Life

- Family/Work Integration
- Physical and Mental Fitness/Health
- Employee Satisfaction
- Within the Station

4. Questions

To validate and expand on the core values listed above and to ascertain the organizational factors impacting the values (*leadership, resources, incentives, organizational practices, decision making, communication, and organizational structure*), we asked the following questions for each of those values:

- a. Several people in your organization have identified (*core value*) as a core value. Can you tell me something more about it?
- b. Can you describe two incidents where you found identified (*core value*) at its best? Or, When have you experienced a significant level of identified (*core value*) in this organization?
- c. What are the factors or conditions that facilitate the existence of identified (*core value*) here?

APPENDIX D

**CORE VALUE/ORGANIZATIONAL FACTOR DATA CORRELATION  
MATRIX**

(Matrix is presented by column by column)

<b>Growth &amp; Development.</b>	
<b>Leadership</b>	Officers encouraging college & training (n=3) Self-motivation to achieve excellence (n=3) Leadership modeling (n=1)
<b>Resources</b>	Job opportunities (n=8) Opportunities for promotion (n=4) Time constraints for training (n=1)
<b>Incentives</b>	Salary opportunities (n=3) Assignments which promote excellence and responsibilities (n=2) Funding for college (n=2)
<b>Organizational Practices</b>	Training & education (n=10) Availability of training information (n=3) Proficiency in specialized areas (n=2) Time availability for learning (n=2) Growth through community service (n=1) Recruit school (n=1) Progressive & aggressive dept. (n=1) Empower to developing training curriculum (n=1)
<b>Decision Making</b>	Station captain flexibility to make assignments and schedules to accommodate training. (n=1)
<b>Communication</b>	Member input into assignments (n=1) Increased awareness of entire organization through training (n=1) Notification of opportunities (n=1)
<b>Organizational Structure</b>	EMS career path (n=1) Well disciplined, structural style (n=1)

<b>Service</b>	
<b>Leadership</b>	<p>Provide service to the best of own ability (n=10)</p> <p>Help patients or customers with social services and other needs.(n=1)</p> <p>Coordination of multiple resources at point of need. (n=1)</p> <p>People (members) recognized as their own most important resource. (n=1)</p> <p>Decentralized to be customer focused. (n=1)</p>
<b>Resources</b>	<p>Grants for smoke detector installations and public/private partnerships. (n=3)</p> <p>Satisfied customers lead to increased resources. (n=1)</p> <p>Funding and staffing needed to provide services. (n=1)</p>
<b>Incentives</b>	<p>Organizational pride for a vital service. (n=1)</p> <p>Emergency service &amp; support of ES provides implicit motivation. (n=1)</p> <p>Recognition from community &amp; peers for service. (n=1)</p>
<b>Organizational Practices</b>	<p>Provide prevention (smoke detectors) &amp; self-help education to the community. (n=9)</p> <p>Every citizen gets the same high-quality service. (n=3)</p> <p>Customers recognized internally and externally. (n=2)</p> <p>Provide high caliber specialized service. (n=2)</p> <p>Continuous training (life-long learning). (n=1)</p>
<b>Decision Making</b>	<p>Empowerment to make decisions to help people at point of need. (n=3)</p> <p>Low threshold for error. (n=1)</p> <p>Ability to identify new service needs (e.g., help programs for the elderly). (n=1)</p>

<b>Communications</b>	Continuous communication emphasis by leadership on customer. (n=2) Letters of appreciation for service delivery. (n=1) High citizen expectations. (n=1)
<b>Organizational Structure</b>	Training arrangements for partnerships. (n=1)

