

**DEVELOPING A SUCCESSION PLAN AT THE CHIEF OFFICER LEVEL FOR THE  
PARKER FIRE DISTRICT.**

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

BY: Robert F. Baker  
Parker Fire Protection District  
Parker, CO

An applied research project submitted to the National Fire Academy  
as part of the Executive Fire Officer Development Program.

October 2005

**CERTIFICATION STATEMENT**

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

## Abstract

The problem was that the Parker Fire District (PFD) didn't have a formal succession plan for division chief and fire chief positions (senior-level chief officers) as required in the agency's *Strategic Plan*. Two of these four positions were expected to be vacated due to planned retirements in less than three years. The purpose of this research was to develop and produce the components for a succession model for senior-level chief officer positions at PFD. Action research was used to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the components used in succession planning models?
2. What are the components being used for succession planning for senior-level chief officer positions by other fire departments who have achieved Accreditation through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI)?
3. What components of a succession plan for senior-level chief officers are already in place at PFD?
4. What components should PFD use to develop and implement a succession plan for senior-level chief officer job positions?

The procedures involved an extensive literature review process to answer questions 1, 2, and 4; and a questionnaire to answer questions 2, 3, and 4.

The results of the research concluded that most CFAI Accredited fire departments, including PFD, have implemented various components of a succession plan for senior-level officer positions. The research also found that these agencies could expand and improve their succession planning models which include designing and managing succession *processes* and developing *people*. The research identified ten basic succession *process* components; as well as four basic *people* components, including career development plans consisting of a great number

of methods for developing the management and leadership potential of individuals in an organization, to prepare them for future challenges and opportunities in strategic roles.

Recommendations included PFD adoption of all ten succession *process* components and four *people* components identified in the research; as well as expanding career development methods within the organization to better prepare individuals and the organization to meet future challenges and opportunities as an accredited, best-in-class fire department.

## Table of Contents

Certification Statement	2
Abstract	3
Table of Contents	5
Introduction	6
Background and Significance	7
Literature Review	11
Procedures	44
Results	50
Discussion	60
Recommendations	74
References	85
Appendix A	92
Appendix B	93
Appendix C	95
Appendix D	99
Appendix E	101
Appendix F	104
Appendix G	107

## Introduction

The problem is that the Parker Fire District (PFD) does not have a formal succession plan for division chief and fire chief positions (senior-level chief officers) as required in the agency's *Strategic Plan*. Two of these four positions are expected to be vacated due to planned retirements in less than three years. The purpose of this research is to develop and produce the components for a succession model for senior-level chief officer positions at PFD. Action research, including an extensive literature review process, was used to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the components used in succession planning models?
2. What are the components being used for succession planning for senior-level chief officer positions by other fire departments who have achieved Accreditation through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI)?
3. What components of a succession plan for senior-level chief officers are already in place at PFD?
4. What components should PFD use to develop and implement a succession plan for senior-level chief officer job positions?

The researcher used the National Fire Academy's (NFA) definition of succession planning for this applied research paper: "an organized and systematic way to ensure that employees in a particular organization are capable, competent, and willing to replace and/or succeed to strategic roles within the organization" (National Fire Academy, 2004, p. 6-3). However, the researcher amended this definition to include "qualified" as a fourth condition. Consequently, the amended definition for succession planning used by the researcher throughout this applied research paper was "an organized and systematic way to ensure that employees in a

particular organization are capable, competent, *qualified*, and willing to replace and/or succeed to strategic roles within the organization.” This revision was necessary to ensure that minimum eligibility requirements for job positions, such as a college degree, were included as a component of the succession planning process. As the researcher quickly discovered, stakeholders often disagreed as to whether certain minimum job requirements were necessarily an indicator of whether promotional candidates were “capable, competent, or willing to replace and/or succeed to strategic roles within the organization” (p. 6-3).

### Background and Significance

The PFD transitioned from an all volunteer fire department to a combination department with the hiring of its first career firefighters and fire chief in 1983 (Parker Fire District, 1984, p. 2). In the 22 years following, PFD has progressed to a career fire department with a staff of 128 employees; including 86 line firefighters, 14 uniformed support staff, and 28 civilian support staff (Parker Fire District, 2006, n.p.). The District’s budget has grown from approximately \$1 million to almost \$30 million (Parker Fire District, 1984, p. 21; Parker Fire District, 2006, n.p.). Moreover, the population served by PFD has increased from approximately 10,000 in 1983 to approximately 90,000 in 2005 resulting in an increase in emergency responses from 652 to more than 5,000 during this same period (Parker Fire District, 1984, p. 17; Parker Fire District, 2006, n.p.). This tremendous growth has resulted in tremendous challenges for the leadership at PFD. Arguably the most significant of these challenges has been, and will continue to be, developing and implementing an organized and systematic process for ensuring employees at PFD are capable, competent, qualified, and willing to fill strategically critical senior-level chief officer positions due to planned retirements – in other words; succession planning (National Fire Academy, 2004, p. 6-3).

For this research paper, *senior-level chief officers* are defined as the fire chief and his direct reports; at PFD these strategic roles include the fire chief and the agency's three division chiefs who are assigned to administration, community safety services, and operations. In October of 2000, PFD's Operations Division Chief John York wrote a memorandum communicating his intent to retire in 2003; forwarding this advisory notice to those internal employees he believed had the potential of being capable, competent, qualified, and willing to test for his vacated position within three years. He titled it simply "Future" and gave as his reason for writing the memorandum: "My reason for publishing this memo now is simply to give you plenty of lead time and planning time...in addition to perhaps raising your awareness of how quickly the future is upon us, especially if we are not prepared" (Appendix A).

Chief York retired in 2004 taking with him some 22 years of institutional knowledge and experience. In 2005 the District's Human Resources Director retired, taking with her some 21 years of institutional knowledge and experience. In addition, PFD's Fire Chief and Division Chief of Administration have expressed their plans to retire in 2008; and possibly even sooner. The current Fire Chief has provided leadership as the District's chief executive officer since 1986 when he was promoted from his previous position as Assistant Fire Chief; a position he had held since being hired in 1983. The Division Chief of Administration has held positions as the District's first Operations Chief and more recently as Fire Marshal. Together these two leaders will have served as senior-level chief officers at PFD for more than 50 years combined by year 2008.

In 2008, this *perfect storm* of leadership exodus will likely occur and bleed PFD of more than 140 years of combined leadership and management expertise and institutional knowledge and experience as two of the District's three battalion chiefs have expressed the real possibility



of retiring within the next few years as well. The potential is for a total loss of every tenured senior-level chief officer, and the District's Human Resources Director and battalion chiefs, within a period of less than five years. The researcher believes this provides the strongest case possible for developing and producing the components of a model to be used as the foundation for implementing a formal succession planning system at PFD.

PFD is also compelled to provide for succession planning as a condition of several adopted and published policy documents including the agency's *Accreditation Self-Assessment Manual* and *Strategic Plan* (Parker Fire District, 2002, 2003). Requirements of Accreditation through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International will be discussed in the literature review component of this applied research paper. PFD's *Strategic Plan* (2003) specifically directs the agency to "promote leadership development program and succession planning" as well as "select the most qualified leaders" (p. 5).

On a larger scope, succession planning has been routinely identified as a process that is critical to the success of companies and institutions. Moreover, the need for succession planning has never been more critical according to subject matter experts in the field of management. Rothwell, Jackson, Knight, Lindholm, Wang, and Payne (2005) provide strong supportive evidence of the need for succession planning in government: "About 80 percent of all the senior executives and about 70 percent of all middle managers in the U.S. federal government are eligible for retirement [by 2008]" (p. xiii). In an article for *Governing* magazine titled "Expert Exodus," Conte (2006) warns:

The Conference Board, a business research group, estimates that by 2010, 64 million workers – 40 percent of the nation's public and private workforce – will have reached retirement age.... the public sector may be hit particularly hard.... In 2002, 46.3 percent of

government workers were 45 or older, compared with 31.2 percent of private-sector workers, according to the Rockefeller Institute of Government. (p. 24)

Conte goes on to admonish fire departments, along with other public sector agencies:

Despite clear warning signs, the public sector has been slow to try to fix the problem.

Many managers, themselves close to retirement, either don't believe there is a problem, see it as something they can leave to their successors or are reluctant to admit that their agencies are becoming less competent as they lose seasoned manpower. (p. 24)

Finally, Conte goes on to quote Mary Young, a researcher for the Center of Organizational Research: "...policies on recruitment, hiring, training and development, promotion and career mobility, knowledge management, program evaluation and more all need to change for government to get enough qualified people in the pipeline to replace departing baby boomers" (pp. 24-25).

In an article for *Firehouse* magazine on succession planning Chief Dennis Wolf (2006) lasers in on the fire service in particular:

A separate survey by the human resources firm DMB found that 94 percent of the human resource professionals polled said their organization had not adequately prepared younger workers for advancement to senior leadership roles. Unfortunately, succession planning is not practiced in many fire service organizations. A quick search of the on-line card catalog at the National Fire Academy's Learning Resource Center reveals abstracts of many Executive Fire Officer applied research papers identifying the lack of a succession plan when key personnel need to be replaced. (n.p.)

It seems then that the need for succession planning extends far beyond the jurisdictional boundaries of the PFD and has been assertively argued for in the private and public sector, as

well as the fire service, in particular. The criticality and timeliness of succession planning is discussed more in depth in the literature review component of this applied research paper, however the researcher believes the need for succession planning has been cogently documented.

This applied research project is directly related to both the Executive Fire Officer Program's (EFOP) *Executive Leadership* course and supports one of the United States Fire Administration's (USFA) operational objectives. Unit Six of the *Executive Leadership* course is devoted to succession and replacement planning. The terminal objective for this unit is: "Given experiences and models from industry, the students will be able to develop an appreciation for workforce planning, development, and succession planning" (National Fire Academy, 2000, p. 6-2). The body of public and private sector literature, including previously published applied research papers submitted by participants of the NFA's EFOP, lends considerable support to the premise that succession planning is also linked to the fifth operational objective of the USFA (2003): "To respond appropriately in a timely manner to emerging issues" (p. II-2).

### Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to research and identify the components used in various succession planning models. The literature review process is divided up into three specific sections, with summaries provided for each section. A final summary is also provided which coalesces each of the three sections and provides an overall synopsis identifying common and mutual components used in various succession planning models. The first section reviews current management literature – both public and private sector – relative to the subject matter of succession planning. Succession planning is also discussed as specifically applied to public sector government. The second section reviews standards published by fire service professional organizations relative to succession planning and career development. These organizations

include the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA); the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI); the Commission on Chief Fire Officer Designation (CFOD); the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC); and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The last section reviews applicable ARPs submitted by fellow participants of the NFA's EFOP.

### *Succession Planning and Management Literature*

Current management literature on the subject of succession planning was available from a variety of sources. First, applicable literature from several well regarded fire service texts is reviewed; although these texts provided a dearth of succession planning information contrasted against all other literature. Next, information gleaned from contemporary literature on the subject is reviewed; the bulk of which was published within the past two years. Professional journals cited have been recognized for their research validity and veracity, such as *Harvard Business Review*; a professional publication consistently ranked in the top ten recognized and respected research journals by the Association for Information Systems (Saunders, 2006). In addition, highly regarded subject matter experts are routinely cited. This includes organizations such as the Center for Creative Leadership and authors such as William J. Rothwell, a recognized expert on the subject of succession planning. Rothwell's (2006) *Curriculum Vita* proved extremely helpful in culling him from the "pack" of subject matter experts as, arguably, the present day authority on succession planning (pp. 1-67).

The researcher reviewed many fire service texts in an attempt to cull information relative to the applied research topic of succession planning. Saunders (2003) touches on succession planning in her chapter for *The Fire Chief's Handbook* on personnel administration:

Once a need for a promotional exam arises within a department, a notice is promulgated informing those eligible of the pending examination. This should be done well in advance of the anticipated vacancy, to give those eligible as much time as possible to prepare for the exam. At this time, the department should provide a list of study material from which the examination will be drawn. (p. 239).

In the final chapter of this same text, Granito (2003) offers his observations regarding “challenges for the next generation” and warns of massive firefighter retirements due to trends in demographics (p. 1108). Granito goes on to recommend “... that those departments [with] a high percentage of older members... will need to fast-track some officer positions.... The bad news is that decades of operational experience and mentor-class personnel will be lost” (p. 1109). Togle (2003) mentions succession planning in his chapter for the *Fire Protection Handbook* titled “Organizing for Fire and Rescue Services” (Section 7). The extent of this coverage is to discuss various promotional processes including performance ratings; oral interview; and assessment centers (p. 7-20). Carter and Rausch (1989) also discuss succession planning, but only as a component of NFPA 1201, *Recommendations for the Organization for Fire Services* and the since reorganized NFPA 1021, *Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications* (pp. 310-319). cursory mention is made regarding promotion programs, job analysis, and preparation of job descriptions in the text (Carter and Rausch, 1989, pp. 312-313). The International Fire Service Training Association’s (IFSTA) (2004) *Chief Officer* book also mentions “promotions” and “professional development programs” as components of the aforementioned NFPA Standards (pp. 198-216). An additional “Case Study” mentions the EFOP and there is also a paragraph mentioning CFOD (IFSTA, 2004, pp. 214-215).

Current management literature also addresses the differences between private sector and public sector succession planning. Rothwell (2005) notes that government and public sector agencies have been reticent to embrace succession planning; “often relying on a talent-pool approach, which is more consistent with the laws, rules, regulations, political realities, and organizational cultures.... efforts to groom individuals in these settings have sometimes been prohibited rather than encouraged” (p. 321). Rothwell goes on to predict “government agencies will be forced to adopt more systematic succession practices” due to a variety of external factors not the least of which is the projected increases in retirements (p. 31). The author identifies two key differences between government and private business succession planning models – civil service systems and the “key customers” of succession planning efforts; noting that in the public sector succession planning is often referred to as “workforce planning” or “human capital management initiatives” (p. 51). This alternative wording is used to avoid the outward appearance that a specific *heir apparent* is part of the succession plan.

Rothwell (2005) asserts that the “key challenge” for government and other public sector agencies “... is to find better ways to recruit, retain, motivate, and cultivate talent without sacrificing existing civil service laws and rules and without sacrificing merit-based pay employment in favor of political patronage, nepotism, or unlawful discrimination” (p. 322). The author also recommends a major paradigm shift in public-sector culture and thinking “... so that focusing on succession and beyond becomes a hallmark of strategic leadership” (p. 344). To accomplish this, fire chiefs must resist being consumed by the demands of the present and allow time to focus and prepare for the needs of the future. Rothwell goes on to contend that a fire chief’s success in succession planning is predicated on overcoming four specific roadblocks:

(1) The leader's reluctance to take up the succession "task"; (2) The assumption that succession issues are beyond the scope of the leader's work; (3) Confusion about how the succession task should be framed – is it a matter of replacing oneself or of strategic "positioning?" and (4) Lack of information about how to take up the task – how to plan for succession in the midst of a shifting political environment and given regulator and political constraints. (p. 344)

The main body of management literature devoted to succession planning is broad and well documented through extensive supporting research. Several concepts are consistent throughout the literature and research regarding the succession planning process: the general lack of effective succession planning in most organizations; the criticality of succession planning to an organization's success and bottom line; the criticality of CEO and other executive-level support to the success of succession planning; and the relationship between an organization's health and vigor and its ability to prepare adequate numbers of internal candidates for potential vacancies at executive-level job positions; candidates who are "... capable, competent, [*qualified*], and willing to replace and/or succeed to strategic roles within the organization" (National Fire Academy, 2004, p. 6-3). Freeman (2004) sums it up quite nicely:

The literature on CEO succession planning is nearly unanimous in its advice: Begin early, look first inside your company for exceptional talent, see that candidates gain experience in all aspects of the business, help them develop the skills they'll need in the top job. (p. 51)

Finally, while there are many different succession planning models in the literature, most of these models share similar components.

The general lack of effective succession planning in most organizations is well documented and supported in the literature. Ciampa (2005) lends this support: “Clearly, there is an urgent need for CEOs and boards of directors to have an efficient and effective succession process, but few do” (p. 48). The author goes on to cite a survey conducted in 2002 by the MassMutual Group and the George and Roby Raymond Family Business Institute that revealed “...although 40% of the polled chairmen and CEOs planned to retire within four years, 55% of the ones age 61 or older had not settled on a succession plan” (p. 48). Charan (2005) lends additional support noting that of the HR executives who responded to a 2004 survey of 272 large companies only 20% “...were satisfied with their top-management succession processes” (p. 74). The author goes on to admonish; “That deficiency is simply inexcusable. A CEO or board that has been in place for six or seven years and has not yet provided a pool of qualified candidates, and a robust process for selecting the next leader, is a failure” (p. 74).

The criticality of succession planning to an organization’s success and bottom line is well documented and supported in the literature. Mamprin (2002) writes:

Empirical evidence abounds that succession planning and management development can and do contribute to extraordinary business success. In their book *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies*, Jim Collins and Jerry Porras identified 18 organizations that have led their industries for at least 50 to 100 years. They found that one of the key reasons such visionary organizations enjoy long-term success is because of their strong focus on succession planning and leadership development. These companies develop, promote, and carefully select managerial talent from inside the company to a much greater degree than comparison companies, ensuring leadership excellence and continuity. (n.p.)



Charan (2005) warns: “The result of poor succession planning is often poor performance, which translates into higher turnover and corporate instability” (p. 74). Cohn (2005) adds: “Companies whose boards and senior executives fail to prioritize succession planning and leadership development end up either experiencing a steady attrition in talent or retaining people with outdated skills” (p. 64). Rothwell (2005) also weighs in, citing research that shows “... firms in which the CEO has a specific successor in mind are more profitable than those in which no specific successor has been identified” (p. xxii). Finally, Fulmer and Conger (2004) offer empirical evidence that “80 percent of best practice [organizations] engage in succession management activities below the executive level” (p. 37).

The criticality of CEO and other executive-level support to the success of succession planning is well documented and supported in the literature; as well evidenced empirically by a landmark study conducted in 2001 by the American Productivity and Quality Center (APQC) in which senior-level commitment to succession planning was proven to be “absolutely essential” (Fulmer and Conger; 2004, p. 26). Brookhouse and Lane (2005) have the following to say about the CEO of Motorola, a recognized “best practices” company: “Why would the CEO of a Fortune 500 company with more than 100,000 employees worldwide dedicate one-third of all his time to the creation and implementation of a leadership development system? *Because companies with the best leaders win*” (p. 335). Rothwell (2005) is even more assertive in his admonition that CEOs cannot delegate the responsibility for succession planning efforts: “Lacking the CEO’s personal support, commitment, and participation, succession planning and management efforts will fail” (p. 66). In Lorsch and Khurana’s (1999) panel discussion with five well regarded Fortune 500 corporate directors they determined that “the CEO is the point person in the entire succession process...” (p. 101); and “... one of the board’s [of directors] most

critical roles is to ensure the presence of an effective management development program for the whole enterprise” (p. 99). Charan (2005) is more vehement in his appraisal: “CEO succession is all boards’ paramount responsibility” warning that “nothing else so profoundly affects their companies’ futures” (p. 81). Charan (2005) also contends that in facilitating the succession planning process, “... directors should personally get to know the company’s rising stars. Promising leaders should be invited to board meetings... and [board] members should talk with them informally whenever possible” (p. 78). Lorsch and Khurana (1999) recommend management development programs be managed by the CEO, formally evaluated by the board of directors at least every year, and be focused on the upper managerial levels of the organization (p. 99). Finally, the comprehensive involvement of an organization’s human resources professionals in the succession planning process is documented throughout the literature (Fulmer and Conger, 2004; Kleiman, 2004; Rothwell, 2004).