<b>Recognition &amp; Achievement</b>	
<b>Leadership</b>	<p>Recognition and achievement are implicit motivators by peers, management, and self to do better for the organization. (n=11)</p> <p>Customer feedback provides satisfaction. (n=6)</p> <p>Recognition by leaders for important thing such as physical fitness, public education &amp; specialty services. (n=3)</p>
<b>Resources</b>	Specialty background can drive transfer for good of the service. (n=1)
<b>Incentives</b>	Proficiency pay for obtaining ALS certification. (n=1)
<b>Organizational Practices</b>	<p>Team member of the month, county, other awards, etc. (n=12)</p> <p>Awards and ceremonies are implicit motivators for the members to want to do more for the department. (n=1)</p> <p>Mentor and teach (n=1)</p> <p>Recognition from volunteers for career staff help on projects. (n=1)</p>
<b>Decision Making</b>	<p>Abilities are linked to specialized job the members want to do. (n=1)</p> <p>Specialty team sent out of county to help disaster victims. (n=1)</p>
<b>Communications</b>	<p>Customer feedback provides satisfaction. (n=6)</p> <p>Use of letters, commendations, and verbal communication for job well done. (n=1)</p> <p>Equal opportunity for special assignments. (n=1)</p>
<b>Organizational Structure</b>	Opportunity for training stemming from past performance. (n=1)



<b>Teamwork</b>	
<b>Leadership</b>	<p>Peers pushing peers to excel. (n=6)</p> <p>High level of coordination and integration among members of the team for complex service. (n=6)</p> <p>Work with others in a collegial manner. (n=1)</p>
<b>Resources</b>	<p>Creating synergy through teams. (n=4)</p> <p>Rely on each other for resources (e.g., staffing relief for special duties). (n=1)</p>
<b>Incentives</b>	<p>Keep members safe. (n=3)</p> <p>Recognition for team performance. (n=1)</p>
<b>Organizational Practices</b>	<p>Service provided through teams. (n=10)</p> <p>Cross-training. (n=1)</p>
<b>Decision Making</b>	<p>Each member has decision-making responsibility. (n=1)</p>
<b>Communications</b>	<p>Trust developed between crews. (n=5)</p> <p>Communication mechanism to accomplish objectives. (n=4)</p>
<b>Organizational Structure</b>	<p>Organized into teams whose members cover each other. (n=7)</p>

<b>Quality Of Life</b>	
<b>Leadership</b>	<p>Self-improvement leads to quality of life. (n=4)</p> <p>Leadership recognizes needs for QOL. (n=2)</p> <p>Officer loyalty and support of their crew. (n=2)</p>
<b>Resources</b>	<p>Ability to perform physical conditioning. (n=5)</p> <p>Ability to take leave. (n=4)</p> <p>Quality of good work facilities. (n=1)</p>
<b>Incentives</b>	<p>Need for adequate compensation. (n=3)</p> <p>Satisfaction is obtained by helping people. (n=3)</p>
<b>Organizational Practices</b>	<p>Employee Assistance Program (n=2)</p> <p>Reduction of workweek. (n=1)</p> <p>Transfer policy offers members a choice. (n=1)</p>
<b>Decision Making</b>	<p>Department is fixing quality of life problems that are within its control. (n=1)</p>
<b>Communications</b>	<p>Family support is number 1 priority and communicated and demonstrated throughout the department. Balance between family and work. (n=6)</p> <p>Encourages open communications in a safe team environment. (n=1)</p> <p>Working within the community (n=1)</p> <p>People (community) don't understand demands of the job. (n=1)</p>
<b>Organizational Structure</b>	<p>Work environment is highly demanding. (n=1)</p> <p>24-hour shift is more conducive to quality of life. (n=1)</p> <p>Continuity of team. (n=1)</p> <p>Fosters a foundation for friendships and camaraderie. (n=1)</p>