The link between an organization having enough internal candidates to fill executive-level management/leadership position vacancies and organizational health is well documented and supported in the literature. Studies show a markedly higher failure percentage for external CEOs compared with the internally chosen counterparts (Charan, 2005, p. 74; Mamprin, 2002, n.p.). Fulmer and Conger (2004) note that “...best practice organizations targeted, at a minimum, two to three individuals for a position” (p. 129). Lorsch and Khurana (1999) add credibility to these numbers asserting that healthy organizations have three to four candidates for each vacant position at executive levels. This translates to what much of the literature refers to as *bench strength*. In 2001, the Corporate Leadership Council compiled responses from some 8,000 corporate leaders and found that “companies with above-average bench strength [enjoyed] above average thirty-six-month revenue growth relative to the industry peer group” (Fulmer and

Conger, 2004, p. 77). Lorsch and Khurana (1999) found consistent threads in a panel discussion among five well respected Fortune 500 corporate directors on the topic of succession planning noting first that "... in general you want [CEO] successors to emerge from within the organization" and also advising that boards of directors must be actively involved in succession processes; devoting time and attention to getting to know prospective CEO candidates in both formal and informal environments (p. 99). According to Lorsch and Khurana, this process should begin, at a minimum, four years prior to the CEO's expected departure (p. 100). Freeman (2004) supports this assertion in his admonition to current CEOs: "Early – and I mean early – in your tenure as CEO, you should initiate and then actively manage the process of selecting and grooming a successor" (p. 51). Freeman continues:

One reason for you to take the lead in managing the succession process – and if necessary, to prod the board to collaborate with you – is the unfortunate possibility that your term may be cut short by illness or accident. More important, aggressive succession planning is one of the best ways for you to ensure the long-term health of your company. There is one other, somewhat counterintuitive benefit: Thinking early and often about a successor will likely improve your performance during your time in the position. (p. 52)

Freeman ends with this challenge: "Your true legacy as a CEO is what happens to the company *after* you leave the corner office" (p. 52).

Much of the literature differentiates between succession planning – a proactive, flexible, visionary, planned, and big picture approach based in long-range strategic principles; and replacement planning – a reactive, rigid, and narrow focused approach based in short-term risk management (Wolfe, 1996; Rothwell, 2005). This applied research is focused on the former. However, some components of replacement planning are also components of succession

planning models; including performance appraisals, promotional testing, minimum job requirements, and other processes that typically fall under the purview of human resources professionals (Wolfe, 1996).

Documentation and tracking in succession planning models is primarily a function managed and overseen by human resources and provides the basis for workforce forecasting and planning (Kleiman, 2004). Kleiman recommends “replacement charts” to identify “...the availability of candidates and their readiness to step into the various management positions” (p. 216). Berger and Berger (2004) identify “...five major situational classes that must be addressed in human capital planning” including:

Surpluses – more than one replacement for an incumbent; voids – no replacement for an incumbent (voids for key positions are a critical concern); blockages – non-promotable incumbents in the path of one or more high-potential or promotable employees; problem employees; [and] superkeepers – employees whose performance greatly exceeds expectations, who inspire others to greatly exceed expectations, and who embody institutional competencies. (p. 14).

Documentation and tracking also provides a valuable reference tool for employees, managers, mentors, and coaches in the career development process. Evaluating employees’ progress in attaining career development goals and objectives is integral to the career development process (Berger and Berger, 2004; Carter, Ulrich, and Goldsmith, 2005; Fulmer and Conger, 2004; Rothwell, 2005).

Succession literature contains information on many different planning models; from Knowdell’s (1996) “nine steps” for building and implementing a career development program, to the concept of “leadership pipelines” (Charan, Drotter, and Noel, 2001), to the more recent

innovation of “acceleration pools” (Byham, Smith, and Paese, 2002). While each of these models has its own distinctive slant on succession planning, most components of succession planning are shared between the various models, and focus on two distinct elements – designing and managing the succession *process* and developing the *people*.

The organizational *process* element has already been discussed and involves several benchmarks that must occur; generally in sequence. Organization’s must first recognize the need for succession planning, followed by an organizational commitment starting at the governing board and advocated and championed by the CEO and senior-level management. The succession plan must be aligned with the organization’s culture, mission, vision, and values and address the organization’s strengths and weaknesses – as well as future opportunities, threats, and leadership/management needs (Fulmer and Conger, 2003; Rothwell, 2005). This can be accomplished through organizational assessment instruments such as a SWOT analysis (Solomon and Stuart, 2003; Crossan, Fry, and Killing, 2005). Two difficult questions must also be asked when position vacancies occur at senior-level chief officer positions: “Is this key position no longer necessary?” and “Can a key position be rendered unnecessary by finding new ways to achieve comparable results?” (Rothwell, 2005, p. 258). The succession plan must focus on internal candidate succession to ensure an organization’s health, vigor, and future success. Rothwell (2005) strongly asserts: “The centerpiece to a systematic succession planning and management program is a written policy favoring internal promotion” (p. 232). The succession plan must be adopted and validated throughout the organization; as well as evaluated periodically to ensure stated benchmarks, goals, and objectives are met (Fulmer and Conger, 2004; Rothwell, 2005). Finally, the organization must conduct a competency assessment to determine current and future leadership, management, and staffing needs.

Analysis and identification of relevant competencies and job requirements, and development of a competency model, can be a complicated process that is achievable through many different instruments, systems, and methodologies. The case for competency modeling is assertively made by Fulmer and Conger (2004) in their APQC study of best practices companies: "... all of the best practices companies used competency models in all phases of the succession management process" (p. 49). Examples of competency models working in best-in-class organizations are Federal Express's "Leadership Evaluation and Awareness Process (LEAP) and Eli Lilly and Company's "Talent ID Tool," as described in the literature (Fulmer and Conger, 2004; Conger and Benjamin, 1999, p. 91). The LEAP process ensures organizational culture remains consistent by giving promotional opportunities only to those "... individuals who have demonstrated excellence along nine specific leadership dimensions," including "charismatic leadership," "individual consideration," "intellectual stimulation," "courage," "dependability," "flexibility," "integrity," "judgment," and "respect for others" (pp. 91-93). Rothwell (2005) asserts that competency modeling is the "... foundation for state-of-the-art succession planning and management programs" and that "lacking them, organizations will rarely be able to proceed beyond a simple replacement approach to succession planning..." (p. 85). Rothwell further provides excellent insight into an innovative and relatively new competency modeling approach he calls "rapid results assessment"; a marrying of traditional competency assessment approaches with the Developing A Curriculum Method" or "DACUM" (p. 187). The weight of the literature suggests using a collaborative approach to this process that involves internal and external stakeholders along with subject matter experts on specific organizational job positions (Berger and Berger, 2004; Carter, Ulrich, and Goldsmith, 2005; Fulmer and Conger, 2004; Rothwell, 2005). One area engendering some contentiousness in the literature is "future competency

modeling” (Rothwell, 2005, pp. 208-221) The premise behind future competency modeling is “to give future orientation to competency models, simply direct attention to the future rather than the past” (Rothwell, 2005, p. 208). The basic concept is that successful organizations may require different leadership and management competencies in the future than those required today. In future competency modeling, organizations must make assumptions based on forecasts of future organizational cultures, challenges, needs, opportunities, and environments.

The *people* development element is predicated on employee commitment to succession planning and career development processes and first requires individuals to perceive the succession plan as valid and also trust those individuals administering and managing various plan components (Rothwell, Jackson, et al., 2005). Once employees have bought into the process, there are potentially many different directions and methodologies to career development in succession planning models. However, these models generally share four distinct and necessary components: effective *gap analysis* through evaluation of employee knowledge, skills, abilities (KSAs), and other competencies, 360-degree multirater performance reviews, and leadership potential appraisals; effective employee career development to address identified *gaps*; performance recognition such as awards, incentives, or other types of pay for performance; and continual and periodic evaluation of employee progress. The researcher reviewed the literature in each of these component areas, with appropriate citations below.

“The centerpiece of most succession planning and management programs is some means by which to assess individual potential” (Rothwell, 2005, p. 210). The author goes on to assert that “potential assessment is a critically important activity, if only because as many as one-third of all leadership positions (it has been estimated) would not be filled by present incumbents if decision-makers had it to do over again” (pp. 210-211). Fulmer and Conger (2004) provide

additional support noting that “more and more of the emphasis is on the candidate’s potential rather than simply on recent performance” (p. 7). Effective gap analysis through evaluation of employee KSAs and competencies, 360 degree, multirater performance appraisals, and leadership potential appraisals is then essential. While evaluating current employee performance and KSAs is a complicated process, evaluating an employee’s *potential* is even more difficult. The literature is unanimous in its support of 360-degree, multirater appraisal to evaluate current performance; and in using this data exclusively for developmental purposes rather than administrative purposes such as employee performance reviews affecting compensation (Berger and Berger, 2004; Carter, Ulrich, and Goldsmith, 2005; Fulmer and Conger, 2004; Rothwell, 2005). Fulmer and Conger (2004) identify an important key to success in this area noting that all assessment instruments “... [depend] on a deep comfort with differentiating performance between individuals and in turn a corporate culture in which candor is more highly valued than politeness or tolerance for average or poor performance” (pp. 153-154). Fulmer and Conger (2004) reinforce the need for candor, adding that “...where the old [succession management] systems were characterized by complete confidentiality and secrecy, today’s systems actually encourage a lot of involvement by individuals who are participants and candidates” (p. 7). Recent literature on the topic of Emotional Intelligence (EI) suggests EI assessment or relational competency could be an invaluable component in assessing an individual’s future leadership potential (Berger and Berger, 2004; Ruderman, 2004). (Ruderman, 2004) asserts that “relational competency is a key requirement for successful performance in the organizations of today and the near future” and goes on to posit that “a key competency for the future is the ability to lead across differences” (p. 301). EI competencies are divided into four basic clusters, with a total of 18



individual competencies: “self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relationship management” (Dalziel, 2004, p. 57).

An effective employee career development program that addresses identified gaps in employee KSAs and competencies is the single most comprehensive element of the succession planning process as evidenced by the literature which identified a plethora of employee development approaches; each with many different nuances and options. Traditional approaches to succession planning are often devoid of any meaningful career development component; more accurately defined as “replacement planning,” where organizations “... attempt to fit the most highly qualified candidate with the job in the hope that candidate then carries out the responsibilities of the job most efficiently and effectively” (Ohlott, 2004, p. 171). Career development program components were identified and recommended throughout the literature. Brookhouse and Lane (2005) include the following components: coaching and mentoring; expansion of job scope; transfer to a new job offering specific developmental opportunities; special projects; lateral job rotations, assignment in an “office of” or “assistant” role; and “rewards” (p. 338). Berger and Berger (2004) add task force assignments; company educational courses and courses outside the company, including e-learning and other Internet-based education; guided reading; teaching educational courses; extracurricular activity; and assistance from counselors and employee assistance programs (pp. 12-13). Finally, Rothwell (2005) adds “public seminars” to complete the list of career development components (p. 247). Ohlott (2004) reports that “challenging job assignments are perhaps the most potent form of leader development that exists” and asserts that some organizations have implemented a “...systematic program of job rotation, in which they identify future leaders and their strengths and development needs and then devise a development plan...” (p. 181). The author goes on to

recommend individuals remain in developmental assignments for a minimum of three and a half years, referencing John Gabarro's (1987) research that further reports "... managers did not learn at a deeper level until after the first eighteen months in a job" (p. 180). Finally, Ohlott cites empirical data showing that companies that incorporate individual career development programs as components of succession planning models report "improved organizational reputation and fiscal performance" (p. 172).

The literature provides some insight as to which of these career development components are most effective or most important in various authors' documentation of best practices and best-in-class organizations. In their research of these exceptional organizations, Fulmer and Conger (2004) report that "feedback and relationship (coaching, mentoring) programs are the most effective leadership development strategy" and that "more than 8,000 leaders report that people-management skills are the most important attributes of effective leadership, outranking strategic management, personal characteristics, or day-to-day business management" (p. 78). Grubs (2004) synthesizes the results of Hewitt's "Top 20 Companies for Leaders" study asserting that "best practices" companies "... with a reputation for developing great leaders also rely heavily on experiential training to help develop high-potentials into successors" (p. 196). Grubs supports this assertion noting that with regard to career development, "...73% provide cross-functional experiences" and "...63% encourage job rotations" (p. 196). Rothwell (2005) reports several "best practices" succession planning and management components as a result of his research, including: individualized career development plans specific to the employee; mechanisms in place to make career development activities "simple for the employee"; use of coaching, training, special assignments, action learning, and Web-based development; and building a culture where "high-potential talent is a shared resource rather than owned by specific

managers” (pp. 31-32). The need for a non-traditional and altruistic departure away from a corporate culture of hoarding talent to sharing it is reinforced elsewhere in the literature (Cohn, Khurana, and Reeves, 2005). Finally, Conger and Benjamin (1999) identify several “best practices for effective programs in individual development,” including:

1. Build Around a Single Well-Delineated Leadership Model
2. Use Participant Selection Process with Clear Criteria
3. Conduct Precourse Preparation
4. Use Personalized 360-Degree Feedback to Reinforce Learnings
5. Use Multiple Learning Methods
6. Conduct Extended Learning Periods and Multiple Sessions
7. Put Organizational Support Systems in Place (pp. 33-55)

Conger and Benjamin (1999) also provide “common shortcomings of individual development programs” with the number one shortcoming being the “Failure to Build a Critical Mass”:

One of the principal drawbacks of individual development programs is that they are not always geared to cohorts of individuals from a single workplace – especially programs offered on the outside such as at universities. As a result, participants may be among a handful of individuals from their own organizations who attend the leadership program. Upon their return to the office, they discover that their learnings and new vocabulary are little appreciated or understood by others. This creates an enormous hurdle for the application of learnings. The dilemma is tied to the fact that work is essentially a collaborative process.... What gives new learnings the potential for taking hold is that one’s workgroup also endorses, promotes, and reinforces them. Without that social

support and pressure, new ideas and behaviors may receive neither sufficient reinforcement nor rewards to survive for long. (pp. 55-56).

A final common thread running through the career development program element of succession planning and management is some form recognition, rewards, or pay for performance component (Berger and Berger, 2004; Carter, Ulrich, and Goldsmith, 2005; McCall, 1998; Rothwell, Jackson, et al., 2005). Providing employee awards, incentives, and rewards is an integral part of “best practices” succession planning models employed by “best-in-class” organizations (Carter, Ulrich, and Goldsmith, 2005). Grubs (2004) reports:

Fully 100% of the “Top 20 Companies for Leaders” pay high-potentials more than average performers in the same role, compared with 54% of other companies. In fact, 80% of the top 20 companies report that they significantly or noticeably differentiate pay between these two groups. (p. 197)

Ongoing evaluation of employee progress is the final component in the *people* element of a succession planning model. Evaluating the people in a succession plan is not much different than evaluating the succession planning process. The goal is to provide adequate assessment and feedback to employees regarding their career development; as well as to provide the information necessary to human resources personnel assigned to routinely maintain and update workforce planning and forecasting systems (Rothwell, 2005).

In summary, the researcher identified several consistent threads running throughout the body of literature available: success of succession planning is dependent on support of leadership at executive levels (including board of directors, CEO, and senior-level executive staff); succession planning should be aligned and linked to the organization’s culture, mission, vision, and values and evaluated periodically to ensure alignment; effective succession planning is

critical to the overall success of an organization; and healthy organizations develop and prepare internal candidates to ensure they are capable, competent, qualified, and willing to replace and/or succeed to strategic roles within the organization (National Fire Academy, 2004). Moreover, the researcher found that the body of literature does support several common and mutual components used in succession planning models that address both the process and the people.

#### *Fire Service Professional Organizations*

The researcher identified several standards published by various fire service organizations relative to succession planning and career development. These organizations include the NFPA, CFAI, CFOD, IAFC, and DHS/USFA/NFA.

The NFPA provides internationally accepted and recognized standards that extend beyond the scope of the fire service. NFPA (2003) addresses succession planning in its *Standard for Fire Officer Qualifications*; but only as a general requirement for certification at various “Fire Officer” levels. This is a progressive succession planning model system where each subsequent level requires demonstrable proficiency at the previous level(s). For senior-level chief officers this certification is Fire Officer III and IV, and requires specific “job performance requirements” including “Requisite Knowledge” and “Requisite Skills” in addition to meeting the requirements of Fire Instructor II (NFPA, 2003, Chapter 6).

The CFAI (2006) – a collaborative effort between the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) and the IAFC – is an agency:

...dedicated to ensuring continuous quality improvement within the fire and emergency services while supporting education, data collection, and research within the fire and emergency service industry” by providing “an in-depth process of self-assessment for fire

and emergency service agencies, granting accreditation to those agencies who successfully complete the self-assessment and an on-site evaluation by their peers. (n.p.)

The CFAI's (2000) *Fire and Emergency Service Self-Assessment Manual* "...is the result of thousands of hours of work by more than 150 fire-related professionals" (p. 1.7). The self-assessment process is purported by CFAI as "... a proven model to assist fire service professionals in continually improving the quality and performance of their organization" and "...will assist agencies in becoming goal-oriented, future-oriented, well organized, properly equipped, properly staffed and trained" (pp. 1.2-1.3).