## APPENDIX E

**Growth and Development Possibility Propositions**

<p><b>Organizational Structure</b></p>	<p>The Department is organized so that decision-making authority is pushed as far down the chain of command as possible with new members mentored to be decision-makers.</p> <p>The addition of a journeyman grade broadens the organizational structure for members who have achieved a level of expertise within their job responsibilities and who have a responsibility to mentor less experienced members.</p>
<p><b>Decision making</b></p>	<p>All members are trained to be proficient problem solvers and decision-makers and are given authority to make decisions at the point of customer contact or need.</p>
<p><b>Leadership</b></p>	<p>Department officers and managers encourage their employees to obtain college degrees and attend knowledge and skills training. As an example, supervisors fill in for their employees to allow the employee to attend classes they might otherwise not be able to attend due to scheduling conflicts.</p> <p>Employees at all levels are self-motivated to achieve excellence. As an example, employees compete with one another for weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual awards, including time-off, on-the-spot bonuses, and certificates of recognition.</p> <p>Department leadership arranges for several colleges and universities to offer classes in Department facilities that are conveniently scheduled around members work schedules.</p>
<p><b>Communication</b></p>	<p>Members discuss their annual professional development plans (with semi-annual review) with their supervisor and follow through with a written plan that outlines growth and development goals.</p> <p>Members learn to hold skillful discussions during team meetings to analyze their performance in an appreciative manner to continue to build on what they are doing best.</p>
<p><b>Incentives</b></p>	<p>Sufficient opportunities for salary progression exist throughout the organization. Compensation is set based on an employee's skill and abilities. Examples include the establishment of a broad pay band system that allows for both automatic step increases as well as for discretionary step increases based on superior performance. Resources are set aside each fiscal year to sufficiently fund the salary progression program and to stay competitive with the Northern Virginia fire and rescue departments.</p> <p>College tuition is provided to members as an advance rather than reimbursement.</p>

<b>Resources</b>	<p>Employees of the Department are drawn to, and remain with, the Department due to a wide range of job and promotion opportunities. These opportunities allow the employees to excel at their craft, while also experiencing new challenges in other fields. As an example, members assigned to slow units are given bi-annual opportunities to rotate assignments to heighten and broaden their own, and the Department's, experience and skill abilities.</p>
<b>Organizational Practices</b>	<p>Training and continuing education is encouraged by the organization, and is required for maintaining high levels of performance. Examples include completing a minimum number of credit hours on the job over a 24-month period to further develop skills and to stay abreast of advancements in technology and techniques.</p> <p>Employees actively participate in the development and implementation of their own training plans. As an example, employees meet annually with their supervisor (one-on-one) to develop an agreed-upon training plan for the year. Employees then meet quarterly as a group to review upcoming training options, ascertain whether the course fits within their plan, and fill-in for others who may miss work due to their training schedule. No longer is advanced training a "benefit," but rather it is a requirement, one in which the entire department assists each other in obtaining and completing.</p> <p>An optimal number of Technician II's are trained to the paramedic level to maintain continuous staffing for Advanced Life Support care for existing and future programs.</p>

**Service Possibility Propositions**

<b>Organizational Structure</b>	<p>Special project task groups are organized into matrix structures. This will ensure the development of appropriate expertise in finding and implementing the solution and to avoid splitting up established service delivery teams.</p>
<b>Decision making</b>	<p>Empowerment and decision making pushed to the lowest levels.</p> <p>Decision-making teams begin in a skilled discussion format to facilitate the development of common ground and mutual trust.</p> <p>Every incident and service intervention is reviewed to identify how service can be improved. Tacit knowledge is made explicit, where applicable.</p>
<b>Leadership</b>	<p>Information and state-of-the-art technology systems are placed in the hands of the front-line members.</p> <p>Management provides the capabilities and resources to Department employees to foster the delivery of mission-related services.</p> <p>Members are change agents who create or react to change to adapt responsively to external and internal environmental pressures.</p> <p>Every member as a leader of the Department is dedicated to providing service to the best of their ability and should include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ availing themselves to the leaders in their profession, as much as possible,</li> <li>■ strives to see the global picture and as a leader promotes the best relationship between volunteers and career staff,</li> </ul> <p>Work-along programs allows members to be detailed with members in other parts of the Department and County Government. This program creates a fuller understanding of the range of services provided by County Government and teaches the member how to handle unusual situations without the need to call for others to intervene. Promotes one stop service.</p> <p>Provide more organization to community service programs, eliminating duplication of efforts and overtaxing employees.</p> <p>Experienced Fire and Rescue technicians are now Journeyman grade and are responsible to assure that junior members are prepared for any experience in the line of duty. If junior members are not exposed to experienced members, they must dedicate themselves to their own preparation of every experience they can imagine in the line of duty (e.g. use of collaborative computing with other stations or departments anywhere, as relevant.)</p>