The foundation of self assessment rests on a number of performance criteria – “performance indicators” – which must be met (pp. 4.1-5.33). Several performance indicators are components of a succession planning model used by the CFAI, including:

- 1A.3 – There is a method that utilizes qualifications and credentials to select the agency's chief fire officer.
- 7B.4 – New personnel recruited and appointed, and those transferred into the agency or promoted, meet stated qualifications for the position.
- 7B.5 – Testing processes used for initial selection and promotion are job related.
- 7B.8 – There is a position classification system that is adhered to.
- 7D.1 – There are current, written job descriptions for all positions.
- 7D.2 – The agency has a process by which the organization and jobs are audited and modified as needed.
- 7D.3 – The agency maintains a current list of the special knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA's) of each employee/member.
- 7D.5 – There is a career development program in place. (pp. 5.1-5.33)

On February 21, 2003 the PFD was awarded “Accredited Agency” status by the CFAI and has successfully maintained its status via annual compliance requirements through CFAI in subsequent years. As an Accredited Agency, PFD (2002) published an *Accreditation Self-Assessment Manual* in which the agency documented successfully meeting recognized goals and objectives documented in various “performance indicators,” providing a benchmarking and planning tool for the organization. Included in this document are goals and objectives relative to the organization’s succession planning process. A review of this Manual identified the following agency responses to performance indicators relevant to the topic of this applied research paper:

- 1A.3 – The last [chief fire officer] selection process consisted of résumé submittal by candidates, résumé review by the Board, and interview of top candidates by the Board.... there are no current plans to modify the process or requirements... (p. 8)
- 7B.4 – Job descriptions are reviewed each time a position opens up, or a new job description is created with each new position. The Division [Chief] and the HR Manager both have the opportunity to make sure the job description is accurate and meets legal requirements. (p. 416)
- 7B.5 – Candidates for managerial and administrative staff may be asked to pass relevant skills-related written tests and/or conduct an oral interview with a representative(s) or management.... Currently, the Agency does not have a system in place to internally validate the selection process. (pp. 417-418)
- 7B.8 – The Agency uses the traditional rank structure for line members. Each rank and grade within rank is formally designed to note the job certifications, knowledge, skills, and minimum requirements. Written job descriptions define each position according to these criteria. (p. 422)

- 7D.1 – Supervisors are [asked] to review job descriptions on an annual basis and contact Human Resources if any changes are necessary. (p. 449)
- 7D.2 – A wholesale job description review will be scheduled triennially beginning in 2002. The Administrative Services Division will conduct this evaluation. The goal will be to ensure consistency between job positions and accuracy of requirements for each job position. (pp. 450-451)
- 7D.3 – The current system of tracking KSA's is generally effective but there is room for improvement. The Agency is evaluating this system with a goal to centralize the process and responsibility of tracking KSA's within the Training Bureau for all Agency employees; both line and staff.... The Agency's Training and Human Resources Bureaus will collaborate to ensure the new process is efficient, effective, and meets the needs of their respective Bureaus and the organization as a whole. (pp. 452-454)
- 7D.5 – Both line and staff personnel are included in the Agency's tuition reimbursement program. This program reimburses member up to \$1,500 per year for tuition costs when attending college courses toward a degree in their related field.... Support staff do not really have a defined career development program other than formal and informal educational opportunities... members are encouraged to pursue these opportunities and prepare themselves for future job positions should they arise. Staff members are encouraged to apply for these job positions and "promotions." The Agency has a policy to hire and/or promote qualified persons from within the organization when possible. In addition, the Agency encourages its management/supervisory members to complete their formal education by offering an



Education Differential to management personnel. The differential is available to individuals whose educational levels meet or exceed the education requirements for their job positions in comparison with Metro Denver area fire departments, as identified during the Agency's annual Salary and Benefit Survey.... Career paths for staff personnel must be better defined and stated... a formal system must be developed and implemented that more clearly defines advancement and promotional opportunities for staff personnel. (pp. 458-460)

The CFOD is in partnership with the CFAI to manage the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) Designation program. According to the CFAI (2006) Web site:

The Chief Fire Officer Designation program recognizes fire officers who have demonstrated a consistent level of excellence during their career. This nationally recognized and accepted designation is based on a core set of academic and professional, technical and management experience criteria, and is evaluated by a board of peers.  
(n.p.)

Requirements to attain CFO Designation – components of the CFOD's succession planning model – are based on several criteria including: tenure as a chief-level officer in the fire service; level of formal education achieved; letters of personal reference; level and consistency of professional development; level and consistency of professional contributions; professional memberships, community involvement, and affiliations; and successful completion of 20 “Technical Competencies” (CFOD, 2005).

The IAFC (2003) published an *Officer Development Handbook*, which the IAFC considers the culmination of a “...single-minded vision to provide a clear roadmap for success as a fire service officer” (n.p.); positing that “professional development is the planned, progressive

life-long process of education, training, self-development and experience” (p. 4). The IAFC documents this need for professional development in the fire service, especially for officers, as an issue that goes as far back as the initial *Wingspread Conference – Statements of National Significance to the Fire Problem in the United States* (p. 2). The foreword to this first *Wingspread* report asserts that “success [in the fire service] is largely dependent upon the caliber of leadership of the individual fire chiefs, and there is no assurance that this progress will continue... when there is a change of leadership...” (Johnson Foundation, 1966, p. 5). The report goes on with a stiff warning to the fire service in Statement #9: “The career of the fire executive must be systematic and deliberate” (Johnson Foundation, 1966p. 13). The IAFC goes to note:

This statement goes on to point out the ineffective fire service practice of promoting personnel into higher ranks and then attempting to train or educate them. This practice of on-the-job training, rather than systematic skills building and preparation, is in direct contrast to the methodologies employed by virtually any other profession. (p. 2)

Moreover, the IAFC suggests that the same problems identified in *Wingspread I* continue to plague today’s fire service, and supports this assertion by documenting little change in the area of succession planning in subsequent *Wingspread* reports published in 1976, 1986, and 1996 (IAFC, 2003, p. 2). Finally, the IAFC’s (2004) own *Issues Assessment Survey* continues to confirm that succession planning continues to pervade the fires service as a pandemic problem: “Training issues were cited by many as a problem facing their department. Career, volunteer and combination departments would like help in officer development, succession planning...” (p. 7).

The IAFC’s (2003) succession planning model “...contains four distinct elements... Education; Training; Experience; [and] Self-development” (p. 4). Self-development, according to the IAFC, includes a mentoring and coaching component (p. 3). The researcher placed

considerable validity in each of the IAFC's initiatives – including the CFAI and CFOD – due to the credibility of stakeholders documented by the IAFC in the *Officer Development Handbook*. These stakeholders included organizations of the highest professional regard, including: FEMA; USFA; NFPA; ICMA; State Higher Education Associations; National Society of Executive Officers; National Board of Professional Fire Service Qualifications; International Association of Fire Fighters; National Association of Counties; International Fire Service Accreditation Congress; National Volunteer Fire Council; and the National League of Cities, among others (p. 44).

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), through the USFA and the NFA's Executive Fire Officer Program, is committed to succession planning (NFA, 2000). An entire Unit of the EFOP's *Executive Leadership* Course Student Manual is devoted to succession planning. The commitment of the DHS through the USFA's National Fire Academy cannot be overstated: "Succession planning is a critical element of organizational strategy. Organizations with well-developed employee development and planning methods are more competitive. Public safety organizations achieve excellence through a well-trained and competitive workforce.... there is a strong need for *bench strength* [emphasis added] in a public safety organization" (p. 6-3).

Through its *Executive Leadership* EFOP Course, the NFA (2000) recommends the fire service adopt several succession planning components; however it regards "senior-level support and sponsorship" as a critical component (p. 6-21). Additional components of the NFA's succession planning model include: conducting Organizational Capability Analyses (OCA); implementing a "comprehensive selection process" for senior-level positions; adopting "principles of workforce development"; reviewing the organization's mission, vision, strategic

plan, and organizational capabilities to identify critical competencies; defining individual critical competencies through “competency statements”; implementing 360-degree, multirater feedback mechanisms; providing individuals with career development plans specific to their needs; and employing coaching and mentoring career development tools (pp. 6-1 – 6-29). Some of these succession planning components, such as coaching and mentoring, have been explained previously in the research. A few, including OCA, principles of workforce development, competency statements, and 360-degree, multirater feedback, require further definition and explanation.

Occupational Capability Analysis (OCA) is routinely referred to as a SWOT analysis in the private sector – SWOT, an acronym for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats – and is a process that provides an organizational overview from as objective a position as possible (Solomon and Stuart, 2003; Crossan, Fry, and Killing, 2005). This overview is then used to determine required personnel competencies relative to the *future* strategic needs of the organization – the goal being to provide for exemplary management and leadership in the organization’s future; rather than being constrained by the organizations leadership and management needs of the past or the present.

The “principles of workforce development” referred to in the *Executive Leadership Student Manual* include a “staffing formula” that ensures “right person,” “right skills,” “right time,” “right place,” and “right job” in personnel assignments and promotional decisions (NFA, 2000, pp. 6-6 – 6-7). This formula bears close resemblance to Collins’ (2001) “first who... then what” theory of “... *first* get the right people on the bus (and the wrong people off the bus) *before* you figure out where to drive it” (pp. 43-44). Collins goes on to elaborate on what he calls the

“...degree of *sheer rigor* in people decisions [necessary] in order to take a company from good to great” (p. 44).

Developing competency statements involves a process of evaluating the skills, knowledge, social roles, self-image, traits, and motives necessary for individuals to achieve exemplary performing in job positions (NFA, 2000, p. 6-9). Determining these competencies and the development of competency statements involves a process utilizing a panel of experts with expertise and objectivity in a collaborative group effort to identify critical competencies for various job positions (p. 6-10 – 6-11). Rothwell (2005) describes this as a “new approach to competency modeling” that utilizes a combination of traditional competency assessment methodology, with the DACUM (Developing a Curriculum) process, to conduct a “rapid results assessment” (pp. 187-189). Rothwell (2005) goes on to laud the benefits of this process:

Rapid results assessment can provide valuable information for succession planning and management. If the assessment process is focused on key positions – and DACUM panels include immediate supervisors, peers, incumbents, and even subordinates – it can yield powerful information about role expectations for incumbents in these positions. It can also provide the basis, as DACUM does, to select, appraise, train, reward, and develop people who are being groomed for key positions. (p. 189)

Multi-rater 360-degree feedback is a process whereby an individual’s performance is evaluated by persons at multiple relational levels in the organization; including direct reports, peers, self, supervisors, and virtually any other internal or external stakeholders (Chappelow, 2004, p. 59). Generally, the anonymity of multirater evaluators is a critical component of this process; with the usual exception of the individual’s supervisor (Fleenor and Prince, 1997; Van Velsor, Leslie, and Fleenor, 1997). Multirater, 360-degree feedback can be a contentious

process, especially in the fire service. There are two distinctly opposing schools of thought on the use of 360-degree feedback mechanisms. Chappelow (2004) clarifies the two uses for 360-degree feedback as either “administrative” or “developmental” with the “...critical difference between these two approaches is ownership of the data” (p. 66). In other words, administrative use of the 360-degree feedback mechanism is for employee performance appraisals, with the organization *owning* the data; while developmental use is for employee career and personal development, with the employee *owning* the data. The NFA (2000) recommends 360-feedback “... be used only for developmental purposes.... without any information placed in the employee’s permanent record” (p. 6-12). This view is also supported by a great many other individuals and organizations, including the Center for Creative Leadership (Bracken, Dalton, Jako, McCauley, and Pollman, 1997). Finally, the NFA (2000) also recommends that “... it is appropriate for the senior-level champion to participate fully in the program and allow him/herself to be rated as well” (p. 6-21).

In summary, every fire service professional organization the researcher evaluated shared three common components in their succession planning models – advocacy, championing, sponsorship, and support of the succession planning process at the CEO and governing/oversight levels of the organization; leading by example at senior-level chief officer positions; and the development and implementation of a formal succession planning and development process. Additional succession planning components generally shared by fire service professional organizations for senior-level chief officers included the following *mapping* and *measuring* components:

- job analyses based on organization analyses through evaluation of agency mission, values, vision, and strategic goals and objectives;

- job descriptions based on job analyses combined with competency modeling resulting from evaluation of KSAs and other critical competencies by subject matter experts (e.g. DACUM method, etc.);
- minimum job requirements as a component of job descriptions based on competency modeling (e.g. formal education; professional certifications; technical competencies; required training; etc.);
- 360-degree, multirater feedback as a component of a formal career development program;
- coaching and mentoring as part of a formal career development program;
- measuring the health and success of an organization using internal bench strength as a barometer;
- comprehensive and job related testing & selection processes for filling position vacancies that also place a value on experience.

#### *NFA EFOP Applied Research Papers*

The researcher identified numerous ARPs, relative to succession planning, submitted as part of the NFA's Executive Fire Officer Program. In Wolf's (2006) previously cited article for *Firehouse* magazine on succession planning, he identified a common thread running throughout these APRs: "A quick search of the on-line card catalog at the National Fire Academy's Learning Resource Center reveals abstracts of many Executive Fire Officer applied research papers identifying the lack of a succession plan when key personnel need to be replaced" (n.p.). A more thorough search conducted by the researcher at the Learning Resource Center confirmed Wolf's observation; however there was valuable information found in these ARPs relative to succession planning.

Leland (2004) provides several examples of components utilized in succession planning models including the Orange County (CA) Fire Authority's Leadership Institute; career development planning at Fairfax County (VA) Fire and Rescue and Minneapolis (MN) Fire Department; and a succession plan model for the job of fire chief at the County of Henrico (VA) Division of Fire (pp. 12-13). However, Leland only cites these examples to "...illustrate the prevalence of succession planning in fire departments..." (p. 13). According to Leland, common succession planning model components include: "...developing a vision for the organization's future, defining the skills and competencies needed for leaders, identifying and assessing individuals within the organization, creating individual development plan and providing development opportunities to close the skill gaps" (p. 13).

Rooney (2004) laments the lack of preparation for promotion to senior-level chief officer vacancies at the Peoria (AZ) Fire Department (p. 11). His ARP recommends implementation of a succession planning model, championed at the fire chief level, which "...incorporates the Peoria fire department's core values of Team, Trust, Efficiency, and Professionalism" (p. 54). From his applied research, Rooney recommends succession planning models include the following components: "career development," "formal education requirements," "a comprehensive training program," and encouraging aspiring senior-level chief officers to pursue EFOP and CFOD (pp. 54-56).

Garcia (2004, p. 2) and King (2005, p. 8) document a succession planning problem shared by many other EFOP participant and ARP researchers; a problem germane to this applied research and one facing PFD – impending retirements of senior-level chief officers creating a leadership/management void; exacerbated by inadequate bench strength to fill vacated positions. Garcia (2004) recommends succession planning models include CEO support, succession



planning development facilitated by a “leadership cadre,” a mentoring component, and a means for measuring results (pp. 36-37). King (2005) offers similar recommendations for succession planning models including CEO support and a succession planning development committee; as well as development of “*Task Books*” for senior-level chief officers, but the author does not elaborate as to the composition of these task books (pp. 36-39). King (2005) also notes the conspicuous absence of “specific training requirements” for senior-level chief officer positions; noting that these division chief and fire chief officer positions are “considered a special assignment” and therefore do not have position requirements found in jobs farther down in the organizational hierarchy (pp. 17-18).

Wallace (2004) strongly recommends that succession planning be driven by “the futurity of current and future organizational leadership development decisions based on the vision of the current organizational leader” (p. 29). He goes on to document and detail a six step succession planning model that includes the following components: environmental scanning (similar to a SWOT analysis); linking the succession planning process to organizational culture, mission, and strategy; identify position competencies and provide coaching, mentoring, and training; identify internal and external candidates for succession; establish a formal mentoring program; and continually evaluate succession planning program effectiveness (pp. 46-69).

Kopp (2004) completed an assessment tool ranking various KSAs by fire chiefs in DuPage County, Illinois (p. 18). This assessment does provide some interesting data regarding what are generally considered emotional intelligence (EI) factors – such as communication skills, empowerment and delegation, relationship building, and political savvy – the top four critical KSAs necessary in a senior-level chief officer; at least, according to fire chiefs in DuPage County. Unfortunately, the limited population distribution pool erodes some of the credibility of

this research. However, this was the first occasion in fire service literature where EI factors were considered as a component of and succession planning model. According to Robbins (2003): “Emotional intelligence refers to an assortment of noncognitive skills, capabilities, and competencies that influence a person’s ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures” of which there are five components; self-awareness, self-management, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills (p. 111). Robbins (2003) goes on suggest that “the implication from the initial evidence on EI is that employers should consider it as a factor in selection, especially in jobs that demand a high degree of social interaction” and when selecting effective leaders, “... candidates with a high EI should have an advantage, especially in situations requiring transformational leadership” (pp. 111; 355).

Dean (2004) provides excellent research data based on an informational feedback tool; data that was particularly germane to this applied research as this instrument included a population methodology utilizing CFAI Accredited Agencies (p. 15). Dean’s research included a population pool of 92 agencies with the author determining “... the top three perceived components of importance in a succession plan ranked highly in the areas of a clearly defined career path component, defined training and development, and a human resource evaluation based on knowledge, skills and abilities” (pp. 21-22). Additional research results identified that almost 85 percent of respondents believed that competencies and/or educational standards are “very important” to a succession planning; with higher education, CFOD, EFOP and other fire officer development ranking in the top three succession planning model components among respondents (pp. 24-25).

In summary, the body of applied research conducted by participants of the NFA’s EFOP provides additional evidence supporting the need for succession planning in the fire service.

Fellow EFOP researchers identified several common components in their recommended succession planning models including:

- the criticality of fire chief support to the success of the succession planning process;
- including senior-level chief officers in the succession planning process;
- an overarching need for succession planning to provide for future fire department leadership;
- tying organizational culture, mission and values into succession planning;
- including competency assessment in succession planning to determine KSA gaps and fill them;
- including formal education requirements as a component of succession planning;
- including certification requirements such as EFOP and CFOD as a component of succession planning;
- including a formal mentoring component in succession planning.

### *Summary*

The literature review process provided the researcher with a plethora of substantive information germane to the research. There was however a dearth of public sector data; especially regarding fire departments that have developed and implemented effective succession planning models and systems. The lack of succession planning in the public sector is well documented by Rothwell (2005) citing comprehensive research by the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) during the past decade. Rainey and Wechsler's (1988) public sector research depicts leadership transitions at executive levels of government as "marked by serious deficiencies in preparation, orientation, and communication" (p. 45). The researcher believes Conger and Benjamin (1999) offer encouragement by way of remonstrance; "The worst

case would be that organizations return to older notions that the cream will naturally rise to the top (so who needs education and career planning)” (p. 263).

## Procedures

### *Research Methodology*

A literature review was conducted including an exhaustive search at the National Fire Academy’s Learning Resource Center on the subject matter of succession planning. The researcher attempted to review the most contemporary literature available, including more than a dozen complete texts on the subject matter. Most of the texts referenced were published in the last five years; and many within the past year. All NFA EFOP applied research papers referenced were published within the past two years. Professional journals cited have been recognized for their research validity and veracity, such as *Harvard Business Review*; a professional publication consistently ranked in the top ten recognized and respected research journals by the Association for Information Systems (Saunders, 2006). The Internet was used as a tool to provide information on various organizations and some supportive documentation; however Internet articles and literature were not the predominant source of information for the research. The researcher believes this also contributes to the credibility and validity of the applied research. In addition, highly regarded subject matter experts are routinely cited including the Center for Creative Leadership, and author William J. Rothwell; both highly regarded experts on the subject of succession planning. Rothwell’s (2006) *Curriculum Vita* reinforced his distinction as a present day authority on succession planning (pp. 1-67).