<p><b>Communication</b></p>	<p>Members are trained and encouraged to solve the customer's problem either directly or acting as a liaison referral to cut through bureaucracy.</p> <p>Management emphasis on department employees as customers needing continuous communication. Every station is equipped with networked personal computer workstations, with departmental web-pages and internet access for fire and rescue collaborative computing focused on learning for service improvement.</p> <p>Members seek to reach a level of dialogue in their communications in order to be better able to address contentious issues such as the barrier between fire and EMS. Members understand the value of dialogue to share mental models that cut across the subcultures of the organization.</p> <p>Information and knowledge is shared in a networking fashion intra- and inter-departmentally to provide members with immediate feedback on services they provide, such as response times and other service related information.</p>
<p><b>Incentives</b></p>	<p>Sufficient number of specialized personnel along with programs designed to relieve under-supported services prevents member burnout from high stress jobs. For example, having an ALS engine program will require enough Paramedics to regularly allow existing Paramedics to be rotated from Medic Units, thus reducing ALS provider burnout.</p>
<p><b>Resources</b></p>	<p>Grants for smoke detectors and other equipment for under-served constituencies (e.g. smoke alarms for the hearing-impaired). These needs are determined by department studies.</p> <p>Public/private partnerships support various community self-help education programs (e.g. CD-ROM educational programs).</p> <p>A fire protection engineer is hired to maintain quality and quick turnaround of "plans review."</p>
<p><b>Organizational Practices</b></p>	<p>By providing additional resources (paramedics, medications, equipment, etc), engine companies are able to provide advanced life support care prior to medic unit arriving.</p> <p>New prevention initiatives are targeted to the residential community based on evidence of where fire and injury problems are occurring.</p> <p>Community service is accounted as an integral part of the work, especially with technology integration.</p> <p>Citizens are invited and encouraged to attend public education and PC-based training systems programs at their local station.</p> <p>The department is dedicated to providing high caliber specialized service.</p>

**Recognition and Achievement Possibility Propositions**

<b>Organizational Structure</b>	An elite team is organized to respond to other jurisdictions to provide disaster assistance.
<b>Decision making</b>	Each member has developed a specialty area in order to have a range of expertise for decision making throughout the Department and that can be provided to each region of the County served.
<b>Leadership</b>	Achievements such as fire investigation cases closed, plans reviewed within 7 days meeting quality standards, and administrative support rendered are given recognition by leaders with the same frequency as is given for emergency incidents.
<b>Communication</b>	Members are given consistent and immediate face-to-face feedback from their supervisor regarding the quality of the work they have performed.  An environment exists where the units/stations spend time using affirmative communication to express the value placed by each of the members for one another.
<b>Incentives</b>	Proficiency pay is offered for a range of advanced certifications and college degrees.  The Team-of-the Month Award Program is established.
<b>Resources</b>	
<b>Organizational Practices</b>	When positions become open, Technician I's are fairly and impartially upgraded to Technician II's without the need for a promotional process based on their demonstrated qualifications.