A Succession Planning Questionnaire (Appendix C) was developed by the researcher *after* completion of the literature review process. This was purposefully done to improve the researcher’s sagacity in asking the subject matter questions necessary to facilitate credibility and

validity in the research, and to better define the scope of the questions asked. Prior to distributing this research instrument, a sample group of four PFD senior-level chief officers was given the questionnaire to help ensure they made sense, were straightforward, and that none of the questions were confusing or difficult to understand. Fire chiefs leading Accredited Agencies were chosen as the sample population, with the assumption that these agencies represent progressive, best-in-class fire service organizations. Moreover, Accredited Agencies are required to have implemented some type of succession planning and management and career development processes as a condition of their accreditation through the CFAI.

The CFAI was contacted on February 7, 2006 and provided addresses & contacts of the 106 accredited fire agencies, as of January 1, 2006, including the PFD. Questionnaires were mailed out on February 8, 2006, including a Succession Planning Questionnaire Cover Letter (Appendix B) and self-addressed stamped envelope with each questionnaire. The cover letter was included with the questionnaire to define the intent and scope of the research and to reinforce respondent confidentiality. Respondents were given the opportunity to request completed results from the questionnaire via email once the researcher completed this applied research paper. An email group was configured in Microsoft Outlook by PFD Administrative Assistant Becky Hersey to aid in forwarding this information to all interested respondents; as well as to facilitate any future correspondence with questionnaire participants. All 33 respondents who requested results from the questionnaire were emailed the applied research paper submitted to NFA on March 2, 2006 (See Appendix D for a list of departments completing the questionnaire). A copy of the follow-up email to questionnaire participants is included in Appendix F.

The Succession Planning Questionnaire determined what percentages of responding Accredited Agencies provide for succession planning; and to what extent various components of the succession planning model were used. The questions focused on quantifiable succession planning components such as formal education requirements, job rotations, and a formal mentoring process. While not all the succession planning model components identified in the literature review were part of the questionnaire, those components consistently and historically employed by fire departments in association with a formal or informal succession planning model were evaluated. Several questions were also used to determine demographics of respondents including number of fire stations, population served, and number of personnel.

The researcher used action research methodology to answer the research questions. The American Psychological Association's (APA) Fifth Edition guidelines were used to cite form and references. The desired outcome of this research project was to identify components of succession planning models; ascertain what other CFAI accredited agencies used as components in their respective succession plan models; identify which components were already in place as part of PFD's succession plan model; and to identify what components PFD should use to develop and implement a succession plan for senior-level chief officer job positions.

A literature review process was used to answer Question 1 and determine succession plan model components used by agencies both inside and outside the fire service; as well as to review any historical documentation or research studies germane to this subject matter. This information was contrasted against the questionnaire results used to answer Questions 2 and 3 – the identification of succession plan model components already in place at PFD and other accredited fire service agencies – and to answer question 4 and ultimately determine what components PFD should evaluate for inclusion in its existing succession plan model.

### *Definition of Terms*

Ability – “The capability needed to perform a nonmotor task, such as communication ability, mathematical ability, reasoning, or problem-solving ability” (Kleiman, 2004, p. 91).

At will – Either the employee or management has the right to terminate employment at any time, for any reason.

Bench strength – The relative strength of employees regarding their capability, competence, qualifications, and willingness to fill leadership voids in strategic roles within the organization.

Best-in-class / Best practices – Terms used to describe organizations, and methodologies associated with organizations, that have proven set the standard of performance in a given field as recognized by subject matter experts.

Coaching – A short-term relationship in which an individual assists another in accomplishing a future goal or objective.

Competencies – “Underlying characteristic[s] of an employee (i.e., motive, trait, skill, aspects of one’s self-image, social role, or body of knowledge) that results in effective and/or superior performance in a job” (Boyatzis, 1982, pp. 20-21).

DACUM – Developing A Curriculum Method.

Emotional intelligence (EI) – “An assortment of noncognitive skills, capabilities, and competencies that influence a person’s ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures” (Robbins, 2003, p. 111).

Gap analysis – An evaluation of current leadership and management assets against current and future needs to determine any developmental “gaps” that must be addressed to facilitate successful performance.

HR – Human resources.

Knowledge – “The body of information one needs to perform the job” (Kleiman, 2004, p. 91).

KSAs – Knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Mentoring – “A committed, long-term relationship in which a senior person (mentor) supports the personal and professional development of a junior person (protégé)” (McCauley and Douglas, 2004, p. 92).

Senior-level chief officers – the fire chief and his direct reports; at PFD direct reports to the fire chief include three division chiefs assigned to administration, community safety services, and operations.

Skill – “The capability to perform a learned motor task, such as forklift operating skills and word-processing skills” (Kleiman, 2004, p. 91).

Succession planning – An organized and systematic way to ensure that employees in a particular organization are capable, competent, qualified, and willing to replace and/or succeed to strategic roles within the organization.

SWOT – Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; a SWOT analysis is a comprehensive and objective assessment of an organization in these critical areas.

360-degree multirater feedback – A method of assessing employee job performance based on feedback provided by a wide range of coworkers including direct reports, peers, supervisors, the employee themselves, and any other stakeholders.

### *Limitations and Assumptions*

The assumption is made, based on the research, that internal succession is preferable to external succession. Consequently, succession plan model components specific to recruitment,



hiring, and retention of external candidates for senior-level chief officer job positions are outside the scope of this research and were not included in this ARP. Other peripheral succession plan model components – such as employee union considerations and influences, collective bargaining restrictions, civil service constraints, discriminatory implications, such as disparaging impact and equal employment opportunity – were not discussed in the scope of the research as they were not particularly germane to the PFD. PFD is an *at will* special district fire department without a recognized union, collective bargaining, or civil service.

The subject of succession planning is extensively covered by the researcher. Authors and texts were carefully evaluated for accuracy of information and statistical data cited; as well as to ensure that the literature cited reflects current management and leadership thought by subject matter experts in both private and public sectors. However, the scope of this applied research is still limited due to time constraints among other factors. While the researcher believes the subject matter is appropriately and extensively covered, especially considering the scope of this applied research paper, the topic of succession planning is certainly broad enough in scope that information was still left unearthed.

The research questionnaire is also limited due to initial sample size (106 accredited fire department agencies); the number of respondents (56); incomplete responses from responding agencies; distribution methods; and the inability to follow up due to research time constraints. Moreover, the researcher assumes that all questions were answered truthfully and respondents were unbiased in their responses.

Finally, as is often the case, this research process led the researcher to explore several peripheral issues beyond the scope of the applied research project. This information is essential for the researcher to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the problem statement.

Unfortunately, due to the limited scope of this research paper, a detailed examination of these peripheral issues cannot be facilitated.

## Results

The results of this applied research project were derived from the literature reviewed as well as the procedures completed. Four research questions were solicited and answered based on evaluation of succession planning literature, applied research projects published as part of the NFA's EFOP, books, professional journals, articles, Internet resources, national standards, PFD documents, and a questionnaire of CFAI accredited fire departments. The research questions are listed below, with research results from each question cited in a format determined by the researcher to best convey, explain, and present the results.

Question 1. What are the components used in succession planning models? The research identified numerous succession planning models. Fire service models are essentially components of career development models, while succession planning models – external to the fire service – are much broader in scope and include overarching processes that include, but are not limited to, career development. Succession planning can be divided into two distinct elements: designing and managing the organization's succession *process* and developing the *people*.

Designing and managing the organizational *process* generally includes the following ten components, in sequence, as evidenced by the research:

1. Recognize the need for succession planning and the benefits of internal v. external succession – provide a policy statement communicating the need and direction, including organizational goals and objectives relative to the succession planning process.

2. Succession planning advocated, championed, and supported at senior-level leadership, CEO, and governing board levels.
3. Succession planning model (including steps 5-9 below) developed at the executive leadership level, including HR, and communicated throughout the organization – appropriate steps taken to ensure model is aligned with organizational culture, mission, values, vision, goals and objectives.
4. Succession planning accepted and adopted throughout the organization.
5. Organizational SWOT/gap analysis conducted to determine future staffing needs; especially with regard to present and future management and leadership.
6. Critical job competencies and minimum requirements identified through a process such as DACUM or rapid results assessment.
7. Job descriptions reviewed and revised (if necessary) to reflect necessary competencies.
8. HR to develop workforce forecast and planning model including replacement charts, documentation, and tracking.
9. Implement career development model to address needs based on assessments.
10. Periodic and continual evaluation of the succession planning process to ensure goals and objectives are met and the process remains aligned and congruent with organizational culture, mission, values, vision, goals, and objectives.

The *people* element is basically a career development model that is implemented once employees have bought into the succession planning process. The research identified four general components included in the career development process, including:

1. Effective gap analysis through evaluation of employee knowledge, skills, abilities (KSAs) and other competencies, 360-degree multirater performance reviews, and leadership potential appraisals.
2. Effective employee career development to address identified gaps.
3. Performance recognition such as awards, incentives, or other types of pay for performance.
4. Continual and periodic evaluation of employee progress.

The research showed that effective employee career development is comprised of a myriad of components designed to provide personal and professional development opportunities for individuals aspiring to higher level leadership positions. These components include:

- expansion of job scope
- assignment in an *office of* or *assistant* role
- transfer to a new job offering specific developmental opportunities
- lateral job rotations
- task force assignments
- mentoring
- coaching
- special projects
- in-house educational courses
- external educational courses including public seminars
- e-learning and other Internet-based education
- guided reading
- teaching educational courses

- extracurricular activity
- assistance from counselors and employee assistance programs (EAPs)

Succession planning models specific to the fire service were identified in the literature review, including evaluation of previous applied research papers submitted by fellow participants in the NFA's EFOP. The research identified several fire service organizations employing various components of succession planning. These organizations included NFPA, CFAI, CFOD, IAFC, and DHS/USFA/NFA. Every fire service professional organization the researcher evaluated shared three common components in their succession planning models – advocacy, championing, sponsorship, and support of the succession planning process at the CEO and governing/oversight levels of the organization; leading by example at senior-level chief officer positions; and the development and implementation of a formal succession planning and development process. Additional succession planning components generally shared by fire service professional organizations for senior-level chief officers included the following mapping and measuring components:

- job analyses based on organization analyses through evaluation of agency mission, values, vision, and strategic goals and objectives;
- job descriptions based on job analyses combined with competency modeling resulting from evaluation of KSAs and other critical competencies by subject matter experts (e.g. DACUM, etc.);
- minimum job requirements as a component of job descriptions based on competency modeling (e.g. formal education; professional certifications; technical competencies; required training; etc.);

- 360-degree, multirater feedback as a component of a formal career development program;
- coaching and mentoring as part of a formal career development program;
- measuring the health and success of an organization using internal bench strength as a barometer;
- comprehensive and job related testing & selection processes for filling position vacancies that also place a value on experience.

Question 2. What are the components being used for succession planning for senior-level chief officer positions by other fire departments who have achieved Accreditation through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International? The literature review and questionnaire each provided information necessary to answer this research question.

The literature review clearly and distinctly identified several succession plan components required as a condition of CFAI (2000) accredited agencies, including the following *performance indicators*:

- 1A.3 – There is a method that utilizes qualifications and credentials to select the agency's chief fire officer.
- 7B.4 – New personnel recruited and appointed, and those transferred into the agency or promoted, meet stated qualifications for the position.
- 7B.5 – Testing processes used for initial selection and promotion are job related.
- 7B.8 – There is a position classification system that is adhered to.
- 7D.1 – There are current, written job descriptions for all positions.
- 7D.2 – The agency has a process by which the organization and jobs are audited and modified as needed.

- 7D.3 – The agency maintains a current list of the special knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA's) of each employee/member.
- 7D.5 – There is a career development program in place. (pp. 5.1-5.33)

The questionnaire identified additional succession plan components used by respondent fire chiefs from organizations that were accredited through the CFAI. Of the 106 accredited fire departments that were mailed questionnaires, fire chiefs from 56 (53%) agencies responded. In addition, questionnaires also provided demographic information relative to respondents and their fire department agencies; as well as some information relative to the respondents' perception of the value of various succession plan components.

Demographically, 55 (98%) respondents had formal college degrees, as follows: 11 (20%) Associates; 26 (47%) Bachelor's; 18 (33%) Master's; with none of the respondents reported to have their Doctorate. Twenty-nine (55%) were either currently enrolled or graduates of the NFA's EFOP and had attained CFO Designation through the CFAI. Forty (71%) of responding agencies serve communities of 100,000 or less and 16 (29%) greater than 100,000 population. Twenty-seven (48%) have 100 or less employees and 29 (52%) greater than 100. Forty-two (75%) have less than ten fire stations and 14 (25%) have ten or more stations.

Respondents' perceptions of the value of several career development components were also provided as a result of the questionnaires. Fire chiefs ranked formal education, EFOP, CFOD, progressive fire service experience (rising through the ranks), and experience in administrative/staff assignments relative to their importance in developing and preparing individuals for senior-level chief officer positions as either "essential," "important," "worthwhile," or "unnecessary." A formal college education was ranked highest, receiving 53 (95%) essential or important ratings. Progressive fire service experience was ranked second

receiving 49 (88%), followed closely by experience in administrative and staff assignments – also receiving 49 votes but with a greater number in the *important* category. EFOP was ranked higher than CFOD, with 6 (11%) of the respondents indicating CFOD was unnecessary as a career development tool; the only component to receive marks in the unnecessary category. The final *perception* question asked responding fire chiefs to identify the level of involvement at various organizational levels should their agencies develop a new succession planning and development process. Forty-nine (88%) indicated that the fire chief would be extremely involved; 44 (79%) that senior-level chief officers would be extremely involved; 21 (38%) that human resources would be extremely involved; and only 5 (9%) respondents indicated that the governing body (board of directors, county commissioners, city council) would be extremely involved developing a new succession planning and development process. Moreover, 26 (46%) respondents felt that governing bodies should have no involvement in this process whatsoever. Finally, 33 (60%) of responding fire chiefs provided email addresses and requested results from the applied research.

Twenty-four (43%) of questionnaire respondents believe they have a formal succession planning and career development system in place to develop and prepare individuals for senior-level chief officer positions. Thirty-four (61%) of respondents believe their organizations currently have eligible candidates who are capable, competent, qualified, and willing to promote from within should senior-level chief officer positions become vacant. Twenty-three (41%) replied that their agency has a formal “promote from within” policy for direct reports to the fire chief; while only 9 (16%) for the fire chief position itself. Eighteen (32%) of respondents require candidates for senior-level chief officer positions to have achieved the rank directly below the position they are applying for. All but one of the respondents believes their



organization has current and accurate job/position descriptions for these positions that include all formal requirements.

Thirty-two (57%) of respondents require attendance at specific external conferences, seminars, or trainings other than EFOP as a component of career development for senior-level chief officers assignments. Eight (14%) require EFO; 5 (9%) require CFO; 35 (63%) require Fire Officer II or III; and 30 (54%) require Fire Instructor I or II. Twenty-eight (50%) respondents use job rotations to help prepare individuals for senior-level chief officer positions. Sixteen (29%) of respondents utilize a full-circle multirater assessment component in their formal performance evaluation model of senior-level chief officers. Twenty-one (38%) of respondents employ a formal mentoring process to help prepare aspiring senior-level chief officers.

Thirty-eight (68%) of respondents have a formal educational requirement for the position of fire chief: 6 (11%) require an Associate's Degree; 29 (52%) require a Bachelor's Degree; and 3 (5%) require a Master's Degree. Thirty-six (64%) have a formal educational requirement for individuals who directly report to the fire chief: 20 (36%) require an Associate's Degree; 16 (29%) require a Bachelor's Degree; and none require a Master's Degree. Nineteen (50%) respondents indicated that educational requirements applied to incumbents in their current positions and 18 (47%) noted their organizations allow a grace period for attaining educational requirements with 13 of the 14 respondents indicating a grace period of less than three years. Forty-six (82%) of respondents' agencies have a tuition reimbursement policy in place for senior-level chief officers with a range of annual caps. Twenty-one (46%) respondents reported having no annual cap whatsoever on reimbursement of tuition expenses. Thirteen (23%) of respondents' agencies offer some type of educational differential for meeting or exceeding

formal educational requirement for senior-level chief officer job positions with annual differentials ranging from \$1,000 to \$3,000; and as a percentage of annual salary, approximately half of reported incentives ranging from 2.5% to 5% and half reporting greater than 5%.

Question 3. What components of a succession plan for senior-level chief officers are already in place at PFD? Results from the Succession Plan Questionnaire completed by Fire Chief Dan Qualman identified the following components in place at PFD:

- Formal promote from within policy at the division chief level
- Job descriptions including formal job requirements for each position
- Formal education requirements including a bachelor's degree at the division chief level and a master's degree at the fire chief level
- Fire Officer, Fire Instructor, and EFO certification requirements at each chief level
- Pay for performance/recognition systems in place including tuition reimbursement and educational differential at each chief level
- Job rotations at the division chief level

The questionnaire also identified the absence of a formal succession planning and career development system at PFD; as well as a current deficit of eligible candidates for every senior-level chief officer position who are capable, competent, qualified, and willing to promote should positions be vacated.

Results from the literature review identified several additional PFD goals relevant to succession planning, including the following *performance indicator* objectives required as a condition of PFD's Accreditation through the CFAI:

- Validation of senior-level chief officer selection processes;

- Wholesale job description review conducted by the Administrative Services Division to ensure consistency between job positions and accuracy of requirements for each job position;
- HR and Special Operations Bureau to collaborate to centralize the responsibility and the process for tracking KSA's for PFD line and staff employees within the Special Operations Bureau – ensuring the new process is efficient, effective, and meets the needs of their respective bureaus and the organization as a whole;
- Better defined career paths for senior-level chief officers, including development and implementation of a formal career development system more clearly defining advancement and promotional opportunities.

Question 4. What components should PFD use to develop and implement a succession plan for senior-level chief officer job positions? Review of the literature and analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaire identified a number of succession plan model components the researcher recommends be included in PFD's succession plan model. These recommendations are broken into two distinct areas: designing and managing the succession planning *process* and developing the *people*. The researcher recommends that each of the ten *process* components and four *people* components identified in Question 1 be included in a succession plan for senior-level job positions at PFD. Each of these components, including additional recommendations based on the research, is further discussed and explained in the *Recommendations* section of this ARP; as well as included in the *Recommended PFD Succession Model* (Appendix G). In addition, the researcher recommends PFD continue to utilize the succession plan and career development components already in place as identified in Question 3; while expanding their scope as

discussed in the *Recommendations* section of this ARP and also included in the *Recommended PFD Succession Model* (Appendix G).

### Discussion

The research provides ample evidence illustrating a lack of succession planning in the private and public sectors (Ciampa, 2005; Conte, 2006; Rothwell, 2005; Rothwell, Jackson, Knight, Lindholm, Wang, and Payne, 2005). The research further identifies the problem as being particularly endemic in the fire service (IAFC, 2003; Wolf, 2006); a problem further exacerbated by a critical need for succession planning as evidenced throughout the literature. Moreover, this critical need for succession planning is illustrated empirically in numerous applied research papers submitted as part of the NFA's EFOP (Dean, 2004; Garcia, 2004; King, 2005; Kopp, 2004; Leland, 2004; Rooney, 2004; Wallace, 2004). Study after study shows the benefit of succession planning to organizations and their bottom lines (Charan, 2005; Cohn, 2005; Mamprin, 2002; Ohlott, 2004; Rothwell, 2005). The research also demonstrates that succession planning is a critical component of "best practices" and "best-in-class" organizations such as Agilent Technologies, Bank of America, Corning, Dell Computer, Dow Chemical Company, Eli Lilly and Company, Hewlett-Packard, Honeywell Aerospace, Intel, Lockheed Martin, Mattel, and Motorola, to name a few (Carter, Ulrich, and Goldsmith, 2005; Fulmer and Conger, 2004). A notable exception is the fire service, where "Accredited Agency" status through the CFAI is recognized as an indicator of a "best practices" organization (CFAI, 2000, 2006; IAFC, 2003).

According to the questionnaire component of this research; even after successfully completing the comprehensive self-accreditation process, fire departments still miss the mark when it comes to succession planning. In fact, only 24 of 56 (43%) of CFAI Accredited fire

department leaders who responded to the research questionnaire believed their agencies were successful in providing formal succession planning and career development systems to develop and prepare individuals for senior-level chief officer assignments. Fortunately, the great majority of these fire chiefs believe they currently have the bench strength to fill vacancies in senior-level chief officer job positions, should they occur. More than half of the agencies surveyed do not have a *promote from within* policy for direct reports to the fire chief; and a full 83% do not have this policy in place at the fire chief level. This is disconcerting as Rothwell (2005) strongly asserts: "The centerpiece to a systematic succession planning and management program is a written policy favoring internal promotion" (p. 232). Accredited fire departments responding to the questionnaire also didn't fare so well implementing additional hallmark components of a *best practices* career development model for senior-level chief officers including: 360-degree multirater evaluation; job rotations; a formal mentoring process; external training; and performance rewards and recognition. Only 29% of respondents have a multirater evaluation process in place at this hierarchal level in the organization even though this succession plan component is considered essential in most of the literature (Berger and Berger, 2004; Carter, Ulrich, and Goldsmith, 2005; Fulmer and Conger, 2004; NFA, 2000; Rothwell, 2005). About half of the responding agencies utilize job rotations, approximately 40% have a formal mentoring process in place, and almost 60% require attendance at specific external conferences, seminars, or trainings to help develop and prepare individuals for senior-level chief officer positions. Questionnaire components relative to performance rewards and recognition included education differentials and college tuition reimbursement. Only 25% of responding agencies have implemented some form of educational differential; while a full 90% reimburse senior-level chief officers for some or all of their college tuition expenses, with almost half not

subject to an cap. The questionnaire shows that respondents value formal education, progressive fire service experience, and experience in administrative/staff assignments ahead of graduating from the EFOP and attaining CFOD. Finally, questionnaire components relative to specific minimum job requirements indicate almost 70% of responding agencies require formal education and professional certifications at the senior-level chief officer position; with most requiring a Bachelor's Degree for fire chiefs and an Associate's Degree for division chiefs. Master's Degrees were only required at the fire chief level, and only in three responding agencies. There were only a few responding agencies that required EFO or CFO certification as a minimum job requirement.

The questionnaire empirically shows that even those Accredited fire service agencies recognized as best-in-class employ a predominantly traditional approach to succession planning and career development – an approach that is really more accurately defined as “replacement planning,” attempting “...to fit the most highly qualified candidate with the job in the hope that candidate then carries out the responsibilities of the job most efficiently and effectively” (Ohlott, 2004, p. 171). Contrasted against the other Accredited Agencies responding to the questionnaire, PFD has the most stringent minimum job requirements; employs less career development components than do the majority of other agencies; and appears to be better than most at recognizing exceptional performance through its tuition reimbursement and educational differential components. PFD does not currently have in place an organized and systematic way to ensure that employees are capable, competent, *qualified*, and willing to replace and/or succeed to strategic roles within the organization. The researcher finds this extremely problematic when combined with the fact that PFD is also in the minority of Accredited Agencies to report an

inadequate *bench* of leaders to fill anticipated vacancies in strategically vital senior-level chief officer positions.

This begs the obvious question: why are some of the most progressive and professionally regarded best-in-class fire departments around the world failing to provide for future leadership in their organizations? In my opinion, the answer is complicated and subjective; requiring additional research well beyond the scope of this ARP. However, some clues can be found in the fire service literature reviewed and the research Questionnaire.

The lack of succession planning in the public sector is well documented by Rothwell (2005) citing comprehensive research by the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) during the past decade. Rainey and Wechsler's (1988) public sector research depicts leadership transitions at executive levels of government as "marked by serious deficiencies in preparation, orientation, and communication" (p. 45). In the final chapter of this same text, Granito (2003) offers his observations regarding "challenges for the next generation" and warns of massive firefighter retirements due to trends in demographics (p. 1108). Granito goes on to recommend "... that those departments [with] a high percentage are older members... will need to fast-track some officer positions" (p. 1109). There is no mention by the author as to what precipitated the fire service's predicament of having to *fast-track* officers in the first place. The researcher believes the answer is failing to include succession planning as an integral component of a fire department's strategic planning process as recommended by subject matter experts, and as a well-documented component of succession planning in best practices organizations (Carter, Ulrich, and Goldsmith, 2005; Fulmer and Conger, 2004; Rothwell, 2005).

For example; Togle (2003) mentions succession planning in his chapter for the *Fire Protection Handbook* titled "Organizing for Fire and Rescue Services" (Section 7). The extent

of the author's coverage is to discuss various promotional processes including performance ratings; oral interview; and assessment centers (p. 7-20). Saunders (2003) touches on succession planning in her chapter for *The Fire Chief's Handbook* on "Personnel Administration":

Once a need for a promotional exam arises within a department, a notice is promulgated informing those eligible of the pending examination. This should be done well in advance of the anticipated vacancy, to give those eligible as much time as possible to prepare for the exam. At this time, the department should provide a list of study material from which the examination will be drawn. (p. 239)

Once again, replacement planning takes the place of succession planning. However, the body of management literature is clear that promotional testing is an extremely minor component of a succession planning model (Rothwell, 2005).

The research has provided some very interesting and illuminating insights regarding fire service culture relative to succession planning. Probably the most significant challenge to the researcher's preconceptions came as a result of the final query in the Questionnaire instrument. Almost 50% of the responding fire chiefs from CFAI Accredited organizations reported that if their fire department developed a new succession planning and development process, their governing body would have no involvement in the process – less than 10% believed they would be extremely involved. This is contrary to all of the research literature vehemently asserting and empirically proving the need for governing boards to participate in the succession planning process for the process to be successful (Charan, 2005; Ciampa, 2005; Cohn, Khurana, and Reeves, 2005; Freeman, 2004; Lorsch and Khurana, 1999). Another example of how fire service culture influences succession planning is observed in how fire department career development focuses almost entirely on minimum position requirements such as years of service, required



rank advancement, and credentialing. Unfortunately, the fire service's predilection to rank/seniority as a precondition for promotion ignores the intuitive construct that a good fireground commander does not necessarily make a good manager or administrator. The fire service also seems to be averse to the vast majority of career development components cited in the literature; especially those most often identified as *best practices* by subject matter experts.

Rothwell (2005) identifies many of these "best practices" succession planning and management components in his research, including: individualized career development plans specific to the employee; mechanisms in place to make career development activities "simple for the employee"; use of coaching, training, special assignments, action learning, and Web-based development; and building a culture where "high-potential talent is a shared resource rather than owned by specific managers" (pp. 31-32). The need for a non-traditional and altruistic departure away from a corporate culture of hoarding talent to sharing it is reinforced elsewhere in the literature (Cohn, Khurana, and Reeves, 2005). In the researcher's 22 years of fire service experience, the concept of sharing talent throughout the organization is antithetical. Anyone who has ever sat through a battalion chief meeting to discuss potential personnel reassignments is aware of the protectionist climate of chief officers posturing to keep their best performers at almost any cost. Rarely are individual career development opportunities and challenges the topic at hand; or the overarching needs of the organization considered ahead of the desire to keep from losing talented officers off one's shift. Moreover, many a battalion chief (BC) has expressed that their crews often measure the mettle of their BC in terms of the net loss or gain in perceived human capital following these re-organization meetings.

In fact, most fire service texts offer only traditional approaches to succession planning which are devoid of any meaningful career development component; and are more accurately

defined as “replacement planning,” where organizations “... attempt to fit the most highly qualified candidate with the job in the hope that candidate then carries out the responsibilities of the job most efficiently and effectively” (Ohlott, 2004, p. 171). The research is clear on this point – replacement planning is not succession planning (Berger and Berger, 2004; Conger and Benjamin; 1999; McCauley and Van Velsor, 2004). Why does the fire service give succession planning such seemingly short shrift?

Rothwell (2005) notes that government and public sector agencies have been reticent to embrace succession planning; “...often relying on a talent-pool approach, which is more consistent with the laws, rules, regulations, political realities, and organizational cultures.... efforts to groom individuals in these settings have sometimes been prohibited rather than encouraged” (p. 321). Rothwell goes on to predict “...government agencies will be forced to adopt more systematic succession practices” due to a variety of external factors not the least of which is the projected increases in retirements (p. 321). The author identifies two key differences between government and private business succession planning models, civil service systems and the “key customers” of succession planning efforts; noting that in the public sector succession planning is often referred to as “workforce planning” or “human capital management initiatives” (p. 51). This alternative wording is often used to avoid the outward appearance that a specific heir apparent is part of the organization’s succession plan.

Rothwell (2005) further asserts that the “key challenge” for government and other public sector agencies “... is to find better ways to recruit, retain, motivate, and cultivate talent without sacrificing existing civil service laws and rules and without sacrificing merit-based pay employment in favor of political patronage, nepotism, or unlawful discrimination” (p. 322). The author also recommends a major paradigm shift in public-sector culture and thinking “... so that

focusing on succession and beyond becomes a hallmark of strategic leadership” (p. 344). To accomplish this, fire chiefs must resist being consumed by the demands of the present and allow time to focus and prepare for the needs of the future. Rothwell goes on to contend that a fire chief’s success in succession planning is predicated on overcoming four specific roadblocks:

- (1) The leader’s reluctance to take up the succession “task”;
- (2) The assumption that succession issues are beyond the scope of the leader’s work;
- (3) Confusion about how the succession task should be framed – is it a matter of replacing oneself or of strategic “positioning?”
- (4) Lack of information about how to take up the task – how to plan for succession in the midst of a shifting political environment and given regulator and political constraints. (p. 344)

The researcher believes that all of these roadblocks can be overcome and has offered recommendations, as a result of the research, that are believed will be effective in meeting this goal.

The most important recommendation required for the success of succession planning at PFD – the sine qua non of succession planning, as identified by the research – is support for, and involvement in, the succession planning process by the District’s Board of Directors and Fire Chief, and championed by incumbent senior-level chief officers and the Human Resources Bureau. As Fulmer and Conger (2004) assert: “The most effective systems are not owned and championed by the senior operating executives of the company, often in concert with the board of directors. At the same time, operating executives and general managers throughout the organization play active ownership roles as well” (p. 7). Following a close second in importance is to greatly expand the components of PFD’s informal career development model – discussed at great length in the next section – as well as expanding and modifying how existing career

development components are utilized. Career development components discussed include the NFA EFOP, 360-degree multi-rater assessment, and job rotations. But first, the researcher believes an overview and discussion of PFD's existing replacement planning components is important to better understand the issues specific to PFD.

Currently, PFD has implemented a formal policy of "promoting from within" at the division chief officer level as the lodestar of its informal employee career development model (PFD, 2005, Section 5.1). Formal job position requirements for all senior-level chief officers serve as the remaining component of the District's career development model and include: formal college education; professional certifications through the State of Colorado; EFOP, and a modicum of required supervisory experience (PFD, 2005). There is an observable lack of additional succession planning or career development model components for senior-level chief officers at PFD; especially in contrast with career development for positions below the chief officer rank.

PFD has employed several initiatives below the rank of chief officer, including comprehensive and formal "Qualifications" programs at the engineer, lieutenant, and battalion chief positions and an in-house Company Officer Development Course (PFD, 2004a, 2004b, 2004d, 2004e). Each of these career development training and education tools is also accredited through the State of Colorado Community College System, earning participants semester credit hours toward an Associate's Degree in Fire Science. There are additional career development initiatives at engineer and paramedic positions, including an extensive Engineer Academy; an EMT-Attend Program to indoctrinate aspiring paramedics; and a very well-defined and comprehensive Paramedic Field Instruction Program that invests up to twelve months to intensely mentor and coach brand new paramedics (PFD, 2004c). Field instructors are tenured

paramedics who have competed for the honor of shaping their peers who have just completed paramedic school; and are considered the best and brightest PFD has to offer.

This begs the question; why are there no formal career development components for senior-level chief officers at PFD beyond the replacement planning mentioned earlier? King (2005) also notes the conspicuous absence of “specific training requirements” for senior-level chief officer positions; noting that these division chief and fire chief officer positions are “considered a special assignment” and therefore do not have position requirements found in jobs farther down in the organizational hierarchy (pp. 17-18). The researcher believes there are additional reasons for the dearth of formal career development initiatives at senior-level chief officer positions at PFD, including: the aversion of senior-level chief officer incumbents to being perceived as playing favorites or identifying an heir apparent; the presumption that eventually the “cream will rise to the top” anyway; the relative lack of job openings at the executive level due to extended tenures in these positions; and the unwillingness of incumbents to face the eventuality of their own separation from the job – since for many of the individuals that reach the senior-level in a fire service organization, the job is often what defines them as a person, both on and off duty. However, the researcher believes that the one word that cogently and succinctly defines the problem is fire service *tradition*.

One program that attempts to break with tradition, and is successful in a great many ways, is the NFA’s EFOP; the first replacement planning and career development component the researcher believes should be expanded and modified. The NFA’s EFO Program meets all of Conger and Benjamin’s (1999) “best practices for effective programs in individual development,” including:

1. Build Around a Single Well-Delineated Leadership Model

2. Use Participant Selection Process with Clear Criteria
3. Conduct Precourse Preparation
4. Use Personalized 360-Degree Feedback to Reinforce Learnings
5. Use Multiple Learning Methods
6. Conduct Extended Learning Periods and Multiple Sessions
7. Put Organizational Support Systems in Place (pp. 33-55)

Unfortunately, in the researcher's experience – which includes discussions with a great many fellow EFOP participants – the EFOP falls short of its intended potential as a personal career development tool due to what Conger and Benjamin (1999) describe as the “failure to build a critical mass” (p. 56). The authors go on to elaborate:

One of the principal drawbacks of individual development programs is that they are not always geared to cohorts of individuals from a single workplace – especially programs offered on the outside such as at universities. As a result, participants may be among a handful of individuals from their own organizations who attend the leadership program. Upon their return to the office, they discover that their learnings and new vocabulary are little appreciated or understood by others. This creates an enormous hurdle for the application of learnings. The dilemma is tied to the fact that work is essentially a collaborative process.... What gives new learnings the potential for taking hold is that one's workgroup also endorses, promotes, and reinforces them. Without that social support and pressure, new ideas and behaviors may receive neither sufficient reinforcement nor rewards to survive for long. (p. 56)

For many EFOP participants, failure to build critical mass is illustrated in several ways. The researcher believes each of these can be attributed to a short-sighted career development

philosophy – a philosophy exemplified in the NFA’s own choice of verbiage found in its EFOP application process guidelines; which state that acceptance into the EFOP requires a commitment by the sponsoring fire chief and organization “... to *allow* [emphasis added] the participant to complete the entire program, including the Applied Research Project Process” (USFA, 2003, I-7). In the researcher’s experience, fire chiefs do just that; *allow*. Moreover, there is rarely any support for the EFOP participant from senior-level chief officers, who are generally busy with their own workloads. At risk of appearing sophomoric in the research, there is an excellent metaphor that comes to mind. As a father, there is a chasm of difference between *allowing* my children to participate in sports and being their advocate, coach, mentor, and actively participating in their activities. The former demonstrates a disassociated, uninvolved commitment of a few dollars for attire and equipment or providing a ride to practices now and then – while the latter demonstrates a sincere commitment and heartfelt, passionate resolve to actively and assertively be personally involved in my child’s development and success. I believe this illustrates what is often lacking in the EFOP as a career development tool.

Most EFOP attendees dread the week preceding their trip to Emmitsburg and the weeks immediately following their coursework. They are expected to get ahead of their workloads prior to leaving and play *catch-up* upon returning. The exceptional information learned and experiences gained at NFA during these two weeks are rarely passed along to others in the organization as there is neither the time nor the direction to do so. Applied research papers are completed at nights and on weekends with little support from the organization. These ARPs are completed with organizational challenges and problems in mind; however in many cases they are never shared with other members of the organization or reviewed by senior-level chief officers. “What gives new learnings the potential for taking hold is that one’s workgroup also endorses,

promotes, and reinforces them. Without that social support and pressure, new ideas and behaviors may receive neither sufficient reinforcement nor rewards to survive for long” (Conger and Benjamin, 1999, p. 56). The researcher believes fire departments have often failed to build a critical mass in utilizing the NFA’s best-in-class EFOP as a career development tool for aspiring senior-level chief officers. Moreover, a significant paradigm shift away from fire service tradition is necessary to dramatically change the involvement of fire chiefs and organizations in the EFOP process for the fire service to be successful in getting the most out of the NFA’s wonderful career development tool.

The second replacement planning and career development component the research suggests should be expanded and modified at PFD is the use of a 360-degree, multi-rater assessment for senior-level chief officers (Berger and Berger, 2004; Carter, Ulrich, and Goldsmith, 2005; Fulmer and Conger, 2004; Rothwell, 2005). Currently this type of assessment instrument is only used for lieutenants and battalion chiefs. Fulmer and Conger (2004) identify an important key to success in this area noting that all assessment instruments “... [depend] on a deep comfort with differentiating performance between individuals and in turn a corporate culture in which candor is more highly valued than politeness or tolerance for average or poor performance” (pp. 153-154). Unfortunately, this type of candor is often antithetical to PFD culture and fire service culture, in general. The researcher believes this is due to a pervasive family atmosphere that often inspires supervisors to maintain friendships and camaraderie at the expense of accountability, honesty, and responsibility when conducting performance appraisals.