<b>Teamwork Possibility Propositions</b>	
<b>Organizational Structure</b>	Each member is trained for advanced responsibility prior to formal advancement in Department
<b>Decision making</b>	<p>Each member completes the Front-line Leadership course and other problem solving and decision making training to develop decision-making skills.</p> <p>Each team has established a balance between the 4 components of the team learning wheel (public reflection, shared meaning, joint planning, coordinated action) and each member learns faster because they move more slowly for thoughtful rather than reactive decision making.</p>
<b>Leadership</b>	<p>The Department has a formal peer support system designed for each member to help a peer to reach their full potential.</p> <p>Leadership uses organizational development interventions to support an organizational culture that continuously seeks to improve teamwork and achieve high performance levels.</p>
<b>Communication</b>	State-of-the-art communications systems, such as mobile data system and station networking, allow the teams to have the information they need to be more independent in preparing for and reacting to the needs and desires of the customer.
<b>Incentives</b>	<p>The Department trains all members to function as Incident Safety Officer and in injury prevention techniques and hazard recognition.</p> <p>A team of the month award is given to recognize outstanding teamwork.</p>
<b>Resources</b>	<p>A staffing plan that increases staffing levels is justified in part based on the need to minimize detailing of personnel from their team.</p> <p>The Department provides flexibility to employees to trade workdays with each other rather than to exclusively use leave to take off of work.</p>
<b>Organizational Practices</b>	<p>Teams are kept together for as long as possible since only a minimal number of assignment transfers are made.</p> <p>Cross training is extended to administrative functions and Fire Marshal duties such as plans review.</p>

**Quality of Life Possibility Propositions**

<b>Organizational Structure</b>	<p>The work week schedule is changed to be more conducive to employee satisfaction.</p> <p>Adequate staff is on duty to relieve personnel at the 1800 hours shift change to minimize overtime.</p> <p>Provide uniformed ranks and administrative support opportunities for varied shifts (e.g. pilot for civilian administrative support on 4 day/10 hour work shifts, and uniformed office assignments are reduced to a 40-hour work week).</p>
<b>Decision making</b>	<p>Station commanders have discretion for flexible scheduling, awards, recognition, etc.</p> <p>It is clearly communicated for employees to "take ownership of their lives." Primary responsibility for career development, health and work balance is in the employees' hands. Assistance with this decision-making is aided by Career Training Coordinators.</p>
<b>Leadership</b>	<p>Management communicates, and demonstrates through committed action, that it recognizes that family support (balance between family and work) is the top priority. Examples included flexible scheduling, leave incentives, and communication of family-friendly/balance of life policies.</p> <p>Management collects information and provides relevant services to individual employees. Employee needs are assessed through surveys to identify population of needs (e.g. child care, elder care, etc.)</p>
<b>Communication</b>	<p>On a weekly basis, 1-2 hours are scheduled to brief members of any changes involving policies, procedure, or organizational news.</p> <p>The installation of e-mail to all work sites and to each member improves the member's sense of belonging to the Department as they are all now able to stay abreast of what is occurring throughout the Department.</p> <p>A regular section of the community newspaper is dedicated to clearly inform the community about the fire and rescue system and to inform the community of any significant events within Department.</p> <p>There is continuous communication between the volunteer and the career staff for enhanced team operations.</p> <p>Consistent and complete notification of self-improvement, employee assistance program, special assignment opportunities are communicated weekly and posted on a station bulletin board.</p>

<b>Incentives</b>	<p>Compensation and benefits remains competitive with the Northern Virginia fire and rescue departments.</p> <p>Once per week, peer recognition meetings are held within the station.</p> <p>Staff members are recognized weekly for achievement in local publications.</p> <p>Additional staffing is obtained through the budget process to provide improved opportunities for leave, in particular to allow each member to take a two week vacation in the summer and to allow the member to use the leave that was accrued during that year.</p>
<b>Resources</b>	<p>Members feel safer because staffing of emergency response tactical units have been increased.</p> <p>Physical fitness equipment is available at each facility to include offices and scheduled time is provided at least 3 times a week for its use.</p> <p>Passes from local fitness centers or community recreation centers are secured so entire crews can workout together at scheduled times.</p>
<b>Organizational Practices</b>	<p>Time for physical fitness is scheduled for at least three times per week.</p> <p>There is a structured integration of career staff and volunteers through joint exercises and other events so each has a better understanding of the other's role.</p> <p>Create an environment through publicity, posters, exercises, and modeling that employees are a holistic unit and fire-fighting is only a part of the workday.</p>