The final replacement planning component the researcher believes should be expanded and modified is the use of job rotations to facilitate personal career development at PFD. Historically, PFD has employed job rotations as a career development tool for senior-level chief



officers; both at the training chief (now special operations chief) and division chief of administration job positions. Each of these assignments involved rotation of battalion chiefs to prepare them for future promotion to fill division chief and fire chief vacancies. Ohlott (2004) posits that “challenging job assignments are perhaps the most potent form of leader development that exists” and asserts that some organizations have implemented a “...systematic program of job rotation, in which they identify future leaders and their strengths and development needs and then devise a development plan...” (p. 181). The author goes on to recommend individuals remain in developmental assignments for a minimum of three and a half years, referencing John Gabarro’s (1987) research that further reports “... managers did not learn at a deeper level until after the first eighteen months in a job” (p. 180). The researcher believes the missing career development component in job rotations to prepare senior-level chief officers at PFD has been an absolutely essential one; the mentoring process.

Historically, battalion chiefs have rotated into these positions with an almost sink or swim mentality on the part of immediate supervisors and the organization. Very little preparation took place with no individual competency assessment component and only a modicum of feedback for the battalion chief during the rotation period; typically ranging from two to three years. There appeared to be a pedestrian “I guess it’s my turn” type of mentality along with an almost immediate admonition by the rotated chief officer that the new assignment was not really their bailiwick, but that they would muddle through; and not to expect too much. The researcher believes this is an excellent example of replacement planning that failed to meet its potential as succession planning. Individual needs were never addressed, nor were the opportunities to really *develop* chief officers during job rotations ever realized beyond what the rotated battalion chief aspired to within the bounds of their individual cognizance and initiative.

In summary, the researcher believes Conger and Benjamin (1999) offer the best final advice and motivation applicable to the applied research: “The worst case would be that organizations return to older notions that the cream will naturally rise to the top (so who needs education and career planning)” (p. 263). To avoid this gloomy forecast, the researcher believes PFD must act quickly and assertively to develop and implement a succession planning model to prepare future leaders for challenges and opportunities that are looming on the horizon.

### Recommendations

The research found that fire service agencies could expand and improve their succession planning models, including design and management of succession *processes* and developing *people*. The researcher recommends that PFD adopt of all ten succession *process* components and four *people* components identified in the research; as well as expanding career development methods within the organization to better prepare individuals and the organization to meet future challenges and opportunities as a best-in-class fire department. Further recommendations for PFD include a review of CFAI required performance indicators relative to succession planning to ensure agency compliance with Accreditation requirements and standards; as well as PFD’s own documented goals and objectives. The researcher believes that specific recommendations for PFD are also germane to other CFAI Accredited Agencies and the general fire service. These recommendations are split between “what we aren’t doing and should be?” and “what we are doing and should be doing better?”

What we aren’t doing and should be includes all ten of the succession *process* components identified in the research, including:

1. Schedule a focus group meeting with all PFD senior-level chief officers and the Human Resources Director to discuss succession planning. The group should utilize

- this ARP as a springboard for discussion to identify future challenges and opportunities facing the organization and conduct an informal SWOT analysis. The researcher believes the result will be group recognition of the need for a more extensive succession plan model and an appreciation for the benefits thereof. PFD has already demonstrated an appreciation for promoting internally when possible as evidenced in formal policy. A goal of this meeting is to develop organizational goals and objectives relative to the succession planning process.
2. Succession planning advocated, championed, supported, and developed by PFD bureau chiefs and directors, battalion chiefs, division chiefs, fire chief, and the District's Board of Directors. This will first require buy-in from the fire chief who is responsible for involving the Fire District's Board of Directors in the succession planning process.
  3. Succession planning model and timeline developed at the executive leadership level, including HR, and communicated throughout the organization. Appropriate steps should be taken to ensure the succession model is aligned with PFD's organizational culture, mission, values, vision, and the goals and objectives identified in the District's *Strategic Plan*.
  4. Succession planning accepted and adopted throughout the organization through communication and collaboration.
  5. Organizational SWOT/gap analysis conducted to determine future staffing needs; especially with regard to present and future management and leadership.
  6. Critical job competencies and minimum requirements identified through a process such as DACUM or rapid results assessment. Evaluate the possibility of integrating

- an emotional intelligence (EI) or leadership assessment instrument similar to those used in the NFA's EFOP for EFO participants. These competencies, KSAs, and minimum job requirements – along with other expectations of senior-level chief officers – should be assertively and routinely communicated so individuals have a crystal clear understanding of the responsibilities of the job. Chief Officers should be encouraged to attain their CFOD as a measure of competency in their respective positions.
7. Review and revise job descriptions for senior-level chief officer positions to reflect organizational needs in the present and future; as well as documenting necessary competencies and changes to minimum job requirements, once defined.  
  
Recommended changes based on the research include mandatory three year tenure as a battalion or bureau chief to be eligible for senior-level chief positions (Ohlott, 2004).
  8. HR to develop workforce forecast and planning model including replacement charts, documentation, and tracking to determine current and anticipated “bench strength” including a candid analysis of surpluses, voids, blockages, problem employees, and exemplary performers (Berger and Berger, 2004, p. 14).
  9. Implement a career development model that allows for individualized career and personal development plans to address individual needs based on competency assessments.
  10. Continually evaluate the succession planning process and model to ensure organizational goals and objectives are met; and the process remains aligned and

congruent with organizational culture, mission, values, vision, and the goals and objectives identified in the District's *Strategic Plan*.

What we are doing and should be doing better includes most of the four *people* components identified in the research, including:

1. Develop and implement effective gap analysis instruments to evaluate those employees eligible for succession into senior-level chief officer positions. Evaluation instruments should measure knowledge, skills, abilities (KSAs) and other competencies and include 360-degree multirater performance reviews and other leadership potential appraisals contrasted against the critical competencies and minimum requirements identified in the organizational DACUM or rapid results assessments. These reviews should be used for developmental rather than administrative purposes, as recommended in the research. Currently PFD does not utilize 360-degree multirater performance reviews at the division chief officer or chief officer levels and only tracks minimum job requirements such as formal education and certifications to ensure compliance and eligibility for promotion. The existing system is reactive rather than proactive; employing an accountability component and lacking a developmental one.
2. Effective individual employee career development plans to address identified gaps. This process is only completed rudimentarily as a component of an annual performance appraisals system. Currently, employees are only notified if they fail to attain or maintain job requirements.
3. Additional performance recognition such as awards, incentives, or other types of pay for performance should be evaluated and implemented where appropriate. Currently

PFD has the following components in place: 2.5% educational differential for recognized formal education levels; tuition reimbursement; and a special award for completing a formal college degree program at a bachelor's or master's level.

4. Continual and periodic evaluation of employee progress in achieving their career and personal developmental goals and objectives. Currently this is only achieved informally, depending on the supervisor, and formally during annual performance appraisals.

The researcher has also identified the need to review and expand several career development components already in place at PFD; components designed to provide personal and professional development opportunities for individuals aspiring to senior-level chief officer leadership positions. Recommendations include:

1. Expansion of job scope – Oversight of special teams and other Coordinator positions should be reassigned to training bureau as a developmental opportunity for the training bureau chief. Currently these are managed by the operations division chief and include the following coordinator positions: aircraft rescue (ACR); engineer; hazardous materials (HazMat) team; fitness and wellness; self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA); special weapons and tactics team (SWAT) paramedics; technical rescue team; urban search and rescue (USAR) team; water rescue; and wildfire team. Moreover, the Training Bureau should be renamed as “Special Operations” and the Training Chief, Special Operations Chief. The Operations Chief should use this as a developmental opportunity for the Special Operations Chief. Expansion of job scopes for additional positions should be evaluated.

2. Assignment in an “office of” or “assistant” role – In 2007, PFD will be involved in a comprehensive re-accreditation process that must be completed by February, 2008. This would be an excellent developmental opportunity to temporarily reassign an individual to assist the division chief of administration with this process.
3. Transfer to a new job offering specific developmental opportunities – PFD is currently exploring a residency program staffing concept. This would be an excellent developmental opportunity to reassign an individual to manage and lead this program.
4. Lateral job rotations – Historically, PFD has implemented several job rotation schemes for the following job positions: training lieutenant, training battalion chief, and division chief of administration. Unfortunately these job rotations did not realize their potential as career development tools due to either short duration (six months) and/or the lack of an assessment and mentoring component whereby individuals rotating into positions were routinely and purposefully evaluated and developed in their new roles. The recommendation is that these critical components be implemented for any future job rotations used for career development purposes. In addition, job rotations for career development purposes should last a minimum of three years.
5. Task force assignments – Deployment as a team member and/or single resource through various Incident Management Teams (IMT); Colorado Task Force One (USAR); the PFD hazmat, technical rescue, and wildfire teams should be strongly encouraged and facilitated for individuals identified as potential senior-level chief officer candidates. Historically, special teams’ deployments, while supported, were not specifically identified in the career development process as plan components for

- specific individuals. Individuals returning from deployments should also be required to share their experiences and *lessons learned* with fellow officers during formal presentations which can be facilitated during scheduled officer meetings.
6. Mentoring – Mentoring is an informal and sporadic process at best. The recommendation is to formalize the mentoring process to include structured training for both senior-level chief officer mentors and protégés who aspire to be senior-level chief officers.
  7. Coaching – Coaching is an informal and sporadic process as well. The recommendation is to formalize the coaching process to include structured training for individuals assigned to coach aspiring senior-level chief officers.
  8. Special projects – PFD utilizes special projects on an organization-wide basis. Special projects are part of PFD’s corporate culture. However, while special projects have been a method for showcasing individuals who aspire to be officers; special projects have not realized their potential as a career development tool – or in most cases even been recognized as such. In conjunction with reassigning an individual to assist the division chief of administration with the re-accreditation process in 2007; individuals should be assigned to assist specific division and bureau chiefs/managers with their respective accreditation responsibilities, as a career developmental tool to prepare individuals for future leadership and management challenges and opportunities. In addition, the special operations chief should invest the time and focus necessary to use the reassignment of special teams and other “coordinators” under his/her purview as a career development opportunity for each of these individuals.



9. 'In-house' educational courses – PFD should sponsor educational opportunities directed at the competencies and KSAs necessary at senior-level chief officer positions and make these opportunities available to individuals targeted for these positions, as part of the organization's succession plan.
10. External educational courses including public seminars – Currently EFOP is required at the fire chief level and “desired” at a division chief level. EFOP participation can be significantly enhanced as a career development tool. Recommendations include greater organizational support for EFOP participants; as well as implementing a mentoring component with an EFOP alumnus. Organizational support for EFOP participants should include provisions to fill temporarily vacant job positions with individuals assigned in an “office of” or “assistant” role while participants attend NFA EFOP courses. Provisions should also be made to reduce workloads immediately following EFOP courses and facilitate the time necessary for participants to share EFOP material and experiences with coworkers and senior-level chief officers, in addition to working on ARPs without overloading EFOP attendees. The mentoring component should include routine interplay between EFOP attendees and their mentors to ensure ARP subject matter is of value to the organization and will benefit the EFO attendee in their career development. Once completed, ARPs should be reviewed and discussed amongst management staff, especially senior-level chief officers – and disseminated throughout the organization via a formal presentation by EFOP participants.
11. E-learning and other Internet-based education – Opportunities to use this convenient career development tool should be routinely explored.

12. Guided reading – This career development component has been used within the Administration Division with success and should be expanded to other divisions and bureaus within the organization.
13. Teaching educational courses – Instructor assignments as career development opportunities should be expanded to include in-house company officer development, EMT, and college courses; firefighter recruit academies; and senior-level chief officer training.
14. Extracurricular activity – Opportunities for career development such as giving formal presentations to homeowners’ groups and attendance at various other civic and community group meetings should be explored. Currently these events are attended by only a few individuals and have not been specifically identified or utilized in with a career development focus.
15. Assistance from counselors and employee assistance programs (EAPs) – PFD has a comprehensive EAP that should be identified as a resource in the career development model outside of its predominant use as a remediation tool.

What we are doing and should be doing better also includes compliance with CFAI guidelines, recommendations, and standards as documented in PFD’s *Self-Assessment Manual*, including the following recommendations referencing the performance indicators identified:

- 1A.3 – The incumbent fire chief and board of directors should collaborate to review and revise the job description and selection process for the fire chief position. This process should include a means of measuring critical competencies and minimum requirements identified in 7B.4 as a method of internally validating the selection process.

- 7B.4 – Job descriptions for all senior-level chief officer positions should be reviewed and revised after critical competencies and minimum requirements are identified through a DACUM or rapid results assessment process.
- 7B.5 & 7D.2 – Incumbent senior-level chief officers should collaborate to review and revise the job descriptions and selection processes for the division chief job positions. This process should include a means of measuring critical competencies and minimum requirements identified in 7B.4 as a method of internally validating the selection process.
- 7D.3 – Documentation and tracking of KSAs, critical competencies, minimum job requirements, and required certifications for senior-level chief officers (and all line and staff employees) should be centralized in one location. PFD’s Special Operations and Human Resources Bureaus should collaborate to ensure the new process is efficient, effective, and meets the needs of their respective Bureaus and the organization as a whole.
- 7D.5 – The District’s tuition reimbursement program guidelines and policies should be reviewed and revised to more effectively meet the needs of participants including individuals aspiring to senior-level chief officer positions. The program currently reimburses all members uniformly, without consideration as to the level of education being pursued (e.g. Associate’s, Bachelor’s, or Master’s) or the associated cost per credit hour. The program is also somewhat onerous for both participants and human resources personnel with regard to planning, budgeting appropriately, and disbursement of funds. The District’s educational differential program should also be expanded to include a two-tiered system to recognize individuals who prepare

themselves for future promotional challenges and opportunities by completing advanced education – the consequences being increased organizational bench strength in key strategic management and leadership areas. Career paths for staff positions should be defined and delineated more clearly as part of individual career and personal development plans for individuals identified as potential senior-level chief officer candidates.

## References

- Berger, L. A., & Berger, D. R. (Eds.), *The talent management handbook: Creating organizational excellence by identifying, developing, and promoting your best people*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Boyatzis, A. R. (1982). *The competent manager: A model for effective performance*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Bracken, D. W., Dalton, M. A., Jako, R. A., McCauley, C. D., & Pollman, V. A. (1997). *Should 360-degree feedback be used only for developmental purposes?* Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership.
- Brookhouse, K. & Lane, J. M. (2005). Motorola. In Carter, L., Ulrich, D., & Goldsmith, M. (Eds.). (2005). *Best practices in leadership development and organizational change: How the best companies ensure meaningful change and sustainable leadership*. (pp. 334-345). San Francisco: Pfeiffer.
- Byham, W. C., Smith, A. B., & Paese, M. J. (2002). *Grow our own leaders: How to identify, develop, and retain leadership talent*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Carter, H. R., & Rausch, E. (1989). *Management in the fire service* (2nd ed.). Quincy, MA: National Fire Protection Association.
- Carter, L., Ulrich, D., & Goldsmith, M. (Eds.). (2005). *Best practices in leadership development and organizational change: How the best companies ensure meaningful change and sustainable leadership*. San Francisco: Pfeiffer.
- Chappelow, C. T. (2004). 360-degree feedback. In C. D. McCauley, & E. V. Van Velsor (Eds.), *The center for creative leadership handbook of leadership development* (2nd ed.) (pp. 58-84). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Charan, R. (2005, February). Ending the CEO succession crisis. *Harvard Business Review*, 72-81.
- Charan, R., Drotter, S., & Noel, J. (2001). *The leadership pipeline: How to build the leadership-powered company*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Ciampa, D. (2005, January). Almost ready: How leaders move up. *Harvard Business Review*, 46-53).
- Cohn, J. M., Khurana, R., & Reeves, L. (2005, October). Growing talent as if your business depended on it. *Harvard business review*, 63-70).
- Collins, J. (2001). *Good to great*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Collins, J. C. & Porras, J. I. (1994). *Built to last: Successful habits of visionary companies*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Commission on Chief Fire Officer Designation (CFOD). (2005). *Candidate guide and application* (Version 3.0). Fairfax, VA: Author.
- Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI). (2000). *Fire and emergency service self-assessment manual* (6th ed.). Fairfax, VA: Author
- Commission on Fire Accreditation International, (2006). Frequently asked questions. Retrieved February 14, 2006 from <http://www.cfainet.org/home/faq.asp#top>
- Conger, J. A., & Benjamin, B. (1999). *Building leaders: How successful companies develop the next generation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Conte, C. (2006, February). Expert exodus. *Governing*, 19(5), 22-28.
- Crossan, M. M., Fry, J. N., & Killing, J. P. (2005). *Strategic analysis and action*. Toronto: Pearson Prentice Hall.

- Dalziel, M. M. (2004). Competencies: The first building block of talent management. In Berger, L. A., & Berger, D. R. (Eds.), *The talent management handbook: Creating organizational excellence by identifying, developing, and promoting your best people*. (pp. 53-84). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Dean, B. R. (2004). *Planning for future leadership in Winter Park* (Applied research project). Emmitsburg, MD: National Fire Academy, Executive Fire Officer Program.
- Fleenor, J. W. & Prince, J. M. (1997). *Using 360-degree feedback in organizations: An annotated bibliography*. Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership.
- Freeman, K. W. (2004, November). The CEO's real legacy. *Harvard Business Review*, 51-58.
- Fulmer, R. M., & Conger, J. A. (2004). *Growing your company's leaders: How great organizations use succession management to sustain competitive advantage*. New York: American Management Association.
- Gabarro, J. (1987). *The dynamics of taking charge*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Garcia, R. M. (2004). *Succession planning for the Aurora Fire Department* (Applied research project). Emmitsburg, MD: National Fire Academy, Executive Fire Officer Program.
- Granito, J. (2003). The next generation. In R. C. Barr & J. M. Eversole (Eds.), *The fire chief's handbook* (6th ed.) (pp. 1095-1109). Saddle Brook, NJ: PennWell® Publishing Company, Fire Engineering.
- Grubs, L. (2004). Achieving organization excellence through talent planning and development. In Berger, L. A., & Berger, D. R. (Eds.), *The talent management handbook: Creating organizational excellence by identifying, developing, and promoting your best people*. (pp. 185-198). New York: McGraw-Hill.

International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC). (2003). *Officer development handbook*. Fairfax, VA: IAFC Foundation.

International Association of Fire Chiefs. (2004). *Issues assessment survey*. Fairfax, VA: Author.

International Fire Service Training Association. (2004). *Chief officer* (2nd ed.). Stillwater, OK: Author.

Johnson Foundation. (1966, February). Fire service administration, education and research. *Wingspread Conference*. Racine, WI: Author.

King, R. C. (2005). *Succession planning for future leaders of the Sparks Fire Department* (Applied research project). Emmitsburg, MD: National Fire Academy, Executive Fire Officer Program.

Kleiman, L. S. (2004). *Human resource management: A managerial tool for competitive advantage* (3rd ed.). Cincinnati, OH: Atomic Dog.

Knowdell, R. L. (1996). *Building a career development program: Nine steps for effective implementation*. Palo Alto, CA: Davies-Black Publishing.

Kopp, M. D. (2004). *Determining the elements of a succession plan for the position of fire chief for the Elmhurst Fire Department and the benefits of succession* (Applied research project). Emmitsburg, MD: National Fire Academy, Executive Fire Officer Program.

Leland, J. R. (2004). *Continuing a legacy: Succession planning for the Rochester Fire Department* (Applied research project). Emmitsburg, MD: National Fire Academy, Executive Fire Officer Program.

Lorsch, J. W., & Khurana, R. (1999, May-June). Changing leaders the board's role in CEO succession: A roundtable with Phillip Caldwell, George D. Kennedy, G.G. Michelson, Henry Wendt, and Alfred M. Zeien. *Harvard Business Review*, 96-105.



Mamprin, A. (2002, December). Next in line: Five steps for successful succession planning.

*Executive Update*. Retrieved February 15, 2006, from [http://www.gwsae.org/  
executiveupdate/2002/December/next.htm](http://www.gwsae.org/executiveupdate/2002/December/next.htm)

McCall, M. W., Jr. (1998). *High flyers: Developing the next generation of leaders*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

National Fire Academy (NFA). (2000, October). *Executive Leadership* (4th Ed.). [Student Manual]. Emmitsburg, MD: Author.

National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). (2003). *Standard for fire officer professional qualifications* (NFPA 1021). Quincy, MA: Author

Ohlott, P. J. (2004). Job assignments. In C. D. McCauley, & E. V. Van Velsor (Eds.), *The center for creative leadership handbook of leadership development* (2nd ed.) (pp. 151-182). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Parker Fire District (PFD). (1984). *PFD district report*. Parker, CO: Author.

Parker Fire District. (2002). *PFD accreditation self-assessment manual*. Parker, CO: Author.

Parker Fire District. (2003). *PFD strategic plan*. Parker, CO: Author.

Parker Fire District. (2004a). Battalion chief qualification program. Parker, CO: Author

Parker Fire District. (2004b). Company officer development. Parker, CO: Author

Parker Fire District. (2004c). Field training program for new paramedics. Parker, CO: Author

Parker Fire District. (2004d). Lieutenant qualification program. Parker, CO: Author

Parker Fire District. (2004e). Promotional study guide for engineers. Parker, CO: Author

Parker Fire District. (2005). *Employee policy and procedures manual*. Parker, CO: Author.

Parker Fire District. (2006). *PFD 2006 budget*. Parker, CO: Author.

- Rainey, H. G., and Wechsler, B. (1988). Executive-level transition: Toward a conceptual framework. *Public Productivity Review*, 13(1).
- Robbins, S. (2003). *Organizational behavior* (10th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Rooney, L. R. (2004). "Passing the torch" - Succession planning in a professional fire service organization (Applied research project). Emmitsburg, MD: National Fire Academy, Executive Fire Officer Program.
- Rothwell, W. (2006) *Curriculum vita*. Rothwell-Associates. Retrieved January 3, 2006, from <http://www.rothwell-associates.com/CurrentVita.pdf>
- Rothwell, W. J. (2005). *Effective succession planning: Ensuring leadership continuity and building talent from within*. New York: American Management Association.
- Rothwell, W. J., Jackson, R. D., Knight, S. C., Lindholm, J. E., Wang, W. A, and Payne, T. D. (2005). *Career planning and succession management: Developing your organization's talent – for today and tomorrow*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.
- Ruderman, M. N. (2004). Leader development across gender. In C. D. McCauley, & E. V. Van Velsor (Eds.), *The center for creative leadership handbook of leadership development* (2nd ed.) (pp. 271-303). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Saunders, C. (2006). MIS journal rankings. *Association for Information Systems*. Retrieved February 9, 2006, from <http://www.isworld.org/csaunders/rankings.htm>
- Saunders, K. J. (2003). Personnel administration. In R. C. Barr & J. M. Eversole (Eds.), *The fire chief's handbook* (6th ed.) (pp. 229-255). Saddle Brook, NJ: PennWell® Publishing Company, Fire Engineering.
- Solomon, M. R. & Stuart, E. W. (2003). *Marketing: Real people, real choices* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Tokle, G. O. (2003). Organizing for fire and rescue services. In Cote, A. E., et al. (Eds.), *Fire Protection Handbook* (Nineteenth ed., Volume 1) (Section 7). Quincy, MA:

National Fire Protection Association.

United States Fire Administration (USFA). (2003). *Executive fire officer program operational policies and procedures applied research guidelines*. Emmitsburg, MD:

Author.

Van Velsor, E., Leslie, J. B., & Fleenor, J. W. (1997). *Choosing 360: A guide to evaluating multirater feedback instruments for management development*. Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership.

Wallace, M. P. (2004). *A strategic formulation process for leadership succession planning – the Salem New Hampshire Fire Department* (Applied research project). Emmitsburg, MD:

National Fire Academy, Executive Fire Officer Program.

Wolf, D. (2006). Succession planning-part 1: Mentoring and educating younger fire officers for the chief's position. *Firehouse.com*. Retrieved February 9, 2006, from

<http://cms.firehouse.com/content/article/article.jsp?sectionId=5&id=46719>

Wolfe, R. L. (1996). *Systemic succession planning: Building leadership from within*. Boston: Course Technology.

## Appendix A

## York Memorandum

**From: John York, Operations Chief**

**Subject: Future**

It is not too soon to begin seriously considering the future direction of this District and your part in helping to guide it in the right direction. I am planning (but nothing in the future is guaranteed) to retire at age 55, which would occur in late 2003. With this in mind, I would anticipate that there will be testing processes beginning in late 2002 or early 2003 in order to fill expected vacancies for Operations and BC(s). To that end, I recommend that each of you examine his/her goals and career ambitions and obtain counsel from your leaders and peers to help you prepare for those goals. It is appropriate for the District to support those who seriously want to improve themselves, and I am confident this policy will continue. Make good use of our tuition reimbursement program.

I am recommending that any candidate for BC should have, at the very least, an associate's degree, and any candidate for Ops Chief should have at least a Bachelor's degree. In addition, serious contenders should think now about how to broaden their perspectives and view of management in the fire service and how to obtain the skills needed to do it. The National Fire Academy is one excellent way to do this, providing the proper classes are taken and the effort is put forth. The other opportunities for education are many and varied, including some excellent ones extending outside of the fire service.

My reason for publishing this memo now is simply to give you plenty of lead time and planning time...in addition to perhaps raising your awareness of how quickly the future is upon us, especially if we are not prepared. Thank You

## Appendix B

### Succession Planning Questionnaire – Cover Letter

February 7, 2006

Dear Chief:

As the leader of an Accredited Agency you are the CEO of a respected and progressive fire department. I'm confident that succession planning and career development is important to you and your organization in preparing individuals for future challenges and opportunities. This is why I am asking for your help in completing a short questionnaire on the subject of succession planning.

The information you provide will be used in my final Applied Research Paper (ARP) required as part of the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Course in *Executive Leadership*. The goal of my paper is to identify what components the Parker Fire District should use to develop and implement a succession plan for senior-level chief officer level job positions.

I sincerely appreciate and value your assistance in completing the attached questionnaire, which should take only a few minutes of your time. Your responses will provide me with the necessary research data I need to complete my ARP. All information will be held in the strictest of confidence; your responses will not be directly associated with you or your agency in particular. Enclosed is a self-addressed stamped envelope for your convenience in returning the completed questionnaire. I must receive completed questionnaires prior to March 1, 2006 to be included in my ARP.

If you would like to receive the results from this research, please provide me with your email address in the space provided to facilitate sharing of this information. Of course, your email address will be used for this purpose only.

Thank you in advance for your assistance in my personal career development and for assisting me in pursuing an essential component of my fire department's strategic planning process. If you have any questions regarding this questionnaire or the applied research please feel free to contact me personally at (720) 274-3737 or via email at [bbaker@parkerfire.org](mailto:bbaker@parkerfire.org)

Sincerely,

Bob Baker

Operations Chief

Parker Fire District

Encl.

## Appendix C

## Succession Planning Questionnaire

**Fire Department** \_\_\_\_\_

**Number of Fire Stations** \_\_\_\_\_

**Population Served (approximate)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Fire Department Personnel (approximate)** \_\_\_\_\_

1. What level of formal education have you completed as Fire Chief?

\_\_\_\_\_ Associate's

\_\_\_\_\_ Bachelor's

\_\_\_\_\_ Master's

\_\_\_\_\_ PhD

2. Are you currently enrolled in or a graduate of the NFA's Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP)? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Have you attained Chief Fire Officer Designation (CFOD) through the Commission on Chief Fire Officer Designation? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Rank the importance of the following in developing and preparing individuals for *senior-level chief officer* positions (defined as the fire chief & direct reports to the fire chief): (**E** =

Essential | **I** = Important | **W** = Worthwhile | **U** = Unnecessary)

\_\_\_\_\_ Formal Education (College)

\_\_\_\_\_ EFOP

\_\_\_\_\_ CFOD

\_\_\_\_\_ Progressive fire service experience ("rising through the ranks")

\_\_\_\_\_ Experience in administrative/staff assignments

5. Do you have a formal succession planning and career development system in place to develop and prepare individuals for *senior-level chief officer* promotion/assignment?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Do you require attendance at specific external conferences, seminars, or trainings (other than EFOP) to help develop and prepare individuals for *senior-level chief officer* promotion/assignment? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Do you have a formal performance evaluation/feedback system in place for *senior-level chief officers* that includes a full-circle multirater (360 degree) assessment component?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Do you use job rotations to help prepare individuals for future *senior-level chief officer* positions? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Do you use a formal mentoring process to help prepare individuals for future *senior-level chief officer* positions? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Is there a formal educational requirement in place for *senior-level chief officers*?  
\_\_\_\_\_

- If YES, please note the educational requirement for:

**Fire Chief**

\_\_\_\_\_ Associate's

\_\_\_\_\_ Bachelor's

\_\_\_\_\_ Master's

**Direct Reports**

\_\_\_\_\_ Associate's

\_\_\_\_\_ Bachelor's

\_\_\_\_\_ Master's

PLEASE CONTINUE QUESTIONNAIRE ON REVERSE SIDE

11. Does this educational requirement apply to incumbent *senior-level chief officers*?  
\_\_\_\_\_



12. Is there a “grace period” in place for attaining educational requirements for either incumbents or future promoted *senior-level chief officers*? \_\_\_\_\_

- If YES, what is the deadline for attaining (e.g. 1/08)? \_\_\_\_\_

13. Are *senior-level chief officers* eligible for any compensation “differential” for meeting or exceeding formal educational requirements for their job position? \_\_\_\_\_

- If YES, what is the  
 \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Annual “Differential”  
 \_\_\_\_\_ % of Annual Salary

14. Are *senior-level chief officers* eligible for college tuition reimbursement? \_\_\_\_\_

- If YES, what, if any, is the annual cap? \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

15. Please indicate any formal certification level required for senior-level chief officers.

\_\_\_\_\_ EFO

\_\_\_\_\_ CFO

\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Officer II or III

\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Instructor I or II

16. Does your organization currently have eligible candidates for every *senior-level chief officer* position who are capable, competent, qualified, and willing to promote should these positions become vacant? \_\_\_\_\_

17. Does your agency have a formal “promote from within” policy in cases where there are capable, competent, qualified, & willing internal candidates for *senior-level chief officer* vacancies?

\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Chief

\_\_\_\_\_ Direct Reports to Fire Chief

18. Does your formal promotional policy/process for *senior-level chief officer* positions require candidates to have achieved the rank directly below the position they are applying for (e.g. must be a battalion chief to test for deputy/division chief; must be a deputy/division chief to test for fire chief)? \_\_\_\_\_
19. There is a current and accurate job/position description for *senior-level chief officers* that includes all formal requirements for each position. (**YES** or **NO**). \_\_\_\_\_
20. If your agency developed a new succession planning and development process, please identify the level of involvement you believe each of the following would have in this process (**E** = Extremely Involved | **S** = Somewhat Involved | **N** = No Involvement):
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fire Chief
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Other Senior-Level Chief Officers
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Human Resources
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Governing Body (e.g. Board of Directors, County Commissioners, City Council)

If you would you like to receive results from this questionnaire, please provide your email address and completed data will be distributed electronically when compiled.

---

## Appendix D

## Accredited Agencies Participating in Questionnaire

<b>Organization</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>State</b>
Air Force Academy Fire & Emergency Services	USAF Academy	Colorado
Bradenton Fire Department, City of	Bradenton	Florida
Calgary Fire Department	Calgary	Alberta
Cary Fire Department, Town of	Cary	North Carolina
Charlotte Fire Department	Charlotte	North Carolina
Clay Fire Territory	South Bend	Indiana
Clovis Fire Department	Clovis	California
Coral Gables Fire Department	Coral Gables	Florida
Covington Fire Department	Covington	Georgia
Elmendorf Fire and Emergency Services	Elmendorf AFB	Alaska
Fayette County Department of Fire & Emergency Services	Fayetteville	Georgia
Geneva Fire Department	Geneva	Illinois
Glencoe Department of Public Safety	Glencoe	Illinois
Greensboro Fire Department	Greensboro	North Carolina
Hartford Fire Department	White River Junction	Vermont
Henrico County Division of Fire	Richmond	Virginia
Highland Park Fire Department	Highland Park	Illinois
Hill AFB Fire Department	Hill AFB	Utah
Hilton Head Island Fire & Rescue, Town of	Hilton Head Island	North Carolina
Honolulu Fire Department	Honolulu	Hawaii
Houston Fire Department	Houston	Texas
Jackson County Fire District # 3	White City	Oregon
Jacksonville Fire Department (NC)	Jacksonville	North Carolina
Jacksonville N.A.S. Fire Department	Jacksonville	Florida
Kingsport Fire Department	Kingsport	Tennessee
Largo Fire Rescue	Largo	Florida
Lenexa Fire Department	Lenexa	Kansas
Los Alamos County Fire Department	Los Alamos	New Mexico
Menasha Fire Department, Town of	Neenah	Wisconsin
Mesa Fire Department, City of	Mesa	Arizona
Mokena Fire Protection District	Mokena	Illinois
Mount Pleasant Fire Department, Town of	Mount Pleasant	South Carolina
Naperville Fire Department	Naperville	Illinois
Oak Park Fire Department	Oak Park	Illinois
Palm Harbor Special Fire Control & Rescue District	Palm Harbor	Florida
Park Ridge Fire Department	Park Ridge	Illinois
Parker Fire Protection District	Parker	Colorado
Patuxent River Fire and Emergency Services	Patuxent River	Maryland
Port Huron Fire Department	Port Huron	Michigan

Ridge Road Fire District	Rochester	New York
Roanoke Fire-EMS Department	Roanoke	Virginia
Rocky Mount Fire Department	Rocky Mount	North Carolina
Roseville Fire Department (CA)	Roseville	California
Santa Clara County Fire Department	Los Gatos	California
Shaker Heights Fire Department, The	Shaker Heights	Ohio
Sioux Falls Fire Rescue	Sioux Falls	South Dakota
Skokie Fire Department	Skokie	Illinois
South Kitsap Fire Rescue	Port Orchard	Washington
Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue	Aloha	Oregon
Tulsa Fire Department	Tulsa	Oklahoma
Union Township Fire Department	Cincinnati	Ohio
Virginia Beach Fire Department	Virginia Beach	Virginia
West Allis Fire Department	West Allis	Wisconsin
Wilson Fire/Rescue Services	Wilson	North Carolina
Winter Park Fire Department, City of	Winter Park	Florida
Yuma Fire Department, City of	Yuma	Arizona

## Appendix E

## Succession Planning Questionnaire – Results

*Raw Data***N=56**

This questionnaire is part of an Executive Fire Officer Program Applied Research Project completed by Robert F. Baker, Operations Chief of Parker Fire District. Results of the survey will be made available to other fire departments if requested. The Project is titled: *Developing a Succession Plan at the Chief Officer Level for the Parker Fire District.*

**n**

- 55**    Question 1.    What level of formal education have you completed as Fire Chief?  
Associates (**11**), Bachelor's (**26**), Masters (**18**), PhD (**0**)
- 55**    Question 2.    Are you currently enrolled in or a graduate of the NFA's Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP)? Yes (**29**), No (**26**)
- 53**    Question 3.    Have you attained Chief Fire Officer Designation (CFOD) through the Commission on Chief Fire Officer Designation? Yes (**29**), No (**26**)
- 54**    Question 4.    Rank the importance of the following in developing and preparing individuals for *senior-level chief officer positions* (defined as the fire chief and direct reports to the fire chief). [**E** = Essential | **I** = Important | **W** = Worthwhile | **U** = Unnecessary]. Formal Education [College] – E (**44**), I (**9**), W (**1**), U (**0**); EFOP – E (**8**), I (**31**), W (**15**), U (**0**); CFOD – E (**5**), I (**18**), W (**25**), U (**6**); Progressive fire service experience [“rising through the ranks”] – E (**33**), I (**16**), W (**5**), U (**0**); Experience in administrative/staff assignments – E (**27**), I (**22**), W (**4**), U (**0**)

- 53** Question 5. Do you have a formal succession planning and career development system in place to develop and prepare individuals for *senior-level chief officer* promotion/assignment? Yes (**24**), No (**29**)
- 55** Question 6. Do you require attendance at specific external conferences, seminars, or trainings (other than EFOP) to help develop and prepare individuals for senior-level chief officer promotion/assignment? Yes (**32**), No (**23**)
- 55** Question 7. Do you have a formal performance evaluation/feedback system in place for *senior-level chief officers* that includes a full-circle multirater (360 degree) assessment component? Yes (**16**), No (**39**)
- 54** Question 8. Do you use job rotations to help prepare individuals for future *senior-level chief officer* positions? Yes (**28**), No (**26**)
- 55** Question 9. Do you use a formal mentoring process to help prepare individuals for future *senior-level chief officer* positions? Yes (**21**), No (**34**)
- 54** Question 10. Is there a formal educational requirement in place for *senior-level chief officers*? Yes (**37**), No (**17**)
- 44** Question 11. Does this educational requirement apply to incumbent *senior-level chief officers*? Yes (**19**), No (**25**)
- 42** Question 12. Is there a “grace period” in place for attaining educational requirements for either incumbents or future promoted *senior-level chief officers*? Yes (**18**), No (**24**)
- 55** Question 13. Are *senior-level chief officers* eligible for any compensation “differential” for meeting or exceeding formal educational requirements for their job position? Yes (**13**), No (**42**)

- 51** Question 14. Are *senior-level chief officers* eligible for college tuition reimbursement?  
Yes (**46**), No (**5**)
- 56** Question 15. Please indicate any formal certification level required for senior-level chief officers. EFO (**8**), CFO (**5**), Fire Officer II or III (**35**), Fire Instructor I or II (**30**)
- 52** Question 16. Does your organization currently have eligible candidates for every *senior-level chief officer* position who are capable, competent, qualified, and willing to promote should these positions become vacant? Yes (**34**), No (**18**)
- 52** Question 17. Does your agency have a formal “promote from within” policy in cases where there are capable, competent, qualified, & willing internal candidates for *senior-level chief officer* vacancies? Fire Chief – Yes (**9**), No (**43**); Direct Reports to Fire Chief – Yes (**23**), No (**29**)
- 55** Question 18. Does your formal promotional policy/process for *senior-level chief officer* positions require candidates to have achieved the rank directly below the position they are applying for (e.g. must be a battalion chief to test for deputy/division chief; must be a deputy/division chief to test for fire chief)? Yes (**18**), No (**37**)
- 54** Question 19. There is a current and accurate job/position description for *senior-level chief officers* that includes all formal requirements for each position. Yes (**53**), No (**1**)
- 54** Question 20. If your agency developed a new succession planning and development process, please identify the level of involvement you believe each of the following would have in this process. [**E** = Extremely Involved | **S** = Somewhat Involved | **N** = No Involvement]. Fire Chief – E (**49**), S (**5**), N (**0**); Other Senior-Level Chief Officers – E (**44**), S (**10**), N (**0**); Human Resources – E (**21**), S (**28**), N (**1**); Governing Body [e.g. Board of Directors, County Commissioners, City Council] – E (**5**), S (**21**), N (**26**)

## SUCCESSION PLANNING QUESTIONNAIRE

	# of Fire Stations				Population Served				
	1-4	5-9	10-14	15 or >	<15k	16k-50k	51k-100k	101k-500k	>500k
	26	16	2	12	3	24	13	12	4
Total Responses - %	56 - 46%	56 - 29%	56 - 4%	56 - 21%	56 - 5%	56 - 43%	56 - 23%	56 - 22%	56 - 7%
	Total Personnel				Level of Education				
	<15	16-50	51-100	101-500	>500	AA	BA	MA	PhD
		3	24	24	5	11	26	18	
Total Responses - %	56 - 0%	56 - 5%	56 - 43%	56 - 43%	56 - 9%	55 - 20%	55 - 47%	55 - 33%	55 - 0%
	EFOP?		CFOD?						
	Yes	No	Yes	No					
	29	26	29	26					
Total Responses - %	55 - 53%	55 - 47%	53 - 51%	55 - 47%					
	Importance for Developing Senior Level Chief Officer				Formal Succession Plan		External Training for Promotion		
	E	I	W	U	Yes	No	Yes	No	
	College	44	9	1		24	29	32	23
EFOP	8	31	15						
CFOD	5	18	25	6					
Progressive Exp.	33	16	5						
Admin/Staff Assigns.	27	22	4						
Total Responses - %	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	53 - 45%	53 - 55%	55 - 58%	55 - 42%	
	360 Evaluation Process		Job Rotations to Prepare?		Mentoring Process?		Education Requirement?		
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	
	16	39	28	26	21	34	37	17	
Total Responses - %	55 - 29%	55 - 71%	54 - 52%	54 - 48%	55 - 38%	55 - 62%	54 - 69%	54 - 31%	
	Education Requirement for Fire Chief			Education Requirement for Direct Reports			Apply to incumbents?		
	AA	BA	MA	AA	BA	MA	Yes	No	
	6	29	3	20	16	0	19	25	
Total Responses - %	38 - 16%	38 - 76%	38 - 8%	36 - 56%	36 - 44%	36 - 0%	44 - 43%	44 - 57%	
	Grace Period for Education Requirements?		Time Frame for Attaining Requirements?						
	Yes	No	< 1 yr.	1-3 yrs.	4-5 yrs.	> 5 yrs.			
	18	24	5	8	0	1			
Total Responses - %	42 - 43%	42 - 57%	14 - 36%	14 - 57%	14 - 0%	14 - 7%			
	Compensation Differential for Education?		Annual Differential?				% of Annual Salary?		
	Yes	No	< \$1k	\$1k-\$3k	\$3k-\$5k	> \$5k	0 - 2.5	2.5 - 5	
	13	42		3				5	
Total Responses - %	55 - 24%	55 - 76%		13 - 23%				13 - 38%	
	Eligible for Tuition Reimbursement?		Annual Cap						
	Yes	No	<\$1k	\$1k - \$3k	\$3k - \$5k	> \$5k	No Cap		
	46	5	8	12	3	2	21		
Total Responses - %	51 - 90%	51 - 10%	46 - 17%	46 - 26%	46 - 7%	46 - 4%	46 - 46%		



	Formal Certification Level for Senior Level Chief Officers				Current Candidates for Promotion?		Promote from Within Policy?			
	EFO	CFO	FO II or III	FI I or II	Yes	No	Fire Chief		Direct Reports	
	8	5	35	30	34	18	Yes	No	Yes	No
							9	43	23	29
<b>Total &amp; %</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	52 - 65%	52 - 35%	52 - 17%	52 - 83%	52 - 44%	52 - 56%
	Rank directly below position applying for requirement?		Current/Accurate Job Description?							
	Yes	No	Yes	No						
	18	37	53	1						
<b>Total &amp; %</b>	55 - 33%	55 - 67%	54 - 98%	54 - 2%						
	Level of involvement in new succession planning process.									
	E	S	N							
Fire Chief	49	5								
Senior Level Chief Officers	44	10								
Human Resources	21	28	1							
Governing Body	5	21	26							
<b># Surveys Sent</b>	<b>106</b>									
<b># Returned</b>	<b>56</b>									
<b>% Returned</b>	<b>53%</b>									

## Appendix F

## Questionnaire Participant Follow-up Email

Recently each of you was kind enough to complete my questionnaire on "Succession Planning," conducted as a component of the NFA's *Executive Leadership* Course in their Executive Fire Officer Program. Thank you for assisting me in this career development tool and for your interest in my applied research.

I have completed my Applied Research Paper (ARP) which I have attached as a Microsoft Word file. This ARP contains the results of my research on the succession planning process, which includes data from the questionnaires each of you participated in. I hope you find the information edifying and interesting -- my apologies for the length of the ARP; it was an extremely comprehensive subject to cover succinctly.

Please feel free to email me if you have any questions or concerns regarding my research or the subject matter in general. Once again, I sincerely appreciate your time and commitment to my personal career development, the NFA's EFOP, and succession planning in the fire service.

Best Regards,

Bob Baker, Operations Chief

(720) 274-3700 ext. 3737

(303) 841-2608

[bbaker@parkerfire.org](mailto:bbaker@parkerfire.org)

## Appendix G

## Recommended PFD Succession Model

The logo for Parker Fire District is a black rectangular box with the text "Parker Fire District" in white, sans-serif font centered inside.

## Informational Memorandum

To: Chief Dan Qualman  
From: Bob Baker, Operations Chief  
CC: Jim Drummond, Administration Division Chief  
Vince Turner, CSS Division Chief  
Date: December 17, 2007  
Re: Succession Planning

---

Chief Qualman:

Recently I completed my final EFOP ARP for my *Executive Leadership* Course at NFA. As you know, the subject matter for my applied research is succession planning; a topic, as you know, that I am passionate about and believe is essential to our organization's future as a progressive and best-in-class fire department. The title of my ARP is "Developing a Succession Plan at the Chief Officer Level for the Parker Fire District." Contained in the research are recommendations that include suggested components for developing and implementing a succession plan for senior-level chief officers in our organization (fire chief and division chiefs, although the information and recommendations certainly apply to bureau chiefs and bureau directors as well). While I am submitting the entire ARP to each of you for your review, I've also synopsised my recommendations in regards to this topic for your reference below.

Succession planning is, according to my slight variation of the NFA's definition, 'an organized and systematic way to ensure that employees in a particular organization are capable, competent, qualified, and willing to replace and/or succeed to strategic roles within the organization.' As you know, PFD is facing a considerable challenge, facing the loss of many of these key strategic leadership positions in the next few years to potential retirements; and some, including our Operations Chief and Human Resources Director, which have recently been vacated. Please review the information provided as a starting point for discussions I hope we have regarding future leadership challenges and opportunities. I appreciate any feedback you may have.

Recommendations for succession planning at the chief officer level include:

1. Schedule a focus group meeting with all PFD senior-level chief officers and the Human Resources Director to discuss succession planning. The group should utilize this ARP as a

springboard for discussion to identify future challenges and opportunities facing the organization and conduct an informal SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis. I am hopeful the result will be group recognition of the need for a more extensive succession plan model and an appreciation for the benefits thereof. PFD has already demonstrated an appreciation for promoting internally when possible as evidenced in formal policy. The vision for this meeting would be to develop organizational goals and objectives relative to the succession planning process.

2. Succession planning advocated, championed, supported, and developed by PFD bureau chiefs and directors, battalion chiefs, division chiefs, fire chief, and the District's Board of Directors. This will first require personal "buy-in" at the fire chief level, and subsequent efforts to involve PFD Board of Directors in the succession planning process.

3. Development of a succession planning model and timeline at the executive leadership level, including HR, and communicated throughout the organization. Appropriate steps should be taken to ensure the succession model is aligned with our organizational culture, mission, values, vision, and the goals and objectives identified in the District's *Strategic Plan*.

4. Succession planning accepted and adopted throughout the organization through communication and collaboration.

5. Organizational SWOT/gap analysis conducted to determine future staffing needs; especially with regard to present and future management and leadership.

6. Critical job competencies and minimum requirements identified through a process such as Developing a Curriculum Model (DACUM) or "rapid results assessment." Evaluate the possibility of integrating an emotional intelligence (EI) or leadership assessment instrument similar to those used in the NFA's EFOP for EFO participants. These competencies, KSAs, and minimum job requirements – along with other expectations of senior-level chief officers – should be assertively and routinely communicated so individuals have a crystal clear understanding of the responsibilities of the job. Chief Officers should be encouraged to attain their CFOD as a measure of competency in their respective positions.

7. Review and revise job descriptions for senior-level chief officer positions to reflect organizational needs in the present and future; as well as documenting necessary competencies and changes to minimum job requirements, once defined. Recommended changes based on the research include mandatory three year tenure as a battalion or bureau chief to be eligible for senior-level chief positions.

8. HR to develop workforce forecast and planning model including replacement charts, documentation, and tracking to determine current and anticipated "bench strength" including a candid analysis of surpluses, voids, blockages, problem employees, and exemplary performers.

9. Implement a career development model that allows for individualized career and personal development plans to address individual needs based on competency assessments.

10. Continually evaluate the succession planning process and model to ensure organizational goals and objectives are met; and the process remains aligned and congruent with organizational

culture, mission, values, vision, and the goals and objectives identified in the District's *Strategic Plan*.

11. Develop and implement effective 'gap analysis' instruments to evaluate those employees eligible for succession into senior-level chief officer positions. Evaluation instruments should measure knowledge, skills, abilities (KSAs) and other competencies and include 360-degree multirater performance reviews and other leadership potential appraisals against the critical competencies and minimum requirements identified in the organizational DACUM or rapid results assessments. These reviews should be used for developmental rather than administrative purposes, as recommended in the research. Currently PFD only tracks minimum job requirements such as formal education and certifications to ensure compliance and eligibility for promotion. The current system is reactive rather than proactive; employing an accountability component and lacking a developmental one.

12. Effective individual employee career development plans to address identified "gaps." This process is only completed rudimentarily as a component of an annual performance appraisals system. Currently, employees are only notified if they fail to attain or maintain job requirements.

13. Evaluate additional performance recognition such as awards, incentives, or other types of 'pay for performance' and implement where appropriate. Currently PFD has the following components in place: 2.5% educational differential for recognized formal education levels; tuition reimbursement; and a special award for completing a formal college degree program at a bachelor's or master's level.

14. Continual and periodic evaluation of employee progress in achieving their career and personal developmental goals and objectives. Currently this is only achieved informally, depending on the supervisor, and formally during annual performance appraisals. I have also identified the need to review and expand several career development components already in place at PFD; components designed to provide personal and professional development opportunities for individuals aspiring to senior-level chief officer leadership positions. Recommendations include:

1. **Expansion of job scope** – Oversight of special teams and other Coordinator positions should be reassigned to training bureau as a developmental opportunity for the training bureau chief. Currently these are managed by the operations division chief and include the following coordinator positions: aircraft rescue (ACR); engineer; hazardous materials (HazMat) team; fitness and wellness; self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA); special weapons and tactics team (SWAT) paramedics; technical rescue team; urban search and rescue (USAR) team; water rescue; and wildfire team. Moreover, the Training Bureau should be renamed as "Special Operations" and the Training Chief, Special Operations Chief. The Operations Chief should use this as a developmental opportunity for the Special Operations Chief. Expansion of job scopes for additional positions should be evaluated.

2. **Assignment in an “office of” or “assistant” role** – In 2007, PFD will be involved in a comprehensive re-accreditation process that must be completed by February, 2008. This would be an excellent developmental opportunity to temporarily reassign an individual to assist the division chief of administration with this process.
3. **Transfer to a new job offering specific developmental opportunities** – PFD is currently exploring a residency program staffing concept. This would be an excellent developmental opportunity to reassign an individual to manage and lead this program.
4. **Lateral job rotations** – Historically, PFD has implemented several job rotation schemes for the following job positions: training lieutenant, training battalion chief, and division chief of administration. Unfortunately these job rotations did not realize their potential as career development tools due to either short duration (six months) and/or the lack of an assessment and mentoring component whereby individuals rotating into positions were routinely and purposefully evaluated and developed in their new roles. The recommendation is that these critical components be implemented for any future job rotations used for career development purposes. In addition, based on my research, job rotations for career development purposes should last a minimum of three years.
5. **Task force assignments** – Deployment as a team member and/or single resource through various Incident Management Teams (IMT); Colorado Task Force One (USAR); the PFD hazmat, technical rescue, and wildfire teams should be strongly encouraged and facilitated for individuals identified as potential senior-level chief officer candidates. Historically, special teams’ deployments, while supported, were not specifically identified in the career development process as plan components for specific individuals. Individuals returning from deployments should also be required to share their experiences and “lessons learned” with fellow officers during formal presentations which can be facilitated during scheduled officer meetings.
6. **Mentoring** – Mentoring is an informal and sporadic process at best. The recommendation is to formalize the mentoring process to include structured training for both senior-level chief officer mentors and protégés who aspire to be senior-level chief officers.
7. **Coaching** – Coaching is an informal and sporadic process as well. The recommendation is to formalize the coaching process to include structured training for individuals assigned to “coach” aspiring senior-level chief officers.
8. **Special projects** – PFD utilizes special projects on an organization-wide basis. Special projects are part of PFD’s corporate culture. However, while special projects have been a method for “showcasing” individuals who aspire to be officers; special projects have not realized their potential as a career development tool – or in most cases even been recognized as such. In conjunction with reassigning an individual to assist the division chief of administration with the re-accreditation process in 2007; individuals should be assigned to assist specific division and bureau chiefs/managers with their respective accreditation responsibilities, as a career developmental tool to prepare individuals for future leadership and management challenges and opportunities. In addition, the special operations chief should invest the time and focus necessary to use the reassignment of special teams and other “coordinators” under his/her purview as a career development opportunity for each of these individuals.

9. **‘In-house’ educational courses** – PFD should sponsor educational opportunities directed at the competencies and KSAs necessary at senior-level chief officer positions and make these opportunities available to individuals targeted for these positions, as part of the organization’s succession plan.
10. **External educational courses including public seminars** – Currently EFOP is required at the fire chief level and “desired” at a division chief level. EFOP participation can be significantly enhanced as a career development tool. Recommendations include greater organizational support for EFOP participants; as well as implementing a mentoring component with an EFOP alumnus. Organizational support for EFOP participants should include provisions to fill temporarily vacant job positions with individuals assigned in an “office of” or “assistant” role while participants attend NFA EFOP courses. Provisions should also be made to reduce workloads immediately following EFOP courses and facilitate the time necessary for participants to share EFOP material and experiences with coworkers and senior-level chief officers, in addition to working on ARPs without overloading EFOP attendees. The mentoring component should include routine interplay between EFOP attendees and their mentors to ensure ARP subject matter is of value to the organization and will benefit the EFO attendee in their career development. Once completed, ARPs should be reviewed and discussed amongst management staff, especially senior-level chief officers – and disseminated throughout the organization via a formal presentation by EFOP participants.
11. **E-learning and other Internet-based education** – Opportunities to use this convenient career development tool should be routinely explored.
12. **Guided reading** – This career development component has been used within the Administration Division with success and should be expanded to other divisions and bureaus within the organization.
13. **Teaching educational courses** – Instructor assignments as career development opportunities should be expanded to include in-house company officer development, EMT, and college courses; firefighter recruit academies; and senior-level chief officer training.
14. **Extracurricular activity** – Opportunities for career development such as giving formal presentations to homeowners’ groups and attendance at various other civic and community group meetings should be explored. Currently these events are attended by only a few individuals and have not been specifically identified or utilized in with a career development focus.
15. **Assistance from counselors and employee assistance programs (EAPs)** – PFD has a comprehensive EAP that should be identified as a resource in the career development model outside of its predominant use as a remediation tool.

In addition, a review of PFD’s Self-Assessment Manual has identified several areas I recommend we address this year as part of our 2006 annual CFAI compliance, including recommendations relative to the following associated performance indicators:

- 1A.3 – The incumbent fire chief and board of directors should collaborate to review and revise the job description and selection process for the fire chief position. This process should include a means of measuring critical competencies and minimum requirements identified in 7B.4 as a method of internally validating the selection process.
- 7B.4 – Job descriptions for all senior-level chief officer positions should be reviewed and revised after critical competencies and minimum requirements are identified through a DACUM or rapid results assessment process.
- 7B.5 & 7D.2 – Incumbent senior-level chief officers should collaborate to review and revise the job descriptions and selection processes for the division chief job positions. This process should include a means of measuring critical competencies and minimum requirements identified in 7B.4 as a method of internally validating the selection process.
- 7D.3 – Documentation and tracking of KSAs, critical competencies, minimum job requirements, and required certifications for senior-level chief officers (and all line and staff employees) should be centralized in one location. PFD’s Special Operations and Human Resources Bureaus should collaborate to ensure the new process is efficient, effective, and meets the needs of their respective Bureaus and the organization as a whole.
- 7D.5 – The District’s tuition reimbursement program guidelines and policies should be reviewed and revised to more effectively meet the needs of participants including individuals aspiring to senior-level chief officer positions. The program currently reimburses all members uniformly, without consideration as to the level of education being pursued (e.g. Associate’s, Bachelor’s, or Master’s) or the associated cost per credit hour. The program is also somewhat onerous for both participants and human resources personnel with regard to planning, budgeting appropriately, and disbursement of funds. The District’s educational differential program should also be expanded to include a two-tiered system to recognize individuals who prepare themselves for future promotional challenges and opportunities by completing advanced education – the consequences being increased organizational “bench strength” in key strategic management and leadership areas. Career paths for staff positions should be defined and delineated more clearly as part of individual career and personal development plans for individuals identified as potential senior-level chief officer candidates.